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## CUC Online Youth Safety Policy

While finding creative and engaging ways of moving our ministries to and with youth online, it is important to also keep the safety of our youth a priority. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has developed thoughtful and well-researched recommendations for online events involving youth. The Canadian Unitarian Council's (CUC) youth programs and events will follow the spirit of the UUA's *Guidance on Youth Safety Online*, in combination with some of our existing policies and practices. This document provides links to the UUA Guidelines before outlining the specific protocols that will be used for CUC online youth events.

These guidelines are recommended for CUC member congregations to adopt and adapt for their own congregational events and circumstances.

### Unitarian Universalist Association Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

#### [Checklist for Evaluating Platforms](#)

- The following are some things UUA staff have considered when evaluating platforms. However, no platform is an ideal solution that meets all requirements.

#### [Multigenerational Online Space](#)

- Parents/guardians are primarily responsible for supervising their children and youth's participation in multigenerational/all ages spaces. This responsibility should be clearly communicated to parents.

#### [Registration and Preparation for Online Youth Events](#)

- General guidance on pre-registration, verification, and preparation for online programs with youth.

#### [Guidelines for Larger Virtual Events](#)

- Guidelines for larger virtual youth events such as large youth cons, large youth webinars, and online camps.

#### [Guidance on Platforms](#)

- Guidance on specific platforms for online youth programs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uua.org/youth/adults-ministry/safety-guidelines/online-guidance>



### Communication Procedures During Events

- In youth events, it's important to set up communication processes that (1) avoid adults interacting one-on-one with youth; and (2) avoid making youth contact information public.

## Canadian Unitarian Council Policies and Practices

The points in this section are organized to reflect the UUA's Guidelines so that the reader may compare where the respective organizations employ different practices.

### General Rules and Agreements

All participants (staff and volunteer) in CUC events, in-person or online, must follow the [Youth Event Rules](#) and [Policy on Sexualized Behaviour at Youth Events](#) (online versions of these policies are included at the end of this document).

All participants 18 and over and all youth in leadership must sign and adhere to the [Code of Ethics for Adults & Older Youth Working with Children and Youth](#) (included at the end of this document, though the same version is used for online and in-person events).

All adults attending youth events must have a [Congregational Involvement Form](#) signed on their behalf by a leader in their congregation. All youth participants under 18 must have an [Informed Consent Form](#) signed by a parent/guardian.

Read the full [CUC Youth Event Safety Policies](#) on the CUC website.

### Multigenerational Online Spaces

As part of the Informed Consent Form that they must sign on behalf of any youth under 18, parents/guardians are asked to acknowledge the following:

- *I understand that I am responsible for supervising my youth during any optional multigenerational online events that event staff and youth advisors will be unable to actively supervise (such as relevant events). I will communicate with my youth about their plans for attending these events and will come to agreements with them regarding their participation and interactions with other attendees. My youth will attend these*



*events from a public area of the home (ie. not behind closed doors) so that I am able to supervise them.*

In pre-event communication (eg. the pre-packet), multigenerational events where parents/guardians are responsible for supervising their youth will be clearly indicated.

### **Registration and Preparation for Online Youth Events**

Verification for CUC online youth events is achieved by means of our usual forms and sponsorship process. This involves:

- Parent/guardian consent for those under 18 (via the [Informed Consent Form](#))
- Congregational vetting for adults (via the [Congregational Involvement Form](#))
- Every youth (regardless of age) must be matched with an adult advisor. Usually this is a youth advisor from the youth's home congregation. Where that is impossible, CUC staff will match the youth with an advisor from another congregation with mutual consent. In these situations, CUC staff will be in contact with the youth's parent/guardian to verify the youth's UU involvement, inform them of the match, and initiate direct communication between the parent/guardian and the advisor.

### **Guidelines for Larger Virtual Events**

- Only those who have registered for the event and completed the necessary forms will receive the links to participate.
- One on one chatting between participants should be disabled where possible, and discouraged during the covenant creation process.
- When using breakout rooms, make sure there are at least two youth leaders and one vetted adult in each room, in addition to other participants. Ensure that the youth leaders have adequate training so that one person can facilitate and the other provide tech support.
- Enable the waiting room feature and admit only those who are properly registered for the event.

### **Communication Procedures during Events**

- The planning team for the event will have a back-end communication channel set up, such as on Slack, where they will be able to communicate with each other in real time during the event.



- A group email address can be set up before the event so that participants may contact a group (such as the chaplains) easily while avoiding one on one communication.

**Important:** Whenever an account on any platform is set up for use by a CUC program, CUC staff must have the passwords and have administrative access. This allows staff to be able to monitor things in real time, and also to ensure that the account is appropriately closed in the future.



## **CUC Youth Event Rules - Online Version**

The following apply to all participants of youth events, regardless of age:

- Youth participants must be between 14 – 19 years of age
- Adults Advisors (or other adult volunteers) must be 25 years of age or older and must remain in the role of advisor at all times
- A maximum ratio of 8:1, youth to adults, will be used for all events
- All youth participants (regardless of age) must have an advisor present
- Only registered participants may attend (No drop-ins)
- All participants must be sober at all times (No illegal drug, substance, or alcohol use is permitted)
- Peaceful behaviour and actions must be maintained at all times (No violence, threats of violence or weapons are permitted)
- Inclusive, appropriate behaviours must be maintained at all times (No violating the CUC Policy on Sexualized Behaviour at Youth Cons – see below)
- All participants must maintain appropriate dress for the duration of the event (Public nakedness at CUC Youth Events is not permitted)
- All participants over the age of 18 and all youth under the age of 18 who are serving in a leadership role, must sign the Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children and Youth
- All participants (including event organizers & volunteer “staff”) must submit completed registration forms by the registration deadline, including providing signed congregational involvement forms, and informed consent forms (where applicable)

## **CUC Policy on Sexualized Behaviour at Youth Events - Online Version**

Sexuality is a healthy and important part of young people's lives. Youth programs are an important opportunity for youth to express themselves in healthy ways, however exclusive relationships, especially those of a romantic or sexual nature often detract from the larger community. All members of the community must respect each other's boundaries and the intention and purpose of Youth Events.

Inappropriate sexualized behaviour for youth events is not permitted.



FOR ONLINE EVENTS, inappropriate sexualized behaviour includes any sharing of pornographic or erotic content with other participants. Exclusive (one on one, or secret group) interactions of any kind are strongly discouraged during the event.

The Reconciliation Committee (or designated group) reserves the right to deem any behaviour inappropriate. Parents/guardians are invited to discuss this policy with their youth.

Breach of the above Rules and Policy at a Youth Event, may result in participants being disallowed to participate in the remainder of the event/and or being barred from attending future CUC Youth Events.

### **Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children and Youth**

Adults and older youth working in leadership roles are in positions of power and authority over youth and children. Adults and older youth also play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between children or youth and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if positive potential is to be realized. The areas of growth in one's self-worth and in the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being are very important parts of childhood and adolescent development. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth.

Research indicates that children, youth, adults and communities suffer damaging effects when leaders or those in positions of power and authority become romantically and or sexually involved with young persons in their care.

Therefore: leaders at CUC Events will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behaviour with children and youth. Neither shall they engage in sexually explicit conversations (unless it is part of an educational program i.e. OWL), particularly any of a personal nature, sexually harass or engage in behaviour with children or youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse (including using any form of corporeal punishment).



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All leaders shall be informed of this code of ethics and asked to agree to it before assuming their role as a volunteer or staff in any program involving children and youth which are sponsored regionally or nationally by the Canadian Unitarian Council.

In the event that this code is violated at a CUC sponsored event, appropriate actions will be taken by the CUC staff (and Board as required) in consultation with the event's leadership and organizing team.