

Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis
CONGREGATIONAL GUIDELINES
ON DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on November 13, 2007

Respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person is a fundamental principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and because it is among the highest values of this congregation, we are committed to cultivating a safe, healthy, and welcoming atmosphere for worship and fellowship. The congregation has adopted a Covenant of Right Relations that describes how we should interact with one another in this community. The well-being, strength, and reputation of our church depend on “right relations” among members, friends and staff; our relationships with one another thrive in an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect, and cooperation.

Within such an atmosphere, differences of opinion and their resolution through compromise or consensus can enhance our sense of community; however, differences or misunderstandings that go unresolved and descend into prolonged conflict can threaten the social fabric of our Church. We recognize that conflict may arise from time to time and that, when it does, its management and resolution are paramount.

The Committee on Ministry is charged with the responsibility to ensure the congregation’s adherence to the Covenant Right Relations and to work to resolve conflicts whenever they arise in an open, honest and loving way that is consistent with the Covenant of Right Relations and with the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Procedural guidelines are needed, however, to handle cases of severe conflict that may arise from time to time. These guidelines will be used when serious conflicts disrupt the smooth handling of church affairs and violate the spirit of the Covenant of Right Relations.

These guidelines are prefaced with the common sense wisdom that we all should adhere to the UU Principles and Purposes and demonstrate behaviors that enhance the dignity and inherent worth of all participants, e.g., expressing sincere appreciation; allowing for human fallibility; dealing directly with each other; speaking softly and listening actively and deeply; being creative in problem solving; maintaining a sense of humor; respecting boundaries that may differ from our own; respecting confidentiality; refraining from harmful gossip about others. Each of us — members, friends, staff, and clergy — comes into this community with loving intent and has the right to feel safe and secure here.

As responsible members of this community, we all have an obligation to bring to light concerns about things which threaten the health and well-being of our Church. When any individual’s behavior compromises the safety, health, and well-being of the congregation, or when their behavior threatens another individual’s physical, emotional,

or spiritual safety or well-being, the offensive behavior must be addressed promptly and firmly, even if it ultimately requires the removal of an individual. We understand that part of respecting peoples' worth and dignity is holding them responsible for what they do. Further, we understand that concern for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and the inclusion of the individual. To the degree that disruptive behavior compromises the health of this congregation, our actions as people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security. Instances of an individual's disruptive behavior may include any of the following:

1. A perceived threat to the safety, health, or well-being of an adult or a child
2. Disruption of Church activities, including its ministry, administration, or functions
3. Diminishment of the Church's appeal to its existing or potential membership

The following are the UU Church of Davis guidelines for resolving such concerns and conflicts:

1. **IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION SOMETIMES NECESSARY.** If an immediate response is necessary, either a minister, a member of the Board of Trustees or Committee on Ministry, or the leader of the group involved will respond. This may include asking an individual to leave and suspending the activity until it can safely resume. If further assistance is necessary, the local Police may be called. Any time these actions are undertaken without a minister present, the leader in charge should inform a minister as soon as possible. The minister will inform the Committee on Ministry, who will compose a follow-up letter to the individual. The letter will summarize the Committee's understanding of the situation and outline what steps must be taken before returning to Church activities.
2. **BALANCED CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF SITUATIONS.** If a situation does not require an immediate response or if an immediate response was not taken, the attending leader in the situation should inform the Committee on Ministry as soon as possible. The Committee will consider the situation in light of the following:
 - A. The Covenant of Right Relations is the guideline for interactions in this Church.
 - B. The Committee will respond to problems as they arise. There need not be any preexisting policy specifically prohibiting an offensive behavior or defining acceptable behavior.
 - C. Each individual will be treated individually; individuals will not be stereotyped.
 - D. At every stage of examination and action, the Committee will seek to collect and balance all relevant information regarding the concern.
 - E. In evaluating a conflict, the Committee will consider the following criteria:

DANGEROUSNESS—Was or is the individual's behavior a threat or a perceived threat to persons (their safety, health, or well-being) or property?

DISRUPTIVENESS—How much interference with Church functioning was or is the individual's behavior causing?

OFFENSIVENESS—What was or is the likelihood that existing or prospective Church members would be offended or driven away by the individual's behavior?

- F. To determine the appropriate response, the Committee will consider the following:

CAUSE—Why did the disruption occur? Is it a conflict between an individual and another or others in the Church? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed medical condition? Is that something that the Church community is reasonably able to handle?

HISTORY—What has been the frequency and degree of such disruptions in the past?

PROBABILITY OF CHANGE—What is the likelihood that the problematic behavior will diminish in the future? What are the possibilities for preventing such behavior?

3. **LEVELS OF RESPONSE.** If attempts to address the situations in informal ways are not successful or determined to be infeasible, the Committee on Ministry may be called upon to intervene on behalf of the congregation. The Committee will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis. In reviewing any particular situation, the Committee will discuss the application of guidelines described in this policy above. At every stage of inquiry and response, the Committee will remain open to all information pertaining to the events or circumstances and actively seek to understand the perspectives of all concerned. In determining appropriate responses, on behalf of the congregation as a whole, the Committee on Ministry is authorized to apply one or more of the four Levels of Response described below. Each of the four Levels is more stringent than the earlier Level. While these four Levels of Intervention may be applied progressively in sequence as needed to fairly respond to continued difficult behaviors, some circumstances may warrant moving directly to a more stringent Level of Response without progressing through less stringent Levels.

LEVEL ONE — The Committee will appoint two Committee members to meet with the individual involved. They will communicate the concern and allow the individual to share his/her perspective at every stage. The Committee members will seek to change the disruptive behavior and consider avenues to honor all parties and seek to create situations where the disruptive behavior will not recur. A report of this meeting and its outcomes will be discussed verbally with the Committee on Ministry as part of the ongoing work of the Committee.

LEVEL TWO — If the Committee on Ministry determines that Level One Responses are not feasible, or Level One Responses prove to be unsuccessful, the Committee on Ministry will appoint two Committee members to meet with the individual involved.

The caring message to be delivered at this Level is that the disruptive behavior is harmful to the congregation as a whole and must be changed. The two members of the Committee will remain open at every stage to hearing the perspective of the individual. A written communication from the two members of the Committee will be provided to the individual subsequent to the meeting. This written communication will summarize the nature of the behavior and detail the agreements and requests arrived at to change future behaviors. A copy of this written communication will be provided to the Committee on Ministry and retained in Church files for reference as needed.

LEVEL THREE — If the Committee on Ministry determines that responses at Levels One and Two are not feasible or prove to be unsuccessful, the Committee may initiate Level Three Response actions. The Committee will compose a letter to the individual stating that the individual must refrain from participating in Church life or specific activities for a period of time. The letter will describe the reasons for the decision and clarify the conditions under which the individual may resume participation in Church activities. The caring message at Level Three Response is that it is in the best interest of the individual and the congregation as a whole for all parties to take a time out. Care should be taken to assure that the inherent worth and dignity of all persons is honored at every stage.

LEVEL FOUR — If the Committee determines that less stringent responses have not or cannot be successful, the Committee may need to apply Level Four Response steps. The Committee will decide that the individual must refrain permanently from being on the Church premises and from attending or participating in all Church activities. Before this option is carried out, the Committee will consult with the Board of Trustees and the Church ministers. If a permanent exclusion is affirmed, the Committee will draft a letter to the individual explaining the exclusion and any possible recourse. The letter will be co-signed by the Committee on Ministry Chair(s), Board President, and Senior Minister. The caring messages at Level Four are that the ongoing health and spirit of the congregation requires these actions to be taken and the well being of the individual would no longer be well served through participation in the Church.