

## **I. Introduction to Disruptive Behavior Policy:**

The intent of this policy is to ensure that the Westside Unitarian Universalist Congregation consistently provides a respectful and safe place of community and worship for all members and visitors. As problematic interpersonal situations arise, whenever possible these situations will be dealt with in the spirit of mutual trust and open communication and with the assistance from the Compassionate Congregation Committee as needed. The Disruptive Behavior Policy has been created for those situations in which open, trusting communication is not possible (as in the case of dangerousness). This policy provides church leadership specific procedures to follow in response to any such situation. In both creation and in the event of implementation of this policy, mindfulness toward our seven principles is paramount, especially those principles dealing with inherent worth, dignity, equity and compassion in human relations. Concern for the congregation as a whole will be given priority over privileges and inclusion of the individual.

## **II. Definition of disruptive behavior:**

Disruptive behavior as defined in this policy is any speech or action that threatens the emotional or physical safety of one or more individuals of the congregation or that threatens to disrupt the normal function of congregational activities or that is offensive or disturbing enough such that it threatens to inhibit prospective or existing members from wanting to attend church or other congregational activities.

## **III. Who responds in the event of a complaint or an observation of disruptive behavior:**

Regardless of the degree of severity, the Minister will always be notified when a disruptive event or pattern has occurred and will be the primary person who investigates complaints. In addition to the Minister, WSUU will have a resource team who will assist the Minister in evaluation and intervention of disruptive situations. This team will consist of the Board

President, and the Minister, and at the Minister's discretion, any additional members who have specialized training in the field(s) of interpersonal relations/disruptive behaviors. This team will be referred to as the "Safe Congregation Team" and their names will be given to and recorded by the WSUU Board of Trustees.

#### **IV. Procedures for responding:**

There are two different contexts in which a response to disruptive behavior is needed. The first context is when an immediate response is required, as when an activity or interaction is currently occurring and the threat is immediate or imminent. The second context is when an immediate response is not required, such as when there's been a complaint, or there's an ongoing pattern of behavior.

*If an immediate response is required:*

- Ideally a disruptive situation is averted or deescalated by addressing the person(s) directly in a compassionate and respectful manner. If this isn't possible due to agitation, threat of violence or for any other reason, then any of the following people should respond or designate someone else to do so: The Minister, the leader of the activity, any member of the safe congregation team or any staff member. Immediate actions could include responses such as asking the disruptive person to leave, suspending the activity until it is safe to resume or calling 911. Any congregant who perceives a situation of immediate physical danger is encouraged to call 911.

*If there is a complaint or an observed pattern of disruptive behavior (no immediate response required):*

- Minister is notified of the complaint or observation if not already aware of the issue.
- Minister and President of the Board begin an investigation into the merit of the complaint/observation of the disruptive behavior

- At the Minister's discretion, she/he contacts one or more individuals from the "Safe Congregation Team" to aid in the investigation and evaluation of the issue keeping in mind the following guidelines:
  - 1. All investigations/evaluations of the alleged offender will be without prejudice or stereotyping.
  - 2. All state and federal laws will be followed.
  - 3. Confidentiality will be protected unless to do so would cause harm to any party; in which case disclosures will be only on a "need to know" basis.
  - 4. Police will be contacted if necessary.
  - 5. Whenever possible the subject of the investigation/evaluation will be notified unless to do so could cause harm to any party.

#### **V. Levels of response:**

As previously stated, each situation will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and without prejudice or stereotyping. The following considerations may be helpful when determining an appropriate level of response: dangerousness; degree of interference with individual or congregational functions; degree of offensiveness (threat to people wanting to participate); and if relevant, the potential cause(s) for behavior and probability of change.

If the situation or complaint has in fact been found to be valid and disruptive by the Minister and any one or all members of The Safe Congregation Committee, the following three levels of response can occur:

- Clarification of Expectations: Clarification will be in the form of a written document clearly outlining the expectations that the congregant needs to meet in order to be in good standing at WSUU. The Minister will review the document containing expectations with the congregant to ensure that any questions have been answered and that there is full understanding of its contents.
- Restricted Participation: Restrictions may be in the form of activities, places, and/or people; or it can be a complete restriction of involvement of any kind with WSUU for a limited period of time.
- Prohibited from Participation: This response indicates that the behavior has been egregious enough that the offender may no

longer attend any church function or come onto church property for any reason. An appropriate time frame in which this decision can be appealed will be determined by the Minister and at the Minister's discretion, with one or more persons from the Safe Congregation Team. This recommendation for prohibition and time frame in which to appeal prohibition will then be taken to the Board of Trustees who will vote on the recommendation. A simple majority from the Board will either approve or disapprove of the recommendation.

#### **VI. Documentation:**

The Minister will always document and keep confidential records of any incidents in which this policy was invoked.



