

Peoples Church Unitarian Universalist OWL Facilitator Policy

OWL is a very important part of the Religious Education program at Peoples! It is paramount that the program be available for all in the congregation. The success of this program depends on the qualified and caring persons who are selected and trained to be *Our Whole Lives* facilitators. Guidelines for selecting OWL Facilitators from the UUA will be followed at all times (see page 2).

The cost of training a facilitator for OWL is a considerable investment on the part of Peoples Church and the Religious Education program. Factoring registration, housing, travel and meals the cost can reach \$600-\$750 per person. There are separate trainings required for elementary, JR/SR high, Young Adults/Adults.

To attend training paid for by Peoples Church you must:

- Be an active member or staff member
- Be at least 25 years old
- Pass a background check
- Have the permission of the DRE and the Pastor.
- Commit to at least 3 years of involvement in OWL or be willing to reimburse for the training expenses

Each class requires a minimum of 2 trained facilitators. It is recommended, but not required, that each facilitator team represent a diversity of gender identity and sexual orientation.

The safety of the children is our highest concern. For safety reasons it is considered best practice for the facilitators in a class to not be from the same family or household (husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, parent/child, siblings,) related (including but not limited to aunt, uncle/niece, nephew, in-laws, etc), or in any kind of romantic relationship. The final determination of allowable relationships and class facilitation rests with the DRE in consultation with the Pastor.

The parent/step-parent/guardian of a child may not teach an OWL class in which their child is a student.

All OWL Classes involving children will be conducted in a classroom with limited access (meaning doors can close and a certain amount of privacy can be achieved so children can feel comfortable sharing.

The only adults allowed in an OWL Class with children present are the trained facilitators, the DRE, and the Pastor.

The following was excerpted from Planning Guide for *Our Whole Lives* Trainings found on UUA website in OWL FAQs (updated June 1, 2010):

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING *OUR WHOLE LIVES* LEADERS

1. **A commitment to value-based, comprehensive sexuality education.** A facilitator needs to have values in harmony with the *Our Whole Lives* program and goals, and to feel comfortable with his or her own sexuality.
2. **Experienced, skilled, and comfortable with the specific age group and its developmental needs.** A facilitator needs to stimulate discussion by asking open-ended questions, encouraging communication among participants, and facilitating activities that foster experiential learning. A facilitator needs to use sexual terminology and age-appropriate language comfortably, relate well with the age group of the participants, and convey warmth and a sense of humor.
3. **Anti-bias awareness.** A facilitator needs to understand, appreciate, and celebrate diversity of race/ethnicity, culture, age, ability, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. A facilitator needs to have the skills to work with people of diverse backgrounds as well as the ability to create a safe and engaging learning environment.
4. **An advocate for sexual health and safety.** A facilitator needs knowledge and skills not only to educate about sexual health but to fulfill the trust inherent in the role of sexuality educator. This role includes the responsibility to recognize and report abuse. The facilitator must support your organization's safety-abuse policy and must follow your state's or province's process for reporting and investigating an alleged abuse.
5. **Ability to build relationships.** A facilitator needs to develop rapport with participants, and when the participants are children or youth, with parents and family as well. Facilitators need to build community in the classroom, uphold the Participation Guidelines, and develop relationships of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility within your organization and the wider community.
6. **Dedicated learner and facilitator.** A facilitator needs to be willing to become thoroughly familiar with the content of the program, to work with a co-facilitator or teaching team, and to listen to and learn from young people and parents.
7. **Appropriate boundaries.** Facilitators need to understand that the class is an opportunity for the participants to explore their sexuality and test boundaries and assumptions, which may occasionally involve self-disclosure from participants. Facilitators may be called upon to

uphold boundaries on participants' sharing. Further, facilitators should not use class for their own personal exploration or self-disclosure. This is critically true for the children's and adolescent levels of *Our Whole Lives*, but it is also true for the peer-led Young Adult and Adult levels. Facilitators need to understand the ways that their own participation could compromise their effectiveness as facilitators.

8. **Person of faith.** When offering *Our Whole Lives* in a congregational context, a facilitator needs to be a person who is respected by the congregation and comfortable discussing the integration of sexuality and spirituality with members of their faith community. They should be aware of their own spiritual or religious grounding, and should possess an ability to connect the program values with their religion's principles, traditions and history.