

**Policies and Procedures for Youth Workers  
at Bethesda Friends Meeting  
to Promote Child Safety**

*November 6, 2005*

Every organization that offers programs for children has the responsibility to protect those children from harm. This is both a legal and a moral obligation. One of the most important responsibilities is to protect children from sexual abuse by caretakers. We have never had such a situation at Bethesda Friends Meeting (the "Meeting"), but unfortunately there are religious organizations that have experienced this problem. Religious congregations are one target of pedophiles because of churches' generally trusting environment.

We have a responsibility, when the agents of the Meeting take custody of the children of the Meeting, to see that the children are protected, and to prevent persons who might have improper motives from having contact with them. We also have an obligation to the adults who so caringly assist the youth of our Meeting as First Day School teachers and nursery caregivers, for example, to set up clear guidelines of appropriate behavior when working with our youth. We have committees that oversee child care and religious education and take care to assure that our employees and volunteers are qualified and supported. We must also take care to assure that our employees and volunteers have no history of sexual misconduct and to provide rules and procedures for interaction between our employees and volunteers with our children.

The Meeting's insurance carrier, recognizing the potential financial liability of the Meeting if it fails to take reasonable steps to protect the children in its care, has established a number of steps that it will require the Meeting to adopt in order to continue to be insured for sexual misconduct with respect to children. With all of the foregoing concerns in mind and after Quaker process, the Religious Education Committee of the Meeting has considered various procedures that our Meeting could take and makes the following recommendation to the Meeting:

Worker Selection

- All existing employees of the Meeting who have on a regular basis involvement with minors (being persons under 18 years of age) must have national criminal background checks. This would include the two caregivers we currently employ in the nursery during meeting to watch the younger children.
- All new employees of the Meeting who have on a regular basis involvement with minors must have both a national criminal background check as well as a reference check by a member of the Religious Education Committee or the Child Care Committee, as applicable, from at least two persons who know the person from an institutional standpoint (i.e., from present or past employers or other organizations where the individual has volunteered, not a friend or family member) ("Reference Check"). An example of questions for a Reference Check is attached to this statement. The Child Care Committee should prepare a written application to be filled in by the potential employee and thereafter kept in such committee's files. Resources for these and other forms can be found in certain materials the Religious Education Committee has recently purchased, which will be placed in the library of the Meeting.
- All volunteers who, under the auspices of the Meeting, either take on the responsibility of overseeing minors from the Meeting for overnight activities without such minors' parents or

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guardians being present or provide formal one-on-one counseling must have both a national criminal background check as well as a Reference Check. In addition, all such formal counselors must be qualified to provide counseling to youth.

- All volunteers who, under the auspices of the Meeting, are providing transportation of minors should have their car checked for basic safety items (such as working seat belts and tires which are not worn down significantly) and provide proof of a valid driver's license and insurance. A person who is not the owner or driver of the car (such as the teacher involved in the outing or a member of the Religious Education Committee) should perform this task. All minors must wear seat belts if such transportation is being provided in a passenger vehicle. Further considerations and qualifications may be necessary for transportation by a commercial passenger van or bus.
- No criminal background check or Reference Check is necessary with respect to the Meeting's current First Day School teachers.
- With respect to new First Day School teachers, a Reference Check should be performed but a criminal background check is not necessary. A member of the Religious Education Committee shall interview the potential teacher to see if the volunteer has the appropriate qualities to teach First Day School and shall provide the name of each new potential First Day School teacher to the clerk of the Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee. Such clerk shall share such names with the Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee and if such committee shall have a concern about such individual's capacity to serve effectively in the proposed position, such clerk of Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee shall inform the clerk of the Religious Education Committee.
- No background or reference check or identification to the Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee is necessary for periodic volunteers in any First Day School classroom or in the nursery classroom.
- All volunteers who are working with the Meeting's minors in Meeting-sponsored events (including periodic First Day School helpers, nursery classroom helpers and primary and assistant First Day School teachers) must have attended or been a member of the Meeting for at least six (6) months. However, if the person offering to help out in the First Day School class or the nursery classroom is a parent of a child in that class, then such parent may assist in such classroom.
- The Meeting must obtain a signed release form for any criminal background check (an example is attached to this statement). A member of the Religious Education Committee (currently Jennifer Perkins) shall have the authority on behalf of the Meeting to obtain criminal background checks, when needed. If there are concerns about the results of any criminal background or reference checks, the clerk of the Religious Education Committee in combination with the clerk of the Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee will make the decision whether or not the prospective volunteer or employee shall be hired or allowed to volunteer in the proposed position. The results of all criminal background checks will be provided to the prospective volunteer or employee at such person's request, kept confidential among the committee members described above and placed in the secure files of the treasurer of the Meeting (who shall hold those checks in confidentiality as well).
- These policies apply to adults as well as teenagers working as volunteers with minors of the Meeting, with the understanding that criminal background checks are not available with respect to teenagers and thus will not be performed.

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### Worker Supervision and Rules

- No one child shall be left alone with one volunteer or employee if at all possible and practical and, if this situation arises, the volunteer or employee should move to a location where his or her interaction with the child is easily visible to others. This requirement applies to Meeting-sponsored transportation as well as other Meeting-sponsored activities such as First Day School.
- Interaction by volunteers or employees with the Meeting's youth should be done in an open environment, such as a classroom with windows or with doors left ajar.
- Nursery caregivers should use identification procedures so that the appropriate parent, guardian or other permitted adult picks up each child in their care.
- The Religious Education Committee shall provide a copy of this statement to each employee and each primary and assistant First Day School teacher. In addition, this statement will be made available to all of the other volunteers described above.

### Reporting Obligations and Response Plan for Allegations

- In Maryland, all persons aware of sexual misconduct involving a minor and another are required to report it to the appropriate authorities.
- If a minor is aware of sexual misconduct involving a minor and a volunteer or an employee of the Meeting ("Reporting Event"), the child should be encouraged to tell an adult at the Meeting that they trust or his or her parent.
- If an adult is aware of a Reporting Event, that person should contact the clerk of the Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee. Such clerk shall contact the appropriate police authority and the parent of the minor involved.

All responses to inquiries from the public concerning any allegation of a Reporting Event shall be handled by the clerk of the Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee.