

New England Yearly Meeting Child Safety Policy Appendices

1. Sample Yearly Meeting Forms

Forms used by the youth programs of the organization of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends are available for download including [expectations for youth workers](#), [applications](#) to work with children, [reference check forms for youth volunteers](#), [an incident report form](#), a [checklist for responding in the event of an allegation of sexual abuse](#), and a summary of basic [child safety information for youth workers in the Young Friends Program](#). The Youth Ministries Committee hopes that these documents serve not only to show what the Yearly Meeting as an organization has put into practice, but that they can prove a useful tool for meetings that may be looking for these types of resources in their own meeting. We encourage Friends and meetings to adapt these forms as it is helpful, and to continue to work at making all of our meetings and Friends communities places where children can be nurtured and grow in the Spirit as safely as possible.

2. Best Practices in Risk Reduction

In our efforts to ensure the safety of the children and youth we serve, we recognize both the importance of clear specific policies, and the reality that we cannot anticipate every possible dangerous situation, nor should our programs be guided by fear, and rigidity. The following risk reduction [principles](#) help guide our work, as we seek to be a faith community that is flexible and joy filled as well as prepared to respond in the event of an incident.- NEYM Youth Ministries Committee 2017

The materials in the risk reduction principles document have been assembled by the Yearly Meeting Youth Ministries Committee, drawing on resources written by other Friends, and using material from *Reducing The Risk II: Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse* by James F. Cobble, Jr., Richard R. Hammar and Steven W. Klipowicz. The Youth Ministries Committee hopes that these principles can serve meetings as you undertake your own journey of working to reduce the risk of harm within your own Friends community. **Note to meetings:** If your meeting has its own resources and would like to share them more widely, the Youth Ministries Committee would love to share them here as a resource for other Friends and Friends meetings. Please send any relevant materials to youthministriesclerk@neym.org.

3. State Resources

The following is a list of web resources with information about laws and regulations regarding mandated reporting in each state, as well as phone numbers for reporting an incident of abuse or neglect.

[Connecticut](#) Child Abuse and Neglect Careline (24/7): 1-800-842-2288

Mandated reporters must report orally to the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Careline or a law enforcement agency within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected and must submit a written report (DCF-136) to DCF within 48 hours of making the oral report.

In cases of domestic violence call the [Hartford Interval House](#) at (860) 527-0550

Maine Department of Health and Human Services (24/7): **1-800-452-1999**

Massachusetts Child-At-Risk Hotline (24/7): **1-800-792-5200**

Massachusetts law requires mandated reporters to immediately make an oral report to DCF when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is suffering from abuse and/or neglect. A written report is to be submitted within 48 hours

New Hampshire Division for Children Youth and Families Central Intake Unit (24/7): **1-800-894-5533**

NH Law requires any person who suspects that a child under age 18 has been abused or neglected must report that suspicion immediately to DCYF

Rhode Island Rhode Island Child Protective Hotline: **1 (800) 742-4453**

ALL persons in Rhode Island are required by law to report known or suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families within 24 hours of becoming aware of such abuse/neglect

Vermont Vermont Department for Children and Families: **1 (800) 649-5285**

If you reasonably suspect child abuse or neglect, you are legally required to make a report to our Family Services Division (FSD) — within 24 hours of the time you first received or observed information about the suspected abuse/neglect.

4. Resources for and from local meetings on responding to incidents of sexual abuse

In 2003 a three-member subcommittee on child safety was appointed by NEYM Ministry and Counsel to create a resource for NEYM and affiliated monthly meetings to use as they develop plans for [how to respond](#) to a child safety concern within their meeting community. The committee was comprised of Christel Jorgenson (Cambridge, MA), William How (Fresh Pond, MA) and William Harley (Providence, RI) and they completed this work in August 2005. In 2016-17 the Youth Ministries Committee revised and updated this document and used it as the basis for the current policy as well as many of the materials posted on this website. The cover letter of the original report and the draft child safety policy written by that committee can be found [here](#), and the list of resources they used to inform their work can be found [here](#). We are grateful to these Friends for their service, and hope that their work will encourage greater safety for children throughout our Yearly Meeting.

Christel Jorgenson (Cambridge, MA) also created a document outlining the elements of the child safety policy that was developed at Friends Meeting at Cambridge in 2003. This document, including an excerpt from a letter she wrote encouraging Friends and meetings in New England to take up the work of minimizing the risk of child sexual abuse in our meetings and communities can be found [here](#).

Providence (RI) meeting shared their minute *Acknowledging our Failures and Committing Ourselves to Truth* at Annual Sessions 2015 regarding their experience as a meeting after the disclosure of an instance of sexual abuse within the meeting community many years prior. In this minute Friends from Providence offer sage advice to all Friends: *Looking to the future, we recognize our responsibility to do what we can to prevent abuse in our community and to be truthful in all our dealings with each other.* Read the full text of their minute [here](#).

5. Education

Education around abuse prevention is a critical piece of our stewardship for the children and families in our care. We can think of education as fitting in a logical sequence between our efforts to prevent abuse, on the one hand, and being ready to respond to allegations and reports, on the other... This is tender, thoughtful, vital and ongoing work. - Beth Collea (New England Yearly Meeting Religious Education and Outreach Coordinator)

The Youth Ministries Committee seeks to help carry the various parts of the work of abuse prevention in local meetings across New England, and in all of our faith communities. New England Yearly Meeting's Religious Education and Outreach Coordinator, Beth Collea (Wellesley, MA) has written a very [helpful account of this education work](#) that explains its importance and offers simple, welcoming models of how to begin to go about it.

There are *many* resources available for meetings who are looking to begin, or to continue the work of creating a safer space for children within their community. Beth Collea and other Friends serving in religious education capacities have created a page on community safety, which can be found [here](#). The document called [10 ways to begin building a culture of community safety](#) and [rules of thumb for community safety](#) have both been of use to local meetings as they have begun to undertake the work of building community safety.

The list of background reading used by the 2003 child safety subcommittee to inform their work can be found [here](#) along with a list of more recent publications. **Note to meetings:** If your meeting has created or located educational resources and would like to share them more widely, the Youth Ministries Committee would love to share them here as a resource for other Friends and Friends meetings. Please send any relevant materials to youthministriesclerk@neym.org.

This form is given to volunteers (Resource People-RP's) working in the NEYM Young Friends (high school) program to help them understand the expectations for their behavior as part of the program. All RP's are required to sign this form, indicating that they understand and agree to abide by these guidelines in their work with youth. This document is part of the volunteer's personnel file. The RP has the right to review this document upon request.

Note to meetings: This form may be helpful if you want to lay out clear expectations for those working with youth in your meeting. Please feel free to adapt it to your own needs.

Behavior Expectations for Young Friends (High School) Resource People (volunteers)

Adults working with youth in New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) have been given a sacred trust – to help the youth of NEYM grow in the Spirit, and to grow safely. The programs of NEYM are to serve the youth and not the needs of the adults. Healthy boundaries allow us to make a positive impact on youth and to give them space to seek help if needed. In light of this responsibility, adults working with youth are called on to meet specific expectations and to affirm the following commitments. In my interactions with the youth whom I meet through the Young Friends program, during Yearly Meeting Sessions, Retreats, and outside of official events:

1. I will provide transportation for youth only with the permission of the youth's parent or guardian (outside of Sessions & retreats) or knowledge of the Young Friends Coordinator (during retreats & Sessions).
2. I will not consume alcohol, smoke tobacco, or take non-prescription drugs in the presence of Young Friends.
3. I will only demonstrate affection, such as a hug, after a NEYM youth initiates or if I first ask whether the youth would feel comfortable.
4. In my interactions with NEYM youth, I will wear clothing which covers, at least the "old fashioned men's bathing suit" areas of my body, following the Young Friends clothing expectations.
5. I will not undress, shower, or show underclothes in the presence of NEYM youth.
6. If a Young Friend needs to speak with me in private, I will do so in a place that is freely accessible and visible by other adults such as in a corner of a room with others or in a room with open doors and hallway foot traffic.
7. If I interact with Young Friends via phone, text or social media, I will let the YF Coordinator know or make these interactions visible to the Coordinator. I will not have any conversations via any method with youth that I would not share with the YF Coordinator if asked.
8. In the case of a medical issue which requires privacy, I will ask the NEYM youth to choose a second adult to be present.
9. I will not engage in kissing or permit any contact with the bathing suit area of a NEYM youth's body or my body.

10. I will remind NEYM youth to refrain from drug or alcohol use and exclusive affection during retreats and other NEYM events.
11. I will not use any language in the presence of Young Friends that I would not use in front of their parents or the YF coordinator.
12. I will not engage in any teasing or joking of a sexual nature with NEYM youth or with other adults in the hearing of NEYM youth.
13. I will not promise confidentiality to NEYM youth if they tell me anything that leads me to believe they or someone else could be in danger (for example, if a youth is a victim of abuse, is suicidal, or has a serious drug problem.)
14. If I become aware of a YF in a dangerous situation, I will report it right away to the Young Friends Coordinator. In the case that Young Friends Coordinator is contributing to the YF's harm, I will report to the Clerk of the Permanent Board.
15. If I have any questions about whether behavior is appropriate, I will ask the Young Friends Coordinator for advice.
16. I will listen and respond respectfully if the Young Friends Coordinator asks me to change my behavior.
17. I will continue to abide by these commitments until a NEYM youth reaches age 19 and is at least one full year after high school graduation, even if the youth is not active in NEYM programs.
18. I will continue to abide by these commitments even if I am no longer volunteering for NEYM.

I agree to abide by this code of conduct in my work with Young Friends.

New England Yearly Meeting Youth Staff Applications

Below are the forms used as part of the application process for volunteer staff for youth and children's programs sponsored by New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM), including retreats, and programs at NEYM Annual Sessions, similar forms are used for childcare provided at other NEYM events. These documents are part of an applicant's personnel file. The applicant has the right to review this document upon request.

Note to meetings: These forms may be helpful to you as you consider the gifts and skills you are looking for in a First Day School teacher. Please feel free to take what is helpful, or adapt it to your own needs.

Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) – Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM) Retreats Resource Leader Application

Dear Friend: Thank you for your interest in our New England Yearly Meeting retreat programs. It is our policy to carefully and prayerfully consider all applicants for suitability, experience in working with our children, and, to seek new resource people who understand the ministry of attending to the precious lives of children. Our program requires that *three* separate sources of references be submitted with this application.

Name: _____ Meeting/Faith Community _____
Address: _____
Home Phone:(____) _____ Cell Phone:(____) _____ Email: _____

Personal References

Please provide three names of non-relatives from whom we can request a reference. We prefer that at least one reference come from a person within your Meeting or faith community who knows of your character and possible ministry to children. Please inform your choice of people that a request for references is coming and that a timely response will be helpful. Thank you!

	Name	Address	Zip	Phone	Email
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please briefly share why you are looking to be a staffer for the JYM and JHYM Retreat programs.

Skills and Interests to Share with Children

Are you led to an area of ministry that children, adult staffers, and the program as a whole might benefit by your sharing? What interests, hobbies, or skills you comfortable bringing to our program? The various skills, talents and activities below are referred to frequently when selecting staff for future retreats.

	Cook		Cook's Helper		Arts & Crafts
	Story Reading		Origami		Pottery
	Sculpy		Painting		Writing
	Poetry		Chess		Musical Instrument Inst.? _____
	Other Faiths and Customs		Massage/Healing Gifts		Meditation
	Quilting		Fabrics/Sewing		Quaker History
	Quaker Practice		Quaker Business		Peacemaking
	A.V.P. Skills		Mediation		Reconciliation
	Counseling		Environmental Concerns		Farming
	Gardening/Forestry		Marine Science		Carpentry/Building Skills
	Sports		Games		Medical Skills
	Bilingual Language: _____		Worship Sharing Leader		Roving Loving Presence
	Sports/Games		Life Experience to Share		Medical Skills

Additional Comments

On behalf of our Yearly Meeting's children, their parents, and our ongoing staffers, we thank you very much for your interest in our program. You will be contacted soon after your references are received.

Young Friends (High School) Resource Person Application

This form is for individuals interested in serving as a Resource Person (RP) for the NEYM Young Friends program. RPs are required to be at least 4 years post-high school (this usually means age 22+). While RPs do not need to be Quaker, they do need to be comfortable with the emphasis on Quaker faith and practices at our events and in supporting all youth in their spiritual growth.

What is your name? *

Include your preferred name/what you want us to call you.

What pronouns do you use? *

(for example: he/him, they/them, she/her)

What is your date of birth? *

Please note, except for in rare circumstances, Resource People need to be at least 4 years out of high school.

What is your mailing address? *

Used for sending you our background screening form.

How did you hear about Young Friends? What is your connection to the program or to NEYM? *

In a few sentences, please speak to why you are interested in serving as a Resource Person for Young Friends. *

In a few sentences, please describe your previous experience working with youth. *

Please check the skills that you are willing to share with the group as an RP. *This will help us find leadership roles that fit your individual strengths.

- Willingness to serve as a song leader
- Ability to offer musical accompaniment on guitar or piano
- Interest in leading arts & crafts projects
- Enthusiasm for leading active games

- Experience planning lessons or workshops
- Knowledge of Quaker faith & practice
- Knowledge of Quaker history
- Knowledge of Scripture
- Experience cooking for groups or working in a kitchen
- Licensed driver, willing to drive youth
- Experience with Quaker nominating process
- Experience with Quaker business process
- Experience with intentional community building
- Ability to unclog toilets!
- First Aid or similar certification
- Experience working with individuals with Autism
- Experience serving in a pastoral care role
- Experience doing anti-racism work in community
- Experience as a sexuality educator
- Knowledge of the gender spectrum
- Knowledge of "Magic: The Gathering"
- Experience working as a residential camp counselor
- Other:

If you serve as a RP, what sort of support do you expect you will need? What aspects of the role do you anticipate will be challenging for you? *

Have you ever been accused of being inappropriate with a child or youth? If yes, please describe including dates, context and your response. *

Please list three people who can serve as references for you. They do not need to be professional references. They should adults, unrelated to you, who can speak to your ability to be responsible, appropriate and nurturing. If you have experience in recent years working with youth, please include at least one reference who can speak to your youth work. Please include name, how they know you, email and phone number. *

Is there anything else you would like the coordinator to know at this time? *

New England Yearly Meeting Youth Staff Reference Check Forms

Below are the forms used as part of the application process for volunteer staff for youth and children's programs sponsored by New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM), including retreats, and programs at NEYM Annual Sessions. A similar form is used for childcare provided at other NEYM events. These documents are part of an applicant's personnel file. The applicant has the right to review this document upon request.

Note to meetings: These forms may be useful to you as you explore information you may want to collect from references for First Day School teachers. Please feel free to adapt these forms to your own needs.

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) JYM (Elementary) and JHYM (Junior High) Volunteer Staffing Recommendation

Greetings!

_____ is applying to be on staff for New England Yearly Meeting's Youth Retreat programs and gave us your name as a reference. We would appreciate your completing this recommendation as quickly as possible and returning it to Gretchen Baker-Smith, JYM/JHYM Retreats Coordinator

Part 1

Please rank the applicant from 1-5 in the following categories, with 5 being the highest.

1. Leadership experience or potential _____
2. Reputation within faith community _____
3. Dependability _____
4. Ability to handle challenges _____
5. Positive attitude towards children _____
6. Ability to communicate _____
7. Engages with youth readily _____

8. Youth interact readily with applicant _____
9. Role models ideals of faith community _____
10. Ability to teach/lead groups _____
11. Understands personal boundaries _____
12. Ability to work with other adults _____

Part 2

How long have you known the applicant (dates are helpful)? In what capacity?

What 3 or 4 adjectives come to mind when you think of the applicant?

What strengths, gifts, and talents do you think the applicant can share with children?

Please describe a typical scene that you've observed of the applicant interacting with children.

Do you foresee any problems this person would pose as a youth resource person, either for children, for co-workers, or for the programs as a whole? Would you have any concerns about this person working with children?

Please use the back for additional insights or comments. Thank you very much for your time and assistance.

Your Name: _____ Meeting/Church Affiliation:

Address _____

Home Phone :(_____) _____ Work Phone :(_____) _____ Email:

Today's Date: _____

**Young Friends (High School) Youth Program Staff Reference Check-
New England Yearly Meeting (Quakers)**

You have been listed as a reference by an applicant seeking to volunteer with NEYM's Young Friend retreat program. At our overnight retreats, we value youth safety and well-being of our teen participants first and foremost. Please share your experience of the applicant and their character so that we can select applicants who are appropriate, responsible and caring youth workers.

Name of applicant for whom you are serving as a reference:

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's dependability.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's ability to step out of their comfort zone.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's ability to communicate including asking for help.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's friendliness.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's flexibility and resilience in responding to unexpected changes.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's ability to teach or lead groups.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's ability to respond constructively to conflict.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's ability to work with a diverse group of adults.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's understanding of personal boundaries.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

One a scale of 1-5, please rate the applicant's ability to respond positively to feedback.

1 2 3 4 5

Poor

Exceptional

Do you wish to give any explanation or clarification for why you chose the numbers that you did in the above questions?

Please tell us how long you have known this person and in what capacity. Dates are helpful.

What four adjectives first come to mind when you think of the applicant?

Have you personally witnessed this person interact with children or youth? If so, please describe a typical interaction.

If you have many experiences to choose from, observations of the applicant's interactions with teens are most useful.

Do you have any hesitations in recommending this applicant to serve in an overnight setting with high school age youth? Do you foresee any problems that the applicant's behavior would pose as a youth resource person, either for youth, for other volunteers, or for the program as a whole?

If you prefer to discuss you answer directly, please call the coordinator, Nia Thomas

Are there any special talents or skills you have seen in this person that may enrich our programs?

Do you have any additional comments for us as we consider this application?

Your name:

Your organization (if applicable):

Your phone number:

Your email address:

Today's date:

This form is used to document cases of sexual abuse or neglect that are brought to the attention of youth workers of the organization of New England Yearly Meeting. Sexual involvement of an adult with a child is abuse. If a youth worker of New England Yearly Meeting suspects that any such abuse may have occurred the youth worker should contact the program coordinator who will work with the youth worker to fill out this form, and follow up according to mandated reporting guidelines of the state. If the coordinator is involved in the incident, the youth worker should contact the Clerk of the Permanent Board who will work with the youth worker to ensure the process required by law for mandated reporting is fulfilled.

Note to meetings: This form may be useful to have on hand should an incident of abuse come to the attention of someone in your meeting. The Youth Ministries Committee recommends that you consider who will be responsible for filling out this form, and who will make the report to the state according to the mandated reporting guidelines (see Paragraph 3 of the Child Safety Policy Appendices).

Incident Report Form

Date Written _____

Written by _____ (please print)

Writer's address and telephone(s)

Date of the incident _____

Child(ren)

Name & D.O.B: _____

Names, address and telephone of parents or custodians:

Who has custody? _____

1. Is the child currently safe? Please describe the situation if the child is not safe.

2. What needs to happen to get and/or keep the child safe? _____

3. What is the nature and extent of injury, abuse, or neglect including any prior evidence of same? (Please cite the source of your information if not observed firsthand.)

Where and when did the injury occur? _____

4. What are the circumstances under which you became aware of the injuries, abuse or neglect? _____

5. Has the child and/or the child's family been contacted and offered supports or information? _____

6. REPORT TO STATE AGENCY:

Agency called and telephone number: _____

Person spoken to: _____

Date and time: _____

What is agency's plan for response? _____

7. Additional information.

This form is used by the program coordinators of New England Yearly Meeting's youth programs to keep track of information related to allegations and reports of abuse and neglect of a child/teen participating in the youth programs of New England Yearly Meeting should the need arise.

Note to meetings: You may find this form useful as your meeting prepares for how to respond should there be allegations of abuse of youth within the meeting.

Response Checklist

Name of the child _____

Date of alleged incident _____

1. Incident Report completed (attach a copy to be kept on file)

Name of reporter:

Date of report:

Is the child safe?:

What has to happen to get or keep child safe?

Concrete factual information re incident-- date, time, location, names of all present, parents told, others consulted, who has custody?

2. Contact Parents/Family

When were parents/family contacted?

If parents could not be contacted (or if they were allegedly involved in the abuse) what family member was contacted?(time, content of discussion)

Documentation of contact (time, content of discussion)

What support has been offered? (visitation, worship, counsellors, support groups)

3. Contact Community Members

When/how were the following people contacted:

Friends from the child's local meeting who have been identified to respond to such allegations

Appropriate staff

Attorney

Consultant

Insurance carrier

Friend or trusted adult from the local meeting of the child, or someone in the child's home community.

4. Contact with the Alleged Perpetrator

Contact with the alleged perpetrator is beyond the scope of work of the coordinators of the Youth Programs of New England Yearly Meeting, unless the alleged perpetrator works for the youth programs. If that is the case the alleged perpetrator will not be allowed to work with youth as part

of New England Yearly Meeting until a full investigation has been conducted. The coordinator in collaboration with the Yearly Meeting Secretary are responsible for informing the alleged perpetrator. If the alleged perpetrator is someone from the local meeting of the youth, the coordinator will contact the local meeting who will take responsibility for how to proceed.

5. File a Report to the State

Has the report to the state been made within 24 hours of the allegation?

Document when and to whom report is made. Will there be notification of the results of the report? Timelines and description of what the state will do?

6. Communicate with Families and Program Community

The coordinator and the Yearly Meeting Secretary will work together to determine what type of statement is appropriate to share with families. All statements should balance concrete facts and confidentiality. The Coordinator and Yearly Meeting Secretary will determine how the information can be shared in a way that gives enough information without too much detail. It is important when sharing information that everyone involved is aware of what details must be shared in order to increase the safety of our program and the children in them, and what details are best left out because they may lead to speculation or marginalization of an individual.

7. Immediate Follow-up

The Coordinator should to the largest extent possible maintain contact with the child who has experienced the abuse/neglect as well as those supporting the child, including family members and possibly friends.

8. Long Term Follow-up

Talk to affected staff and key community members for debriefing and feedback.

Share with staff how information about this incident will be maintained as time passes.

What did we learn? What do we want to do differently?

Did we handle confidentiality appropriately?

**Basic Child Safety Information
for Young Friends Resource People
Summer 2017**

Abuse Prevention

Sadly, we know that sexual & child abuse can happen in any community. NEYM is committed to creating conditions that prevent abuse in our youth programs. Ways that RPs can help prevent abuse in Young Friends:

- **Follow child safety practices** such as showering and undressing only in RP areas, only touching YFs with consent, not being alone with a YF in isolated spaces, not engaging in any activity or conversation that a YF might perceive as sexual.
- Work with Nia and other RPs to **assess risk** of a given activity. Rule of thumb: as risk of physical or emotional harm increases, supervision, planning and follow up also needs to increase.
- Provide alternatives so that YFs may choose what they are comfortable with. For example: With physical games, include an option to cheer players on by the sidelines or keep score. With conversations on tender topics, designate a check-out space and give participants an option to pass or participate via writing.
- Model healthy boundaries and affirm assertive communication about touch and emotional self care.
- When you aren't sure if something is OK, ask.

Mandated Reporting

Different states vary in their mandated reporting laws and, as an RP, you do not need to memorize specific details of each state's laws. Here's what you **do** need to know about mandated reporting:

- **If you have reason to believe or suspect that a Young Friend is being abused, neglected, or put in "imminent risk of serious harm" by an adult you must report it to the Young Friends Coordinator ASAP.** Exception: If you believe the Young Friends Coordinator to be part of the abuse/harm/neglect, instead report to the Clerk of Permanent Board (currently Sarah Gant 617-964-9775).
- What will happen if you report to Nia that you suspect a YF is being abused? NEYM has expert advisors as well as legal counsel who Nia will work with to do what is legally required as well as what is most caring in the specific situation. Nia will only share names on a need to know basis. Nia will work with these Friends to 1) do whatever we can to help the YF, 2) ensure that the RP is being supported in following the child safety laws of the given state.
- If Nia & the NEYM advisors believe that a report does not need to be filed but you believe a report should be made, you have a right to make the report directly with the state.

Emergencies

A brief emergency protocol with important phone numbers will be given to you to keep in your nametag holder at Sessions. In case of a fire or other evacuation, group YFs by affinity group to take attendance.



Risk Reduction Principles

In our efforts to ensure the safety of the children and youth we serve, we recognize both the importance of clear specific policies, and the reality that we cannot anticipate every possible dangerous situation, nor should our programs be guided by fear, and rigidity. The following risk reduction principles help guide our work, as we seek to be a faith community that is flexible and joy filled as well as prepared to respond in the event of an incident.

Different activities with youth and children bring different levels of risk related to sexual abuse. The higher the risk, the more that monitoring and safeguards are required. An overnight at Friends Camp with groups spread out over a campsite is inherently more prone to problems than a one hour large group program at a Meeting House. According to the level of risk, we adjust the level of supervision.

Three factors should be considered in assessing risk

1. isolation of the activity
2. accountability
3. power and control

The likelihood of abuse increases when there is isolation, low accountability, and an imbalance in power and control between adults and children, or among a group of children, the risk of abuse decreases when there is a high level of visibility, accountability, and when we pay attention to the balance of power between adults and children, and among groups of children.

Isolation

Most, but not all, sexual abuse occurs in isolated settings – risk increases as isolation increases. In general youth workers should avoid activities that present situations of increased isolation, for example having a single adult accompany a child far away from a group activity.

Youth workers should be aware of factors that increase risk, and program coordinators should take these factors into account when planning for and implementing programming, and should increase the number of adults to help decrease risk when the following factors exist:

- activities that occur overnight, in the evening, and on a weekend
- activities in a home or unfamiliar location
- activities with a single adult in a car with a child
- activities in naturally isolated locations in or near bathrooms, locker, or changing rooms

Youth workers should be aware of factors related to space that decrease risk, and program coordinators should take these factors into account when planning for and implementing programming. The following strategies decrease risk:

- Using rooms that are easily accessible, with windows and keeping doors open
- Making it clear to children and adults which rooms are “off limits”
- Communicating the plan for how space will be used

Accountability

The risk of sexual abuse of children always increases in settings without proper accountability. Accountability relates to the individuals involved and how the activity is managed. Accountability provides boundaries for safety for both the adults and children, and provides the groundwork for trust.

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends uses the following strategies to increase accountability of its youth workers.

- Screening of applicants seeking to work with youth
- Having a clear job description and code of conduct signed by youth workers
- Maintaining personnel files, with regular reviews of supervisory staff
- Offering and reviewing evaluation forms by program participants
- Collaboration between the staff, the presiding clerk, and various committees of the Yearly Meeting (including Youth Ministries, and Ministry and Counsel) to find ways to continue education for meetings, parents, youth workers, and children.
- Ensuring that parents know who is in charge of the program, and that they are encouraged to ask questions and solicit feedback.
- Having program Coordinators report regularly to their advisors, supervisors, and once a year to Annual Sessions.

Further, New England Yearly Meeting works to decrease the possibility of abuse by ensuring that during programs

- events are well-documented
- all boundaries, (physical, emotional, time, etc.) are openly stated
- parents are well-informed of program content, guidelines, behavior expectations and problems
- two or more unrelated adults are present at an activity, which increases supervision between caregivers and is a recommended standard for program planning.

Power and control

Children are vulnerable to abuse from sexual predators because there is an imbalance of power related to age, size, strength, control and authority. This is particularly problematic in settings where leaders or those in power have a spiritual authority.

Youth workers should be aware that there cannot be a balance of power between a child and adult, and should work to maintain a low-risk environment by being around other adults, and abiding by the policies designed to create a balance.

Youth workers should also be aware of the factors that create power imbalances and the coordinators should take these factors into account when designing and implementing programs. Particularly focusing on educating children around issues of power imbalances and the importance of clear boundaries. Factors that can create a power imbalance and an increased risk of abuse, and which are worth monitoring include the following:

- Relationships between children where the age range is wide, particularly when the difference is greater than four or five years.
 - For example: Two five year olds going to the bathroom together are safer than a thirteen year old accompanying a five year old.
- Relationships between youth of the same age but differences in size, gender, and/or social dynamics. Guarding against power imbalance requires monitoring on the part of youth workers, as well as regularly educating our youth about the issues of power and boundaries.

Advice related to power and control:

1. Having more than one unrelated adult at any activity reduces the possibility of the abuse of power.
2. Meetings should carefully consider where authority lies in their youth programs and activities. How is authority and power assigned?
3. People in positions of authority should be accountable to the community. There should be the opportunity for both regular review and open questioning about particular activities.
4. Where there are particular events or dynamics of concern, the community should have a process and be willing to address the concern.
5. Wide interest and involvement in events by members of the Faith community helps to provide a web of accountability and support. There should be an effort to recruit, screen, and train as large a body of volunteers as possible, and to involve other members in non-caretaking, but useful roles.
6. Meetings should work to understand issues of sexuality and self-care and assertiveness, and inform children of all ages, in developmentally appropriate ways, about these issues. This includes developing opportunities for interaction and listening to children.

It is inevitable that some situations will be riskier than others. As guardians of youth and children, we have a responsibility to constantly evaluate the safety of situations –where the risk increases, we must take responsibility for adjusting other factors to reduce the chance of possible abuse. While the decision to not set strict guidelines for every type of situation gives us flexibility, it also gives us an increased responsibility to actively monitor the situation. By keeping the factors that contribute to the possibility of sexual abuse before us, we can better judge whether we are providing adequately for the safety of those in our care.



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In this document you will find steps that your meeting or Friends community can take as you begin to cultivate and implement strategies for child safety. As your meeting or community plans for how to respond to a concern that a child may have been sexually abused we hope that this document is useful.

A Resource for Local Meetings on Responding to Allegations of Sexual Abuse

Understanding the impact of allegations of abuse on the community:

An allegation that someone in a Friends community has been sexually or otherwise abused is devastating. It generates anger, shock, disbelief, confusion, abhorrence, silence, and paralysis. Often the meeting is at risk for extreme avoidance of the issue or acting as if nothing has happened, or for precipitous action.

When there has been an allegation of abuse or neglect, the pain and feeling of crisis can create the potential for a rush to action. This may end up being precipitous and hurtful. At other times the crisis may feel so overwhelming that it creates a climate of inaction. We have found that when Friends response is guided by a consciousness of God's presence, they are more apt to be centered, and find ways forward that lead to healing. During painful times Friends need to sit with the pain and confusion. In our experience it is very often the case that discernment and appropriate action come most quickly when we invite them to come in God's time; as we hold out for unity with God by frequently asking for worship in the moment and allowing it enough time. Perhaps if your meeting is going through this type of turmoil you might consider scheduling additional periods of worship. When it comes to instances of abuse and neglect there is a high risk of inadvertent re-victimization, mistakes, shame, role confusion, and power imbalance. Often there is increased isolation, poor boundaries, silence, inadvertent and purposeful collusion, forgetting about or repetition of the problem. Frequently someone responsible for misconduct reacts with outrage and blames the victim. However when people are mistakenly accused they may react in the same way. We need all the Divine help we can get when it comes to these issues. In regard to serious crises, the community should be prepared for a journey that may take years.

It is also vital to remember that if a report to authorities is warranted, Friends must not delay in this.

Preventative measures: Steps your meeting can take prior to any allegations:

1. Develop and communicate a written plan before there is any allegation.

Once you have developed a plan for how you will respond, communicate that plan to the entire community. Communicate it regularly to parents, care providers, youth leaders, volunteers, clerks and appropriate committees. It may be helpful to have as part of the plan an incident report form for use should there be an allegation of abuse and neglect. You may also consider developing a response checklist to help keep track of steps that

need to be taken by those who will be responding to any concern that is raised. Contacting and following up with the perpetrator of abuse is generally beyond the scope of the work that the Yearly Meeting youth programs staff are asked to do, however when developing a plan for your meeting, knowing how you will respond to a perpetrator or alleged perpetrator if that person is a member of your worshipping community is of vital importance.

2. Be sure that any incident form or response checklists are easily available ahead of time to anyone who might need them.

3. Identify who should respond to allegations.

Consider creating a Response Committee, comprised of members of the community who want to support the meeting community in being a safer environment for children, and who deal well with, and are prepared to deal with difficult issues. When responding to allegations of abuse many feelings arise including fear, shock, denial, anger, distrust, miscommunication, and paralysis. Selecting Friends who operate well in these circumstances is an important part of how we can make our meeting communities more resilient should a situation arise. If at all possible it is important that more than one person holds responsibility for this work within the meeting. No matter who your meeting decides is responsible, make sure that all people involved are aware of their roles and responsibilities, and that the community knows who those people are, and how they plan to respond should the need arise. We recommend that the Friends who agree to hold this responsibility meet at least twice a year to check in on the health of the meeting in this regard, and present a report to the meeting for business once a year on their work, including any activities, changes or suggestions for the meeting.

It is also important to consider how you might ask the community as a whole to respond, or to think through what healthy ways your meeting might think of to come together in a time of crisis such as this.

4. Gather and Disseminate Appropriate Information

- This includes understanding state *laws regarding mandatory reporting* (these can be found on the NEYM website) for your state, knowing what needs to be documented, and having the appropriate level of training or someone to advise you on when you may need to connect with external agencies (including counseling).
- It is likely that the level of care needed for either the person who has been abused or for the perpetrator is beyond the scope of the meetings work. To that end, ensure that those who have agreed to take on the responsibility for responding to allegations *know of counselors and/or agencies that can support all parties involved in any allegations*. This includes the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator and their family or friends.
- know about the insurance coverage of the meeting including the name and telephone number of of the person to contact.

5. If possible, identify people in the community outside of the meeting who you can consult with.
- It may be helpful to find someone who specializes in abuse and neglect, from outside the meeting community. The clerk and any other Friends who have accepted the responsibility for this work should know how to contact this person quickly.
 - Your meeting may also want to have the name of an attorney who agrees to be available to consult should the need arise. For instance, the attorney could consult about how to proceed and the risk of lawsuits. Sometimes when there is an allegation there are threats of a lawsuit. It is helpful to review this concern ahead of time because such threats can frighten and paralyze us when they occur in the middle of a crisis. Being able to realistically respond and/or seek timely advice in response to such a threat can be enormously helpful.

6. Remember that you are part of a network of Friends.

While the details of this specific instance belong only to your meeting, there are others who may have experienced this in the past, or who are willing to listen, be present, and support you should this unspeakable circumstance arise in your meeting. Consider what Friends from your Quarter might offer support, or if you would benefit from the prayers and connection or advice and support from a member of the Yearly Meeting staff, whose job it is to support local meetings like yours. The [Yearly Meeting secretary](#), the [Religious Education and Outreach Coordinator](#), the coordinators of the [Young Friends](#), [Junior Yearly Meeting](#) and [Junior High Yearly Meeting](#) programs, the [clerk of Ministry and Counsel](#), the [clerk of the Permanent Board](#), and the [presiding clerk](#) of the Yearly Meeting are all people who care deeply about the health and wellbeing of the meetings in New England and who have accepted responsibility for nurturing the spiritual health of Friends (including children) throughout our Yearly Meeting.

7. Consider as a meeting what types of training or education is appropriate. Some topics you might consider learning more about together include: sexual abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse, and neglect. The more people who are educated, the better prepared your meeting is likely to be if something should occur.

Note: if there are particular topics that you feel your meeting might be able to be a resource for, or if there is a particular Friend in your meeting willing to offer trainings on a particular area of expertise related to one of these topics please contact Beth Collea (Wellesley, MA) the Religious Education and Outreach Coordinator, or the clerk of Youth Ministries Committee so that we might find a way to fully benefit from the rich resources among us. Similarly, if there is a topic of particular interest that your meeting would like to see offered as a workshop supported by the Yearly Meeting please contact Beth Collea (Wellesley, MA) the Religious Education and Outreach Coordinator, or the [clerk of Youth Ministries Committee](#) so that we can look into ways of more fully serving local meetings in this regard.

At the Time of an Allegation:

1. At the time of the allegation, the youth workers need to **contact the appropriate people within the community**. This may include some or all of the following: A Response Committee (if the meeting has one), the clerk, appropriate youth staff and/or coordinators, attorney, consultant, insurance.
2. The Friends who have taken on the specific responsibility for responding to these allegations (potentially a Response Committee) should do all they can to **ensure that any child and/or alleged victim is safe and separated from the alleged perpetrator**. There should be immediate contact with parents or caretakers, as long as it is safe for the child to make such contact. (See number 5 below).
3. When an allegation is made it is important to **document what is happening as it unfolds**. Those who have agreed to be responsible for the work of child safety need to ensure that an incident report is completed, either by the youth worker, or another member of the meeting who has the information needed to complete the form. The documentation should be written with the knowledge that it may be read by the affected parties at a later time. Taking the time to document the events can be an opportunity for calming down painful reactions and inviting discernment. This is often an opportunity for worship.
4. **Report to the appropriate state agency**. *This should occur within 24 hours of the allegation.* Document when and to whom the report is made. Make a note of whether or not there will be notification of the results of the report, and write down information about the timeline, including a description of what the state will do.
5. The Friends who have taken on the specific responsibility for responding to these allegations (potentially a Response Committee) should do all they can to **ensure the continued safety of the child**. This may involve communication with the alleged perpetrator. This can be a complex thing to navigate.

If the alleged perpetrator is a member of the community, that person should be separated from any contact with the child during meeting activities. The Friends carrying the work of responding to child safety violations (potentially a Response Committee) should review what steps need to be taken in order for this to happen. Some questions they might ask include:

- Is the child involved in activities at which an alleged perpetrator might be present-- (including first day school, excursions, social hours, worship)?
- Who will ask the alleged perpetrator to abstain from such activities?
- How will these Friends respond in a way that makes this boundary clear if the alleged perpetrator refuses? What follow up will be needed to help enforce this boundary?
- Who will help support members of the community who are close with the alleged perpetrator and may have a hard time accepting this boundary?

If the alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect is a family member, other safe family members need to be contacted. The Friends carrying the work of responding to child safety violations (potentially a Response Committee) need a plan for how to identify and communicate with safe family members. Such planning and outreach may need to be done with the input from a state social service agency. That agency will often have specific recommendations and requests about how much to share. Those responding to the allegations need to know how to access after-hours emergency and hotline resources, in the event that the concern arises after hours, or on a weekend. A state by state resource list can be found [here](#).

6. The Friends who have taken on the specific responsibility for responding to these allegations (potentially a Response Committee) should do all they can to **exhibit patience with the process and be available to support members of the community**. It is often the case that anger and confusion surface on the part of many people during this stage. It is vital that those responding to the allegations remember that this is normal. It is usually not possible to know all that has happened right away. Accurate information may be slow in coming. At the same time upset parties will want clear and immediate information and decisions.

Note: At such times, the education, communication, and reports about safety issues that have occurred during the months and years before the event can make a huge difference.

7. The Friends who have taken on the specific responsibility for responding to these allegations (potentially a Response Committee) should do all they can to **balance the immediate actions needed to make things safe with confidentiality for all parties**. Information should be shared only with those who need to know in order to support the child.

Sometimes, when family members hear about such events, the pain that they feel can be inadvertently communicated to the child. The Friends who have taken on the specific responsibility for responding to these allegations (potentially a Response Committee) should do all they can to **help parents find appropriate ways of processing the information before the parent talks at length with their child about details of any alleged event**. The best thing a parent can immediately do is to lovingly ensure that the child is safe. Those responding need to exercise great care in sharing the names of the involved parties. If a child has been victimized, the parents and family of that child have a right to exercise some control over how the information of the event is shared.

8. The Friends who have taken responsibility for responding to allegations may wish to **consult with experts about whether there is responsibility or ability to inform other communities about any allegations**. For instance there have been instances in which a religious body gives a good reference and the person later perpetrates in another community. The perpetrator then moves on to yet another community and repeatedly uses the first reference.

9. Those who have taken on the responsibility for responding to allegations are encouraged to **communicate and consult with Yearly Meeting staff and/or the clerk of Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel**, whose main role is to support local meetings. There is usually wisdom,

resources and history available from the organization of the Yearly Meeting that can help the community in discernment and worship.

10. Those who have taken on the responsibility for responding to allegations should immediately and regularly monitor against conflict of interest. **Spouses, close friends and family members should not be the ones responding to a situation.** If there is even the appearance of conflict of interest that Friend should be asked to step down from their service in this instance.

11. Within the first few days, those who have taken on the responsibility for responding to allegations should **plan how to communicate with the entire community about any confirmed incident or (when appropriate) any allegations.** We know that if the community discovers painful information haphazardly it can more deeply damage trust and safety in the community, and we strongly advise that some communication occur.

One suggestion for how this might happen is that those responding to the allegations write a letter. The letter should be carefully worded to be honest and forthright about what is and is not known. The letter should not share identifying or personal information about any of the parties involved. *It may very well generate pain and strong feelings in the community.* This does not mean that it is to be avoided. *Those reactions would probably occur anyway.*

12. Those responsible for responding to allegations (possibly a Response Committee) may want to consider whether they want to **plan community activities for communication and healing.** If the community knows about an incident of abuse, it is strongly recommended that a community meeting occur. It should be carefully planned with several trusted facilitators and input from people with expertise. Those planning the event might consider inviting facilitators from other meetings, the Yearly Meeting, or experts from outside the immediate community. The event may be marked by emotional turmoil, pain and hard questions. The event should be actively held in worship. Such events are often a first step toward healing. The facilitators should be clear about what they plan to share and what activities should occur.

One model used by some religious communities is described in a Methodist book titled *Safe Sanctuaries, Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church* by Joy Melton:

Begin in worship with the understanding that a statement of facts should be spoken. This statement should protect confidentiality but signal the determination of the meeting to address concerns. After 15 minutes of worship the group could then separate into small groups of 5 or 6 with a facilitator assigned to each group. Other facilitators would be available for extra support. Each group would encourage sharing with an effort to avoid judgment or debate. This small group sharing may take significant time. At a planned time the entire group would reunite for a time of worship and end at a scheduled time. Facilitators should plan to remain and be available for people's individual needs.

13. Those who have taken on responsibility for responding to allegations (possibly a Response Committee) should be sure to **follow-up with specific affected parties.** This might entail

visitation, worship, and clearness or support committees. Those responding should ensure that outreach occurs to all affected parties. Those responsible for the response should also make sure that there is a review a few months later. Questions to ask include:

- Is there growth and healing?
- What have we learned?
- What changes do we want to make?

August 2, 2005

Dear Friends of the New England Yearly Meeting,

After two years, we have finished our work as a subcommittee of Ministry and Counsel on the prevention of child sexual abuse. Attached is our report and recommendations.

In the fall of 2003, we received a charge from Ministry and Counsel:

- To create a proposed set of guidelines and practices for prevention for, and responses to, sexual abuse in our yearly and monthly meetings.
- To create these proposed guidelines and practices with the advice and support of professionals familiar with issues of child sexual abuse in church settings
- To propose to the Yearly Meeting a structure that creates clear lines of responsibility for the supervision of paid and unpaid volunteer youth workers
- To propose the next steps for the refinement and implementation for the guidelines and practices
- To accomplish these tasks in consultation with affected individuals and programs

Through many meetings, and in consultation with many people, we have worshipfully considered the issues around the question of child safety. We have read a wide variety of literature on the subject, engaged in discussions with experts in the field, received input from other faith communities, and consulted with our own youth workers. We have also had long and lively discussions among ourselves, and been challenged by the issues and problems before us.

The issue of child safety is not an easy one. What we ask of the community is not easy, either. Programs of NEYM have constraints put on them by time, resources and geography. Likewise, Monthly Meetings are challenged by the availability of caretakers, space, and resources. However, we believe our attention to these issues is a measure of our commitment to our youth and our religious community. We act in the faith that if these issues are important to us, way will open. We present the following report in the belief that care, tenderness, and attention in this area not only make our children and youth safer, but also make us stronger as a community.

We would like to make one point about the structure of the report: In the following pages, the working committee has laid out proposals for suggested policies, followed by practices that would support those policies. We make an important distinction between these aspects for two reasons.

First, we are conscious that we are making recommendations for Yearly Meeting and affiliated Monthly Meetings. Every meeting has its own unique set of circumstances, and what makes good sense as a practice for one meeting may be either inappropriate or impractical for another. We hope that the policies might be adopted by all groups affiliated with New England Yearly Meeting, but are aware that how the policies are

implemented may vary from meeting to meeting. Practices, then, are for Implementation.

Second, through our work we have become aware that a commitment to a practice as a policy makes the institution legally liable if they do not adhere strictly to that particular practice. For instance, providing adequate supervision can be accomplished through several means. Describing those means in too much detail lays out requirements without regard to changeable circumstances and may not actually accomplish the goal of adequate supervision. What is required is for us to make a commitment to the protection of our youth in the best way we can, and not through one specific method. Where we believe that there are specific requirements, we have outlined those in the policy section.

We look forward to engaging in an open discussion about this important work. We are grateful for the charge we have been given, and for our opportunity to work with each other. Each of us has grown immeasurably in the process.

In the Light,
Bill How
Chris Jorgenson
Bill Harley

Excerpted from: NEYM Draft Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures

Here is a list of background reading used by a three-member subcommittee on child safety which was appointed by NEYM Ministry and Counsel to create a resource for NEYM and affiliated monthly meetings to use as they develop plans for how to respond to a child safety concern within their meeting community in 2003. The work of that committee forms that basis of much of what is currently available on our website, and in NEYM's current child safety policy.

Resources used to Inform our Work

- ❖ The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, by Ellen Bass and Laura David, 1988.
- ❖ Abuse and Victimization Across the Life Span, by Martha Strauss ed., 1990
- ❖ Addressing Sexual Abuse in Friends Meetings, by the Working Party on Sexual Abuse of NEYM Ministry and Counsel, 1994. Available from the NEYM Office
- ❖ Trauma and Recovery, by Judith Herman, 1997.
- ❖ Sexual Abuse in America: Epidemic of the 21st Century, by Robert Freeman-Longo and Gerald Blanchard, 1998
- ❖ Child Sexual Abuse: Its Scope and Our Failure, by Rebecca M. Bolen, Kluwer, 2001
- ❖ The Stop Child Molestation Book by Gene Abel and Norma Harlow, 2001
- ❖ Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, and other Sex Offenders by Anna Salter, 2003.
- ❖ Understanding and Assessing Child Sexual Maltreatment by Kathleen Faller, 2003

Additional Resources

Compiled by NEYM Youth Ministries Committee in 2017

- ❖ Reducing the Risk II: Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse by James F. Cobble Jr., Richard R. Hammar, and Steven W. Klipowicz, 2003
- ❖ Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations: A Resource for Leaders, Karen A, McClintock, 2004
- ❖ Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth by Joy Thornburg Melton, 2008
- ❖ Safe Sanctuaries in a Virtual World by Joy Thornburg Melton and Michelle Foster, 2014
- ❖ Tackling Child Sexual Abuse: Radical Approaches to Prevention, Protection, and Support by Sarah Nelson, 2016

A reflection on our responsibility to minimize the risk of child sexual abuse in our meetings and communities

By: Christel Jorgenson (Cambridge, MA) 2004

“Several factors have brought the issue of child safety to our Quaker meetings. Scandals in other churches have been in the news. Insurance companies are becoming more involved in setting standards in order to cover liability. We may have never given it much thought and now it seems to be important. Of course, we Quakers could be priding ourselves on “it could never happen here.” It isn’t something we like to imagine as possible. It is a hard issue to consider, for any person, for any meeting. We quite naturally resist it. After all, with our small and close-knit community, our emphasis on honesty and compassion, the peace testimony. . . don’t these give us a strong foundation for a healthy environment for our children? Yes. But it is not a guarantee. It can happen here. As well, we need to be aware of the issue because of the other environments our children find themselves in. Studies show disturbing statistics—that [one in ten children will have] experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18—and some studies show a higher percentage. Compassion for children requires that we take seriously our responsibility to minimize the risk of child abuse in our meetings and in our communities...

...One weekend [in 2003] I completed a four hour volunteer training program in a Catholic parish. [it felt like they were] rising from their crises with a very effective program. At the same time, it was deep-in-the-gut disturbing to hear testimonies from perpetrators and survivors. As a whole, the message was hopeful that awareness can prevent these tragedies. I asked myself if it creates an atmosphere of apprehension and suspicion—and in the end, I think it does not. Soberness about our responsibility is more my sense of it. And it does not drown out the joy. The next day in worship, I found myself cherishing our children all the more—each little wiggle, giggle, and whisper. We have the privilege of being in community with such engaging, lively spirits. We need to protect this great gift from God...”-excerpted from the Christian Education Newsletter, New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, February 2004

Elements of Child Safety Policy at Friends Meeting at Cambridge (2003)

In hopes of supporting the work of meetings across New England in developing child safety policies and procedures that will work for their community, Chris who served as the coordinator of the New England Yearly Meeting Young Friends (high school) program for 17 years shares the elements of the child safety policy developed at Friends Meeting at Cambridge (MA). If your meeting has a resource to share, or reflections to offer on your own experiences of work regarding the development of child safety policies, practices, or procedures please share them with the clerk of the Youth Ministries Committee, or with Beth Collea, the Religious Education and Outreach Coordinator, who can add them to our collection for use by local meetings.

“When we set out, we needed a checklist for what we needed to include. Ours looked like this:”

- 1) Raising awareness and invoking participation of the whole meeting
 - a) Brochure/s
 - b) Written materials for newsletter and weekly announcements
 - c) Information and training opportunities
 - d) Formalizing annual/semiannual child safety processes (training, screening, etc)
 - e) Providing any assistance necessary to the First Day School coordinator to carry out the policies

- 2) Workers with children or youth
 - a) Screening
 - i) Application
 - ii) References
 - iii) Criminal Record Check?
 - iv) Interview
 - b) Training
 - i) Written materials
 - ii) Seminars
 - c) Supervision
 - i) Oversight of workers
 - ii) Staff-to-children ratio
 - iii) Guidelines for behavior
 - iv) Check list for safety of First Day School and events (ie youth retreats, childcare at meeting retreats)

- 3) Physical surroundings
 - a) Sleeping arrangements
 - b) Minimizing hazards
 - c) Transportation

- 4) Procedures for incidents
 - a) Child revealing abuse
 - b) Observed problematic behavior
 - c) Mandated reporting
 - d) Responding to allegations
 - e) Incidents made public

A Minute Acknowledging Our Failures and Committing Ourselves to Truth

The recent public disclosure of physical and sexual abuses many years ago in a family within the meeting has led to a deepening awareness that our present community truly includes its past members as well as those who will come after us. Looking to the past, we want to acknowledge that Meeting failed to act to halt this abuse and to address the suffering among those affected. A culture of silence over the ensuing decades, in which those who knew about these events chose not to discuss them, caused further suffering in our community. For our failure to act and our silence, we are deeply regretful and apologize first to the survivors and then to others who have been hurt. We have ended that silence.

We also recognize that apology alone is not enough. In response to this painful situation, we have educated ourselves about the requirements for reporting suspected child abuse in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, we have reviewed our own practices and policies intended to keep us safe, and we have listened carefully to members of our community who have suffered abuse in their lives and have much to teach us. Looking to the future, we recognize our responsibility to do what we can to prevent abuse in our community and to be truthful in all our dealings with each other. We hope to find ways to support Friends in times of deep anguish, including survivors of abuse, some of whom may become perpetrators themselves. We recognize that our commitment to pacifism requires that we learn to deal productively with anger and other painful emotions. We seek guidance in the Light as way opens.



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Community Safety and Abuse Prevention—Making it manageable!

Beth Collea (Wellesley, MA) New England Yearly Meeting Religious Education and Outreach Coordinator

Education around abuse prevention is a critical piece of our stewardship for the children and families in our care. We can think of education as fitting in a logical sequence between our efforts to prevent abuse, on the one hand, and being ready to respond to allegations and reports, on the other. This is tender, thoughtful, vital and ongoing work. Fred Rogers was asked why he thought it was appropriate to create programming for young children about difficult topics like divorce and death. He famously responded, “If it’s mentionable, it’s manageable.”

We want to encourage and empower Friends to find their voice around Community Safety and abuse prevention. Let’s make it manageable! This work will primarily happen in our local meetings and it can take many forms. A program devoted to communicating the meeting’s strategy for abuse prevention to parents/adults is one place to start. Normalizing our commitment to community safety by weaving it in here and there throughout the life of the meeting can be very powerful. As your meeting develops its own policies and approaches, look for the basic understandings on which Friends are building their policy. Weave these in to First Day School lessons, the description of your religious education program, minutes on life in community, etc. Here is a partial list to give you a running start:

- We listen to children and take them seriously
- Children have a right to be safe from abuse or neglect
- There are some secrets it is not OK to ask a child to keep
- We care about all safety issues from accidents on the playground and in the social room to abuse prevention
- No community is immune from possible abuse and assault of vulnerable people

At all times, be mindful of the age and stage of your audience and adjust your messaging accordingly. Even with preschool-aged children, we can build a foundation for later conversations by setting in place basic understandings. For example, in a lesson on integrity and truth telling, we can note there are some secrets no one should ask a child to keep. Look for opportunities to weave in, “It is always okay to tell a trusted adult a worry.” When we celebrate God’s all enfolding love, we can underscore that each of our children is held in God’s love and it is not okay for anyone to harm them in any way. Attached is a [sample lesson](#) for children ages 4-8 on *silence* as a tool which we can use in positive or negative ways.

Education around abuse prevention is an open-ended part of our journey together as New England Friends. Our life in community is always a work in progress. Each meeting will find its own way forward with its own flavor and tone. NEYM hopes to support you and your meeting with resources and enough scaffolding to help you give shape and voice to your commitment to the safety of our children and families. Please feel free to [email me](#) if you would like more information, or would like to talk more about any of these topics.

Building Community Safety in Your Meeting

10 Ways to Begin

1. **Always take attendance.** Be able to reconstruct your First Day School morning.
2. **Use registration forms for First Day School.** Be able to reach each family. Keep a record of allergies and any other special needs or situations.
3. **Wear name tags.** Help Friends to match names and faces. Make an effort to get to know newcomers. Use a Guest Book.
4. **Post an evacuation plan in each room.**
5. **Have a fire drill.** You need to be able to clear the building in 2 minutes or less. Take your attendance sheet outside with you to verify that the building is empty.
6. **Check your First Aid Kit and inspect your rooms.** A play yard accident is much more likely than sexual abuse. Be ready for garden-variety cuts, scrapes, and burns. Discard broken toys, repair chipping paint, replace a worn out porta-crib, and cover exposed radiators in your classrooms.
7. **Have a Floater.** Have a Friend check in on classrooms, hallways, and bathrooms periodically during First Day School. It is a wonderful support for teachers, new families, and late arrivals. This role is more of a *Quaker Concierge* providing directions, hospitality, and supplies than a policeman. This is especially important if you don't have two adults in every classroom.
8. **Use the 6-month rule for volunteers.** Get to know newcomers before asking them to work in your First Day School.
9. **Read the NEYM statement on policies and practices to prevent abuse.** This thoughtful and thorough presentation is a MUST read for all Meetings. It is available at <http://www.neym.org/qye/fds/community-safety>. A copy is in the back of this notebook.
10. **Name a Response Committee.** Your Ministry and Counsel should name three or four Friends who are available to receive concerns about inappropriate, abusive, or negligent behavior and quickly enact a plan to provide comfort, use level-headed judgment, assure confidentiality, communicate with the Meeting and the public, and file official reports if needed.

Seven Ways to Continue Community Safety Work in Your Meeting

1. **Interview and orient** every teacher, volunteer, or childcare worker.
2. **Install a window** in every First Day School classroom door.
3. **Host a Community Safety Training** and invite other local meetings to join you.
4. **Listen** to children. Give them opportunities to develop their voices.

Sparkling Still: A Quaker Curriculum for First Day School or Home Use for Children Ages 3-8, published by FGC, has a helpful section on supporting children when they raise difficult issues. See page 25 on “Coping with Hard Issues.” First Day School teachers may suddenly become the Pastoral Care first responder if a child feels safe enough in their meeting to speak of a troubling situation.

5. **Recognize** that First Day School teachers may be a child’s first-responder around a pastoral care need.
6. **Ask every group** that uses your building to follow your policies.
7. **Advocate self-defense.** Explore the intersection between the Peace Testimony and self-defense.

Rules of Thumb for Community Safety:

Risk of Sexual Abuse **↑ Increases as Isolation Increases ↑**

Factors to consider:

- The number of people present
- The time of the activity
- The location of the activity
- The physical arrangements—window in door, lock on door?
- Available communication—cellphone signal?

[Remember, these are dynamic situations and you may need to modify your strategy on the fly.]

Risk of Sexual Abuse **↑ Increases as Power Differential Increases ↑**

Factors to consider:

- The adult is a person in an official position or respected member of the community.
- The age difference between children is 5 or more years.

Risk of Sexual Abuse **↑ Increases as Accountability Decreases ↓**

Factors to consider:

- Clarity of plans and timely communication when plans change.
- Adequate back-up staffing in place so that supervision is maintained.

Adapted From *Reducing The Risk II: Making Your Church Safe From Child Sexual Abuse*.
By James F. Cobble, Jr. Richard R. Hammar, & Steven W. Klipowicz. Church Law and Tax
Report, 2003. Pages 41-45.

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