

III. PRACTICES TO SUPPORT POLICY

Below are recommendations for the implementation of the NEYM child safety policy within the youth programs of New England Yearly Meeting. Practices are ways of pursuing the policy, and may vary depending upon the program.

Note to meetings: While these practices are tailored to help uphold the specifics of the NEYM child safety policy, the Youth Ministries Committee hopes that your meeting may find them to be helpful guidelines in designing your own practices for child safety within your meeting. Please adapt and use them in whatever way is most helpful to your meeting.

Qualifications and screening for youth workers

The applicant will be known by at least one Friend in New England, and be involved in a local meeting, connected with Friends Camp, or have participated in young adult Friends retreat programs.

The applicant will submit an application, which will include written references from several people who know them well and can speak to their competence in working with youth. The Coordinator can follow up with these references by phone in addition to receiving their written assessment of the applicant.

The Yearly Meeting Secretary implements background checks for prospective youth workers. The background check screens for criminal convictions. Violent crimes or crimes against children will automatically disqualify a volunteer from youth work. Individuals with other criminal convictions may be considered for these roles at the discretion of the program Coordinator and Yearly Meeting Secretary. Prospective youth workers provide written consent, their address and their social security number for the background check. This information is available only to the Yearly Meeting Secretary, the Coordinator of the program, the Office Manager and the individual in question.

Expectations and Training

The Coordinators of the Yearly Meeting youth programs will do their best to provide regular training for all staff working with youth on the topic of child abuse and its prevention. We believe that these types of educational opportunities contribute to a culture of safety and sensitivity which can empower the staff to act accordingly. Through written materials and trainings, workers will be informed of their responsibilities related to the NEYM child safety policy as it relates to prevention of abuse, and appropriate steps for reporting suspicion of abuse or neglect of any youth.

In addition to a screening process for all workers who will spend a substantial amount of time with youth, NEYM will provide all workers with information and literature about child safety. In addition, New England Yearly Meeting will provide regular training for youth workers. Included in this training is information and exercises related to the problem of sexual abuse of children and child safety. While it is unrealistic to assume that all youth workers will attend these sessions in person, NEYM strives to ensure that workers with continued contact with children do attend these

sessions whenever possible, and offers access to online trainings for people who are unable to attend. **Note to meetings:** If you are interested in learning more about the online trainings used by NEYM please contact the Yearly Meeting Office.

New England Yearly Meeting will also provide a mechanism for workers to communicate perceived needs and feedback on the policies, practices, and training that are implemented.

Program guidelines

The NEYM youth programs have the following safeguards in place to reduce risk:

- a. Doors to rooms where activities take place will either be at least half opened, or have windows in them. When this is not practical, other safeguards are applied, such as use of roamers (people assigned to drop in on each group from time to time during the program).
- b. For transportation during an event all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and have proof of insurance. Seatbelts must be used for all passengers. Written parental permission is required to transport youth under eighteen, except in the case of an emergency. If a youth worker is transporting a young person to an event there should always be at least two children in the car, and the youth should have access to cell phones which have full battery power.
- c. Expectations of participant behavior are age appropriate, and clearly communicated to both youth, and staff. These expectations include attendance at scheduled program, refraining from substance abuse and sexual activity, making responsible choices during free time, and responding to staff instructions.
- d. Program coordinators provide participants with an evaluation form at the end of all events, and work to solicit either verbal or written opportunities for feedback from families.
- e. Program coordinators report regularly to their advisor and the Yearly Meeting Secretary, and annually to the Yearly Meeting in Sessions.
- f. Program coordinators publicize retreats ahead of time including information about programming and expectations.
- g. The program Coordinators incorporate their understanding of the content of “[Risk Reduction Principles](#)” when planning programs. This document is shared with youth staff, and is also available on the website.
- h. Written consent of parents or guardians is required for events outside of the scope of normal activities, such as field-trips. In rare cases if written consent isn’t possible, verbal confirmation from a parent or legal guardian directly to the coordinator and with the approval of the Yearly Meeting Secretary will be considered consent.

Reporting and responding to allegations of abuse

The Coordinators will use the “[response checklist](#)” as a guide for their actions when responding to suspected abuse. This form will be available on the NEYM website and the Coordinator will share it with families at the beginning of each year.

The Coordinators will use the “[incident report form](#)” to report allegations of abuse or neglect. This form can be found on the Yearly Meeting website.

The identity of the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator will be kept confidential. Only those with supervisory or organizational need-to know should be informed, unless permission is given otherwise.

In order to learn from an incident and reduce possible future risks and in cooperation with any legal investigation; if the incident occurred during a youth program it is the program coordinator’s responsibility to document factual information about the allegation and the circumstances during which the alleged event occurred in order to maintain the future safety of the program. Extreme caution should be used in exploring the child’s story.

Recordkeeping

Personnel folders for volunteers and paid staff will include job description and any annual reviews. Any documentation of allegations or concerns will be a part of the personnel folder. Each person’s folder will be available to them for review, and that person can add material to their folder at any time.



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.

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?

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.
