

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