

Homewood Friends Meeting

Parent's Guide to the Youth Safety Policy

Introduction and Purpose

Our shared concern for and interest in nurturing the spiritual, ethical, intellectual, and emotional development of the young people of Homewood Friends Meeting and those who visit our Meetinghouse is very much at the heart of who we are as a faith community. Developing this nurturing relationship requires an environment that encourages trust between children and adults and ensures the safety of young people. To the end of creating and supporting a nurturing and trusting environment for young people, the Trustees Committee of the Meeting in consultation with the Religious Education Committee and other interested members and attenders of the Meeting has developed a Youth Safety Policy.

The purpose of the Youth Safety Policy is to guide parents, other adults, and children in the use of the building space as well as to identify specific practices and procedures which will ensure a safe environment for young people.

General Policies and Guidelines

Two Adult Guideline - Our goal is to have a minimum of two adults present whenever children are involved in Meeting programs and activities. However, in those instances where only one adult is present, the following open door policy should be in effect.

Open Door Policy - When a program or activity involving youth or children uses a classroom or other meeting room, the door to the room should remain open unless there is a window or other opening that provides a clear view into the room or unless noise becomes an issue. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside a room.

Check-In/Check-Out Procedure - All programs or activities which serve youth will have a clear check-in/check-out procedure which ensures that the adult workers and volunteers can account for the whereabouts of the youth under their supervision from arrival until departure.

Discipline Policy - Belittling or demeaning forms of discipline such as spanking, grabbing, hitting, yelling or screaming are unacceptable.

Restroom Guidelines - Children under the age of 6 or those requiring assistance should be accompanied by an adult to the restroom. Older children should notify an adult before proceeding unaccompanied to the restroom. An accompanying adult should wait outside the restroom and accompany the child back to the classroom or activity room. Adults should never be alone with a child in a closed bathroom nor in a closed bathroom stall.

Accidental Injuries to Children - In the event that a child is injured while under the care of the Meeting, the following steps should be taken. For minor injuries, scrapes or bruises, workers will provide first aid as appropriate and notify the child's parent or guardian when the child is released from the Meeting's care. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, a parent or guardian will immediately be summoned and a member of the Youth Safety Committee will be informed. If warranted, an ambulance will be called.

Parental Responsibility - Parents are responsible for supervising their children before and after First Day School classes and during all Meeting events for which supervised child care is not provided. Because of their isolation from the location of Simple Lunch, the upper floor classrooms and the Nursery are off limits to children during and after Simple Lunch unless they are involved in an organized, adult-supervised activity or accompanied by either the child's parent or a person 14 years of age or older given specific permission by the child's parent.

Expectations of Adult Workers - The Meeting expects that anyone involved in a supervisory capacity involving youth or children will treat people with respect and consideration regardless of age, race, religion, culture, gender or sexual orientation. Adult workers are expected to be positive role models for children by maintaining an attitude of respect, courtesy, patience and maturity. We expect all those working with youth to understand that certain behaviors are inappropriate during Meeting activities and will not be tolerated, including any activity of a sexual nature, any use of alcohol or illegal drugs; display of pornographic materials; and the use of weapons of any kind.

Youth Safety Committee

The Youth Safety Committee will be composed of the Clerk or Co-Clerk of the Meeting, the Clerk of Trustees, the Clerk of Religious Education and at least one additional member. The Youth Safety Committee will be responsible for implementing the Youth Safety Policy, for ensuring that all parents and those working with youth and children are following the policy, and for responding to allegations of abuse.

Selection of Adult Workers

Anyone endeavoring to work with youth in any capacity needs to go through this screening process. This includes:

- Adult Workers (adults working with children on a regular basis)
- Regular volunteers (those who work with children three or more times a year)
- Anyone serving in a supervisory capacity at an overnight youth program

Six-Month Rule - In an effort to ensure that we know the individuals who work with our youth and serve as role models, only those people who have been active in the Meeting and are generally known to the Meeting community for more than six months will be considered for a position involving supervisory contact with children. However, parents may sit in on any activity that includes their child.

Written Application - All prospective workers need to complete and sign a written application which will include previous experience working with children and disclosure of any previous criminal convictions.

Personal Interview - Upon completion of the application and a possible background check, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the prospective worker to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

Background Check - A national criminal background check, including finger prints, is required for all adult workers or regular volunteers before being allowed to work with children in any Homewood Meeting program or activity. Parents and friends well known to Homewood Meeting may serve as temporary adult workers without a background check provided they are never left alone with children. However, a background check is required before a person will be allowed to serve as a volunteer for a third time in a year.

Generally, convictions for an offense involving children or offenses involving violent behavior, stalking, weapons, illegal substances, indecency, abuse of animals and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Final decisions will be made by the Youth Safety Committee on a case-by-case basis.

Confidentiality – In the interest of personal privacy concerns, all results of the adult worker selection process will be maintained in a confidential file. Only the Meeting Administrative Coordinator and a designated member of the Youth Safety Committee are authorized to have access to these files.

Selection of Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for workers (paid or volunteer) who are under the age of 18 to assist in caring for children during Meeting programs or activities. Teenage workers should be at least 14 years old. Teenage workers should be under the supervision of an adult and have ready access to a responsible adult involved with the activity when that adult is not immediately present. An appropriate age gap between teenage workers and the children under their supervision and an appropriate ratio of workers to child participants will be determined by each activity.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

For the purpose of the Youth Safety Policy, child abuse is defined as any action (or lack of an action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Anyone who witnesses either inappropriate behavior or an incident of abuse is to report the incident immediately to the program person in charge and to the Meeting's Administrative Coordinator or a member of the Youth Safety Committee.

The Youth Safety Policy outlines in inexplicit detail the steps to be taken in the event of a report of inappropriate behavior or child abuse. Such incidents are taken very seriously and will be responded to in a manner which deals first with the well-being of the alleged victim, then with the safety of others, and finally with the person responsible for the alleged abuse or inappropriate behavior.

Other Situations

The Youth Safety Policy also outlines specific policies and procedures for dealing with inappropriate behavior outside of Meeting activities, for dealing with known sexual offenders, and for how outside groups should comply with the Meeting's policies in this regard.

A copy of the complete Youth Safety Policy is available upon request from the Meeting's Administrative Coordinator, from a member of the Youth Safety Committee, or from the *Community Documents* section of the Meeting's website: www.homewoodfriends.org