

Homewood Friends Meeting 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. The policy is intended to be clear and easily understood, practical in implementation, and to support and not restrict the development of genuinely caring relationships between young people and adults.

The policy will apply to:

- First Day School and other activities associated with First Day, such as Simple Lunch;
- Gatherings of young Friends held at Homewood;
- Activities and events sponsored by the Meeting; and
- Activities and events held in the Meeting House but not sponsored by or affiliated with the Meeting.

This policy will become part of First Day School teacher preparation, the contract that the Meeting has with non-affiliated building users, and any agreements for building use with other Quaker groups and organizations.

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Definitions

Child, children, minor, and youth are all defined as any individual under the age of 18 or a participant in a youth activity even if 18 years or older.

Adult is defined as any individual at least 18 years of age who is not a participant in a youth activity.

Adult Worker is defined as any person over the age of 18 who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for youth or children.

Teenage Worker is defined as any worker at least 14 years old but under the age of 18 enlisted to assist in working with or providing care for children.

Regular Volunteer is defined as anyone who is enlisted to work with children three or more times a year and specifically includes teachers of First Day School.

Parent refers to the usual sense of the word and to any person with whom a child resides or to anyone acting in loco parentis.

Child Abuse is defined as verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a child or youth.

Criminal Background Check is the procedure used to check the background of paid workers, regular volunteers, and anyone working in one-on-one sessions with children for a history of criminal activity.

The Meeting, Homewood Meeting and Homewood Friends Meeting all refer to Baltimore Monthly Meeting of Friends, Homewood.

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 number, identity and whereabouts of the youth under their supervision from arrival until departure. Each program will provide specific procedures to guarantee these safeguards.

Discipline Policy - Belittling or demeaning forms of discipline such as spanking, grabbing, hitting, yelling or screaming are unacceptable. Adult workers should consult with a child's parent or a member of the Youth Safety Committee or Religious Education Committee if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

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. If a child requires assistance, the assisting adult should prop the bathroom door open and leave the stall door open while he or she assists the child. 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 or youth 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 - For anyone acting in the capacity of an employee, volunteer, paid worker, or friendly adult presence (FAP) in programs or activities involving youth or children, the following expectations apply:

- Adult workers will treat people with respect and consideration regardless of age, race, religion, culture, gender or sexual orientation.
- Adult workers will 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:
 - Physical or emotional abuse or bodily injury to a child.
 - Sexual advances toward or sexual activities with a child, including any touching in an inappropriate manner or an inappropriate place.
 - Any display or demonstration of sexual activity with another person, including a partner or spouse.
 - The photographing of a child in any state of undress or in a sexually suggestive position, pose or activity.
 - The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials.
 - Using or possessing alcohol or illegal drugs or using any other substance not in the prescribed manner.
 - Using or possessing weapons of any kind.
 - Physical neglect of a child, including failure to provide adequate supervision.
 - Any behavior which would generally be considered inappropriate or offensive and not outlined here.

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 to be selected by the Committee and approved by the Meeting's Administrative Committee. The Youth Safety Committee will have the following responsibilities:

- Primary responsibility for ensuring that the Youth Safety Policy is implemented and is generally known and understood by members and attenders of the Meeting;
- Meeting at least once a year to review the Youth Safety Policy and its implementation, make recommendations for changes it deems necessary and report to the Meeting;
- Orientation of all adult workers, teenage workers and volunteers in the implementation of this Policy;
- Responding to allegations of abuse following the procedures outlined later in this Policy;
- Supervising the Meeting's Administrative Coordinator in responsibilities related to the implementation of the Youth Safety Policy and its requirements relevant to outside groups using the building.

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

While this process understandably trespasses into the privacy of our lives, the security of our children outweighs the personal privacy invasion inherent with such investigations and disclosures. All personal information will be maintained in the strictest confidence.

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 an activity that includes their child.

Written Application - All prospective workers need to complete and sign a written *Adult Worker Application Form* which will require basic information from the prospective worker including previous experience with children (both paid and volunteer), disclosure of any previous criminal convictions, and references. The application form will be maintained in the prospective worker's confidential file in the Meeting office with confidentiality maintained as stipulated below.

Personal References - Paid staff and teenage workers will be required to provide references. Volunteers may be required to provide references as decided by the Youth Safety Committee.

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 is required for all adult workers or regular volunteers before being allowed to work with children in any Homewood Meeting program or activity. Background checks may also be required for people in a non-affiliated group working with children who wish to rent the Meeting House. Any person working in one-on-one sessions with a child, either in a Meeting activity or as a non-affiliated person or group using the building for a program or activity, will be required to undergo a background check. 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, once a person volunteers for the second time in a year, a background check is required before they are allowed to serve as a volunteer for a third time.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the Meeting to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, she/he will be unable to work with children. If an individual from an outside group wishing to use the Meeting House declines to sign the authorization form, that person's rental agreement will be terminated. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the authorization form will also disqualify an individual from working with children or, if an outside group, from using Meeting House facilities.

Finger printing will be required of all permanent paid staff only.

Conviction of a Crime - 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. What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children or an outside group from using the Meeting House will be determined by the Youth Safety Committee on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances.

Confidentiality – In the interest of personal privacy concerns, all results of the adult worker selection process will be maintained in a confidential file in a locked cabinet in the Meeting Office. Only the Meeting Administrative Coordinator and a member of the Youth Safety Committee are authorized to have access to these files and only on a need-to-know basis. Each confidential file will be marked on the outside of the file with the following warning:

Confidential Information - Authorized Access Only

Access to this file is restricted to the Meeting Administrative Coordinator
or to a designated member of the Youth Safety Committee.

Under most circumstances, the details of a prospective worker's ineligibility will not be shared. However, under circumstances where the safety of children is threatened, sharing of some limited information may be deemed necessary. In such circumstances, the Youth Safety Committee will decide

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. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers should be at least 14 years old.
- Teenage workers and their parents will be required to complete and sign a *Teen Worker Form*.
- Teenage workers will not be subject to a criminal background check, but will need to provide references.
- Teenage workers should be under the supervision of an adult and have ready access via cell phone or other means 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.
- Teen workers and volunteers will be provided with an opportunity to read, review and discuss this Youth Safety Policy with a member of the Youth Safety Committee or its designee.

Training

The Youth Safety Committee and/or the Religious Education Committee will provide training on this Youth Safety Policy to all new adult workers and volunteers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events. All workers are strongly encouraged to be involved in these training events.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

For the purpose of this 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. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** - any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns or biting.
- **Emotional abuse** - emotional injury, such as those brought about by an environment of threats, constant criticism, belittling or persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** - any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the younger child,
- **Neglect** - depriving a child of essential needs such as adequate food, water, shelter, or medical care.

Inappropriate behavior is recognized as something that is sometimes very difficult to define and will vary from program to program depending on the developmental stage of the program participants. For example, it may be appropriate for an adult to hold a one-year old in his or her lap and cuddle them, but it is not appropriate for an adult to hold a sixteen-year old in his or her lap and cuddle them. Inappropriate behavior is generally related to interpersonal boundaries, and feelings of safety on an individual and community level.

If a member, attender, teacher, employee, volunteer or member of a non-affiliated group suspects an incidence of child abuse or is witness to inappropriate behavior involving a child, that person must report the situation immediately to the program person in charge and to the Meeting's Administrative Coordinator or a member of the Youth Safety Committee.

Both persons receiving the initial report will, on the same day the incident is reported, determine the condition of the alleged victim and seek to verify the details as reported. If both persons investigating the incident deem it to be ***inappropriate behavior*** whether or not it rises to the level of abuse, the following steps will be taken:

- 1) Attend to the physical and emotional well-being of the alleged child victim.
- 2) Immediately remove the person whose behavior is in question from the situation and relieve that person from any duties involving children until an investigation is completed.
- 3) Notify the parents or guardians of the alleged victim and respond to their questions and concerns.
- 4) Make written documentation of everything done and said, preferably on the *Incident Report Form*.
- 5) Inform the Clerk or Co-Clerk of the Meeting (or if unavailable, the Clerk of Trustees) of the incident on the same day as the initial report and forward the written documentation to the Clerk of the Meeting as soon as possible.

If both of the people investigating the incident deem the incident to be child abuse and not just inappropriate behavior, or if the Clerk of the Meeting after reviewing the information deems the incident to be child abuse, those persons will take the following additional steps:

- 6) Immediately notify verbally both Child Protective Services (410-361-2235) and the Baltimore City Police Department as required by Maryland law.
- 7) Notify both Child Protective Services and the Baltimore City Police Department again in writing within 48 hours (also required by Maryland law).
- 8) Make written documentation of persons contacted and actions taken to this point.

If the incident is deemed to be child abuse, the Clerk of the Meeting or designee(s) will also take the following additional steps:

- 9) Notify both the Clerk of Trustees and the Clerk of Ministry and Counsel Committee so that they may begin the process of counseling those involved.
- 10) Provide assistance to the victim and his or her family in obtaining counseling and/or referral to a mental health professional, if needed.
- 11) Inform all parties involved of the need for confidentiality and the steps taken to ensure it.
- 12) Within 48 hours, notify the Meeting's insurance carrier of the incident and comply with its investigation, if any.
- 13) Prepare a written statement and designate a spokesperson to respond to media inquiries. Make certain the Meeting Administrative Coordinator has the name and contact information for the designated spokesperson.
- 14) Cooperate with legal and state authorities in their investigation, if any.
- 15) Respond to the needs of both the family of the alleged victim and the person whose behavior is in question in order to seek a redemptive solution for all involved.
- 16) Consider and respond to the concerns of other parents in the Meeting.
- 17) Conduct an on-going review to assure that all aspects of this procedure have been followed.
- 18) Ensure that documents pertaining to the incident will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the Meeting Office. Access will be limited to the Clerk of the Meeting and the Meeting Administrative Coordinator. The outside of the file will be labeled with the same warning notice indicated in the *Selection of Adult Workers* section above.

Inappropriate Behavior Outside of Meeting Activities

It is possible that someone may question the appropriateness of a worker's involvement with youth based upon that worker's behavior outside of Meeting activities. When such a concern is brought to the Meeting's attention, care must be taken to discern the appropriate steps to be taken. These steps will be determined by the Youth Safety Committee working in concert with the person in charge of the program or activity. These steps may include any or all of the steps listed above. At all times respect and concern needs to be held for all involved. Information about the situation should be documented and held in confidence as stipulated elsewhere in this Policy.

Dealing with Known Sexual Offenders

If a Meeting member, attender, worker or volunteer becomes aware that a known sex offender is attending Meeting for Worship or other Meeting activities, he or she should report this fact to the Youth Safety Committee.

The Youth Safety Committee should first verify that the person in question is a registered sex offender by checking the National Sex Offender Public Website at <http://www.nsopw.gov>.

The next step is to research State of Maryland and Baltimore City laws. Because these laws change so frequently, this step is required before proceeding. Recent laws in some states prohibit a registered sex offender from having **any** contact with minors or being **anywhere** where children congregate.

Once the Youth Safety Committee clearly understands the local laws and ordinances, at least two designated members of the committee should formulate a tentative plan; meet with the individual; finalize and explain the plan to the individual; and implement the plan.

Depending on the nature of the sex offense and the particular circumstances, the Youth Safety Committee may decide to:

- Exclude the individual from Meeting activities entirely;
- Allow the individual unfettered access to all Meeting programs and facilities;
- Allow the individual access to all Meeting programs and activities, but with some specific supervision;
- Limit access to only those areas where children are under supervision by others; and/or
- Exclude the individual from specific programs and activities where children are involved.

The plan should be reviewed at least annually by the Youth Safety Committee and adjusted as necessary to assure the safety of the entire Meeting community.

Non-Affiliated Groups Using the Meeting House

Outside groups using the Meeting House, including both Quaker and non-Quaker groups, will be required to familiarize themselves with this Youth Safety Policy and to acknowledge that they will endeavor to follow its policies and guidelines by signing a statement to that effect as part of their rental agreement. This statement must be dated and signed by a representative of the outside group and a representative of the Meeting.

Persons using the Meeting's facilities for private lessons or for individual counseling or mentoring sessions where a single adult will be alone with a child may be required to undergo a criminal background check prior to being allowed use of the building.

Anyone witnessing an incident of child abuse needs to report it to a member of the Meeting's Youth Safety Committee or to the Meeting's Administrative Coordinator. Non-affiliated groups are required to notify the Meeting of any such report or allegation, notwithstanding the outside users' sole responsibility for prevention of, and liability for, any confirmed incident.

Homewood Friends Meeting Adult Worker Application Form

Personal Information

Name _____

Current Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email Address _____

Previous Monthly Meeting or Church, if any _____
(If attending Homewood Meeting for less than a year)

References - Please provide at least two references, either personal or professional

Name	Address	Phone or cell phone

Please Describe Your Interests and Prior Experience in Working with Children on the reverse side of this page

Youth Safety Policy Review

I have had a chance to review and discuss the Youth Safety Policy. I agree that in serving as a volunteer or in a paid position for Homewood Friends Meeting, I will abide by the policies and procedures set forth in the Youth Safety Policy. I understand that child abuse is a serious matter and will do my part in the prevention of child abuse while serving Homewood Friends Meeting.

(Signature) (Date)

Homewood Friends Meeting Background Investigation Authorization Form

I hereby authorize Homewood Friends Meeting and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, education, criminal, or police records, including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records. I understand that this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for employment or volunteer positions with Homewood Friends Meeting. I understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer, the background check may be repeated and that I may request to review any resulting reports.

I also release Homewood Friends Meeting and/or its agents and any person or entity providing information pursuant to this authorization from any and all liabilities, claims, or lawsuits in regards to the information obtained from any of the above referenced sources.

The following is my true and legal name and all information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

_____ Print full name

_____ Please list maiden name, aliases, or other names used

_____ Date of Birth _____ Social Security # _____ Drivers License # _____ License State
 _____ Phone # _____ _____ Ethnicity (circle one): African American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Unknown

Current Address and Two Previous Addresses	How Long?

Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than a minor traffic violation? ___ yes ___ no
 If yes, please explain on the back of this form.

Are there any legal charges pending against you? ___ yes ___ no
 If yes, please explain on the back of this form.

Signature _____ Date _____

Homewood Friends Meeting Teenage Worker Form

Personal Information

Name _____

Driver's License # or Other ID _____

Current Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email Address _____

Previous Monthly Meeting or Church _____

References - Please provide at least two personal references

Name	Address	Phone or cell phone

Please Describe Your Interest and Prior Experience in Working with Children on the reverse side of this page.

Youth Safety Policy Review

I agree that in serving as a volunteer or in a paid position for Homewood Friends Meeting, I will abide by the policies and procedures set forth in the Youth Safety Policy. I understand that child abuse is a serious matter and will do my part in the prevention of child abuse while serving Homewood Friends Meeting.

(Signature of Teen Worker)

(Date)

(Signature of Parent or Guardian)

(Date)

**Homewood Friends Meeting
Reference Check Form**

Applicant Name _____

Reference Name _____

Reference Address _____

Reference Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

What is your relationship to the applicant? _____

How long have you known the applicant? _____

How well do you know the applicant? _____

How would you describe the applicant? _____

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth? How would you feel about the applicant working as a volunteer with your child? _____

Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children/youth? _____

Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been arrested or convicted of a crime? _____

Homewood Friends Meeting Child Abuse Incident Report Form

Initial Allegation

Reported by whom _____ Date reported _____

Nature of allegation _____

Name of person filling out this report _____

Incident Information

Date of incident _____ Time _____

Program or activity _____

Location _____

Name(s) and age(s) of minors involved _____

Record the child's or children's first words as closely as possible _____

Briefly describe what happened. _____

What actions have been taken? By whom? (include name and title of officials or other persons to whom reported)

Witnesses

Were there any witnesses? _____ yes _____ no

Witness Name and Signature (if possible)	Address	Phone/Email