

## **THE ANN ARBOR MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

### **Policy for the Protection and Safety of Children and Youth**

Quakers believe that there is that of God in every person. We are committed to honoring that of God in everyone and to providing an environment in which every member, attender, and visitor-- whether a child or an adult--can be truly free from harm, fear or dishonor. We respect each other through our actions and in that spirit we make this policy.

Ann Arbor Friends Meeting cherishes the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. They are a vital part of our faith community. With God's help we seek a community where no child is at risk for emotional, physical or sexual abuse and where no adult or child is at risk for false accusation. We seek a community where a mutual sense of trust allows children and adults to speak out when they feel uncomfortable or unsafe, where difficult issues can be discussed and where our loving concern for one another is strengthened, not diminished, by these discussions.

We have adopted the policies outlined in this document. By implementing the practices outlined below, our goals are: first, to protect the children and youth of Ann Arbor Friends Monthly Meeting from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our volunteers, employees and children from false accusations; and second, to be actively mindful of safety concerns relating to our property.

#### **I. Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child," "children," "minors," and "youth" are defined as including anyone under the age of eighteen (18).

"Youth and child-care workers" or "workers" refers to all persons working with children and youth, paid and unpaid, including

- ◆ Those who will provide child care during worship, committee meetings, Meeting for Business and special events.
- ◆ Those who will lead First Day School and Young People's Group programs and events.
- ◆ Those who will have overnight responsibility during events sponsored by Ann Arbor Friends Meeting.

"Youth and child-care workers" does not include guest speakers, one-time or infrequent volunteers, and parents or guardians staying in a class with their own child, as long as a youth or child-care worker is present during the class or activity.

## **II. Selection of Workers**

All youth and child care workers will be screened. This screening includes the following:

### **a) Six-Month Rule (Volunteers)**

A person may be considered for any regular volunteer position involving contact with children and youth only after s/he has been involved with the Religious Society of Friends for a minimum of six (6) months.

### **b) Application**

Every prospective regular volunteer or employee will fill out an application. For those applicants that meet the Meeting's needs, a personal interview will be the next step.

### **c) Personal Interview**

Every prospective youth or child care worker will have a personal interview. The interview will provide an opportunity for the applicant:

- ◆ to discuss his/her interest and suitability for this service;
- ◆ to be advised of the Meeting's Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safety of Children and Youth;
- ◆ to be given a copy of this Policy;
- ◆ to have an opportunity to raise and discuss any offenses that may be revealed in a criminal background check;
- ◆ and to sign a release form, which allows the Meeting to request a criminal background check, and asks the applicant to list any pending cases or convictions for sexual misconduct. The Meeting will keep the release form on file.

The personal interview for prospective employees will be with the hiring committee as defined in the Meeting Handbook. The interview for prospective regular volunteers will be with a member or members of the Committee for Children and Families.

### **d) Criminal Background Check**

A criminal-background check is required for all prospective workers.

Convictions for an offense involving children, an offense involving violence, or an offense involving any conduct that the committee interprets to be inconsistent with working safely with children will preclude an applicant from being permitted to work with children. What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the hiring committee, in consultation with the Conveners of the Committee on Ministry and Counsel and the Personnel Committee, on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. The hiring committee will discuss with the applicant any negative decision.

**e) References Check**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. If the applicant has worked with minors at another organization, the organization(s) should be included in the two references. The Meeting will keep the reference documentation on file.

**f) Confidentiality**

All personal information gained during the screening process about any individual will be held in confidence by the hiring committee and any other person involved in the decision-making process. All documents with personal information about applicants or workers will be kept in a locked file in the office.

**III. Other Safety Measures**

**a) Two Adults**

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers or one adult worker and one teenage worker will be in attendance when children are being supervised during our programs and activities.

However, if it happens that one adult is the only worker present in a class or child-care setting, the adult shall do one of the following options:

- ◆ recruit another adult in the building to be a "friendly adult presence";
- ◆ join another First Day School class;
- ◆ inform each child's parent or guardian of the situation.

**b) Open Doors**

Classroom doors (for child care, First Day School, and Young People's Group) should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside the door. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

**c) Teenage workers (under 18 years old)**

Teenage workers must be at least age 14.

Teenage workers will be screened as specified above, except that criminal background checks are not required (or available).

Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult worker. With the consent of each child's parent or guardian, the adult worker may be visibly proximal, for example, in a committee meeting in the Quaker House living room while child care is being provided in the Nursery Room.

**d) Restroom Guidelines**

Parents are strongly encouraged to change diapers and/or have their children visit the bathroom prior to child care or First Day School.

Children eight and older may leave the classroom to use the bathroom on their own. Children younger than eight should be escorted to the bathroom by an adult. The adult may help children under five with the toileting process. Any time an adult needs to enter the bathroom with a child, the door should be propped open.

**e) Parent Responsibility**

Parents and guardians are responsible for their children during times when children are not in First Day School or checked into child care. Parents of children eight and under are asked not to leave children unattended in child care or First Day School classrooms at any time.

**f) Check-in/Check-out**

A parent or guardian of any child under three years old will check their children in and out of any Meeting sponsored activity. Parents or guardians of children age three and older will check their children in and out of all events and programs other than First Day School.

The Committee on Children and Families may create a check-in/check out or parental waiver procedure for youth fourteen and older.

**g) Safety Concerns**

We recognize that safety concerns may arise that are not allegations of child abuse, and which do not call for the response described in Section IV. As we try to maintain an environment that is safe for our children in every way, we hope that parents and others will feel comfortable raising these concerns. Any person (parent or guardian, employee, volunteer, child, or other person) with a concern regarding safety of a child or children in the Meeting is encouraged to take the concern to the Committee for Children and Families or to the Clerk. The Committee and the Clerk shall treat these matters with discretion and confidentiality.

**h) Oversight and Implementation**

The Meeting will review this policy and its implementation on an annual basis. A calendar and procedure will be developed for this review. The Committee for Children and Families may develop procedures and forms consistent with this policy.

#### **IV. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

In the event that an incident of child abuse is alleged to have occurred at Ann Arbor Meeting, or during our sponsored programs or activities, the Clerk of the Meeting will be informed.

##### **a) Clerk's Responsibilities**

When the Clerk, or the Clerk's designee, receives an allegation of activity that if true would constitute child abuse, he or she shall:

- ◆ notify the parent or guardian of the child.
- ◆ notify the Convener of the Committee on Children and Families, and, if the alleged perpetrator is an employee, the Convener of the Personnel Committee.
- ◆ notify the worker alleged to be the perpetrator and immediately place him or her on leave from working with children pending an investigation. An alleged perpetrator will not be permitted to participate in any Meeting activities involving children during the investigation.
- ◆ notify civil authorities responsible for investigating child abuse. The Meeting will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
- ◆ notify the Meeting's insurance company, complete an incident report, and forward any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations to the insurance company.
- ◆ take any other action for the protection of the child appropriate in the circumstances.
- ◆ keep all information absolutely confidential outside of those who need to know information in order to carry out this policy.

##### **b) The Meeting's Responsibilities**

- ◆ No adult will question the child or discuss the incident with the child on behalf of the Meeting, as we recognize that asking children questions can influence the process; we will leave such questioning to trained professionals conducting the investigation.
- ◆ The name of the child shall not be entered into the minutes of any meeting.
- ◆ Friends are reminded of the potential harm to a child or adult that comes from gossip or idle discussion.

#### **V. Existing Workers**

Any youth or child care worker who is working with children as of the date this policy is effective will be required to complete a consent form for a criminal background check (if one was not already conducted) in order to continue in his or her position.

#### **VI. Effective Date**

This policy will become effective six months after it is approved.