

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 professional 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,

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Chris Jorgensen
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Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures
New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
901 Pleasant Street
Worcester MA 01602
As adopted on DATE by WHOM

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I. INTRODUCTION

Youth Workers with New England Yearly Meeting and the affiliated Monthly Meetings have been given a trust: to help the youth and children of NEYM grow in the Spirit, and to grow safely. While attention is often focused on the content of our programs, we are also conscious that our way of being with youth is as important as the content of the program provided – children and youth follow our lead, and we teach mostly by example. For our programs to be successful and safe, youth workers, youth, and parents need a common language and understanding of what makes for a safe and trusting environment. In order to ensure the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of participating children and youth workers, we should agree on some guidelines in our work with children and youth. This general understanding also requires us to be specific and clear in our language and expectations.

There are many definitions of sexual abuse – for the purposes of this document, we will define sexual abuse as any sexual activity with a child by an adult or another child who is older and more powerful. (*For further information about the definition and dynamics of sexual abuse, see "Sexual Abuse, Additional Information" in the appendix.*) It is much easier to prevent the occurrence of abuse than to detect its event or the presence of potential perpetrators. Our efforts here focus on primarily on prevention.

In recent years, we have been made aware of the potential for hurt and abuse of children and youth in different faith communities. The effects of the sexual abuse of a child in a faith community are catastrophic and far-reaching. Everyone is hurt – the abused person may carry scars and memories for their entire life; the victim's family and friends can be traumatized; the community in which the abuse occurs may be deeply wounded and divided, and the perpetrator lives in a world of isolation, secrecy and darkness. There is also the risk that he or she may continue the abusive behavior. In instances where allegations prove false, there is still damage done to all involved. Reputations may be unjustly destroyed beyond repair, and the seeds of distrust live on in the community for years afterwards. "No segment of society, including the Religious Society of Friends, is immune to the dangers of sexual abuse. In fact, parts of our own community have been damaged by incidences and accusations of abuse. If we are honest with ourselves as Friends, we acknowledge that the same potential for hurt exists in our community as in others, and that mindfully attending to issues of safety is the best way to

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protect individuals and the community. Denial of the possibility of hurt does not prevent hurt – if anything, it heightens its likelihood.

In this document there is a distinction between “policy” and “practices to support policy”. The policy is recommended for adoption by meetings and programs within New England Yearly Meeting. Once the policy is adopted, there is a legal obligation that it be followed. Practices are ways of pursuing the policy, which may vary depending upon each community’s situation.

The policies and practices in this document will provide all of us with challenges in how we care for the safety of our children and youth.

II. CHILD SAFETY POLICY

NOTE: "Youth worker" or "worker" will refer to all paid and volunteer staff for NEYM, Yearly Meeting sessions, and Monthly meeting sponsored youth and children's programs, including retreats, conferences and Yearly and meeting sessions.

Minutes

1. Each community (monthly meeting or program) shall consider corporately their need for child abuse prevention. A minute regarding these reflections and intentions about community safety and describing communication regarding any risk or allegation of abuse or neglect should be adopted and distributed, to be reviewed regularly within the community, especially with those who work with children and youth.

Qualifications and Screening for Youth Workers

2. Youth workers must be mature and responsible adults. Youth workers should be no less than three years older than the youth being served. Workers under eighteen should be in an assistant capacity under the direct supervision of an adult youth worker.

3. All youth workers will undergo a careful screening process, including an application and references. A documented interview will be at the discretion of the coordinator or responsible committee.

4. Criminal background checks are required for all workers who spend significant amount of time with youth and children, such as, childcare workers, teachers, and retreat leaders.

Expectations and Training of Youth Workers

5. Responsibilities and expectations for proper behavior will be clearly defined and communicated to all youth workers. There should be a written code of conduct, to be read and signed by each worker. *(A proposed code is included in appendix.)*

6. Training will be offered regularly to youth workers. Training should include a job description, resource information, crisis procedures, mandated reporting laws and information about abuse and neglect.

7. In support of youth workers, there should be a community-wide effort to educate both adults and children, appropriate to the groups being addressed, on sexual abuse awareness.

Program guidelines

8. Safeguards should be provided through careful monitoring and staffing. It is recommended that no fewer than two adults be present at any activity. Where this two adult rule is not possible, minimally there should be a roamer regularly checking on all group activities. Ratios of staff to youth for elementary and junior high programs should be no less than 1:8. For high school, 1:10.

9. Staff workers should engage in a risk assessment at the beginning of any new activity and as part of a review of any regular programs or activities. They should monitor and plan in consideration of levels of isolation, accountability and degree of caretaker power and authority. As risk increases, increased supervision is needed. *(See appendix on risk assessment)*

10. Youth and children should be regularly educated regarding sexuality, personal boundaries and assertiveness, appropriate to the age.

Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Abuse

11. Youth workers who suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect have the responsibility to insure that it is reported to appropriate authorities in the program or Meeting. In addition, they need to insure that appropriate state authorities have been contacted.

12. Program coordinators have a responsibility to know and comply with mandated reporting laws.

13. Programs and/or Meetings will have a written response plan in regards to suspicions of allegations of abuse, including identifying the individuals responsible for the plan. The plan should take into account:

- a) the immediate requirement is to stop all possibility of further harm
- b) the documentation of allegations and the community's response to them
- c) a plan for long-term outreach and follow-up
- d) the centrality of worship as a process to support individuals and the community.

14. When allegations are made, the community has a right to know about the existence of the problem, while all parties involved have a right to confidentiality.

Recordkeeping

15. Personnel files should be kept for all workers who are significantly involved with children. Documentation of allegations should be placed in personnel files of affected parties. All files related to personnel and any alleged incidents will be kept permanently in a secure place with limited access.

III. PRACTICES TO SUPPORT POLICY

Below are recommendations for the implementation of the policy. Numbers of practices refer to the number of specific policy minutes.

Qualifications and screening for youth workers

2. In addition to maturity level, his/her being known in the community will increase safety. A minimum of six months of participation in the community provides a basic level of mutual understanding and accountability.
3. Models for application forms and references can be found in the appendix. Face-to face interviews are recommended whenever possible.
4. Criminal background checks are a complex process. Three sources of criminal background checks include:
 - a. Oxford Document Management Company, Inc.
 - b. Church Mutual Insurance Company's Screen Now program
 - c. CORI check – Criminal Offender Record Information (Massachusetts only, but similar for most other states.)

For more information about how to evaluate these sources, see individual websites:

- the Unitarian Universalist Program called "Responsible Staffing" (a very good source for thinking about underlying issues)
- the information on reducingtherisk.com site
- the Massachusetts website for the Criminal History Systems Board
- Variables include cost, turnaround time, depth and breadth of information, geographic range of sources.

Expectations and Training

6. Yearly Meeting should provide a regular training program for all staff working with youth. In written materials and at trainings, workers should be informed of the community policy for prevention of abuse and physical safety, appropriate steps for reporting an abuse of any youth, and details of the state's laws regarding the definitions of child/youth abuse and the requirements of reporting. All youth workers should be provided with regular opportunities to learn First Aid and CPR. Youth programs should endeavor to make sure that at least one person in the immediate area of program is trained in these skills.
7. A community-wide educational event on a regular basis contributes to a culture of safety and sensitivity which will empower everyone to hold standards of accountability. This groundwork will support the maintenance of the policy and the work of youth workers.

Program guidelines

(See also "Risk Reduction Principles" later in this document for further discussion of principles and practices.)

8. Simple safeguards can decrease risk. These would include the following:
 - a) Doors to rooms where activities take place should either be half opened, or have windows in them. When this is not practical, other safeguards should be applied, such as use of roamers.
 - b) For transportation during an event, all drivers should be at least 21 years of age and have proof of insurance. Seatbelts should be used for all passengers. Written permission for youth under eighteen should be obtained from parents.
 - c) Expectations of participant behavior should be clearly communicated and age-appropriate. They would include: attendance at scheduled program, refraining from substance abuse and sexual activity, responsible free time activity, responding to caretaker instructions.
 - d) Feedback process – program coordinators should provide a method for evaluation by participants and parents. This may be accomplished through written and verbal feedback. Regular reports of activities, including annual reports, are crucial. Program staff should report to committee(s) responsible for their work. A written record should be kept.
 - e) Programs should strive for openness in planning and publicity of events and activities. This openness might include communication ahead of time with the parents and community with written description and announcements and/or an invitation to parents and community members to attend, participate and observe the events.
 - f) Events out of the scope of normal activities should receive the approval of parents or guardians. Most often, this approval should be in the form of written consent.
 - g) In all Meetings, there should be clearly identified liaisons or community contacts available to any child, parent or other community member. This contact may or may not be a supervisor of youth programs, although they should be familiar with the programs. There should be a well-publicized written process for reporting any suspected abuse or improper behavior.

Reporting and responding to allegations of abuse

11. Youth workers should have contact information for state agencies and meeting/community liaisons. (See "State Reporting Laws and Agencies" in the Appendix.)

13. Suggestions for responding:

- a) The plan developed for response should be communicated regularly to parents, care providers, youth leaders, volunteers, clerks, and/or appropriate committees. There should be a well-publicized written process for reporting any suspected abuse or improper behavior within the community and to state authorities.
- b) Develop an incident report form for use should there be an allegation of abuse or neglect (see appendix for model form).
- c) Identify who should respond to allegations, insuring that those persons or committees are aware of their roles and responsibilities. A small group of people rather than an individual should take on this responsibility. (This group will be referred from hereon as the Response Committee, or R.C.)
- d) The Response Committee should decide about whether to contact Quarterly and Yearly Meeting personnel for advice and support.
- e) The Response Committee should identify what insurance is available to the meeting should there be incidences of abuse and neglect. Likewise, legal representation should be considered beforehand.
- f) Any allegation of abuse or neglect should be directed to the Response Committee. The parent or guardian should be contacted immediately about any possible abuse or neglect.
- g) The R.C should do all that it can to insure the safety of all parties. The Response Committee should do all it can to insure that any child and/or alleged victim is safe and separated from the alleged perpetrator.
- h) The identity of the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator should be kept confidential. Only those with supervisory or organizational need-to know should be informed, unless permission is given otherwise.
- i) It is the Response Committee's responsibility to document factual information about the allegation and the circumstances during which the allegation occurred. Extreme caution should be used in exploring the child's story – it is not the Response Committee's responsibility, nor is it advisable for them to interview him or her. The committee should work with the child's family and experts to obtain relevant information.
- j) Within the first few days, the R.C. and others should plan how to communicate with the entire community about any confirmed incident or (when appropriate) any allegations. Planning could consider provisions for initial communication with the community, ongoing community sharing, and evaluation and reflection about what has been learned over the course of the experience.

Recordkeeping

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

Implementation and education

In addition to a screening process for all workers who will spend a substantial amount of time with youth, Meetings should make available to all workers information and literature about child safety. A code of conduct (a model is included in the appendix) should be read and signed by all workers. In addition, New England Yearly Meeting will provide yearly training for youth workers – this training should be open to all workers – both those who work in NEYM programs and those for monthly meetings. Included in this training would be information and exercises related to the problem of sexual abuse of children and the child safety. While it is unrealistic to assume that all youth workers will attend these sessions, Yearly and Monthly meetings should strive to insure that workers with continued contact with children do attend these sessions whenever possible.

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. Minimally, we recommend a feedback sheet that workers can fill out on a yearly basis.

Yearly Meeting should develop and maintain a list of individuals that can be called upon for information and support regarding prevention and response to issues of abuse and neglect.

Policies and practices related to child safety should be made available on the Yearly Meeting website. In addition, a letter outlining policies and available resources should be mailed out to significant communities that are part of NEYM. These would include Yearly Meeting staff, monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, Friends Camp and appropriate Yearly Meeting committees, (e.g., Religious Ed, Youth Program Committee, Sessions).

IV. Risk Reduction Principles

In our efforts to assure the safety of the children and youth we serve, we are conscious of the relationship between principles and policies. While we may agree on principals to guide our work, setting strict policies that try to anticipate every potentially dangerous situation presents problems— life often falls between the cracks of our best laid plans. Yet those who work with youth and children need guidance in monitoring their safety. Sometimes a clear specific policy is called for, but often our monitoring must be guided by a flexible consideration of the situation at hand. In this appendix we would like to offer some factors in considering the risk of various activities.

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 camping trip with groups spread out over a campsite is inherently more dangerous than a one hour First Day class presentation by two members of Ministry and Counsel. According to the level of risk, we can adjust the level of supervision.

Three factors should be considered in assessing risk:

- A. isolation of the activity
- B. accountability
- C. power and control

Where there is great isolation, little accountability, and an imbalance in power and control, the danger of abuse is much greater than where there is no isolation, high accountability, and a balance of power.

If a situation appears to bear increased risk, adjustments can be made in one or more of the factors to make it less dangerous.

In considering these factors, we are aware that our youth programs already address many of these concerns. The community should support and acknowledge the good work already being done.

A. Isolation

Most, but not all, sexual abuse occurs in isolated settings – risk increases as isolation increases. In general, workers should guard against activities that present situations of greater isolation. Therefore, having a single adult accompany a child far away from a group activity is an example of high isolation and should be avoided.

“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.”

The number of people present, the time of the activity, the location of the activity, and physical arrangements are all factors that influence the degree of isolation:

- 1) In higher risk activities, increasing the number of caretakers, staff or adults helps decrease risk.
- 2) The time of day the activity takes place relates to risk. Activities that occur overnight, in the evening, on a weekend, at a time not normally scheduled, or on short notice on an unscheduled basis, carry increased risk.
- 3) Location influences risk – activities in a home or unfamiliar location increase risk, as do activities with a single adult in a car with a child. Activities in naturally isolated locations, or in or near bathrooms, locker, or changing rooms increase risk.
- 4) Physical arrangements can reduce or increase risk. Rooms that are easily accessible, with windows into them, reduce risk, as do open doors. Making clear to children and adults which rooms are “off limits” reduces risk, as does sending children to the bathroom in pairs. Communicating the plan for how space will be used may reduce risk.
- 5) The availability of telephones reduces the isolation of a situation.

B. 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.

Accountability of persons:

- 1) Screening is essential to understand the background and abilities of each person working with youth. As well, screening alerts all involved that the community is monitoring child-related activities for safety and discourages those looking for easy access.
- 2) A clear job description and code of conduct decreases the possibility of misunderstanding and risk. The code of conduct should be signed by all youth workers.
- 3) Maintenance of personnel files, regular reviews of supervisory staff, and use of evaluation forms by program participants increases reflection on

effectiveness and purpose, as well as providing accountability.

- 4) Continued education of parents, caregivers, youth workers, and children provides tools for understanding situations and responsibilities.

Accountability in program management:

- 1) Essential aspects of a safe program are transparency and a willingness to communicate within the community. The possibility of abuse is diminished if :
 - a. events are well-documented
 - b. all boundaries, (physical, emotional, time, etc.) are openly stated
 - c. parents are well-informed of program content, guidelines, behavior expectations and problems
 - d. two or more unrelated adults are present at an activity, which increases supervision between caregivers and is a recommended standard for program planning.
- 2) Community members who do not have direct caretaking or facilitating responsibilities have an important role to play in reducing risk. For instance, parents should know who the supervisory body is, and that they are welcome to comment and ask questions. Periodically, the supervisory body should solicit parental comments and evaluation. As well, the program coordinator should provide regular reports to a committee or appointed group, and annual reports or reviews of activities should be provided to the meeting or wider community.

“Community members ...have an important role to play in reducing risk.”

C. Power and control

Children are vulnerable to abuse from sexual predators because there is an imbalance of power related to age, size, strength, and control and authority. This is particularly problematical in settings where leaders or those in power have a spiritual authority. Because there cannot be a balance of power between a child and adult, that balance must come from the presence of other adults and policies designed to maintain a low risk environment.

This imbalance of power also applies to relationships between children where the age range is wide. Two five year olds going to the bathroom together are safer than a thirteen year old accompanying a five year old. Where the age is greater than four or five years, there is an imbalance of

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power, and the possibility of abuse increases.

Also, there may be an imbalance of power between among youth of the same age because of size, gender, and/or social dynamics. Guarding against this power imbalance requires monitoring on the part of youth workers, as well as regularly educating our youth about the issues of power and boundaries.

It is a wisdom in Friends practice to share and rotate significant responsibilities in the community. In doing so, Friends may guard against the concentration of power and authority, thus reducing the risk that it will be misused.

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 the process and willingness to address the concern.
- 5) 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. Wide interest and involvement of the community helps to provide a web of accountability and support.
- 6) Inform and equip all ages of children, in age-appropriate ways, about issues of sexuality, self-care, and assertiveness. Develop opportunities for interaction and listening well to them.

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 we care for.

V. Appendices

A. Code of Conduct for Youth Workers

“Youth Programs for NEYM is called to build a Quaker spiritual community of joy, love and affirmation for our children and ourselves. We create God’s peaceable world through worship, shared work, play and song, fostering safe trusting relationships between generations. This deep respect for each person lets us be our true selves and develop our spiritual lives. In this community, our children grow, knowing that God is there to be found and experienced.” *Statement of purpose of NEYM Youth Programs Committee*

Youth workers with New England Yearly Meeting have been given a sacred trust – to help the youth and children of NEYM grow in the Spirit, and to grow safely. In light of this responsibility, youth workers are called on to meet specific expectations in their work:

- 1) Appropriate interpersonal boundaries – Adults should model respectful and nurturing behavior – youth will follow their lead. Adults should be attentive to appropriate dress, use of language, and demonstrations of affection and encouragement. Adults should never intentionally engage in contact with the “bathing suit” area of a child/youth’s body.
- 2) In the area of physical expression of affection, a general guideline might be – allow the youth to initiate the hug, and expect the youth worker to end it. Whenever questions arise about appropriate expressions of affection, youth workers are reminded that they are the adults, and they have the responsibility to behave maturely. All persons have different comfort levels with touch, and youth workers should be sensitive to each individual’s boundaries.
- 3) There should be no sexualized behavior – Teasing and joking with sexual overtones and content is not acceptable. One of the strong points of NEYM youth programs is its frank and sensitive addressing of issues of gender and sexuality, particularly with the Jr. High and Young Friends program, but youth workers should be mindful of the context of their comments and behavior.
- 4) “Friendship” with youth – youth workers can serve as important mentors and guides for youth, and in this way might be seen as friends to individual youth. But youth workers are counselled that the programs of NEYM are to serve the children and youth, and not the needs of the workers. A youth worker that “needs” young friends may present boundary problems for both youth and other staff. Any relationship with youth outside of the program should be undertaken only with the knowledge and consent of the youth or child’s parent or guardian, and supervisory staff should be made aware of those activities.
- 5) Youth workers for NEYM are responsible not only to children and youth, but to their families and NEYM as well. If you suspect that a child or youth is a victim of abuse, is suicidal, or has a serious drug problem, you must not keep such information to yourself. For this reason, please try never to give children or youth the impression that you will keep secrets for them. Confidentiality is not secret keeping. For the most part a covenant of confidentiality will mean that you

do not repeat information told to you in confidence. However, when the information is of a major crisis nature, encourage the children or youth to seek help from a parent or other authority figure. In addition you yourself MUST consult with a person of greater authority in the program about an appropriate course of action. Read and understand the Advice on Counseling.

"I agree to abide by this code of conduct in my work with: _____
(program name)

signed: _____ date: _____

Advice on Counseling

One-on-one and/or counseling situations can provide important mentoring for young people, not to be avoided, but to be handled with care. Pay attention to isolation: Whenever possible, find a spot in a space that is not isolated, indoors or outdoors, where you can be observed; in a small room, keep the door ajar. Ask if there is anyone else who could helpfully be present, youth or adult. Maximize accountability: speak about the session to the coordinator or other staff, even if in a general way to maintain confidentiality. Make sure that any crisis situation gets immediate attention. Attend to power and control dynamics: Place yourself opposite the youth, making sure that you are not between them and the door. Any physical contact should be reassuring, but considerate of physical boundaries and emotional vulnerability.

B. Sample Forms

***Application to work with children and/or teens in
New England Yearly Meeting***

(Note: each program/ meeting will do some modification of this to suit circumstances; optional questions are put in brackets. Additional questions you may wish to include: educational background; a program area checklist for interest/aptitude. Not to include: questions about accusations or arrests)

Date: _____

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Occupation: _____

1. Why would you like to work with children and/ or youth in our program?

2. What qualities/skills/interests do you have that would help you work with children and/ or youth? _____

3. If you have previously worked with children, please describe you experience.

4. Can you think of specific ways we can help and support you in this work?

5. How long, and in what capacity (member, attender, etc.) have you been associated with Friends/ our meeting? _____

6. If you are new to our meeting/ Friends, list all other religious communities you have been involved in during the last five years, along with a contact name and phone number. _____

*7. Have you ever been convicted of a felony? _____
If yes, please explain: _____

** We ask this question not to disqualify anyone, but to get a fuller picture of your past and to do our best to ensure the safety of our children.*

Please provide the names of two non-relatives who can serve as references. Please include the nature of your associations with these people. One should be someone you know in the Quaker context, and at least one person who can speak about your experience (or potential) working with youth, however informal. List name and phone number. Please send these references the "Volunteer Reference Check" to fill out and return to me. Let them know that they could also receive a telephone call.

Reference #1: Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Relationship: _____

Reference #2: Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Relationship: _____

We appreciate your efforts to help us carry out our child abuse prevention procedures, intended reduce the risk of harm to the children in our programs. Your application is witness to your concern for them and we thank you so much for your participation. In addition to providing this information, please read and sign the waiver statement below.

I look forward to working with you! Please contact me with any questions about this application or our program.

Signed,
Program coordinator
Phone/ address/ email

Applicant's Statement

In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application, I agree and represent that:

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand and agree that providing false or misleading information on this application is grounds for my immediate dismissal, if I am accepted.

I authorize any references, schools, current or former employers, current or former supervisors, churches or denominational agencies, or any other person or organization, whether or not identified in this application, to give you any information (including opinions) regarding my character and fitness for employment. I hereby release any individual, employer, church, denominational agency or official, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, and whether or not identified in this application, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization, excepting only the communication of knowingly false information. I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. A facsimile or photocopy of this authorization shall be as valid as the original.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the bylaws and policies of this organization.

I understand and agree that nothing contained in this application for employment or in any pre-employment interview is intended or shall create a contract between myself and the Meeting for either employment or the providing of any benefit. I further understand that a criminal records check may be conducted on me, and I consent to any such check.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE PROVISIONS, AND AGREE TO THEM. THIS IS A LEGAL DOCUMENT AND I UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT WITH AN ATTORNEY BEFORE SIGNING IT.

Signature of applicant

Date

Reference Check

Volunteer Reference Check for New England Yearly Meeting Volunteers with Youth and Children

(Programs and meetings may wish to add their own questions related to specific attributes)

(This form could be used for a telephone interview of the reference)

Please return to (name) (email) (snail mail). This document becomes part of the applicants personnel file. The applicant has the right to review this document should they request to do so.

Date: _____

_____ has applied to
become _____
(position)

S/he has listed your name as a reference.

1. What is your relationship with the applicant? _____

2. How long have you known the applicant? _____

3. How well do you know the applicant? _____

4. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth?

5. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults? _____

6. How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities? _____

7. How would you feel about having the applicant as a volunteer worker with your child and/or youth? _____

8. Please comment on this person's work with children. Especially helpful are incidents and episodes you have personally witnessed. _____

9. Do you foresee any problems this person would pose as a Sunday School teacher, either for children, for coworkers, or for the programs as a whole? _____

10. Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been convicted of a felony? If so, please describe. _____

11. Any special positives? _____

Thanks.

Reference

Name _____

Address _____

Phone

(w) _____ (h) _____

Email _____

Date _____

Incident Report

_____ (name of community or meeting)
considers any sexual involvement of an adult with a child to be abuse of the child by the adult. We condemn such behavior. We also condemn the non-accidental injury or risk of injury to any child by any adult or caretaker. We also condemn any failure by a caretaker to take available action to provide for the care or supervision of a child in their care.

If you suspect that any such abuse or neglect may have occurred please contact one of the people listed below:

| Name | Address | Telephone | Alternate telephone |
|------|---------|-----------|---------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Please fill out the following information and share with the people listed above.

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? _____

6. Additional information.

Response Checklist

Name of the child _____

Date of alleged incident _____

1. INCIDENT REPORT completed (*see Incident Report Form*)

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?

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:

Response committee.

Clerk.

Appropriate staff.

Attorney

Consultant

Insurance carrier.

Is there any appearance of conflict of interest?

4. CONTACT ALLEGED PERPETRATOR

When/how was the alleged perpetrator contacted?

Consider the following:

Will there be repercussions to the child or their family? Is it safe for the child? Is it safe for the alleged perpetrator-- does he/she have supports?

Document.

Should the alleged perpetrator be asked not to have contact with the victim, be excused from certain activities or asked to separate themselves from community events?

5. FILE A REPORT TO THE STATE (*see also Incident Report Form*)

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. WORSHIP

7. COMMUNITY

Who will write a statement to the community that balances concrete facts and confidentiality?

Consider calling a community meeting.

8. IMMEDIATE FOLLOWUP

Maintain contact with:

- alleged victim and family or supports
- alleged perpetrator and family or supports
- key community members
- entire community

Under what conditions will each party to the incident be in the community and various activities?

9. LONG TERM FOLLOWUP

Talk to affected staff and key community members for debriefing and feedback.

What did we learn? What do we want to do differently?

Did we handle confidentiality appropriately?

How will the confidential information about this incident be maintained as time passes?

Consider sharing with other communities or people who have been through similar events.

C. RESPONDING TO A CONCERN-- further discussion.

A Friends community may want to consider the following ideas in regards to planning how to respond to a concern that a child may have been sexually abused. Not all of the ideas will be applicable or realistic. Each community should adopt or change any of the following ideas in ways that make sense for their particular situation.

Ahead of Time:

1. An allegation that someone in a Friends Community has been sexually or otherwise abuse is devastating. It generates anger, shock, disbelief, confusion, abhorrence, silence, and paralysis. Often the meeting is at risk for extreme avoidance of the issue or acting as if nothing has happened. Often the meeting is at risk for precipitous action.

During times of turmoil, more worship and centeredness are needed than Friends usually attempt. When things are painful, spirituality seems to be the community "canary in the mine". Spirituality dies or decreases and then the community is at risk for conflict and dysfunction. George Fox grappled with this problem when he counselled Friends during times of persecution. His epistles at the time urged Friends that their patience must get the victory. He wrote that at such times Friends must be concerned with deepening the Spirit's presence (the power of the Lord) in meetings for worship... (This is quoted in Michael Sheerhan's Beyond Majority Rule.) At the time of an allegation there is great risk of community contagion. Edwin J. Mikkelsen has written "Responding to Allegations of Sexual Abuse" and this is cited in the "New England Conference of Safe Church Policies and Procedures." He warns that anger and fear can arouse community members to words and actions that may later be regretted.

Frequently the pain and crisis create an overwhelming potential to rush to action. This may end up being precipitous and hurtful. At other times the crisis may create inaction. However, when Friends respond in ways that are healing and centered it is usually preceded by a consciousness of God's presence. During painful times Friends need to sit with the pain and confusion. It is very often the case that discernment and appropriate action come most quickly when we invite them to come in God's time. Friends need to hold out for unity with God by frequently asking for worship in the moment and allowing it enough time. Friends also need to schedule worship. In either case Friends need to wait for God and not outrun their guide.

2. Develop and communicate a written plan before there is any allegation. Communicate that plan to the entire community. Communicate it regularly to parents, care providers, youth leaders, volunteers, clerks and appropriate committees. Develop an incident report form for use should there be an allegation of abuse and neglect. Consider developing a checklist for decision-making by those in the community who will be responding to any concern that is raised. (*See the "Forms" part of the appendix for samples of both types of forms.*)

3. Be sure that any incident form or response checklists are easily available ahead of time to anyone who would need them.

4. Identify who should respond to allegations. Insure those persons or committees are aware of their role and responsibilities. Insure that the community is aware of who responds. Appropriate clerks, staff and/or committees should review this yearly-- perhaps via annual report. Information about the responding committee (names/ phone numbers) should be included in the community and staff/ teacher/ volunteer literature.

In this discussion, those who are designated to respond to allegations will be identified as the Response Committee or R.C. The communities of the Religious Societies of Friends are diverse. Each meeting or Friends community should identify its own Response Committee. The Response Committees for different yearly meeting communities may be constituted quite differently. The Response Committee (R.C.) might be the ministry and counsel committee, the pastoral care committee, or the childcare committee. For a yearly meeting program it might be the Youth Program Committee or the Coordinating and Advisory Committee. It might be some other group specially designated by the Friends community. It is important that the Response Committee (R.C.) be more than one person. The R.C. should be identified ahead of time and periodically review its responsibilities. They should meet at least twice per year. They should communicate to the community regularly that they exist, who is on the committee, what their role is and communicate how they can be reached. The R.C. should report annually to the entire community about any activity, changes or suggestions for the community.

5. Insure that those who are identified (R.C.) to respond to allegations of abuse have appropriate information. They need to know and be able to review policy and guidelines for all community members working with children. The R.C. should be prepared to document its actions.

6. Insure that the R.C. knows the mandated reporting laws pertinent to all members of meeting. Mandated reporting varies for each state. The R.C. should have phone numbers and information for any state in which an event occurs and for any state in which a child lives. This information should include the daytime and 24-hour phone numbers needed for reporting. See additional appended material for the child protective government agencies in each state. The R.C. should periodically review mandated reporting web sites to keep abreast of any changes.

7. The RC should review the procedures ahead of time about what they will do should there be an allegation of abuse or neglect. They should be in unity with God regarding how they want to handle any concerns that they can foresee arising. These might include how to keep a child safe, how to separate the child and the alleged perpetrator, how they will contact the parents, when and how to share with the alleged perpetrator, whether to ask individuals to withdraw from times and activities to avoid contact between the child and the alleged perpetrator and what to say to the community.

8. Insure that the R.C. knows of counsellors and/or agencies that can support all parties involved in any allegations. This includes the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator and their family or friends.

9. The RC could identify a reputable expert in abuse and neglect that can consult to the community as needed. It may be helpful for this person to not be an integral part of the meeting community. The R.C. and clerk of the meeting should know how to contact this person quickly.

10. Insure that the R.C. knows of Quarter and Yearly Meeting personnel who can be called upon for advice and support. This might include New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) Field Secretary, Christian Education Coordinator, Young Friends Coordinator, NEYM Ministry & Counsel, Permanent Board and NEYM Clerk. The R.C. should have the names and phone numbers of these individuals ahead of time.

11. Insure that the R.C. knows the insurance coverage of the meeting including who to contact-- name and telephone.

12. The R.C. may want to have the name of an attorney who has agreed to be available to consult should the need arise. For instance, the attorney could consult about how to proceed and could consult about risk of lawsuits. Sometimes when there is an allegation there are threats of a lawsuit. It is helpful to review this concern ahead of time because such threats can frighten and paralyse when they occur in the middle of a crisis. Being able to realistically respond and/or seek timely advice in response to such a threat can be enormously helpful.

13. The R.C. may want to make recommendations for training or education of community members. The R.C. and entire meeting should have education ahead of time about sexual abuse, abuse, substances, domestic violence and neglect. The R.C. should know that major crises might unfold in the community in ways that imitate individual dynamics among those immediately involved in the crisis. The R.C. should be prepared to deal with difficult issues. These could include fear, shock, denial, anger, distrust, miscommunication, and paralysis. Crises may unfold in the community in ways that imitate individual dynamics among those immediately involved. There is high risk of inadvertent re-victimization, mistakes, shame, role confusion, and power imbalance. Often there is increased isolation, poor boundaries, silence, inadvertent and purposeful collusion, forgetting and repetition of the problems. Frequently when someone is responsible for misconduct they react with outrage and blame the victim. However when people are mistakenly accused they may react in the same way. We need all the Divine help we can get for discernment. In regards to serious crises, the community should be prepared for a journey that may take years.

At The Time Of An Allegation:

1. At the time of the allegation, the youth workers need to contact the community. This will include some or all of the following: Response Committee, clerk, appropriate youth staff and/or coordinators, attorney, consultant, insurance.
2. When an allegation is made it is important to document the dynamics as they unfold. An incident report needs to be completed. The documentation should be written with the knowledge that it may be read by the affected parties at a later time. Taking the time to document the events can be an opportunity for calming down painful reactions and inviting discernment. This is often an opportunity for worship.
3. The R.C. should insure that all parties safe. The RC should do all it can to insure that any child and/or alleged victim is safe and separated from the alleged perpetrator. There should be immediate contact with parents or caretakers.
4. Report to the appropriate state agency. This should occur within 24 hours of the allegation. Document when and to whom the report is made. Will there be notification of the results of the report? Are there timelines and a description of what the state will do?
5. Contacting the alleged perpetrator can be complex. If the alleged perpetrator is a member of the community, they should be separated from any contact with the child. The R.C. should review how this would unfold. Is the child involved in activities at which an alleged perpetrator might be present-- first day school, excursions, social hours, worship? Does the alleged perpetrator need to be asked to absent her/his self from such activities? How will the community respond if the alleged perpetrator refuses?

If the alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect is a family member, the R.C. and involved parties may need to plan how to identify and communicate with safe family members. Such planning and outreach may need to be done in the context of input from a state social service agency. That agency will often have specific recommendations and requests about how much to share. If the concern arises after hours or on a weekend key caretakers, community members and the R.C. need to know how to access after-hours emergency or hotline resources.

There will often be anger and confusion during such safety planning and activities. The R.C. should know that this is normal. It is usually not possible to know all that has happened at this point. Accurate information may be slow in coming. At the same time upset parties will want clear and immediate information and decisions. The R.C. members should do what they can to calmly support each other and other community members. At such times, the education, communication, and reports about safety issues that have occurred during the months and years before the event can make a huge difference.
6. The immediate action to make things safe needs to be balanced with confidentiality for all parties. Information should be shared with those who need to

know in order to support the child. Sometimes, when family members hear about such events, the pain that they feel is communicated to the victimized child creating inadvertent but devastating results. Parents may want to get advice before talking at length with their child about details of any alleged event. The best thing a parent can immediately do is to lovingly insure that the child is safe. Great care should be exercised in sharing the names of the involved parties. If a child has been victimized, the parents and family of that child have a right to exercise some control over how the information of the event is shared.

7. The R.C. could consult with experts about whether there is responsibility or ability to inform other communities about any allegations. For instance there have been instances in which a religious body gives a good reference and the person later perpetrates in another community. The perpetrator then moves on to yet another community and repeatedly uses the first reference.

8. The R.C. and others are strongly advised to communicate and consult with Yearly Meeting staff and/or Yearly Meeting Committees. There is usually wisdom, resources and history available from Yearly Meeting that can help the community in discernment and worship.

9. The R.C. clerk, staff and/or appropriate committee(s) should immediately and regularly monitor against conflict of interest. If there is even the appearance of conflict of interest adjustments should be made. Spouses, close friends and family members should not sit on the R.C.

10. Within the first few days, the R.C. and others should plan how to communicate with the entire community about any confirmed incident or (when appropriate) any allegations. This communication could be by letter. The letter should be carefully worded to be honest and forthright about what is and is not known. The letter should not share identifying or personal information about any of the parties involved. It is strongly advised that this kind of communication occur. It may very well generate pain and strong feelings in the community. Those reactions would probably occur anyway. This is a chance for the R.C. and others to plan how and what kind of information should be shared. If the community discovers painful information haphazardly it can more deeply damage trust and safety in the community.

11. Possibly plan community activities for communication and healing. If the community knows an incident of abuse, it is strongly recommended that a community meeting occur. It should be carefully planned with several trusted facilitators and input from people with expertise. Strong consideration should be given to inviting facilitators from other meetings, Yearly Meeting, and experts from outside the immediate community. The event may be marked by emotional turmoil, pain and hard questions. The event should be actively held in worship. Such events are often a first step toward healing. The facilitators should be clear about what they plan to share and what activities should occur.

One model used by some religious communities is described in a Methodist book titled Safe Sanctuaries, Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church by Joy

Melton: Begin in worship with the understanding that a statement of facts should be spoken. This statement should protect confidentiality but signal the determination of the meeting to address concerns. After 15 minutes of worship the group could then separate into small groups of 5 or 6 with a facilitator assigned to each group. Other facilitators would be available for extra support. Each group would encourage sharing with an effort to avoid judgment or debate. This small group sharing may take significant time. At a planned time the entire group would reunite for a time of worship and end at a scheduled time. Facilitators should plan to remain and be available for people's individual needs.

12. Follow-up with specific affected parties should be planned. This might entail visitation, worship, and clearness or support committees. Outreach should occur to all affected parties, the R.C., staff, volunteers, and others active in connection to the community response. Plans should be made for a review a few months later: Is there growth and healing? What have we learned? What changes do we want to make?

D. STATE REPORTING LAWS AND AGENCIES

Information current as of January 2005

National Hotline for Child Abuse and Neglect: 1 800 422-4453. Call this number to find out the hotline phone number to be used in your state to report abuse and neglect.

CONNECTICUT

Contact info:

Department of Children and Families Hotline: 1 800 842-2288
TDD Number: 1 800 624-5518

If you suspect that a disabled or elderly adult has been abused or neglected: 1 800 842-7303

In cases of domestic violence call the Hartford Interval House at 1 888 774-2900 or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline and ask for guidance: 1 800 799-7233.

The following is summarized from the Connecticut internet site on reporting abuse and neglect:

Who Must Report:

Connecticut law requires certain citizens to report suspected child abuse and neglect. These mandated reporters are people in professions or occupations that have contact with children or whose primary focus is children. The law requires that they report suspected child abuse or neglect. Under Section 17a-101 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the following are some of the legally mandated reporters (for a complete list visit the state web site or call the hotline and ask):

Any person paid to care for a child in any public or private facility, child daycare center, group day care home or family day care home which is licensed by the State, Battered Women's Counsellors, Licensed/Certified Alcohol and Drug Counsellors, Certified Emergency Medical Services Providers, Marital and Family Therapists, Physicians, Licensed Practical Nurses, Licensed Professional Counsellors, Members of the Clergy, Mental Health Professionals, Physician Assistants, Police Officers, Psychologists, Registered Nurses, School Guidance Counsellors, School Paraprofessionals, School Principals, School Teachers, Sexual Assault Counsellors, Social Workers, School Coaches or Coaches of Intramural or Interscholastic Athletics

What Must Be Reported

Mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm. (Connecticut General Statutes §17a-101a)

Internet Links:

Connecticut state government web site on child abuse reporting:
<http://www.state.ct.us/dcf/hotline.htm> ---This is a user-friendly site. It has direct links to the following two sites:

<http://www.state.ct.us/dcf/reptlaws.htm> ---This takes you to the "Summary of Reporting Laws" which begins with "What Mandated Reporters Need To Know". Here you will find a list of legally mandated laws and a description of the process of reporting as well as some information about any ensuing investigation.

http://www.state.ct.us/dcf/new_definitions.htm ---This site has definitions of child abuse.

Definitions of Abuse and Neglect:

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND IN DANGER OF ABUSE

The following operational definitions are working definitions and examples of child abuse, neglect, and in danger of abuse.

- For the purposes of these operational definitions, the term *child* refers to any person under 18 years of age or any person under 21 years of age who is a DCF client.
- *A person responsible for a child's care* includes the child's parent, guardian, foster parent, an employee of a public or private residential home, agency or institution or other person legally responsible under State law for the child's welfare in a residential setting; or any staff person providing out-of-home care, including center-based child day care, family day care, or group day care.
- *A caretaker* is an individual in whose care a biological or adoptive parent or legal guardian has left a child on an extended basis and who exercises parental authority in the capacity of a guardian.
- The phrase *perpetrator given access to the child by the person responsible for the child's care* refers to those circumstances when the person responsible for the child's care uses poor judgment in entrusting the child to another individual who then causes injury to the child.

Abuse

- is a non-accidental injury to a child which, regardless of motive, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by the person responsible for the child's care
- includes:
 - any injury which is at variance with the history given
 - maltreatment such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.

Description/Examples: Sexual Abuse and Exploitation:

Sexual Abuse is any incident of sexual contact involving a child that is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by the person responsible for the child's care. *Sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to, the following:*

- 1) rape
- 2) intercourse
- 3) sodomy
- 4) fondling
- 5) oral sex
- 6) incest
- 7) sexual penetration: digital, penile, or foreign objects.
- 8) Sexual exploitation of a child includes permitting, allowing, coercing or forcing a child to:
 - a) participate in pornography
 - b) engage in sexual behavior

MAINE

Contact info:

Bureau of Child and Family Services

To report child abuse or neglect call: 1 800 452-1999

Deaf/Hard of Hearing TTY: 1 800 963-9490

The following is summarized from the Maine Bureau of Child and Family Services internet links that are cited below:

Who Must Report:

The following adult persons shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Maine Bureau of Child and Family Services when the person knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected and when acting in a professional capacity (for a complete list visit the web site or consult the Maine law referenced at that web site:

Allopathic or osteopathic physician, resident or intern; emergency medical services person; physician's assistant; registered or licensed practical nurse; teacher; guidance counsellor; school official; children's summer camp administrator or counsellor; social worker; medical or social service worker; psychologist; child care personnel; mental health professional; law enforcement official; commercial film and photographic print processor; clergy member acquiring the information as a result of clerical professional work except for information received during confidential communications; any person who has assumed full, intermittent or occasional responsibility for the care or custody of the child, regardless of whether the person receives compensation; and any person affiliated with a church or religious institution who serves in an administrative capacity or has otherwise assumed a position of trust or responsibility to the members of that church or religious institution, while acting in that capacity, regardless of whether the person receives compensation.

What Must Be Reported:

Required report to district attorney. When, while acting in a professional capacity, any person required to report under this section knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected by a person not responsible for the child, the person immediately shall report or cause a report to be made to the appropriate district attorney's office.

Internet Links:

Maine state government web site with information on reporting child abuse:
<http://www.state.me.us/dhs/bcfs/abuse.htm>

Maine web site that has the Maine law listing who are mandated reporters and circumstances under which they are legally mandated to report child abuse—

<http://janus.state.me.us/legis/statutes/22/title22sec4011-A.html>

The Maine Bureau of Child and Family Services receives reports of suspected abuse and neglect. A description of this agency can be found at:

<http://www.state.me.us/dhs/bcfs/index.htm>

For a good summary of the Bureau's definitions of abuse and neglect look on the left side of this site and select "Child and Family Services Policy"

(<http://www.state.me.us/dhs/bcfs/policy/policy.htm>), open the "Child and Family Services Manual" and review the protective services sections. "Section IV.D" might be a good place to start.

Definitions of Abuse and Neglect

Title 22 MRSA, §4002 - Provides definitions

- a. Abuse or neglect means a threat to a child's health or welfare by physical or mental injury or impairment, sexual abuse or exploitation, deprivation of essential needs or lack of protection from these, by a person responsible for the child.
- b. Child is a person under 18 years of age.
- c. Custodial parent means a parent with custody.
- d. Custodian means the person who has legal custody and power over the person of a child.
- e. Jeopardy to health or welfare or jeopardy means serious abuse or neglect, as evidenced by:
- h. Serious harm means:
 - 1) Serious injury
 - 2) Serious mental injury or impairment, evidenced by severe anxiety, depression or withdrawal, untoward aggressive behavior or similar serious dysfunctional behavior
 - 3) Sexual abuse or exploitation. (See Section IV, Addendum A for Title 17A MRSA, §§251-255, Sex Offenses; Title 18 c. 93-B, MRSA, §2921, Sexual Exploitation of Minors; and Title 30, §508 Disclosure of Minor Victims of Sexual Offenses.)

- c. "Jeopardy to health or welfare" is that category of abuse or neglect which constitutes a threat of physical or mental injury or impairment or of sexual abuse or exploitation. A child must be adjudicated by the court to be in jeopardy before the court will issue a protection order regarding the child.
- 1) Jeopardy is evidenced by any of the following conditions of abuse and/or neglect when allowed to occur or caused by a person responsible for the child:
 - a) Serious physical injury or impairment - injury to specific bones or organs, impairment of specific physical functioning, impairment of physical health.
 - b) Serious mental injury or impairment - neurosis, psychosis, adjustment reaction dysfunction, impairment of normal mental development, as evidenced by severe anxiety, depression or withdrawal, untoward aggressive behavior, developmental delay or similar serious dysfunctional behavior.
 - c) Sexual abuse or exploitation - subjection by any person under 18 years of age to any of the acts treated as sexual offenses under the Criminal Code. (See Section IV, Addendum A)
 - 2) Jeopardy is evidenced by circumstances constituting a threat of any of the above conditions of serious harm, when those circumstances are allowed to exist or caused by a person responsible for the child.

MASSACHUSETTS

Contact info:

Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline: 1-800-792-5200

The following information is summarized from the internet links cited below:

Who Must Report:

To report possible child abuse or neglect in Massachusetts, you must first file an oral report by calling the Child-at-Risk Hotline at 1-800-792-5200 to notify the appropriate area office of the Department of Social Services (DSS). Adults who are legally mandated to report in Massachusetts include (for a more complete list visits the internet link cited below or review the Massachusetts law):

Physicians, Psychologists, nurses, public or private schoolteachers, educational administrators, guidance or family Counsellors, day care and child care workers (including any person paid to care for, or work with, a child in any public or private facility, or home or program), social workers, foster parents, police officers, school attendance officers including allied mental health and licensed human services professionals), psychiatrists, clinical social workers, drug and alcoholism counselors and priests, rabbis, clergy members, ordained or licensed ministers, leaders of any church or religious body, accredited Christian Science practitioners, or a person employed by a church or religious body to supervise, educate, teach, train or counsel a child on a regular basis.

Internet Links:

The general site for Massachusetts Department of Social Services is <http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=eohhs2subtopic&L=5&L0=Home&L1=Consumer&L2=Family+Services&L3=Violence%2c+Abuse+or+Neglect&L4=Child+Abuse+and+Neglect&sid=Eeohhs2> Here you will find links to topics related to abuse and neglect: reporting, definitions, warning signs, screening and investigation. There are also two publications that can be printed: "Parents Guide to Child Protective Services" and a "Child Abuse and Neglect Overview Booklet". The second booklet (31 pages) gives you extensive information on mandated reporting, Department screening and investigation, as well as other information on abuse and neglect.

For a quick summary of the reporting process and a list of mandated reporters see the following site:

http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=eohhs2terminal&L=5&L0=Home&L1=Consumer&L2=Family+Services&L3=Violence%2c+Abuse+or+Neglect&L4=Child+Abuse+and+Neglect&sid=Eeohhs2&b=terminalcontent&f=dss_c_can_reportin&csid=Eeohhs2

Description of Sexual Abuse:

MASSACHUSETTS DESCRIPTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE (taken from the website downloadable booklet cited above:

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult caretaker has any sexual contact with a child. This can happen through intercourse which is considered rape under Massachusetts General Law. It includes any oral, genital or anal penetration. Sexual exploitation and molestation are also considered abuse. These are defined as contact or interaction with a child, that is used to satisfy an adult's sexual needs and desires. This includes any verbally enticing language as well as fondling, masturbating or exposure of sexual organs by the adult. Sex between adults and children is never considered consensual.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Contact info:

Bureau of Child Protection Child Abuse Report Line: 1 800 894-5533 or 603 271-6563 8-4:30 M-F. There is not way to contact the child abuse report line Monday - Friday after 4:30PM nor on weekends. For emergencies at these times reporters are advised to contact their local police departments.

Other ways to contact the Bureau of Child Protection:

Main Number: 603-271-4451, 8-4:30 M-F
Toll Free Number: 800-852-3345, 8-4:30 M-F
TDD Number: 800-735-2964, 8-4:30 M-F
Fax Number: 603-271-4729, 8-4:30 M-F

Street Address:
129 Pleasant St.
Concord, NH 03301-3857

Mailing Address:
NH DHHS Division for Children, Youth & Families
Bureau of Child Protection
129 Pleasant Street
Concord, NH 03301-3857

Who Must Report:

New Hampshire Statute requires any person with reason to suspect a child under age 18 has been abused or neglected must report that suspicion immediately to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) Bureau of Child Protection.

If you have reason to suspect a child has been abused or neglected, contact DCYF by telephone from 8 :00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

What Must Be Reported:

Proof of abuse and neglect is not required to make a report. Sometimes, people are unsure if a situation is abusive. Even if you're in doubt, call. DCYF has extensive experience in child protection. DCYF may find no abuse or neglect has taken place but may still offer assistance to the family.

Internet Sites:

<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/BCP/default.htm> There are links from this site that describe how to report, list the New Hampshire and Federal laws pertaining to child abuse reporting, describe the DCYF Bureau of Child Protection response to allegations of abuse and neglect, and list warning signs of abuse and neglect.

Definition of Sexual Abuse:

"Sexual abuse" means the following activities under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm: the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children. With respect to the definition of sexual abuse, the term "child" or "children" means any individual who is under the age of 18 years. (New Hampshire Statutes, Child Protection Act, Section 169-C.3 (definitions) found on Internet site 6/05)

RHODE ISLAND

Contact info:

RI Child Protective Hotline: 1 800 742-4453

Other contact information:

Department of Child, Youth and Families (DCYF)
101 Friendship Street
Providence, RI 02903-3716
401 528-3502
e-mail: webmaster@dcyf.ri.gov

Who Must Report:

ALL persons in Rhode Island are required by law (RIGL 40-11-3) to report known or suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families within 24 hours of becoming aware of such abuse/neglect.

Internet Sites:

<http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/chldwelfare/> -- this is the general introductory site for Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Child Protective Services.

http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/questions/quest_cps.htm -- this site is linked to the one above. It has frequently asked questions in regard to the protective and non-protective services of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families.

http://www.rules.state.ri.us/rules/released/pdf/DCYF/DCYF_1248_.pdf -- this is the policy description that guides the Rhode Island Child Protective Services when they receive a report of abuse or neglect.

Definition or Abuse or Neglect: (found at the Rhode Island website– see links above):

Child abuse and neglect means the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of eighteen (18), by a person, including any employee of a residential facility, or any staff person providing out-of-home care, who is responsible for the child's welfare in a residential setting under circumstances indicating harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare. The term encompasses both acts and omissions on the part of a responsible person.

A person for a child's welfare includes the child's parent, foster parent, guardian, an employee of a private or public residential facility or other person legally responsible under state law for the child's welfare in a residential setting, or any staff person providing out of home care. Out of home care means child day care, i.e. family daycare, group day care, and center-based daycare.

VERMONT

Contact info:

Vermont Department for Children and Families
Family Services Division
103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671 (802)241-2131

Social Services District Offices are open Monday through Friday from 7:45am to 4:30pm. Call the number above for the local office telephone number or visit the first internet link listed below. For an after-hours emergency call 1-800-649-5285.

Who Must Report:

Vermont law requires legally mandatory reporters to report all suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. If they believe that a child has been abused or neglected they are required to report to the Vermont Family Services Division within 24 hours. For a complete list of mandatory reporters see the Vermont web site listed below or call the Vermont Family Services Division. Mandatory reporters include licensed practical nurses, mental health professionals, physicians, psychologists, registered nurses, any other health care providers, school guidance Counsellors, principals, teachers, child care workers, police, social workers, camp administrators or Counsellors, and clergy.

Internet Links:

Vermont state government web site on child abuse reporting:
<http://www.path.state.vt.us/cwyj/cabuse/tnrpt.shtml> -- there isn't much information on this site but it seems to be the introductory portal and has the current phone numbers.

http://www.path.state.vt.us/cwyj/manual/castoc.shtml#_INTAKE_AND_INVESTIGATION– this site lists policy web site locations for definitions of abuse and neglect as well the policy describing how Vermont responds to reports of abuse or neglect.

<http://www.path.state.vt.us/cwyj/publications/MandatoryReporting.pdf> – this site accesses a publication on mandated reporting in Vermont. This publication also includes a nice write-up on developing an organizational policy of mandated reporting.

Definitions of Abuse and Neglect: (taken from the Vermont State Government websites listed above).

- *Abused or neglected child* is a child whose physical health, psychological growth and development or welfare is harmed or is at substantial risk of harm by the acts or omissions of his or her parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare. Also, a child who is sexually abused or at substantial risk of sexual abuse by any person (33 VSA §4912(2)).
- *Child* is an individual under the age of majority (33 VSA 4912(1)).
- *(Child) Day Care Facility* is any place operated as a business or service on a regular or continuous basis, whether for compensation or not, whose primary function is protection, care, and supervision of children under sixteen years of age outside their homes for periods of less than twenty-four hours a day by a person other than a child's own parent, guardian, or relative (33 VSA Chapter 35 § 4902(2)).
- *Domestic Violence* is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and economic coercion that an adult or adolescent uses to obtain and maintain control over an intimate partner.
- *Emotional maltreatment* is a pattern of malicious behavior which results in impaired psychological growth and development (33 VSA §4912(7)).
- *Exploitation* is taking unjust advantage of another person for one's own gain.
- *Harm* (33 VSA §4912(4)) can occur by:
 - physical injury or emotional maltreatment;
 - failure to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter or health care, including medical or non-medical remedial health care permitted or authorized under state law (33 VSA Chapter 49);
 - abandonment
- *Incest* is sexual relations between people who cannot marry under Vermont statute. According to 15 VSA, Chapter 1, Section 1 "A man shall not marry his mother, grandmother, daughter, granddaughter, sister, brother's daughter, sister's daughter, father's sister or mother's sister". Also, "A woman shall not marry her father, grandfather, son, grandson, brother, brother's son, sister's son, father's brother or mother's brother." (Note: First cousins may marry in Vermont.)
- *Impair* is to weaken, to make worse, to lessen in power, diminish, or relax, or otherwise affect in an injurious manner (Black's Law Dictionary).
- *Perpetrator* is an individual of any age who is determined to have committed child abuse or neglect.

- *Person responsible for a child's welfare* is the child's parent, guardian, foster parent or any other adult residing in the home who serves in a parental role; an employee of a public or private residential home, institution or agency; or other person responsible for the child's welfare while in a residential, educational or day care setting, including any staff person (33 VSA 4912(5)).
- *Risk of harm* means a significant danger that a child will suffer serious harm other than by accidental means, which harm would be likely to cause physical injury, neglect, emotional maltreatment or sexual abuse. (33 VSA §4912(4)).
- *Sexual abuse* is any act or acts by any person involving sexual molestation or exploitation of a child including, but not limited to, incest, prostitution, rape, sodomy, or any lewd and lascivious conduct involving a child. Sexual abuse also includes the aiding, abetting, counseling, hiring, or procuring of a child to perform or participate in any photograph, motion picture, exhibition, show, representation, or other presentation which, in whole or in part, depicts a sexual conduct, sexual excitement or sadomasochistic abuse involving a child (33 VSA §4912(8)).
- *Substantiated Report* means that the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee has determined after investigation that a report is based on accurate and reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to believe that the child has been abused or neglected (33 VSA §4912(10)).

(State Laws Agencies word 6 21 05 b)

Sexual Abuse--- Additional Information

Child sexual abuse is any sexual act with a child performed by an adult or another child who is more powerful.

There is clear documentation of youth sexually abusing other youth. The coerciveness of youth-on-youth sexual abuse may be characterized by physical force, extreme social pressure or major age difference.¹

Sexual abuse may include exposure to sex, extreme sexual threats or suggestions, voyeurism, touch, sexual acts, intercourse, violence, humiliation or assaults. It might include fondling the child's genitals, getting the child to fondle someone else's genitals, mouth-to-genital contact, rubbing genitals on the child, or actually penetrating the child's vagina or anus. Other forms of sexual abuse include showing an adult's genitals to a child, showing the child pornographic pictures or films, or using the child as a model to make pornographic materials.

For each state's definition of abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse see "State Reporting Laws and Agencies" in the appendix.

When there is sexual abuse it is not unusual for the child to be threatened with harm to themselves, friends or family members if they tell. Frequently the child will be told that they will be in trouble or that they will not be believed if they tell. Sometimes the perpetrator of the sexual abuse tries to signal affection with gifts, words and actions during the abuse. However, there are also instances of children being emotionally or physically tortured while the sexual abuse occurs.

Boys and girls are sexually abused most often by adults or older children who are known to them and who can exert power over them. The victim knows the offender in at least 8 out of 10 reported cases. The offender is often an authority figure that the child trusts or loves. The offender persuades, bribes, tricks, or coerces the child to engage in sex or sexual acts.²

Many government statistics about child abuse are based on legally mandated information submitted by states to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. This information is drawn from child-specific reports that were investigated by state child protective agencies. By virtue of

¹ Many authorities describe youth-on-youth sexual abuse. Three specific references for further information include Bolen, Rebecca, Child Sexual Abuse, Its Scope and Our Failure 2001, Cobble, Hammar, and Klipowicz, Reducing the Risk II, Making Your Church Safe From Child Sexual Abuse 2003, and an article by Frances Sink, Sexual Abuse in the Lives of Children, Martha Strauss (ed.) Abuse and Victimization across the Life Span 1990. In addition Gene Abel & Norma Harlow The Stop Child Molestation Book 2001 describes that many perpetrators begin their offending disposition and/or behavior as teens.

² For further discussion of the dynamics and/or incidence of victims knowing their perpetrators see Bolen op cit, Judith Herman Trauma and Recovery, and US Department of Health and Human Services Child Maltreatment Reports, latest report is for 2003.

this method of data collection, perpetrators in a caretaking role are probably statistically over-represented. For instance, Massachusetts does not mandate that sexual abuse be reported if the perpetrator is not a caretaker. In addition, when such reports are received they are screened out and therefore not reported to the Federal Government as an investigated allegation. The most valid estimates of child sexual abuse are based on prevalence studies done by random sampling of the adult population. Such studies ask adults to describe any abuse that occurred to them as a child. Even the results of these studies vary enormously because of the use of different definitions of sexual abuse, different methods of sampling (in-person, questionnaires) and differing numbers and types of questions. Results of prevalence sampling range from 1% to 16% of men reporting sexual abuse as a child. Women sampled in such studies report a 2% to 62% prevalence of child sexual abuse. Two careful reviews of sampling studies that attempt to control for variations in sampling techniques conclude that over 25% of women and over 10% of men are sexually abused in childhood.³ Prevalence studies indicate that at least 60% of all female child sexual abuse and at least 80% of all male child sexual abuse occur outside of the family. Girls in particular seem to be at similar risk from a variety of perpetrators. These include acquaintances, strangers, friends, family friends, authority figures, and dates or lovers.⁴

Studies that entail random sampling identify that children are at less risk of sexual abuse within their family. It appears that 60 -80% of all childhood sexual abuse occurs outside of the family. For female victims it appears that they are at risk from a wide range of groups.⁵

Studies and rates of reporting are variable, but a review of the literature on sexual abuse suggests there are deeply concerning patterns in our society that will continue unless there are major social and cultural changes:

³ There is much literature on sexual abuse of children. Good discussion of prevalence can be found in Bolen op cit, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services op cit, , Robert Freeman-Longo & GERAL BLANCHARD Sexual Abuse In America: Epidemic of the 21st Century 1998, Cobble, Hammar and Klipowicz, op cit, Kathleen Faller Understanding and Assessing Child Sexual Maltreatment 2nd edition 2003, Gene Abel & Norma Harlow The Stop Child Molestation Book 2001, and Anna Salter Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, & Other Sex Offenders 2003.

⁴ Much of the literature on sexual abuse doesn't carefully look at the source of the statistics. Often the literature cites the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services information which is gathered from state government agencies that frequently addresses abuse by *caretakers only*. This would naturally over-represent family perpetrators. This issue is extensively addressed in Bolen, op cit and referenced Faller op cit p. 11. Both cite adult population studies describing that the majority of child sexual abuse happens outside of the family. The interested reader is also encouraged to review the Annual Data Collection Process in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services statistical reports.

⁵ See Bolen and Health and Human Services reports for further information.

1/4 of all female youth and 1/10 of all male children will very likely be sexually abused before they are adults.

At least 60 % of all sexual abuse occurs outside of the family.

Girls in particular are at risk from a wide variety of circumstances and individuals. This seems to indicate a culture-wide risk of sexual abuse for girls.

In summary, there appears to be a societal epidemic of child sexual abuse.

Personal accounts of victims and studies indicate that children often wait months or years to share. Adults hope that the child would tell them or someone else about it. Yet, children who are being abused often have been convinced or threatened by the abuser that they must not tell anyone about it. The child often responds to this by not thinking about or putting the sexual abuse into worded memory. Therefore memories and initial statements about abuse may be vague and incomplete. The child may be “discovering” that what happened to them is not their fault, that it was abuse and that it might be safe to think or talk about it. For many victims, the act of clearly remembering or thinking about the abuse is initially experienced as if the event were happening again. Therefore the victim may sometimes only engage in increments of consciousness and disclosure. The amount of consciousness and disclosure may be dependent on how strong and safe the child feels about her/himself and the people around them. Often the child does not share for a long time because they do not feel that anyone is prepared to listen, believe or ask about the problem. To both themselves and people around them, the child may just hint about the problem. Some abused children may tell their friends about it, who may then tell an adult. Many children tell about abuse after a personal safety program is held at their school. Sometimes adults may have suspicions about abuse. Sometimes the adult to whom the child shares is shocked and angry even if they believe the child. The child may interpret their anger at the perpetrator as disbelief and anger at the child. Children have often been told by perpetrators that the child will be in trouble if they share. An angry response by the listener may cause the child to believe that the perpetrator's prediction has come true.⁶

It is hard to measure, but most professionals that work closely with victims feel that children rarely fabricate on purpose about sexual abuse. There are few instances in the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services studies when information was gathered about the incidence of intentionally false allegations of sexual abuse. In 2003, five states reported an incidence of intentionally false allegations that ranged .08 to 1.3%. All agree that when fabrication does occur, it is often because of suggestive questions. All of this information indicates that when there is an allegation of sexual abuse occurs it is important to take it very seriously. It is also important to make sure that someone expert in child sexual abuse interviews the child in a non-suggestive and safe context.⁷

⁶ For an excellent discussion of the fears and delays that the child victim might have in sharing see Herman [op cit](#) and Sink [op cit](#). These writers are excellent in describing the child's state of mind and need for safety as is Faller [op cit](#).

⁷ See U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services [op cit](#), Christine A. Courtois, [Recollections of Sexual Abuse](#) 1999, and Judith Herman [op cit](#),

Studies and accounts also indicate that many children who are sexually abused show no overtly noticeable signs for weeks, months or even years. Therefore reliance on watching for “common” signs of sexual abuse may contribute to false sense of security.⁸

Similarly, there are many different motives and types of sexual perpetration. Significant numbers of sexual perpetrators become very practiced at living a double life and presenting in highly trustworthy and admirable ways. They may be in committed relationships. They may have sons and daughters. Other types of perpetrators are briefly (opportunistically) active and then often refrain from abuse for a period of time before repeating the behavior. Even experts about sexual abuse emphasize that they generally cannot detect a perpetrator of sexual abuse by meeting them or spending time with them. Perpetrators are most often identified because they have been caught in the act, because they confess and/or because several different victims persuasively identify them.⁹

There is no reliable “profile” of victims or perpetrators of sexual abuse. The best way to prevent sexual abuse is not by detection, but by deflection and prevention. Parents and caretakers repeatedly ask if there are indicators of sexual abuse. There are indicators that sometimes occur. However the following indicators may have other causes besides sexual abuse. It is also important to remember that the absence of these indicators does not mean that sexual abuse did not happen. When children have been sexually abused it might cause the following:

- difficulty walking or sitting
- bruised or bleeding genital or anal areas
- frequent stomachaches, headaches, or extreme fatigue
- sexually transmitted diseases
- precocious sexual knowledge or behavior
- poor sleep and/or nightmares
- promiscuity
- inappropriate sex play
- running away or acting out
- unprovoked cruelty to animals or other children
- depression-- withdrawn, behavioral change, poor hygiene
- major change (more or less) in weight or eating
- difficulty concentrating or distractedness
- major change (more or less) in interpersonal boundaries or touch
- noticeable fear of a person or certain places.

⁸ Sink op cit pp. 91 & 95-104. Also see the discussion of asymptomatic child sexual abuse victims in Faller op cit p. 51. Also see British and Australian professional organization statements published in the extensive appendix of Courtois op cit.

⁹ See Anna Salter op cit; Cobble, Hammar, and Klipowicz, op cit pp. 12-14; and Joy Thornburg Melton, Safe Sanctuaries, Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church, pp. 17-20.

If the abuser is a friend or family member, you may be tempted to try and solve the problem yourself. However, when parents alone try to stop sexual abuse, they will most often be unsuccessful. If you suspect child sexual abuse speak with others who can give guidance. This might include a pediatrician or medical provider, a therapist with expertise, a clinic or a legal authority. It is important to confront your suspicions and ask for support and guidance.

For more information about indicators of abuse and neglect contact state agencies or visit their web sites. One can also contact the American Academy of Pediatrics by mail or internet. Another source of information on child sexual abuse or other forms of abuse is the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, PO Box 2866, Chicago, IL 60690.

(Sexual Abuse Additional Information 6 20 05 c)

Child Safety: Getting Started

By Christel Jorgenson

from the Christian Education Newsletter, New England YM, February 2004, slightly altered with new info

Several factors have brought the issue of child safety to our Quaker meetings. Scandals in other churches have been in the news. Insurance companies are becoming more involved in setting standards in order to cover liability. We may have never given it much thought and now it seems to be important.

Of course, we Quakers could be priding ourselves on "it could never happen here." It isn't something we like to imagine as possible. It is a hard issue to consider, for any person, for any meeting. We quite naturally resist it. After all, with our small and close-knit community, our emphasis on honesty and compassion, the peace testimony. . . don't these give us a strong foundation for a healthy environment for our children? Yes. But it is not a guarantee. It can happen here. As well, we need to be aware of the issue because of the other environments our children find themselves in. Studies show disturbing statistics—that ten percent of boys and twenty percent of girls have experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18—and some studies show a higher percentage. Compassion for children requires that we take seriously our responsibility to minimize the risk of child abuse in our meetings and in our communities.

What should your meeting be doing?

Since this is a new idea for many of us, educating ourselves and our meetings is a place to start.

I am on a small task force that is investigating what other denominations and groups are doing by way of training programs, guidelines, and procedures, with the goal of developing appropriate guidelines and procedures for our

- organization that does not sell insurance or endorse providers.

yearly meeting's youth programs. We are considering how best to disseminate what we are learning and how it can be most helpful for the yearly meeting.

The most useful information I've found to date can be found at www.reducingtherisk.com. For a relatively low cost (\$49.95), you receive a manual, a training manual, a dvd with six video segments, and a year's access to the training materials on their web site. Whereas previously (I saw their materials from ten years ago) they emphasized liability, now they've moved the primary focus to the wellbeing of the child and the religious community, while not neglecting to give you pertinent legal information about liability and court cases. It's current (2003), thorough, and full of applicable examples and principles. The dvd has a twenty minute introduction that could be used effectively to lay out the reasons why a policy is important. The remainder of the two hours or so can be used for training, since it covers the major points of the manual. The training manual gives step by step meeting plans for various constituencies who will need to be informed and trained. The on-line training could be a solution for the problem of training people at a distance or who sign on after a group training. I think it's excellent. Two other resources could also be helpful:

- www.nonprofitrisk.org is the web site of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center, which is a nonprofit

Since their web site deals with lots of

- risk issues that nonprofits face, it worth browsing. Their publication titled *A Season of Hope: A Risk Management Guide for Youth-Serving Nonprofits* has lots of clearly presented useful information. You can order it in electronic or print form from their web site.
- *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church* by Joy Thornburg Melton, is a resource/workbook developed by the Methodist Church. It provides pragmatic information and step-by-step process suggestions. This book has already been helpful as Cambridge (MA) Meeting has begun a process to look for ways to be more pro-active in protecting the youth of the meeting.

One thing emphasized in all publications is that a program will fail if it is not a priority for the whole group/congregation. In the Quaker tradition of discernment, engaging the hearts and minds of the whole community around a serious issue would deepen the process and allow for more light and grace. In any process, our goal is not to lay blame, but to keep the focus on the children and our adult role as their protectors. Part of the process in Cambridge is also “to educate and empower children and youth to advocate for themselves and to speak up when they see or experience something that feels wrong.”

Criminal background checks can be a part of a screening process, but are limited in effectiveness and are not a substitute for applications and reference checking. In Massachusetts, there are laws requiring Criminal Offense Record Information (CORI) checks for volunteers in organizations whose work

might be primarily to provide programs for children under 18 years of age. Many churches have determined that they should do these background checks. Amesbury Meeting (MA) was advised that they should do this, and all members and attenders who work or might work with the children agreed that their records could be requested from the state.

This may also be an opportunity for working with other faith communities in your area. Find out what other churches are doing, how they are training. You may be able to draw on their experience and find “fellow travelers” or even participate in their training program. Share what you learn with other meetings in your quarter or yearly meeting.

One weekend I completed a four-hour volunteer training program in a Catholic parish. I think they are rising from their crises with a very effective program. At the same time, it was deep-in-the-gut disturbing to hear testimonies from perpetrators and survivors. As a whole, the message was hopeful that awareness can prevent these tragedies.

I asked myself if it creates an atmosphere of apprehension and suspicion—and in the end, I think it does not. Soberness about our responsibility is more my sense of it. And it does not drown out the joy. The next day in worship, I found myself cherishing our children all the more—each little wiggle, giggle, and whisper. We have the privilege of being in community with such engaging, lively spirits. We need to protect this great gift from God.

An Outline of Ingredients

Cambridge Friends Meeting has been working on guidelines, procedures, and monthly meeting education. These things are in the formative stage, but are nearing completion.

When we set out, we needed a checklist for what we needed to include. Ours looked like this:

Elements of our Child Safety Policy:

- 1) Raising awareness and invoking participation of the whole meeting
 - a) Brochure/s
 - b) Written materials for newsletter and weekly announcements
 - c) Information and training opportunities
 - d) Formalizing annual/semiannual child safety processes (training, screening, etc)
 - e) Providing any assistance necessary to the First Day School coordinator to carry out the policies

- 2) Workers with children or youth
 - a) Screening
 - i) Application
 - ii) References
 - iii) Criminal Record Check?
 - iv) Interview
 - b) Training
 - i) Written materials
 - ii) Seminars
 - c) Supervision
 - i) Oversight of workers
 - ii) Staff-to-children ratio
 - iii) Guidelines for behavior
 - iv) Check list for safety of First Day School and events (ie youth retreats, childcare at meeting retreats)

- 3) Physical surroundings
 - a) Sleeping arrangements
 - b) Minimizing hazards
 - c) Transportation

- 4) Procedures for incidents
 - a) Child revealing abuse
 - b) Observed problematic behavior
 - c) Mandated reporting
 - d) Responding to allegations
 - e) Incidents made public

Forms needed:

1. Job application
 - 1a. Volunteer application
2. Reference
3. Telephone reference check
4. Driver
5. Incident report

Written statements needed:

1. Cover letter for applicants
2. Information letter for parents and others
3. A Minute of Concern from monthly meeting

HOW CAN I HELP PROTECT MY CHILD FROM SEXUAL ABUSE?

Talking about potentially victimizing situations can be similar to discussing other safety messages (what to do to cross the street, in case of fire, how to dress for certain weather). It is never too early. Other suggestions for talking with children to give them information without instilling fear:

Body Safety Rules can be discussed with children from as early as two years old.

- Give them an accurate working vocabulary for parts of the body.
- Discuss different types of touches: "good" or "happy" touches (hug or kiss from Mom, Dad, holding hands when crossing the street, piggy back ride); "bad" or "hurtful" touches (biting, hitting, pinching, pulling hair); "confusing" or "mixed up" touches (one that starts out as "good" then changes so that it gives the child a "funny feeling" (wrestling can be this way or some caresses).
- Differentiate between secrets and surprises. A surprise is something good that is eventually told. A secret is something that is never supposed to be told. Let your child know that s/he should always tell a scary secret that gives a "funny feeling".

Training in Assertiveness

- Say "NO" rather than giving reasons using weaker phrases like "Well, I don't think so."
- Shaking head to reinforce "NO"
- Establishing eye contact with someone the child is talking to.
- "No, Go, Tell".

Talk with your Children about their daily activities. Listen and encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings with you. Listening skills that enhance your child's ability to communicate include:

- Rephrasing your child's comments to show you understand, for example:
 - o Child: Danny wouldn't play with me today, and I'm not going to be his friend anymore.
 - o Adult: Danny wouldn't play with you! You must have felt very hurt and angry.
- Watching and believing your child's body language, for example:
 - o S/he says nothing is the matter but his/her lip is quivering. Believe s/he is sad or upset.
- Helping children understand their body parts and their right to personal body space (you can describe personal body space as a "magic circle" for younger children).
- Giving non-verbal support and encouragement (smiling, hugging, winking, patting on shoulder, making eye contact, reaching for your child's hand).
- Using a tone of voice consistent with the words you are using (being careful not to sound sarcastic, or condescending or all-knowing).
- Using encouraging phrases to show your interest and to keep the conversation going (such as, "Oh really," "Tell me about it," "Then what happened," etc.)

Discuss “OK” and “Not OK” Secrets

A secret about touches to their private parts is not their secret and should be told.

Let your children know that you want to know

Tell them if anyone forces or tricks them into an uncomfortable touch, you will believe them. Even if they had to do the touch, it isn't their fault and you will do whatever you can to protect them.

Practice “Keeping Safe” skills with your child

One way to start this is with the “what if _____” game. The “what if” game is very simple, and can be used with children as young as three years old. It can be used to teach general safety rules as well as to prepare children for people who may want to touch them in their private parts. For example, the parent can begin with: “What if you were lost and couldn't find your way home? What would you do?” The child then gets to play out the scene, learning to brainstorm different solutions to a common problem. You can be available to provide suggestions of your own. When your child feels comfortable with the game, you can ask: “What if someone touched you in your private parts and told you to keep it a secret? What would you do? Who would you tell?”

Do not insist that they obey blindly any adult in authority

In cases of uncomfortable touch, tell them they can say “NO”, even to adults they love and trust. This should apply to a range of interactions, including hugs, kisses, or sitting on someone's lap. Even if the intention of touch on the part of the adult is not harmful, the child should be supported in saying “NO”, or negotiating a different type of interaction/touch that they feel more comfortable with. You can help friends and relatives understand that they are helping to keep children safe by respecting their “NO”.

Help build your child's self esteem

This is crucial to preventing abuse of all kinds.

- Give praise to your child for effort as well as accomplishment. Eg, “that was a good try.”
- Help your child have realistic goals for him/herself (don't expect too much – failure can be a crushing blow”. His/her personal best is as valuable as a blue ribbon.
- When correcting, criticize the action, not the child.
- Helpful example: Climbing that wall was dangerous. You could have been hurt, so don't do it again.
- Hurtful example: You are so careless! Don't you know you shouldn't do something stupid like that?
- Give your child real responsibility appropriate to her/his age (this way they learn to be a valuable part of a team and derive a sense of accomplishment). You can consult with her/his teacher or day care worker if you aren't sure which tasks s/he is old enough to be responsible for.
- Show your children you love them. Hugs, kisses, and saying “I love you” help your child feel good about her/himself.

Make a list of House Safety Rules

List house safety rules (for children alone at home after school). Go over these rules together periodically to make sure your children remember them. These rules should include:

- Teach telephone safety.
Children should never reveal that they are alone. They should say, "My Mom/Dad can't come to the phone right now." They should be taught to hang up the phone if they receive an obscene phone call or if someone refuses to give his or her name. Teach your child to dial 911 for emergencies. Explain what an emergency is. Practice with them (on a play phone).
- Answering the door.
Young children can be taught to ask "Who is it?" and not to open the door unless an adult is present.

*From Pam Nelson, "Training Works"
For Friends Meeting at Cambridge, February 2005*

LITERATURE AND RESOURCES

WEB PAGES

www.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing/

This Unitarian Universalist site provides the text of a publication: "Balancing Acts; Keeping Children Safe in Congregations" by Reverend Debra W. Haffner. It addresses education and policy, as well as issues around sex offenders in the congregation.

www.uua.org/cde/education/safetyguidelinestl.pdf -

This provides the Unitarian Universalist guidelines from the Pacific Southwest District for Child and Youth Protection

www.reducingtherisk.com - This site can be used for education, as well as purchasing training materials (manuals and dvd's). A subscription entitles access to these materials plus online training. It is focused on religious communities and is recommended by Church Mutual Insurance Company.

See "State Reporting Laws and Agencies" section for websites for the individual states, which also have helpful information. Vermont's is especially thorough and user friendly.

PRINTED MATERIAL

Manuals:

Reducing the Risk II; Making Your Church Safe from Child and Sexual Abuse – Christian Ministry Resources, by James Cobble, Jr., Richard R. Hammar, Steven W. Klipowicz, Church and Law Tax Report, 2003. Available from reducingtherisk.com

Reducing the Risk II; Making Your Church Safe from Child and Sexual Abuse , Training Manual by Steven Klipowicz, James Cobble, Christian Ministry Resources. Available from reducingtherisk.com

Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in Church, by Joy Thornburg Melton, Discipleship Resources, 2003.

Safe Sanctuaries for Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries, by Joy Thornburg Melton, Discipleship Resources, 2003
Article

Background reading:

Abuse and Victimization Across the Life Span, by Martha Strauss ed., 1990

Addressing Sexual Abuse in Friends Meetings, by the Working Party on Sexual Abuse of NEYM Ministry and Counsel, 1994. Available from the NEYM Office

Child Sexual Abuse: Its Scope and Our Failure, by Rebecca M. Bolen, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2001

The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, by Ellen Bass and Laura David, Cambridge, MA: Harper and Row, 1988.

Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, and other Sex Offenders by Anna Salter, Basic Books 2003.

Sexual Abuse in America: Epidemic of the 21st Century, by Robert Freeman-Longo and Gerald Blanchard, 1998

The Stop Child Molestation Book by Gene Abel and Norma Harlow, 2001

Trauma and Recovery, by Judith Herman, Basic Books, 1997.

Understanding and Assessing Child Sexual Maltreatment by Kathleen Faller, 2nd edition, 2003

ORGANIZATIONS

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 699 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314, www.missingkids.com

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 2400 North 45th St., #10, Seattle, WA 98103, www.cpsdv.org

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information:
330 C St. SW, Washington, DC 20447, www.calib.com/nccanch