

Policy on the Safety of our Meeting's Children

Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Approved by Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting on May 10, 2009. This policy replaces any earlier CPMM policies that address the safety of the meeting's children, and the reporting of abuse and misconduct allegations.

I. Background and goals

Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (CPMM) strives to be a safe place, both physically and emotionally, for all members of our community. We recognize that children have fewer resources for protecting themselves and less experience at ensuring their own safety than adults do. Additionally, children tend to trust adults who have positions of authority. This policy is intended to give our community a common understanding of how we, as a meeting, protect our children while they are involved in CPMM's programs with children.

The goals of this policy are to provide guidance and requirements for CPMM's programs with children that:

- Support CPMM as a loving, safe community where we know and value each other across age groups.
- Limit, to the highest degree we can, the potential for physical and emotional harm that can result from improper interactions between children and adults.
- Limit, to the highest degree we can, the potential for our volunteers and employees to be in a situation where their integrity could be questioned regarding interactions with children.
- Outline clearly the response to be taken to a report of suspected or known child abuse.
- Fulfill requirements of our insurance policy, thereby ensuring that our meeting has the proper insurance coverage that allows us to be responsible to the members of our meeting's community (both members and attenders).
- Provide clear and explicit guidance that addresses the specific nature of our programs with children and our meetinghouse space, as well as guidelines broad enough to encompass potential future programs.

II. Definitions

1. Child/children; minor/minors: Any person/persons under the age of 18 years old.
2. Confidentiality is understood to mean keeping information private beyond those who have a need to know. The need to know is determined by what is required to ensure the safety of children in the meeting, what is required to ensure a complete investigation and what is required to ensure compliance with applicable law.
3. Counseling: A situation that involves one-on-one interaction for the purpose of personal guidance or exploration.
4. Employee: Any person who provides paid labor for CPMM on a regularly scheduled basis. This includes anyone who is hired to provide childcare on a weekly or semiweekly basis.
5. Lead position: A volunteer position with the primary responsibility for carrying out the program, including health and safety aspects. Non-lead volunteers may plan and lead activities but do not have the primary responsibility for health and safety.

6. The terms Child Abuse and Neglect, Reportable Offense, and Sexual abuse of children are understood to be defined by all applicable laws, including but not limited to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Child Protective Services Law (CPSL). A copy of relevant sections, as of the date of this policy’s approval, is appended. Care should be taken to ensure that the current definitions are being used at the time of any incident that requires use of this policy.
7. Volunteer: Any person who provides unpaid labor for CPMM for children’s programs. This includes First Day School teachers and child care volunteers. This would also include leaders and assistants for activities that may be established in the future such as Quaker Scouts or a CPMM youth group.

III. Policy

All activities and programs sponsored by CPMM at which children are present will be designed to address the three risk factors for child abuse: isolation; accountability; and power and control. This is done to ensure, to the highest degree possible, the safety of our children. In the event of a situation of abuse or suspected abuse, a full investigation will be conducted.

The meeting will follow all applicable laws which include, at the time this policy was approved, the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL). At the time this policy was approved, CPSL included “clergy” in its list of people explicitly included in the category of those who must report or cause a report to be made when the person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse.

Investigation of known or alleged abuse is not discretionary; all allegations will be investigated according to the procedures outlined in Appendix A, and where mandated by law will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

This policy encourages the Clerk of the Meeting and the Clerk of Membership Care Committee to receive training in recognizing and reporting child abuse.

The following Procedures apply only to programs and activities that are sponsored by CPMM and therefore do not apply to informal interactions, such as parents or guardians with their own children or when parents/guardians arrange care for their own children outside of formal child care arrangements.

A. Procedures relating to ensuring the safety of our children

1. No child is ever to be alone one-on-one with an adult in any Meeting-sponsored activity unless in a counseling or one-on-one mentoring situation. “Alone” means behind a closed door; or in an isolated location in the building, regardless of whether the door is open; or being the only ones in the building.
2. If an adult is alone with a group of children, the activity must be visible to other adults in the area. This means that either the door must remain open or there must be a window into the room that provides visibility. Additionally, this means that the activity must take place in an area where other adults are present and aware of the program.
3. All volunteers must be actively involved with CPMM for at least six months before they are allowed in any lead position involving contact with children. First Day School Committee will review the suitability of all volunteers.
4. No one under the age of 18 may be in a lead position involving contact with children. If minors are providing child care, it must be under the supervision of an adult who is physically present.

5. CPMM will perform, at a minimum, statewide criminal background searches and child abuse clearances on all volunteers involved in overnight activities with minors, counseling of minors, and one-on-one mentorship of minors. The First Day School committee will be responsible for ensuring that these background searches and clearances are conducted and kept on file with the CPMM office. CPMM will also keep on file in the Meeting office a signed statement that the individual has read and understands this policy, and that any questions the individual has about the policy have been explained. CPMM will not recognize a background search performed by another organization as a fulfillment of this requirement.
6. CPMM will keep on file in the Meeting office a signed release form for all employees that gives CPMM permission to perform criminal background searches. This release will also state that the individual has read and understands this policy, and that any questions the individual has about the policy have been explained.
7. CPMM will perform national criminal background searches and child abuse clearances on all employees who provide programs, care or supervision for the Meeting's children. The Office Committee will be responsible for this, with the First Day School Committee being available to provide technical assistance. CPMM will not recognize a background search performed by another organization as a fulfillment of this requirement.
8. CPMM will perform reference checks on all new employees, checking two references at a minimum for each employee. The references must be of an institutional nature (i.e., former employers or other organizations at which the individual has volunteered) as opposed to personal friends or relatives. The person serving as a reference must have known the individual for some length of time. These reference checks will be performed by appropriate members of the Meeting, such as the Meeting's clerk or members of the Office Committee. These reference checks will be maintained on file in the CPMM office.

B. Procedures for addressing allegations of abuse

In the event an individual knows or suspects that a child is being abused (including child sexual abuse), that individual will immediately notify the Clerk of the Monthly Meeting or the Clerk of Membership Care Committee. All members of our community should report suspicions of abuse to the Clerk of the Monthly Meeting or the Clerk of Membership Care Committee. Due to their explicit leadership roles in the meeting as pertains to children, people in roles requiring clearance of some level to work with children are *required* to report any suspicions of abuse. Those roles are:

1. All volunteers and paid staff in any lead position involving contact with children
2. All volunteers involved in overnight activities with minors, counseling of minors, and one-on-one mentorship of minors
3. All CPMM employees

The policy of individuals within CPMM reporting allegations to the Clerk of the Meeting or the Clerk of Membership Care Committee in no way countermands an individual's ability to report an allegation directly to child welfare authorities, independently of the Clerks.

In the event that the alleged perpetrator is the Clerk of the Meeting or the Clerk of Membership Care, then the report will be made to the non-involved Clerk. That Clerk will determine whom, within the framework of the meeting, will be the second person named to assist in the investigation and management of the allegation.

Should the substitution of a third person for either of the two Clerks be necessary, the two persons carrying the matter forward are, nevertheless, responsible for carrying out fully the steps outlined below, and will determine between them the appropriate differentiation of the responsibilities.

Similarly, if either of the two Clerks is not available within a reasonable period of time (several hours to a day), the Clerk who is available will seek assistance from an appropriate third person, while continuing efforts to keep the Clerk not available informed.

Because such allegations are extremely serious and sensitive, the Clerk and the Membership Care Clerk (or the persons serving in lieu of one or the other of these persons) are reminded that they are to maintain appropriate confidentiality at this point.

The Clerk of the Meeting and the Clerk of Membership Care (or the persons serving in lieu of one or the other of these persons) will, upon receiving notice of alleged abuse, immediately proceed according to the Procedures outlined in Appendix A, *Procedures to be Followed in Processing a Report of Known or Suspected Abuse*.

C. Allegations arising from outside the Meeting

If the Meeting is informed by the Clerk of PYM, the Clerk of another Monthly or Yearly Meeting, or any other respected source of a pending reported incident of child abuse (including child sexual abuse) against an adult who participates in Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, the Clerk will inform the accused person and will suspend that individual from any contact with children in the Meeting pending the results of the investigation undertaken by the reporting organization. In this situation the Clerk of the Meeting will, within the bounds of confidentiality and need to know, inform others within Central Philadelphia.

IV. Ensuring ongoing dissemination of this policy and its related procedures

Membership Care Committee will make this policy available to parents of children involved in Meeting programs. Those volunteering with child care and children's programs will be oriented to this policy prior to taking up their work and will receive this policy in writing. Membership Care Committee will review this policy every three years and recommend changes as needed.

V. Contact with the media

The Clerk of the Monthly Meeting or his/her designee is the only person responsible for and authorized to speak with the media if that becomes an issue.

VI. Summary

In our commitment to live in loving covenant with the Divine and with one another, we will do our best to treat everyone involved in such incidents with tenderness and respect -- the victim, the family, the perpetrator and the individual who may be falsely accused -- knowing that we are all children of God.

APPENDIX A

Procedures to Be Followed in Processing a Report of Known or Suspected Child Abuse

Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (CPMM)

These procedures are designed to help those in leadership roles in CPMM respond to suspicions, and to reports of suspicions, of child abuse. These procedures cannot anticipate all circumstances that might arise. These procedures provide a framework; deviation from these procedures should be taken if the circumstances of an individual situation warrant it.

I. How should members of the CPMM community report suspected or known abuse?

In the event an individual knows or suspects that a child is being abused (including sexual abuse) while participating in activities under the care of the Meeting, that individual will immediately notify the Clerk of the Monthly Meeting or the Clerk of Membership Care Committee. This procedure in no way countermands an individual's ability to report an allegation directly to child welfare authorities, independently of the Clerks.

In the event that the alleged perpetrator is the Clerk of the Meeting or the Clerk of Membership Care, the non-involved Clerk will receive the notification. That Clerk will determine whom, within the framework of the meeting, will be the second person named to assist in the investigation and management of the allegation. Should the substitution of a third person for either of the two Clerks be necessary, the two persons carrying the matter forward are, nevertheless, responsible for carrying out fully the steps outlined below, and will determine between them the appropriate differentiation of the responsibilities.

Similarly, if either of the two Clerks is not available within a reasonable period of time (several hours to a day), the Clerk who is available will seek assistance from an appropriate third person, while continuing efforts to keep the Clerk not available informed.

Because such allegations are extremely serious and sensitive, the Clerk and the Membership Care Clerk are reminded that they are to maintain appropriate confidentiality at this point.

A. Making a written record

The Meeting Clerk will assist the person making the allegation of child abuse in creating a written record, which includes the following information:

- date written record is created
- name, address and telephone number of the person bringing forward the allegation
- identity of the person accused and contact information, if known
- identity of the alleged victim(s) and contact information if known
- names of any eye witnesses to the alleged incident or persons who may have direct knowledge of the incident and their contact information

- a detailed description of the incident (including time, date, location, persons present, and eye witnesses)

B. Determining the appropriate course of action

Upon completing the record, the Meeting Clerk will make a determination whether what is alleged falls into the category of a reportable offense as defined by CPSL, or not. In those situations in which it does, the Clerk will immediately report the allegation to the Child Line at 1(800) 932-0313 and then proceed with next steps as outlined in Section II. A below.

In the event that the Clerk is uncertain about the allegation being reportable, s/he will call the Child Line to provide a description of the allegation and will cooperate with the Child Line staff.

The Clerk is reminded that contacting the Child Line in regard to an alleged reportable offense is not discretionary; it is required.

II. How to proceed if the reported abuse is determined to be an offense that must be reported to child protection authorities

Following the call to the Child Line, the following steps will be taken in as expeditious way as possible.

A. Communication with the family and alleged victim

The procedures outlined below call for the Clerk of the Meeting and the Clerk of Membership Care to proceed as a team. If the realities of meshing schedules become a problem, good judgment should be used for a plan to proceed without undue delay.

- 1) Unless the parent or guardian is the person accused, the Meeting Clerk and Clerk of Membership Care will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the alleged abuse and also notify them that a report to the Child Line has been made.
- 2) The Clerk of Membership Care or a designated member of the Committee will provide referral assistance to medical or other professional services for the alleged victim and his or her family.
- 3) In this visit, and in the days and weeks that follow, pastoral care consistent with the family's needs will be offered. If the alleged victim and family would find comfort in a care committee, the Clerk of Membership Care or a designated member of the Committee will convene such a group.

B. Notification of the alleged perpetrator and appropriate others

- 1) The Meeting Clerk will promptly consult with CPMM's legal counsel.
- 2) The Meeting Clerk and Clerk of Membership Care, following consultation with legal counsel, will notify the accused person of the allegation and further will inform him/her of its having been reported to the Child Line. Further, they will suspend him/her from contact with children in any Meeting sponsored activity at Friends Center or off site, either alone or with other adults, pending the investigation results. This includes one-on-one contact with a child at Meeting functions such as Meeting for Worship and social hour.

- 3) The Meeting Clerk and the Clerk of Membership Care may discern that the Clerk of PYM should be informed of this allegation, if they have information that the accused may be in contact with children in other Monthly Meetings and/or in PYM activities.
- 4) The Clerk of Membership Care or a designated member of the Committee will provide referral assistance to medical or other professional services for the alleged perpetrator.
- 5) In this visit, and in the days and weeks that follow, pastoral care consistent with the alleged perpetrator's needs will be offered. If the alleged perpetrator would find comfort in a care committee, the Clerk of Membership Care will convene such a group.

C. Investigation of the allegation

- 1) In the situation in which an alleged offense has been reported to the Child Line, and they have accepted the call for investigation, the meeting's investigation of the event(s) is suspended, pending the outcome of the official investigation.
- 2) The Meeting Clerk and the Clerk of Membership Care will cooperate with law enforcement authorities investigating the allegation.

III. Procedures for response to alleged incidents other than reportable offenses

There may be incidents or behaviors that do not fall within the legal definition of abuse but that the CPMM community nonetheless deems unacceptable. In those instances, the following procedures provide guidance.

A. Communication with the family and alleged victim

The procedures outlined below call for the Clerk of the Meeting and the Clerk of Membership Care to proceed as a team. If the realities of meshing schedules become a problem, good judgment should be used for a plan to proceed without undue delay.

- 1) Unless the parent or guardian is the person accused, the Meeting Clerk and Clerk of Membership Care will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the alleged abuse.
- 2) The Clerk of Membership Care or a designated member of the Committee will provide referral assistance to medical or other professional services for the alleged victim and his or her family.
- 3) In this visit, and in the days and weeks that follow, pastoral care consistent with the family's needs will be offered. If the alleged victim and family would find comfort in a care committee, the Clerk of Membership Care will convene such a group.

B. Notification of the alleged perpetrator and appropriate others

- 1) The Meeting Clerk will promptly consult with CPMM's legal counsel.
- 2) The Meeting Clerk and Clerk of Membership Care, following consultation with legal counsel, will notify the accused person of the allegation. Further, they will suspend him/her from contact with children in any Meeting sponsored activity at Friends Center or off site, either alone or with other adults, pending the investigation results. This includes one-on-one contact with a child at Meeting functions such as Meeting for Worship and social hour.

- 3) The Meeting Clerk and the Clerk of Membership Care may discern that the Clerk of PYM should be informed of this allegation, if they have information that the accused may be in contact with children in other Monthly Meetings and/or in PYM activities.
- 4) The Clerk of Membership Care or a designated member of the Committee will provide referral assistance to medical or other professional services for the alleged perpetrator.
- 5) In this visit, and in the days and weeks that follow, pastoral care consistent with the alleged perpetrator's needs will be offered. If the alleged perpetrator would find comfort in a care committee, the Clerk of Membership Care will convene such a group.

C. Investigation of the allegation

The Meeting Clerk and the Clerk of Membership Care are responsible for ensuring that the alleged complaint is carefully and fully investigated. They will involve other members of the Meeting as appropriate. A qualified and objective professional will be engaged to investigate the allegation. The Meeting is committed to uncovering all relevant information.

IV. Action subsequent to determination of outcome

A. Substantiated allegation

- 1) If the allegation is substantiated, the perpetrator will be immediately suspended from all Meeting activity until the situation can be more fully assessed and the Meeting community will be informed. It is the Meeting's responsibility to discern the degree to which the individual can or cannot return to participation in the Meeting. An appropriate professional with relevant training and expertise will be consulted before making this decision.
- 2) The Meeting Clerk will also notify the Clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, who may want to inform other Monthly Meetings and/or extend this suspension to contact with children in any PYM sponsored activity.

B. Unsubstantiated allegation or unclear determination

If the allegation is not substantiated, the accused person will be released from suspension. If a clear determination can not be made, the Meeting Clerk and the Clerk of Membership Care, in consultation with an appropriate professional, shall consider whether to impose conditions on release of the suspension.

APPENDIX B

Highlights of Relevant Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) Act 179

I. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this chapter to encourage more complete reporting of suspected child abuse; to the extent permitted by this chapter, to involve law enforcement agencies in responding to child abuse; and to establish in each county protective services for the purpose of investigating the reports swiftly and competently, providing protection for children from further abuse and providing rehabilitative services for children and parents involved so as to ensure the child's well-being and to preserve, stabilize and protect the integrity of family life wherever appropriate or to provide another alternative permanent family when the unity of the family cannot be maintained. It is also the purpose of this chapter to ensure that each county children and youth agency establish a program of protective services with procedures to assess risk of harm to a child with the capabilities to respond adequately to meet the needs of the family and child who may be at risk and to prioritize the response and services to children most at risk.

II. PERSONS REQUIRED TO REPORT

Child abuse reporting is required by any persons who are affiliated with or work for an agency, institution, organization or other entity that has the child under its care, supervision, guidance or training, and who have reasonable cause to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse.

(a.) General rule.—A person who, in the course of employment, occupation or practice of a profession, comes into contact with children shall report or cause a report to be made in accordance with section 6313 (related to reporting procedure) when the person has reasonable cause to suspect, on the basis of medical, professional or other training and experience, that a child under the care, supervision, guidance or training of that person or of an agency, institution, organization, or other entity with which that person is affiliated is a victim of child abuse, including child abuse by an individual who is not a perpetrator...

(b.) Persons required to report under subsection (a) include, but are not limited to, any licensed physician, osteopath, medical examiner, coroner, funeral director, dentist, optometrist, chiropractor, podiatrist, intern, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, hospital personnel engaged in the admission, examination, care or treatment of persons, Christian Science Practitioner, member of the clergy, school administrator, school teacher, school nurse, social services worker, day care center worker, or any other child-care or foster-care worker, mental health professional, peace officer or law enforcement official.

A person, hospital, institution, school, facility, agency or employee that participates in good faith in the making of a report, whether required or not, cooperating with an investigation, testifying in a proceeding arising out of an instance of suspected child abuse, the taking of photographs or the removal or keeping of a child pursuant to section 6315 (related to taking the child into protective custody,) and any official or employee of a county agency who refers a report of suspected child abuse to law enforcement authorities or provides services under this chapter, shall have immunity from civil and criminal liability that might otherwise result by reason of these actions.

A person or official required by this chapter to report a case of suspected child abuse or to make a referral to the appropriate authorities who willfully fails to do so commits a misdemeanor of the third degree for the first violation and a misdemeanor of the second degree for a second or subsequent violation.

III. WHERE AND HOW TO REPORT

Oral reports should be made to Child Line 1(800) 932-0313 and followed up with a written report. Reporters are not required to identify themselves.

Reports to Child Line should be documented and include the following:

- 1) Date of call; 2) time of call; 3) summarized content of the call; 4) Child Line operator's name (if available); and 5) report number assigned by Child Line (if available).

Written reports shall include the following information if available:

- 1) The names and addresses of the child and the parents or other person responsible for the care of the child, if known.
- 2) Where the suspected abuse occurred.
- 3) The age and sex of the subjects of the report.
- 4) The nature and extent of the suspected child abuse, including any evidence of prior abuse by that person or persons.
- 5) The name and relationship of the person or persons responsible for causing the suspected abuse, if known, and any evidence of prior abuse by that person or persons.
- 6) Family composition.
- 7) The source of the report.
- 8) The person making the report and where that person can be reached.
- 9) The actions taken by the reporting source, including the taking of photos and x-rays, removal or keeping of the child or notifying the medical examiner or coroner.
- 10) Any other information which the county may require by regulation.

The failure of a person reporting cases of suspected child abuse to confirm an oral report in writing within 48 hours shall not relieve the county agency from any duties prescribed by this chapter. In such event, the county agency shall proceed as if a written report were actually made.

IV. DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse committed by *any* persons must be reported.

- (1) The term "child abuse" shall mean any of the following:
 - (i) Any recent act or failure to act which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child less than 18 years of age.
 - (ii) An act or failure to act which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.

- (iii) Any recent act, failure to act or series of such acts or failures to act which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
 - (iv) Serious physical neglect constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.
- (2) Child abuse also includes sexual crimes committed against children under the age of 18—rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation.

Situations of child abuse requiring reporting include the following:

- (i) If the child is under the age of 13, and is engaging in sexual intercourse, including oral or anal sex regardless if the child is consenting to the activity.
- (ii) If the child is under the age of 16, and is engaging in oral or anal sex, with a partner who is four (4) or more years older and they are not married.
- (iii) If the child is under the age of 18, and someone forces, coerces, or otherwise makes the child engage in pornography or nonconsensual sexual activities such as sexual intercourse (including oral or anal sex), penetration of the genitalia or anus with any part of the body or with any object, and inappropriate touching of or near the genitalia or anus.

V. SITUATIONS NOT DEEMED TO BE CHILD ABUSE

No child shall be deemed to be physically or mentally abused based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors that are beyond the control of the parent or person responsible for the child's welfare, such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medical care.

- (1) If, upon investigation, the county agency determines that a child has not been provided needed medical or surgical care because of seriously held religious beliefs of the child's parents, guardian or person responsible for the child's welfare, which beliefs are consistent with those of a bona fide religion, the child shall not be deemed to be physically or mentally abused. The county agency shall closely monitor the child and shall seek court-ordered medical intervention when the lack of medical or surgical care threatens the child's life or long-term health. In cases involving religious circumstances, all correspondence with a subject of the report and the records of the Department of Public Welfare and the county agency shall not reference "**child abuse**" and shall be referred for general protective services, if appropriate.

VI. EXPUNGING OF UNFOUNDED REPORTS

3490.34 Child Line is required to expunge unfounded reports within 120 calendar days of receiving the report. Reports that are to be expunged as a result of the appeal process will be expunged immediately after the time limit for the next level in the appeal process has passed.