

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Friends General Conference will take all reasonable precautions to insure the safety of the children and youth at our gatherings and conferences. To that end, we will provide appropriate screening of all staff and volunteers working with children and young people.

This policy and related procedures apply to everyone who works with children and young people under 18, whether paid, compensated by workgrants or fee waivers, or volunteer. (Some exceptions exist for “walk-in volunteers” -- explained below -- and when older teens are participating in adult events -- see Policy on Teen Involvement in FGC Programs and Committees.) In the policy below, we refer to these people as “Youth and Childcare Workers.” “FGC Staff” refers to paid employees of Friends General Conference, including but not limited to the Conference Coordinator, the Junior Gathering Coordinator, and the General Secretary.

In this policy “Supervisory role” means any Youth and Childcare Worker who is supervising other Workers, or who has overnight responsibilities with Youth, or who might be alone with Youth.

This policy and related procedures apply during formal FGC Youth Program Time (e.g., Junior Gathering sessions, the Gathering High School Program, weekend youth programs, and child care at small conferences or committee meetings).

I. Obtaining References & Background Checks

1. All potential Youth and Childcare Workers shall provide three references, including at least one who has direct experience of the Worker’s work with children and at least one who is a professional or institutional reference, rather than a personal one. Family members and FGC Staff should not be used as references. References will be checked, and written records of at least two references kept on file.
2. All Youth and Childcare Workers (other than paid non-Quaker babysitters) must be active in a monthly meeting for at least six months prior to servicing in FGC youth programs. This shall be verified with the meeting. Quaker camps and schools may substitute for meetings at the discretion of the Junior Gathering Coordinator.
3. All workers who will have supervisory roles will consent in writing to a criminal and/or child abuse background check. When legally possible, the checks will be performed by FGC staff in national and state databases. In some states and Canada, the worker may need to request a background check directly from appropriate agencies.
4. When babysitters are hired to provide childcare for a committee meeting they are servicing in a Supervisory role. If they have not been active in a meeting or Quaker school or camp for at least six months (, see point I.2), FGC will complete and file three reference checks, including at least two who have direct experience of six months or more of the Worker’s work with children and at least one who is a professional or institutional reference, rather than a personal one. If these requirements are met, a meeting verification is not necessary. A criminal background check will be required, as for all Child Care Workers in Supervisory roles. If all of the children needing child care are from the same family, the parent(s) of those children may make independent arrangements for childcare and request reimbursement from FGC without following FGCs child safety policy.

Approved March 2010, by FGC’s Long Range Conference Planning Committee. This policy has not been reviewed by legal counsel. It was developed for FGC use, and was not intended as a model or template for other organizations.

5. Should FGC staff have a question or concern about information revealed during the screening procedures, they must consult in confidence with either the Conference Coordinator, his/her supervisor or the General Secretary who may in turn consult with the LRCP clerk or the presiding clerk . Decisions of the staff and the clerks shall be final.

II. Repeating Reference and Background Checks

1. For all Youth and Childcare Workers, references and meeting verifications will be repeated when there has been a gap of service to FGC of two or more years.
2. All workers with supervisory roles, or who have overnight responsibility for minors, or who may be alone with young people, will have their references, meeting verification, and criminal and/or child abuse background check repeated every five years, or more frequently (see next point). Criminal background checks will not routinely be repeated more frequently than every five years.
3. The Junior Gathering Coordinator is instructed to repeat reference checks, meeting verifications, or criminal background checks more frequently when the situation or her/his intuition suggests this would be appropriate.

III. Maintaining Confidential Files

All information from references, monthly meetings, and background checks will be held in the strictest of confidence. Files will be maintained for up to 20 years (until the youngest child reaches majority plus 2 years) in a secure file. Access to these files will be limited to paid FGC conference staff, their supervisors, the FGC General Secretary, the FGC presiding clerk, and the clerk of LRCP. Each spring when workload is high, a volunteer file clerk may access these files always in the presence of one of these Friends. These files are the property of FGC. Upon written request to the Conference Coordinator, workers shall have access to their files except for letters of reference, which are confidential and not available to the worker. The file is not available to others outside of FGC.

IV. Unscreened Volunteers

1. Walk-in volunteers (e.g., Lend-A-Hand volunteers or presenters at weekend youth conferences) are not considered Youth and Childcare Workers and do not need reference checks or meeting verification.
2. Any unscreened volunteers, including “walk in” volunteers and parents and Sponsors, will be supervised at all times during Program Time. A Sponsor is an adult who has been designated by the parent of a Youth (the Sponsee) to serve *in loco parentis* during the event. Under no circumstances will these unscreened volunteers be left alone during Program Time with a youth other than their own child or Sponsee.

V. Abuse Prevention Training

1. FGC will provide abuse prevention training for High School Counselors, Junior Gathering leaders, and others in leadership roles, including appropriate FGC staff (but not paid babysitters).

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2. Detailed procedures, restrictions, and guidelines will be provided to all Youth and Childcare Workers and paid babysitters.

VI. Allegations of Abuse

Any allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. All such allegations are to be reported immediately to the Conference Coordinator, the General Secretary, the clerk of LRCP and/or the FGC Presiding Clerk. Additional procedures will be developed to protect and care for the victim(s) of abuse, the alleged perpetrator(s), and others close to both. Our existing guidelines and procedures for Sexual Harassment will form the initial basis for these procedures. In addition, Friends General Conference shall comply with all government regulations for reporting of abuse.

This document was downloaded from the website of Friends General Conference. Explore the many resources and opportunities we offer for Quakers, Quaker meetings, and all interested individuals. Go to www.fgcquaker.org.



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