

Herndon Friends Meeting Minute on Protecting Youth from Physical, Verbal, and Sexual Abuse

Revised April 2018

Herndon Friends Meeting (HFM) recognizes its responsibility in assisting parents in protecting children from physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. The Meeting, which has no paid staff, has established the following procedures to minimize the risk of children being harmed in the course of Meeting connected activities.

Definitions

- “Candidate” refers to an individual expressing interest in serving in an unpaid leadership position in a youth activity sponsored by HFM.
- “Screening”: Process by HFM to verify that a candidate has regularly attended HFM for at least six months plus checking the public *VA Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registration for Violent Sex Offenders* website against the person’s name and address.
- Youth activity: Any activity primarily aimed for youth participation, such as First Day school, a field trip, a social activity (onsite or offsite), service project, etc.
- Community Room: Area of Meeting house outside meeting for worship, including kitchen, baby room, and cabin, whether separated by dividers or not

Procedures for Working with Youth

1. All volunteers must have been cleared within the past twelve months by the HFM M&O committee before leading any youth activities.
2. There will be at least two cleared adults present in the community room during any youth activity.
3. At least two cleared adults will be at any off site location for any youth activities held there. At least two adults must accompany the children from the HFM Meetinghouse to an offsite location for any activity.
4. Field trips or day trips sponsored by the Religious Education Committee or the Meeting will require supervision by adults, with a ratio of at least one cleared adult to six children. There will be a minimum of two cleared adults on any field trip.
5. Any overnight field trip attended by both male and female youth should have adult supervision by both male and female cleared adults.
6. Any vehicle used for transportation associated with HFM youth activities must be operated by a cleared adult.
7. All adult visitors wishing to attend a First Day School class need to coordinate with the class teacher or coordinator.
8. HFM does not sponsor any regular or extended one-on-one counseling for youth. Any counseling done with youth (such as a clearness committee) will include at least two cleared adults.

Procedures for Clearing Candidates to Work with Youth:

Anyone interested in volunteering with youth needs to be screened and cleared by the Ministry and Oversight (M&O) committee before they can lead a youth activity. This includes, but is not limited, to the following:

- First Day school teachers

- Adult leaders for an HFM-sponsored youth activity (such as game night, service project, or field trip) or any activity primarily aimed at youth participation, or adults in a supervisory role (such as child care or escorting children to another location)

As a part of the screening process, candidates will be provided with resources on youth safety.

The responsibilities of the M&O committee in clearing candidates include the following:

1. Screening: For candidates to lead a youth activity, confirm that the candidate has regularly attended HFM for at least six months, verify their identity and address with a government-issued photo identification, and verify that the candidate is not listed in the public *National and VA Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registration for Violent Sex Offenders* websites.
2. M&O will maintain a list of people who have been cleared to lead youth activities and will provide this list, and any updates, to all HFM committee clerks.
3. Confirm, on a yearly basis, that cleared volunteers are interested in renewing their cleared status and if so, that they continue to meet HFM criteria for working with youth.

Individuals known by the M&O committee to have charges pending or have been convicted of sexual crimes will not be permitted to lead a youth activity. If M&O determines that a candidate for working with youth does not meet HFM criteria or if there are other concerns, M&O will not clear the candidate. M&O will determine what further action is needed.

Response to Concerns or Incidents

Anyone who has a youth safety concern about an individual should share that concern with the Meeting clerk or the clerk of M&O. If a concern is raised, M&O will investigate and will contact the individual, if necessary. Criminal offenses must be reported to authorities.

Anyone who observes an incident of youth physical, verbal, or sexual abuse during an HFM-sponsored activity or who has knowledge that such an incident has occurred should do the following:

- Take immediate action to protect the child.
- Contact M&O immediately to report the alleged abuse. M&O will notify the child's parents or guardians of the reported abuse. M&O will determine if additional actions are needed, such as counseling, contacting child protective services, legal action, or notifying the HFM insurance representative. M&O will discuss the incident and the proposed response from HFM with the child's parents or guardians. M&O will determine when the entire meeting needs to be notified.
- Written documentation should be kept for all steps.

Regular Review of Procedures and Education

HFM currently has no paid staff. If we hire employees or change venues we will revisit these procedures. In any case we will reevaluate our procedures every three years at a minimum. To maintain awareness of our procedures, HFM will post this minute in a visible place at the Meetinghouse. In addition, the clerk of Religious Education will distribute copies of this minute yearly to:

- a, Parents of children registered in the HFM religious education program
- b, HFM committee clerks and the clerk of HFM
- c, All adults cleared to work with youth serving in a leadership position in activities dealing with youth, including (but not limited to) all First Day School teachers and class coordinators.

HFM will also conduct activities to raise awareness of issues related to protecting youth from physical, verbal, and sexual abuse.

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