

## Chestnut Hill Friends Monthly Meeting Child Safety Policy

Nurturing the spiritual lives and community of our young Friends is essential and it requires the work, energy and deep dedication of adults. It also requires a safe environment. Physically, spiritually, emotionally, our children must feel safe and be safe to grow in God's Light. There are many things we do to create an environment of safety around them. We take care to deliberately build community among the children and between children and adults, we carefully guide them through conflict and a large community of adults in the meeting keep an eye on children as they play in and around the meetinghouse. Another step is to provide for First Day School Teacher and child care providers guidelines and expectations concerning safety.

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### Guidelines and Expectations Concerning Child Safety

1. Adults and teens need to be known to the meeting for a minimum of six months before they may be considered for teaching First Day School. This gives the meeting and the adult time to get to know each other. It also ensures that the adult has had an introduction to the Quaker experience we hope to be sharing with the children. Working with the children of the meeting is privilege, not a right, and may not be the best choice of service to the meeting for all adults.
2. All teachers who are new to the meeting within the last two years will be asked to provide two references who will be contacted by the FDS Coordinator, the FDS Assistant, or the FDS Clerk. The references should be from someone outside of the meeting. Preferably they will be from someone who is familiar with the potential teacher's work with children. Alternatively, the reference may be of an institutional nature (work or committee related). A record of the FDS teachers will be kept in a locked file in the office.
3. Teachers who are new will always be paired with seasoned teachers both for the purpose of introducing the new teacher to the FDS experience and also in the consideration of children's safety. The FDS coordinator will check in with the new teacher and with the seasoned teacher for the first several weeks of the new teacher's service.
4. Teachers who expect to work with the same group of children all year or who expect to go off-site with the kids, as well as paid staff of the meeting and adult paid babysitters are asked to consider voluntarily consenting, in writing, to a criminal and/or child abuse background check. The checks will be performed by FDS staff or clerks in national and state databases. The checks will be repeated every five years for continuing workers. The results of the check will be shared with the teacher and will be kept in a locked file cabinet until the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday of the youngest child the adult taught at the last time the adult taught.
5. Adult and teen paid babysitters also need to provide references as described in #2 above. Teens who have grown up in the meeting are known to us better than any reference they could furnish; therefore in lieu of this requirement, two Friends from the meeting who know the teen may simply give their blessing in writing.
6. If we discover that someone has been convicted of a crime or accused of a child-safety related incident, we will handle these case-by-case, with a clearness committee. Clearness committee must be confidential and should involve:
  - RE Clerk
  - Someone from Care & Council committee
  - RE Staff (Coordinator & Assistant)
7. Short-term (less than one year) teachers do not need to complete the screening. We do ask that they remain in the company or sight of other adults and/or children and do not spend time one-on-one with a child. Individual adults should not be in an isolated place with one child who is not his or her own child.
8. Adults helping children in the bathroom must leave the door open and whenever possible have another adult in view.
9. An adult working with the children is encouraged to seek out the parent in cases where she or he feels uncomfortable, as in changing a diaper, helping in the bathroom or supporting a child who is having a difficult time managing his or her behavior.
10. FDS programs will take place in central, highly accessible locations. Programs may be randomly monitored and visited unannounced by the FDS Coordinator or member of the FDS committee.
11. When childcare is provided at a time when all other Friends are several rooms away (ie during Meeting for Worship for Business, when there is no First Day School and adults are all in the meeting room), doors between children and adults will be kept open and someone from the meeting will be designated to occasionally go check in on the children and their caregiver.
12. A Child Safety Committee should be formed consisting of someone from each of the following committees: Child Care, Religious Education, Property and Care & Counsel. This committee will review the policy and procedures annually. Concerns about the policy may be directed to this committee.
13. This policy will be published annually in the newsletter, provided to each new teacher and the parent(s) in each new family and published on our website.

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### In the event that a person in the meeting is accused or suspected of molesting or otherwise hurting a child, the following steps should be taken:

1. Immediately the child(ren) will be made safe. Parents should be notified and the child attended to in any way necessary.
2. If the person who was identified as hurting a child is part of the meeting community, he or she will immediately be asked to refrain from interacting with the children of the meeting.
3. The Clerk of the meeting, the clerk of Care and Counsel and the FDS Coordinator must be informed immediately. An incident report must be completed.
4. Within 48 hours, the clerk of the meeting must either call ChildLine (the abuse reporting hotline in PA) or instruct the First Day School Coordinator to do so. ChildLine's number is **1-800-932-0313**.
5. A care committee will be set up for the child and the child's family. A separate committee will be arranged for the person identified as hurting a child if that person is a member or attender of the meeting.
6. If necessary, the insurance company should be informed of the events.
7. If it is necessary to speak with the media the clerk of the meeting shall be the only person to do so unless the meeting chooses another person.

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### In the event that there is a concern that a child of the meeting is being hurt outside of the meeting, the following steps should be taken:

1. Immediately the child(ren) will be made safe. Parents should be notified and the child attended to in any way necessary.
2. The clerk of the meeting and the clerk of Care & Counsel will be notified immediately. They will consult with whomever is appropriate to determine if the child is currently in danger and take necessary steps to ensure the child's safety.
3. Care and Counsel holds the trust of the meeting to discern the next steps and to move forward with care for all involved.
4. Appropriate steps may include, but are not limited to, those steps listed above or seeking additional qualified persons for consultation or intervention