

36. Safe Nurturing of Children in our Care:

Elaine Bishop presented a draft document on the Safe Nurturing of Children in our Care. This document arises from approximately twenty years of work within our yearly meeting. This document is important for protecting and nurturing our children, our workers and ourselves, and aims to ground the policy in Quaker practice while meeting our legal obligations. The policy has been drafted as a policy for CYM in session, but may also be a beginning toward the drafting of similar policies for other Canadian Quaker bodies, such as Camp NeeKauNis. This policy should ultimately be implemented by the CYM Youth Program Committee but can be carried by the CYM Program Committee until the CYM Youth Program Committee is established. We receive this draft document with thanks. We will begin to implement this document in its present form for one trial year, starting at the rise of CYM 2011, and running until the rise of CYM 2012. The document will be brought back to CYM 2012 for further seasoning, with feedback from those who have made use of the document during the intervening year. Our experience will help us to better discern the strengths and weaknesses of the document. Feedback is also requested from individual Friends and from monthly meetings, especially those that may have similar policies already in place, and from Camp NeeKauNis Committee. Comments can be sent to Elaine Bishop, Keith Barber, and/or Katrina McQuail, who will report to the Spring 2012 Representative Meeting. If significant concerns are raised about the current draft during 2011-2012, we ask Spring Representative Meeting to address these concerns and approve an updated draft for implementation at CYM 2012 in session. **Report attached in Appendix A.**

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Appendix A.

To: Canadian Yearly Meeting
From: Elaine Bishop and Keith Barber
Date: July 24, 2011
Dear Friends

Attached is the *Draft Document on the Safe Nurturing of Children in our Care*. This has been produced in response to Representative Meeting Minute 10-11-19. Both of us are members of Winnipeg Allowed Meeting of Prairie MM. Both of us work regularly with children, Keith as a junior high school art teacher and Elaine in her work as Executive Director of the North Point Douglas Women's Centre. Both are holders of Vulnerable Persons' Police Checks and Child Abuse Registry Checks as required of people working with children and youth in Manitoba.

We have drafted this document using resources from a number of sources: Canadian Yearly Meeting Registration Documents; Canadian Yearly Meeting *The Nurturing of Children in our Care* (undated); Child Protection Policy & Procedures Review of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Final Report (2010); Concord Quarterly Meeting of Philadelphia YM of the Religious Society of Friends Child-Safety Protection Policy and Procedures (2007); Friends General Conference's Child Safety Policy (2010); Safety in Community: Abuse Prevention and Beyond, Wellesley Friends Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting (2009); June 2007 Working document for procedures in the event of an allegation of child sexual abuse during New York Yearly Meeting sessions; and two further sample child/youth protection policies sent to us in our correspondence from Friends at FGC and Baltimore Yearly Meeting. We are most grateful to the assistance we received from Friends of whom we enquired and hope we may be freed by CYM to share any policy we approve with them as this is an issue of significant concern to Friends beyond our YM. We also did some research on age of majority in different parts of Canada as child welfare issues are under provincial jurisdiction.

We did not extend our exploration further so have not consulted other bodies within our own YM such as Camp NeeKauNis. We see this draft as a beginning rather than an end. We encourage CYM, should this document be approved, to implement further consultations amongst appropriate bodies and with Meetings within our body to encourage adaptation of any policy to our wider needs.

Draft Document on the Safe Nurturing of Children in our Care July 2011

In our Meetings it is the responsibility of all members and attenders to help build a community in which all children feel happy and safe, and feel nurtured spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. In such a community, the age and developmental stage of children will be respected. Children will feel listened to and truly heard. Adults need to remember that we are often seen as role models. Those leading group activities will encourage a positive atmosphere of mutual trust, support and care – both between adults and children, and among children. Control and discipline will be carried out with a focus on loving guidance rather than on punishment.

Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Council, Faith and Practice of CYM, 2010 ss5.11

Policy Statement:

We, in Canadian Yearly Meeting, cherish our children and are committed to doing everything possible to create a safe environment where they nurtured and to reduce the risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. To that end we have developed policies and procedures to protect

our children when they are at events sponsored by CYM or otherwise in the care of CYM staff, child-care providers and/or volunteers.

It is not the intention of this policy to insulate children and youth from the balance of challenge and risk that they need for healthy development. Rather it is the goal to provide an environment in which certain risks are reduced to provide a nurturing and safe environment for healthy spiritual, social and physical development

Benefits of implementing such a policy

- Creating a relaxed atmosphere where children feel valued and build supportive and caring relationships with each other and with adults.
- Parents, giving their children over to the care of other Friends, can rest assured that their children are safe from harm, are in a happy and supportive environment, and are being made to feel a full part of our community of Friends.
- Building community including giving those with little experience with children, or those who are new to the Meeting, an opening to get to know the children in the Meeting and learn from those with more experience.

Legal Obligations: Canadian Yearly Meeting accepts that it has a duty of care to children being cared for under its auspices, which applies to all activities authorized by or under the control of the Society.

Authority

These are the Policy and Procedures of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada, approved by Canadian Yearly Meeting (*date of approval*). The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada is committed to implementing the policy and procedures and educating the society's child carers in its content and application.

Definitions

Child – “Child” has the meaning given in the relevant Provinces’ child protection legislation.

Youth--`Youth` has the meaning given in the relevant Provinces’ child protection legislation.

Child abuse – Children can be abused in different ways and child abuse includes a wide range of acts of omission and commission.

Physical Abuse – Physical Abuse occurs when a person intentionally injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures.

Sexual Abuse – Sexual abuse occurs when any sexual activity between a child and an adult, or between a child/youth and another child/youth at least four years older than the victim takes place. This includes activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest or pornography.

Sexual Abuse may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential between adult and child. (It should be noted that the age of consent varies between provinces in Canada, ranging from 16 to 18 years for heterosexual and homosexual intercourse, and in some jurisdictions is also influenced by the age difference between parties.)

Emotional Abuse – Emotional Abuse is a persistent attack on a child or young person's self-esteem. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating, bullying or isolating a child or young person.

Neglect – Neglect is the failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision, to the extent that the child's health and/or development are placed at risk.

Child Carer – any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the care and safety of children and youth in a recognised activity of the Society.

Activity – an organized activity that is authorized by the Society.

Code of Conduct

Child Carers shall ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times when they have children in their care. While the age of individuals is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding what is appropriate behaviour, the following behaviours are regarded as inappropriate when caring for children and youth:

- Engaging in dangerously rough physical activities without appropriate risk assessment and risk management.
- Physically hurting a child*
- Physically contacting a child when it is unwanted, unless necessary for the safety of the child or those around them
- Holding, kissing or touching children in inappropriate* or culturally insensitive ways
- Making sexually suggestive comments to children
- Doing things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves such as going to the toilet or changing clothes
- Taking a child home or visiting a child in their home without the child's parents being present or having received parental permission to do so
- Singling out a child for highly favoured or unduly harsh treatment
- Ridiculing, scapegoating, rejecting, or threatening a child
- Bullying or put-downs
- Making racially provocative comments or remarks based on appearance

- Being affected by alcohol or illegal drugs

*These are reportable offences by adults against children

Procedures for implementation

Responsibility to implement: it is the responsibility of the CYM Youth Program Committee to oversee implementation of this policy. Until the Youth Program Committee is operational this role will be undertaken by the CYM Program Committee with the Youth Program Coordinator.

Selection of persons involved in Children`s and Youth Programs

Those people responsible for implementing child and youth programs must be under the immediate supervision of someone with the province`s required clearance for working with vulnerable persons

Canadian Yearly Meeting may want to develop a registry of its members already holding such clearance as a consequence of their work or volunteer activities who may be available to assist with or be resources to children`s and youth programs.

Maintaining a Safe Environment

Child Carers need to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children and youth are cared for in a physically and emotionally safe environment. The following procedures ensure this.

- In all activities at least one of any child carers must have cleared a vulnerable persons` police check and/or a child abuse registry check (dependent on relevant provincial policy).
- For participation in CYM children and youth programs parents must complete the release forms that are part of the registration package.
- The first time a child is cared for parental contact details and any necessary medical information should be recorded. Custody arrangements or other care arrangements need to be recorded.
- Except in an emergency written instructions regarding the pick- up of children by anyone other than the parent, guardian or the person dropping the child off must be provided.
- A check-in and check-out procedure will be followed, including signing in and out.
- Parents must inform program leaders if the child/youth will miss any of the program. Unexplained absences will be taken seriously.
- Necessary medical information is recorded. Written instructions must be obtained from the parent or guardian regarding administering any prescription medication or other medication. (ex. Epi-pen)
- At least two (2) Child Carers should be present when working with or supervising children, except where a parent is caring for their own child/children in the same location. In that case one Child Carer is acceptable.
- When only one Child Carer is working with or supervising children they need to be in sight of other adults.

- Consultation needs to take place with parents about their wishes with children of an age needing assistance in toileting— whether the parent wishes to do this or gives permission for the Child Carers to do so.
- When transporting children:
 - Appropriate car seats and seatbelts must be used.
 - Where possible Child Carers must try to not be alone with a child not their own. If this is unavoidable the Child Carer will travel directly to the agreed on location without spontaneous detours.
- Respect for privacy is required during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Child carers are not to be alone with a child while either is changing. Child carers are expected to model appropriate privacy during such activities.
- All aspects of the children’s and youth programs are to be open to observation by parents or guardians.
- Child carers have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at child/youth related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.
- Unscreened volunteers: walk-in volunteers at CYM or in other activities, who are accepted by program leaders to assist with programs, are not considered child carers as in needing to have requisite clearances (police/child abuse registry). Any unscreened volunteer must be supervised at all times by someone with clearances.

Discipline Policy

Discipline used by Canadian Yearly Meeting will be compatible with our Quaker peace testimony and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990).

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

Child carers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. When a disclosure of child abuse is made the child carer will maintain appropriate pastoral care of the child/youth/person making the disclosure. In such an situation this should be reported immediately to the **Youth Program Coordinator** for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by provincial law.

This will include:

- Treating each disclosure seriously, not attempting to deny or minimize the impact on the alleged victim.
- Not pushing the person to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Not making promises to confidentiality that cannot be kept.
- Assuring the child/youth/person that they are understood, that their disclosure is being taken seriously, that what happened was not their fault, and that they are justified in disclosing the incident.
- Not making contact with the person who is accused of the abuse.

- Consulting with the Youth Program Coordinator on appropriate next steps regarding contacting appropriate authorities for further investigation of the disclosure.
- Working with the Youth Program Coordinator and, where not the target of the disclosure, parents/guardians of the child/youth disclosing to ensure appropriate on-going support for the child/youth. This may include involvement of Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel and the M of M&C of the home meeting of the family.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Canadian Yearly Meeting or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

- The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- The child carer alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
- An incident report will be completed by those addressing the allegations and the CYM insurance company will be notified.
- CYM will comply with the Province's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse.
- CYM will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by appropriate authorities. In the event there is no statutory investigation of the incident a CYM team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
- Any person who is not found not guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth and will be prevented from being alone with children under CYM care.
- The Yearly Meeting Clerks will be our spokespersons to any media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
- Pastoral care will be arranged for those who desire it.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, child carers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care. No pain medication is to be administered except by parents to their own children.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the Youth Program Coordinator and CYM medic. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Training

Canadian Yearly Meeting will provide training on this child protection policy to all new child carers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

Evaluation and Revisions

This policy will be implemented for a trial period of one year. After that it will be evaluated by parents, Youth Program Committee, Youth Program Coordinator, Program Committee and Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel with revisions being made as necessary. Thereafter this policy and procedure will be evaluated bi-annually.