South Mountain Friends Meeting Child Safety Guidelines

Minute of Concern
We cherish the children and youth in South Mountain Friends Meeting.

We believe that children and youth need a whole community that cares about them and actively engages with them. As a result, we welcome and encourage loving interaction between the adults and young people of our Meeting.

We are sadly aware that sexual abuse of children and youth occurs in religious communities as well as in the wider society. We are therefore committed to guidelines that will help us reduce the risk of harm happening to our beloved children and youth while in our care.

We acknowledge that the most effective safeguard from child abuse is to provide our children with the tools to protect themselves. By respecting children as complete persons, and by relating to them with respect, we allow them to develop self-confidence and to trust our relationship with them. They will then become unresponsive to exploitive behavior and will feel comfortable reporting behavior that makes them uneasy.

Activities covered by these guidelines
All classes and activities held on South Mountain Friends Meeting (SMFM) property or special events sponsored by the meeting held elsewhere (retreats, field trips, etc.) requiring meeting volunteers or paid staff to care for/teach/supervise persons less than 18 years of age should follow these guidelines. Drivers and chaperones of child/youth off-site trips are also covered by this policy.

Childcare worker selection
Adults and teens working with children should be at least 18 years of age and be known to the meeting for a minimum of six months before they may be considered as caregivers or teachers of the meeting’s children. Teens 14 years of age and older may assist adults in working with younger children, but they should not take the place of adult workers.

All caregivers or teachers new to the meeting in the last two years and/or paid babysitters should expect to be asked to provide two references from people not in the Meeting and to be interviewed by the Childcare Coordinator, the Clerk of the Meeting and the Clerk of Ministry and Counsel.
Childcare givers, teachers or paid babysitters who expect to work with the same children all year are asked to consent, in writing, to a criminal and child abuse background check. The results of the check should be kept confidential. Only the Clerk and the Childcare Coordinator should have access to the information. The Meeting should pay for the investigation.

**Expectations Concerning Child Safety**

At no time should any teacher/childcare worker or paid babysitter be alone with a child or youth. There should always be at least one seasoned Friend as part of each care giving team of two. If a situation develops that does not meet this expectation, for example, only one child and one adult caregiver/teacher shows up on a Sunday, the adult should find a partner from the Caregiver Committee or Ministry and Counsel to work with them, or the caregiver/teacher and the child should attend meeting.

Adults helping children in the bathroom should leave the door open and, whenever possible, have another adult in view.

All SMFM children's programs should take place in locations visible to the public. Programs may be randomly monitored and visited unannounced by any member on the Childcare Committee.

Primary childcare givers, teachers or babysitters should serve on a schedule that is periodically rotated so that the same person is not always caring for the same children.

Any person who is currently under investigation for, or has been convicted of (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse, should not be permitted to work or volunteer in any meeting-sponsored activity or program involving children or youth.

**Procedures for Suspected Child abuse**

Immediately the child should be made safe. Parents should be notified and the child attended to in any way necessary -- including calling 911. Anyone within the meeting community who is aware of any suspicious or inappropriate behavior of suspected (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse of a child should also report the incident as soon as possible, to one of the following clerks: (listed in the preferred reporting order) Clerk of the Meeting, the Childcare Coordinator, and/or Clerk of Ministry and Counsel.
According to Oregon law, the Clerk of the Meeting must report the incident, as soon as possible, to The Jackson County Department of Human Services hotline at 866 840 2741 M-F 8 am – 5 pm, the Ashland police at 541 488 2211 (local police if off-site), 911 or Jackson County Sheriff Department 541-774-6800.

The Clerk of the Meeting should serve as the spokesperson with any media representatives who become involved, unless the meeting chooses someone else.

The person who was identified as hurting the child will be asked to refrain from interaction with the children of the meeting until the issue has been investigated and resolved to the satisfaction of the Clerk of the Meeting, Clerk of Ministry and Counsel, and the Coordinator of Childcare.

A care committee should be set up for the child and the child’s family. A separate committee should be set up for the person identified as hurting the child, if that person is a member or attender of the Meeting.

If necessary, the insurance company should be informed of the events.

**Publication and Review**
These guidelines shall be published either in the meeting newsletter or via the meeting’s email list, whichever the Meeting feels is most appropriate.

There shall be a review of these guidelines every three years or as needed. Any revisions must be approved in Meeting for Business.

All childcare givers/teachers should acknowledge their agreement to abide by these guidelines by signing them. A signed copy shall be kept on file for each caregiver/teacher.

*Guidelines updated by Ministry & Counsel April 2018*

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*I have read, understand and agree to follow the South Mountain Friend’s Meeting Child Safety Guidelines.*

Signature ........................................ Date ___________________

Printed Name ..........................................................