

Tempe Friends Meeting

Guidelines for Child Safety

Approved 11/9/14

Introduction

Quakers believe that there is that of God in every person. We are committed to honoring that of God in everyone and to providing an environment in which every member, attender, and visitor — whether a child or an adult — can be truly free from harm, fear or dishonor. We respect each other through our actions and in that spirit we adopt these guidelines.

Tempe Friends Monthly Meeting cherishes the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. They are a vital part of our community. With God's help, we seek a community where no child is at risk for emotional, physical or sexual abuse, and where no adult or child is at risk for false accusation. We seek a community where a mutual sense of trust allows children and adults to speak out when they feel uncomfortable or unsafe, where difficult decisions can be discussed and where our loving concern for one another is strengthened, not diminished, by these discussions.

We have adopted the guidelines outlined in this document. Our goal in adopting them is to protect the children and youth of Tempe Friends Monthly Meeting from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting individuals from false accusations, and to recognize certain state law requirements that may be applicable. As the guidelines are put into practice, we intend to periodically review and modify them as needed to ensure that they serve their purpose.

Guidelines for Child Safety

1. For purposes of these Guidelines, the terms “child,” “children,” and “youth” are defined as including anyone under the age of eighteen.
2. As representatives of Tempe Monthly Meeting, our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach. Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing.
3. We are each expected to promptly discuss concerns about inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior with the Presiding Clerk or the Convenor of the Counsel and Oversight Committee.
4. We encourage families to discuss appropriate touching with their children. Any of these guidelines relating to touching of children do not apply to related family members.
5. All teaching areas will be visible and un-lockable. It should be the custom to leave bathroom (when not in use) and closet doors open, as well as classrooms when noise is not an issue.
6. Adults who work with children need to create a climate of open communication.
7. Some children will not want to be touched and may not want to share details about their lives. They should not be pressured to do so.
8. It is less likely to be considered inappropriate or misconstrued when adults make every effort not to be alone with a single child in areas that are isolated. Touching and affection should be given preferably when in the presence or in clear view of other adults.
9. When someone other than a family member is diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the restroom, two adults should be present, or a single adult should leave the door open.
10. When touching children, contact should generally be limited to the hand, shoulder, or upper back. Children should never be touched in a place normally covered by a bathing suit unless for a clear medical necessity and then only in the presence of another adult.
11. Under no circumstances may an adult hit a child.
12. Adults should not initiate or encourage physical contact with children such as wrestling, horseplay, or any other high contact games
13. Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth. (For example it is generally appropriate for a young child to sit in an adult's lap but is not appropriate for older children to behave this way.)
14. Children of all ages should be encouraged to be respectful of each others bodies at all times. They should not touch another child unless they ask permission first.
15. Children will not be asked to ‘keep a secret’. The occasional ‘surprise’ planned by children for the adults will be distinguished from ‘a secret’.
16. Children’s activities away from the meetinghouse are coordinated through the parents and with their parents’ consent. More than one adult should accompany the children to these activities and parents are always encouraged to participate.
17. Members and attenders of the meeting are encouraged to take a turn teaching first day school.

18. All participants in activities with children are highly encouraged to attend an annual training on child safety conducted by the Children's Religious Education Committee, which includes these guidelines and reporting processes, and should have signed that they did so.

19. Meetings on child safety will occur typically at the beginning of each school year and/or when new attenders have brought their children to the meeting or are volunteering to work with the children.

Guidelines for Responding to Incidents of Concern

1. Dealing with the Child Reporting an Incident

The Children's Religious Education Committee will develop guidelines for responding to an incident. A member of the Children's Religious Education Committee (preferably a teacher or former teacher) will first talk to the child to get information, and provide comfort where necessary, and then talk to the child's parents. The Meeting will offer to pay for professional counseling for the child if the Children's Religious Education Committee and/or the Counsel and Oversight committee think it is warranted.

2. Incidents Not Required to be Reported to an External Agency

This section pertains to those incidents or conditions of a nature not requiring reporting to an external agency, namely, where it is unreasonable to suspect any illegal behavior or outcome. Examples include behaviors which violate Quaker practice or testimony; otherwise create discomfort to the children of the Meeting and/or their parents, caregivers *or other adults*. The matter may relate to any activity under the Meeting's sponsorship.

a. **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be honored by the Counsel and Oversight Committee, subject to the rights of parents, guardians, legal obligations, the safety of others and voluntary consent for disclosure.

b. **Processing:** The Counsel and Oversight Committee will proceed promptly to consider the incident and initiate an appropriate response. Special care should be taken to protect the well-being of children and to address the concerns of parents.

c. **Follow-through:** Meeting care and support should be provided to all who are involved using a Spirit-led process. This includes those individuals identified as either real or perceived perpetrators and/or victims. It may be helpful to call on resources from outside the Meeting.

The Counsel and Oversight Committee, along with the Presiding Clerk, and others if requested, shall provide support and comfort to the family with their consent, as soon as possible after an incident of abuse or inappropriate touch, in a Spirit-led process.

Support and comfort may include such things as meals, housing, transportation for adults, spouses, and children, for a time, until facts can be discerned, informal meetings for family involved in the incident with members of the Counsel and Oversight Committee.

Mandatory Reporters

State law (ARS 13-3620; see <http://www.azleg.gov/ars/13/03620.htm>) requires that persons of certain specific occupations must report or cause a report to be made to the county social services department or to the county sheriff any event or conduct for which there is reasonable cause to know or suspect abuse or neglect, or to know of conditions that would reasonably result in such. These mandatory occupations include, but are not limited to, schoolteachers, health care professionals, and counselors. *First Day School teachers are not required to follow this mandate unless they have current professional certifications, licenses, etc.* Any such person is required to report wherever and whenever he or she becomes aware of a reportable incident, and thus would be required to report any incidents occurring during Meeting activities.

Unlawful child abuse and neglect in Arizona is defined in ARS 13-3620, Section P. The Counsel and Oversight Committee should be promptly notified of any required report to an external agency.

3. Incidents Reported to Others

a. **Reporting to an External Agency:** Any person not a mandatory reporter as described above, but who becomes aware of any event or conduct for which there is reasonable cause to know or suspect abuse or neglect, or to know of any conditions that would reasonably result in such, should take steps to report to the Presiding Clerk or to direct the matter to any member of the Counsel and Oversight Committee. If the Counsel and Oversight Committee is informed of the incident, and agrees that there is reasonable cause to know or suspect abuse or neglect, or to know of conditions that would reasonably result in such, that Committee will report or cause a report to be made to Child Protective Services (1-888-767-2445), and to the police department.

b. **Primary Liaison:** Once a required report is made by any party, the convenor of the Counsel and Oversight Committee should serve as the primary liaison between the external agency and the Meeting and its members and attenders, or appoint an individual to serve in that capacity. This liaison is intended to be the point of contact between the Meeting and external parties, including agencies, parents, the accused, the Meeting and those in the community involved, the media and general public.

c. **Insurer Notification:** The Meeting's insurer should be notified in a timely manner of any reporting to an external agency.

4. Matters Internal to the Meeting: the Committee should insofar as possible follow the guidelines for Non-Reported Incidents in handling all related matters internal to the Meeting.

These Guidelines, once adopted by Tempe Friends Meeting, will be made available to Meeting members and attenders by email and regular mail. Notice of its existence will be posted on our website. The Guidelines will be reviewed periodically by the Counsel and Oversight Committee.

References consulted by Tempe Friends Meeting in preparation of their document:

- Tempe Elementary School District Handouts to staff – 6/13

References consulted by Durango Friends Meeting in preparation of their document on which this is

based, include:

- Religious Society of Friends Australia Yearly Meeting, January 2008
- Ann Arbor Monthly Meeting, Policy for the Protection and Safety of Children and Youth
- Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse at Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 3/2006
- Consultation with licensed psychologist Candace Alburn, Durango, Colorado.