

Child Safety and Abuse Prevention Minute, Portland Friends Meeting

After many years of thoughtful consideration, we ask the Meeting to approve the following Minute.

The purpose of this Minute is to provide our community with guidance regarding child safety and abuse prevention issues, and to facilitate open discussion of this topic.

We at Portland Friends Meeting are committed to recognizing that of God in all of us. Consistent with our testimonies of equality, integrity, and community, we are clear in our commitment to assure the safety of all members of our community.

No community is immune from the problems and concerns of the larger world. We seek God's help in creating an environment where no child is at risk for emotional, physical or sexual abuse and where no adult is at risk for false accusation.

We understand that issues of inappropriate conduct and abuse are troubling to contemplate. When these difficult issues are discussed with tenderness and loving concern, we feel our community is strengthened, not diminished. In addition, we feel that an open discussion of these issues acts as a powerful deterrent.

Youth Religious Education, with the support of Ministry and Counsel, will develop and implement guidelines for child safety in alignment with those recommended by New England Yearly Meeting. When completed, these guidelines will be distributed to the PFM community and posted in our classrooms.

We also propose the formation of a Response Committee to receive concerns in this area. This committee would be comprised of the clerk(s) of Youth Religious Education, Ministry and Counsel, and Portland Friends Meeting, as well as the Youth Religious Education Coordinator(s). When a concern is raised, the Response Committee is charged with informing relevant parties and taking appropriate action in a timely fashion. Others may be called upon by the committee for help and guidance as the situation requires. All concerns will be handled mindful of the balance between the need for confidentiality, respect for all parties involved, and our obligations under the law.

By approving this Minute on Child Safety and Abuse Prevention, Portland Friends Meeting embraces this issue as a community-wide concern, and affirms our commitment to the safety of our children and adults.

Approved January 2, 2007