

Newtown Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Child Safety Policy and Background Check Procedure – May 2019

To assure the safety of the children of Newtown Meeting and compliance with current Pennsylvania law, the Ad Hoc Child Safety Committee and Children's Religious Education recommend:

1. Anyone (teen or adult) who works with, or is directly involved with, our youth must be active in the meeting and known to the meeting community for a minimum of six months. This includes First Day School (FDS) teachers, substitute FDS teachers, and babysitters.
2. Drop off for children's religious program begins at 9:45 am and ends at 10:55 am. Parents ensure safety arrival by dropping children off upstairs. At the end of the religious program CRE teachers will escort those children who attend Meeting for Worship downstairs to reunite with their families. Children who do not attend Meeting for Worship will be escorted into the nursery for child care. Child care runs in tandem with Meeting for Worship and begins by 11:00 am for preschool and younger and 11:20 am for school-aged and older. A babysitter and an adult will escort those children attend Meeting for Worship up to babysitting at 11:20 am. All children will be escorted back downstairs just before announcements to be reunited with their families.
3. We will employ the best practice known as "the rule of three" which, in brief, asserts that minors are best protected when in groups of at least three people. To this end, no one adult should be alone with a child or teenager under the age of 18. In addition, no teenaged babysitter should be alone with a child in care. Consequently, we will employ the following guidelines for staffing:
 - a. For young children (preschool-aged or younger), we should have a minimum of two sitters (adults and/or teens), even if only one young child is present. This will ensure a minimum of three people in the room.
 - b. For school-aged children, we should have a minimum of one adult or teen with two or more children. This will ensure a minimum of three people in the room.
 - c. In an effort to support and mentor our teenaged sitters, whenever possible, we will have at least two adults in First Day School classes and at least one adult in child care.
 - d. There will be times, such as during summer child care and other circumstances, when it is not possible to strictly follow the rule of three. In these cases, we will ensure that adults and babysitters are with children in open and accessible areas

(such as the nursery, playground, and FDS classes) and that other adults will check in periodically and unpredictably.

4. We will ensure that all adult and teenage volunteers have appropriate clearances. Per Pennsylvania law, any volunteer age eighteen or over who is responsible for a child's welfare, in that this person "provides permanent or temporary care, supervision, mental health diagnosis or treatment, training or control of a child in lieu of parental care, supervision and control" or "provides care, supervision, guidance or control of children AND has routine interaction with children (meaning "regular and repeated contact: that is "integral" to the volunteer's responsibilities) must have:
 - a. A PA State Police criminal history certification
 - b. A Department of Human Services' child abuse history certification
 - c. An FBI fingerprint background check OR have lived in the state of Pennsylvania continuously for the last ten years
 - d. Affirmed in writing that they are not disqualified from working with children due to a conviction or placement on a child abuse registry in any state
 - e. The understanding that if the volunteer is arrested or convicted of a crime (outlined in state law) that limits contact with children or places them on the state child abuse registry, the volunteer must notify the clerk of the Meeting within 72 hours.
 - f. These certifications are repeated every 60 months
5. These certifications may be conducted independently or through the PYM online system. For existing certifications and FBI Clearances that must be completed outside the system, a representative from Children's Religious Education will collect digital copies of the originals and store them in an electronic file.
6. For teachers, classroom assistants, and those who watch children in the nursery, the Children's Religious Education Committee will pay for any certifications not paid for by the state, unless a volunteer wishes to pay for their own certification.
7. Per Pennsylvania law, any volunteer age eighteen or older who is responsible for the child's welfare (see #3) is a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Children's Religious Education will work together to ensure that all volunteers have adequate training to understand their rights and responsibilities as mandatory reporters. Training will be offered by Children's Religious Education for new volunteers.
8. Per Pennsylvania Law, any volunteer age eighteen or older who has a good faith reason to suspect child abuse or neglect must immediately report the suspected abuse to child line: www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or 1800-932-0313. A record of this report of suspected abuse should be shared with the clerk of the meeting.

9. If a child under the care of a teenage babysitter confides that they have been a victim of any kind of abuse at home, in our meeting, or anywhere else, the sitter will immediately contact the babysitting coordinator or trusted adult on CRE. The teen should not try to interview the child or in any way seek further information from the child.
10. During the children's religious education program as well as babysitting and including holiday events, no child is allowed to be upstairs without proper chaperones. Children are not allowed to sit in the foyer between the classrooms nor be in any classroom spaces alone.
11. Children's Religious Education will annually review the Child Safety Policy and the clearance status of all volunteers.