

Old Chatham Monthly Meeting Child Protection Policy

Policy to Reduce the Risk of Child Abuse

(approved 10 August 2014 – amended by committee January, 2023)

A. INTRODUCTION

This policy has been developed to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, that our Meeting environment is a place where children are protected from child abuse. We hope that its establishment and application will lead to a climate of security and trust for all Old Chatham Monthly Meeting (OCMM) children, and the adults and youth who work with them.

B. TO WHOM IS THIS POLICY APPLICABLE?

- First Day School teachers and assistant First Day School teachers
- Adults and youth providing care for children
- Paid employees who work with children
- Adults and youth driving children (other than their own) in vehicles to or from Meeting-sponsored events at the request of OCMM event coordinators
- Adult and youth volunteers who supervise Meeting-sponsored overnight events
- Adults and youth who may provide one-on-one counseling or mentoring to children
- Children aged 11 through 17 who are involved with caring for younger children

C. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMINISTERING THE POLICY

The Meeting will have a Safety Committee with names brought forward annually by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Meeting. It will have two to four members, comprised of the Clerk from Children and Youth Committee and up to three other members of the Meeting. The Meeting Safety Committee will identify an individual outside of the Meeting to be on call to work with OCMM in the event of an incident.

D. DEFINITIONS

Child (children): youth, or minor – any person(s) seventeen years of age or younger

Adult: any person(s) aged 18 years or older

Adult or youth working with children in Old Chatham Monthly Meeting: any adult or minor (11-17) who is teaching, facilitating activities with, or caring for children in the Meeting

Child abuse: Child abuse is defined as harm to a child for which there is no “reasonable” explanation. It includes non-accidental physical injury, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual molestation. Child sexual abuse for the purposes of these procedures will include sexual activity explicit or implicit, sexual advances or insinuations towards children, and sharing indecent material with a child.

E. REGISTRATION PROCESS

1. All individuals who plan to work with children must meet the following criteria:
 - a. fill out and sign a **Registration Form (Appendix A)** providing the names of two references;
 - b. be known to the Meeting as a member or attender for a minimum of six months prior to assuming their duties, or be referred by another Meeting;
 - c. be willing to undergo a national criminal background check;
 - d. fill out and sign a **Background Investigation Consent Form (Appendix B)**;
 - e. attend a training session covering this policy and its implementation.
2. Anyone who has a conviction for a crime against children will not be allowed to participate in religious education of children and youth or other children- and youth-oriented activities.
3. Any employee or volunteer for whom there is an ongoing investigation of an alleged crime against a child will not be allowed to participate in children- and youth-oriented activities until after the investigation is completed and has revealed no basis for concern.

F. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information collected in connection with implementing this policy will be kept in the strictest confidence, to the extent allowed by law.

All papers generated in conjunction with the registration process will be kept strictly confidential. None of these records will be distributed to any entity other than the Safety Committee. The reasons for a negative decision about an applicant for a position working with children will not be publicly revealed. Any applicant has the right to inspect his or her own file in the presence of a member of the Safety Committee and has the right to submit written refutation of any material the applicant deems to be inaccurate or misleading.

The applicant will be provided with a **Non-Disclosure Statement (Appendix C)** signed by a member of the Safety Committee.

G. CONDUCT OF MEETING ACTIVITIES INVOLVING CHILDREN

1. The general rule of “No child left alone with an adult” will prevail. Ideally, there should be at least two teachers, facilitators, or caregivers OR two children in a First Day School classroom. This also applies in other secluded places including restrooms.
2. In the event that only one adult or youth working with children is present with only one child, the door to the classroom should be left open.
3. Field trips or day excursions require the supervision of at least two adults/youth who have been approved as a result of the registration process outlined above.
4. The Safety Committee will conduct training sessions periodically for anyone wishing to teach or assist with teaching First Day School classes or other child or youth activities outlined above. Other adults will be welcome. Training sessions will cover prevention, discovery, and reporting of child abuse incidents.

H. PROCEDURE FOR INDIVIDUALS MAKING OR HANDLING A REPORT OF AN ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE INCIDENT

The person first hearing the allegation of child abuse will:

1. Listen fully and carefully to the complaint
2. Reassure the child that his/her safety is a priority and that his/her complaint is being taken seriously
3. Take measures to protect the child’s privacy and try to find a calm, quiet place for discussing what happened
4. Make a record of the time, the place, the persons involved, the general nature of the incident, and the exact words of the complainant (do NOT conduct an investigation)
5. Immediately inform another adult in the Meeting and a member of the Safety Committee of the alleged abuse

The Safety Committee will:

1. Engage with the child’s parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide support and guidance regarding what is best for the child (e.g., seeking medical care), or if a parent/guardian is implicated, then consult with other committee members about the next course of action
2. Fill out an **Incident Report Form (Appendix D)** documenting the complaint and the child’s exact words in describing what happened as a record of the complaint
3. Discern if there is reasonable cause to make an immediate report to the state authorities (at 800-635-1522 if person reporting is a state-mandated reporter, or 800-342-3720 for all others)
4. If a report is made to the state authorities, (a) copy the **Incident Report Form**, (b) seal the original in an envelope, (c) have the individual(s) making the report sign across the closing flap, and (d) place the envelope in the care of the OCMM Clerk or another officer of the Meeting for use by the state authorities in their investigation of the claim

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5. If not reported to the state authorities, place the **Incident Report Form** in the confidential records maintained by the Child Protection Committee
6. Inform the Meeting's insurance company as required by the insurance policy
7. Review the case and this policy statement to ensure that all procedures have been followed, and work with the insurance company or legal counsel as needed concerning the alleged incident

OCMM's policy is not to respond to media inquiries.

I. FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES

The Safety Committee will follow the incident through to its resolution. The Committee will also work with the Meeting to complete the follow-up actions as identified in the "Follow-Up" sections of the **Incident Report Form (Appendix C)**.

Appendix A: Registration Form

**Old Chatham Monthly Meeting
REGISTRATION FORM
FOR THOSE WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

I wish to submit my name as a teacher, facilitator, or caregiver for children in the Old Chatham Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Last

First

Middle (aliases)

Present address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Occupation _____ Work Phone _____

If less than one year:

Previous Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Occupation _____ Work Phone _____

Have you ever been in counseling for, arrested for, charged with, under probation for, or convicted of a crime against a child (age 17 or below)? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please explain or provide documented record of the resolution of this issue.

Personal References (2) – non-family members

Name	Address	Telephone

Can you confirm that you have been attending this Meeting for at least six months?

If not, please append a letter of introduction from another Meeting.

Print Name _____ Date _____

Applicant's Signature _____

Appendix B: Background Investigation Consent Form

A note to those wishing to work with children at Old Chatham Monthly Meeting:

Old Chatham Monthly Meeting with some reluctance has decided to require both registration for those working with children in the Meeting and consent to conduct a background check. It is the aim of this process to make sure all people entrusted with the care of our children have the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to protect the children in our Meeting. We hope that those who do not pass our screening process will remain in our community and bless the Meeting with their presence.

Friends have historically been called to genuineness and simplicity in life and speech, and it is against our practice to mistrust the word of those who join us in worship. We hope that continued prayer and consideration will help us to develop a policy that reflects this principle while it protects the well-being of our children.

Further, we regret that the information used in this process comes from a criminal justice system that is deeply flawed and inequitable. Friends also embrace forgiveness and do not wish to turn away anyone who joins us in fellowship, including those who have been convicted of crimes. We, as a Meeting, pledge to work towards a fair and just criminal justice system and a society that recognizes that of God in every person, including those who have committed crimes or rejoin us after serving time in prison.

Our decision to require registration and consent to conduct a criminal background check for those who work with children in our Meeting is a practical one, about how best to secure our children's safety, rather than a measurement of the inherent worth of anyone who seeks to join our community.

**Old Chatham Monthly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends
BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION CONSENT FORM**

(See REGISTRATION PROCESS)

I, _____ (applicant's complete name)
authorize Old Chatham Monthly Meeting and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, education, criminal, or police records, including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records, for the purpose of ascertaining that I have not been convicted of a crime against a child.

I release Old Chatham Monthly Meeting and/or its agents and any person or entity, which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims, or lawsuits in regard to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

Print Name _____ Date _____

Applicant's Signature _____

Social Security Number: _____

Appendix C: Non-Disclosure Statement

**Old Chatham Monthly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends
NON-DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

To assure the protection and preservation of the confidential information regarding the background records and reference check of current or potential employees and volunteers, Old Chatham Monthly Meeting, its officers or assigns agree to release any of the obtained information only to the OCMM Meeting Safety Committee (see Section C: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THIS POLICY under the *Old Chatham Monthly Meeting Child Protection Policy*) and to no one else, to the extent allowed by law.

Old Chatham Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
by:

Print Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____
Member of the Meeting Safety Committee

Appendix D: Incident Report Form

**Old Chatham Monthly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends
CHILD ABUSE ALLEGATION
INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

Old Chatham Monthly Meeting, P.O. Box 165, Old Chatham, NY 12136
(518) 794-0259

Fill out a separate Incident Report Form for each child.

Date of incident: _____ Time of incident: _____

Name of child involved: _____

Date of birth: _____ Telephone #: _____

Parents'/guardians' names: _____

Notification of family: Who was contacted? (name(s) and relationship to child)

By whom: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Child's home address:

Description of allegation (quote as exactly as possible the child's first words):

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Were there any witnesses? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what are the names of the witnesses: _____

Was first aid or treatment was required and given? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please provide details, including who provided the treatment.

What other immediate action was taken? By whom?

Report submitted by:

Print Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Office/Committee: _____

If second person involved in completing the report:

Print Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Office/Committee: _____

Child abuse is defined as harm to a child for which there is no “reasonable” explanation. It includes non-accidental physical injury, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual molestation. (The New York State Definitions can be found in the *Procedure for Child Abuse Allegation/Incident.*) Child abuse should be immediately reported to state authorities at 800-635-1522 (if you are a state mandated reporter) or 800-342-3720 (for all others).

Do not complete this page when completing the Incident Report. The following section is only for later use by the Safety Committee.

Short-Term Follow-Up

What immediate follow-up was taken to resolve the incident (e.g., who met with whom, what did they agree to do, what action did they take)?

What other follow-up steps should OCMM take (e.g., change the locks on the doors)?

Long-Term Follow-Up

What long-term follow steps did OCMM take (e.g., revise the reporting procedures)?