

# **Policy for Prevention of Sexual and Physical Abuse in PYM Programs and Activities**

## **Short Title: Abuse Prevention Policy**

**May 2010**

Pacific Yearly Meeting takes reasonable and necessary precautions to insure that our children, young people, and the adults who work with them are safe and secure during their programs and activities, and that the safety and reputation of teachers and program organizers is also protected. However, in an organization made up almost entirely of volunteers, strict requirements regarding references and background checks are cumbersome at best and nearly impossible to enforce. It becomes the responsibility of *all* who work with children and young people to be aware of situations in which abuse might occur and prevent those occurrences by following strict guidelines.

### **Volunteers:**

- All volunteers who work with children and young people are well known (active members and attenders for at least six months before the event, for example) to the program organizers or to their meetings so that the program organizer may easily determine their suitability.
- Any occasional or casual volunteers who drop in to help may not be left alone with the children or any child not their own, except in an emergency. This includes teen volunteers with children.
- One-to-one conversations and activities not visible to others, even by fully trusted and familiar volunteers, are strongly discouraged.

### **Program activities:**

- All programs, rooms, activities are staffed by at least two adults.
- Locations of activities, programs, classes are easily accessible by parents and other concerned adults—an area outdoors, or with windows, or near adult activities.
- Field trips or activities in a remote location include an extra adult—for example, two to stay with the group, one to go for help.

### **Responding to reports of suspected abuse:**

- All reports of suspected abuse are taken seriously, and heard with compassion and without judgment. It is not the responsibility of the report taker to decide whether or not abuse has occurred. Reports made to volunteers or parents must be shared with one of the following, who will then notify the others: the Adult Clerk of JYM, the Children's Program Committee Clerk, the Clerk of M&O, and Clerk of PYM. However, when a teacher reports suspected abuse to a clerk, the responsibility to report to

- the official agencies does not shift to the clerk. The person hearing the initial report is responsible for the report.
- Teachers, medical workers, and therapists are mandated reporters and must report any incidents of suspected abuse as defined by law. We should hold PYM program organizers and teachers to the same standard. The person hearing the report, or a clerk as listed above must make a report to the local child protective service hotline or local law enforcement.
  - All involved adults are held to a standard that respects the confidentiality, sensitivity and reputation of all concerned.

Sexual abuse may include, but is not limited to:

- verbal or visual obscenities,
- unwanted sexual comments, teasing or jokes,
- unwanted sexual or suggestive touching or closeness,
- pressure for dates or meeting alone,
- sexual intercourse or touching without consent,
- sexual intercourse, contact, or touching, even with consent, between two minors or between a minor and an adult,
- any sort of threat, implied or stated, if the victim “tells.”

State information regarding mandated reporting can be found at <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/PUB132.pdf>

Note regarding sexual harassment and unwanted sexual activity between adults:

Although this policy is primarily concerned with the safety of children, similar care and concern is extended to adults who report unwanted sexual attention. These reports are referred to the Clerk of M&O, who will discern how to proceed. One important concern may be whether or not, and how, to involve police or other authorities.

Approved by Pacific Yearly Meeting Ministry & Oversight Committee, May 1, 2010