

# **Southeastern Yearly Meeting Child Abuse Prevention Procedures**

**including the Child SEYM Child Abuse  
Prevention Policy**

First Edition  
October 16, 2006

## History of Revisions

This section must be updated whenever changes to this document are approved by SEYM.

- First edition, October 2006, The first edition has been adopted as a working paper after review by the SEYM Executive Committee and others. Section 2 contains the SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy, which was approved by the Yearly Meeting at the Annual Gathering, 2005. Refer any questions or requests for changes to the SEYM Executive Committee, Nancy Fennell, clerk.

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# SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures

## Section 1: Introduction

### ***SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Program Goals***

- Provide a safe environment for participants in SEYM youth programs
- Avoid child abuse at SEYM events
- Comply with legal and insurance requirements

### ***About this Document***

This document includes the SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy and describes the procedures, requirements and guidelines for compliance with the SEYM child abuse prevention policy. It is to be used in conjunction with the following:

1. The presentation, “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse”, which was developed by the District 3 Regional Child Abuse Prevention Task Force, which is facilitated by the Child Abuse Prevention Project at the University of Florida Department of Pediatrics. A copy of that presentation should accompany this document whenever and however it is distributed.
2. The *SEYM Youth Program Worker Training Manual*.
3. The *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines for Volunteers*.

The *Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures* are intended to be used within the context of an SEYM event youth program which provides an educational and enjoyable experience with emphasis on the beliefs, values, testimonies and practices of the Society of Friends. The development and implementation of a good Friends’ youth program are outside the scope of this document.

The most critical elements of the SEYM Youth Program Worker Training are the requirements for adult youth program workers at SEYM events and the recognition and reporting of child abuse. Those elements are covered in the presentation, “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse” and in the procedures in this document. However, child abuse is not the only area of concern. If a child is harmed during an SEYM event youth program, the Yearly Meeting may be held accountable. The *SEYM Youth Program Worker Training Manual* covers a broader range of child safety concerns as well as guidelines for avoiding suspicion or unwarranted accusation of child abuse in SEYM Event Youth Programs.

The *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines for Volunteers* are a set of one-page summary guidelines, intended for volunteers in SEYM youth programs. Each is a subset of the information contained in the *Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures* and the *SEYM Youth Program Worker Training Manual*. There is one summary pertaining to each of three youth age groups: Wee Friends, Elementary School Young Friends, and

Teen Friends. These summaries are to be given to all non-registered volunteers in SEYM event youth programs.

## **Section 2. The SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy**

The following is the complete text of the SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy, as approved by the Yearly Meeting at the Annual Gathering, 2005.

### ***The SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy***

Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) will take all reasonable precautions to insure the safety of the children and youth at our Gatherings and conferences. To that end, we will provide appropriate screening of all staff and volunteers working with children and young people. It has been, and continues to be, the policy of SEYM to have two adult Youth Care Workers present at all times.

It is the policy of SEYM to follow the procedures outlined below. This policy and these procedures apply to everyone who works with children and young people under the age of 18, whether paid, compensated by work grants or fee waivers, or volunteer, who are working with SEYM youth at Yearly Meeting, as Friendly Adult Presences or presenters at SEYM events, or providing child care at Interim Business Meetings. In the procedures below, we refer to these people as “Youth and child care workers.” “SEYM staff” refers to the paid employee(s) of SEYM.

1. All potential youth and child care workers shall provide three references, including at least one who has direct experience of the person’s work with children and at least one who is a professional or institutional reference, rather than a personal one. Family members should not be used as references. References will be checked, and written records of reference calls kept on file. Reference checks will be repeated every 4 to 6 years for continuing workers.
2. All youth and child care workers (other than paid [local] babysitters) who will serve full time (that is, for the length of the event and not for just one day or as a lend a hand volunteer), must be active in a monthly meeting for at least six months prior to being hired. This shall be verified with the meeting clerk. Verification will be repeated every 2 to 4 years for continuing workers.
3. All workers who will have supervisory roles, or who will have overnight responsibility for children or young people, or who may be alone with young people, will consent, in writing, to a criminal and/or child abuse background check. The checks may be performed by SEYM staff in national and state databases. These checks will be repeated every five years for continuing workers.
4. All information from references, monthly meetings, and background checks will be held in the strictest of confidence. Files will be maintained on appointed staff for up to 20 years (until the youngest child is majority plus 2 years) in a secure file. Access to these files will be limited to the greatest extent practical. These files are the property of SEYM. Upon written request to the SEYM clerk, workers shall have access to their files except for letters of reference, which are confidential and not available to the worker. The file is not available to others outside of SEYM.

5. Workers who have not undergone the more thorough screening, including “walk in” volunteers, will be supervised at all times. Under no circumstances will these workers be left alone with a child other than their own.
6. Should SEYM staff have a question or concern about information revealed during the hiring procedures, they must consult in confidence with the Personnel Committee whose decisions shall be final.
7. SEYM will provide abuse prevention training for those in leadership roles. This training may be mandatory for workers in certain positions.
8. Detailed procedures, restrictions and guidelines will be developed and explained to all youth and childcare workers.
9. Any allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. All such allegations are to be reported immediately to the SEYM clerk or designee AND if abuse is suspected, called into the State Child Abuse Hotline. Additional procedures will be developed to protect and care for the victim(s) of abuse, the alleged perpetrator(s), and others close to both. Our existing guidelines and procedures for Sexual Harassment should form a good basis for these procedures. In addition, SEYM shall comply with all government regulations for reporting abuse.

## Section 3. Definitions

### ***Definitions of Terms to Identify Youth Program Workers***

**Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker:** an adult who has been through an application process and has been approved by the Yearly Meeting. Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers are approved to work with youth on an extended basis and may supervise non-registered volunteers at SEYM events with planned youth programs.

**Designated SEYM Youth Program Worker:** an adult who has been selected to be a primary or full time worker in an SEYM youth program. A Designated SEYM Youth Program Worker must become a Registered SEYM youth program worker before the commencement of his or her work with youth in the SEYM Youth Program.

**Youth Program Volunteer or Part-time Volunteer:** an adult or older youth who serves in a youth program, usually temporarily, assisting the Designated SEYM Youth Program Workers, acting as a resource person, leading or presenting particular activities, etc. This person works under the supervision of the Designated SEYM Youth Program Worker(s) and may or may not be a Registered SEYM youth program worker.

### ***Definition of Child Abuse***

The following are the definitions of child abuse. The definitions which are provided in the presentation, “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse” are included here in italics.

**Child abuse:** Physical, emotional or sexual abuse of a minor (under the age of 18) by an adult or another minor.

**Physical abuse:** *The intentional injury of a child, ranging from minor bruises and lacerations to severe neurological trauma and death.* This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.

**Emotional abuse:** *Emotional abuse may occur when a parent/caregiver fails to provide the understanding, warmth, attention, and supervision the child needs for healthy psychological growth. Also, when a parent/caregiver ignores, terrorizes, blames, belittles or otherwise makes a child feel that he’s worthless and incompetent.*

**Sexual abuse of a child:** *Sexual abuse occurs when an adult exploits a child for sexual gratification. Sexual abuse is not limited to intercourse. Exposing oneself to a child and fondling a child’s genitals are considered sexual abuse. So is using a child for production of pornographic materials.*

Sexual abuse includes the following: unwelcome sexual activity with a child of any age; any form of sexual activity, whether unwelcome or welcome, with an underage child. Under Florida law, any sexual activity with a child under the age of 16 is a crime. Any sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old is a crime if the other person is over 24 years of age or in a “position of familial or custodial authority” over the child. “Lewd and lascivious conduct” in the presence of a child under 16 is also a crime. (Ref. Florida statutes chapters 794 and 800.)

## **Section 4. Requirements for Youth Leadership at SEYM Events**

### ***Requirements for Adult Presence***

- During the time when a child is in an SEYM Event Youth Program session, at no time should the child be alone with an adult who is not a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker or the child's parent or sponsor at the event.
- Two registered adult youth program leaders shall be assigned to each age group/room.
- At all times, two adults, at least one of whom is a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker, shall be present with each group.

### ***Requirements for a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker***

A Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker shall be active in a monthly meeting or worship group for at least 6 months prior to any event where he or she will serve either as a Designated SEYM Youth Program Worker or as a stand-by substitute. A Registered SEYM Youth Program Leader must be at least 18 years of age.

### **Application Process**

- The applicant is named by the event youth program coordinator or makes a request to the SEYM administrative secretary for an application packet.
- The secretary sends the applicant an SEYM packet with a Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) fingerprint card, background check permission and SEYM reference form
- The applicant secures fingerprints from local police (no cost) and returns fingerprint card, FDLE background check permission form and SEYM reference form.
- If the applicant is serving at the request of a particular SEYM event, the event picks up the FDLE child abuse background check cost. Others are requested to send a check to cover this expense,
- The secretary is responsible for sending the materials to the FDLE. (The FDLE needs between 3 and 6 weeks lead time to provide the check,)

### **Yearly Meeting Approval**

- The Yearly Meeting Executive Committee appoints a small committee to review the application. This review committee may be a subset of the Personnel Committee (which is the Executive Committee), the youth program coordinator and/or the event committee clerk of the first event for which the application is made, or other SEYM members appointed by the Personnel Committee.
- The review committee may contact the clerk of the applicant's monthly meeting to verify affiliation.

- The review committee may contact each of the references and ask about the applicant's suitability as a youth program worker.
- The review committee approves (or disapproves) the applicant as a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker.

### **Training**

- The Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker must complete SEYM training for child abuse prevention prior to serving in an SEYM event youth program.
- Training may consist of reading material and/or classroom time.
- The Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker must make written affirmation of having completed training in the form of written material. The instructor provides written verification when a youth program worker has completed classroom training. Affirmations of training are given to the SEYM administrative secretary to be filed with the other records of Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers.

### **Ongoing Requirements**

- Verification by the clerk of the monthly meeting that the youth leader is still active in the monthly meeting every 2 to 4 years
- Child abuse background check every 5 years as required by FDLE.
- Repeat or review the training every two years, when the training has been changed substantially, or when the youth program worker is to be working with an age group he/she has not led before.

### ***Privacy Protection for Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers***

SEYM protects the privacy of applicants for Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker in accordance with its Child Abuse Prevention Policies and FDLE legal requirements for obtaining background checks.

- All information from references, monthly meetings, and background checks will be kept by the SEYM administrative secretary in the SEYM office or warehouse, in a locked box. Access to those files will be restricted to the administrative secretary, current and future youth leader review committees, and others who may in the future be approved by the Yearly Meeting on a need to know basis.
- Upon written request to the SEYM clerk, youth leader applicants for SEYM Youth Program Worker registration shall have access to their files except for letters of reference.
- Files will be maintained for up to 20 years.
- These files are not available to others outside of SEYM except as required by law or court order. As approved by FDLE, SEYM may provide a copy to another FDLE-approved entity at the request of a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker.

## **Section 5. Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse**

Observed, reported or suspicion of child abuse, as defined in “Section 3. Definitions”, must be reported to appropriate authorities. The Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker is responsible for reporting child abuse. You can report child abuse by calling 1-800-96-ABUSE.

Read or view the presentation “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse”. It includes more detail on reporting child abuse in Florida and for providing supporting information.

### **If you discover, suspect or receive a report of child abuse occurring at the SEYM event you should take the following steps:**

- If the child is with you, endeavor to keep him/her away from the suspected abuser. However, you may not keep a child away from his parent even if the parent is the suspected abuser. If that is the case, report the suspected abuse and let the authorities take it from there.
- Gather (preferably put in writing) the information needed to report the abuse or suspected abuse to authorities.
- Report the abuse by calling 1-800-96-ABUSE.
- As soon as possible, inform the youth program coordinator for the event about the situation.

### **If you discover evidence that a child has been abused before coming to the SEYM event:**

- Gather (preferably put in writing) the information needed to report the abuse or suspected abuse to authorities.
- Report the abuse by calling 1-800-96-ABUSE.
- Inform the youth program coordinator for the event.

Do not attempt to do the job of law enforcement in collecting evidence, other than to provide the information as described in the presentation, “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse”. Incorrect evidence gathering, such as improper questioning of a child, can result in corruption of evidence.

- If there is observed, suspected or reported child abuse, there are sensitive issues of confidentiality for both the child and the accused. Your observations and the information you gather should be treated as highly confidential. You should discuss the event, report or evidence only with the child or children involved and his/their parent(s) or sponsor at the event, any other youth program worker who is directly involved, the youth program coordinator, and with law enforcement authorities. Note that publishing or broadcasting information identifying a sexual offense victim is forbidden by Florida law, Ref: Florida Statute 794.03.
- If a child reports being abused, be as supportive of the child as possible. Do not badger the child or ask leading questions in an attempt to collect evidence. Avoid having multiple adults question the child.

- Meet with the child along with his/her parent(s) or sponsor. This may be done along with the youth program coordinator. Discuss the situation and inform the parents and child of action being taken.
- In a case where other children besides the victim have observed abuse or heard reports of abuse from the child, it may be appropriate to discuss the incident with the other children along with their parents. For the benefit of the children, it is desirable to have this discussion sooner rather than later. However, discussion should wait until law enforcement officers have made their investigation. This must be weighed against the privacy issues for the victim and the adult and the potential further embarrassment to the child. If possible, consult with the youth program coordinator before having any discussion with the children.

## **Section 6: Responsibilities of Youth Program Coordinators and Planners**

### ***Before the Event***

- Make sure that two Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers are scheduled for each session of the youth program.
- Inform new Designated SEYM Youth Program Workers of the requirements and process for becoming Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers. Tell the SEYM administrative secretary the names of newly designated and unregistered youth program workers as soon as possible so that the process of registration can be started in plenty of time before the event.
- Make a list of all Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers who will attend the event.
- Review the child abuse prevention training. Identify Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers who need to take or review the training before the event.
- Provide child abuse prevention training for youth program workers who need to take it before the event.
- Give each designated youth program worker the schedule of adult leaders and volunteers who will participate with his/her group as well as the list of all Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers who will attend the event.
- Review any reports of questionable behavior or suspected child abuse made at recent SEYM events, noting what action was taken.
- If unregistered adult volunteers who will work in the event youth program are identified before the event, provide each volunteer with a copy of the *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines for Volunteers* for the appropriate age group and answer any questions the volunteers have about the child abuse prevention policy or the guidelines.

### ***During the Event***

- Provide copies of the *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines for Volunteers* for the appropriate age group to all Designated SEYM Youth Program Workers, to be given to volunteers in their groups.
- Make sure you know that the Designated SEYM Youth Program Workers are present when they are scheduled to be.
- Ask unscheduled, Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers to fill in if a designated youth program worker cannot be present as scheduled.
- Visit the youth program sessions and speak to children in and out of the sessions to get a feel of what is happening in the youth program.
- Be observant.

### ***If Child Abuse is Suspected or Reported***

- If a youth program worker reports abuse or suspected abuse, the youth program coordinator should immediately do the following:
  - Discuss the incident or report with the youth program worker. Find out whether he or she has reported the abuse.
  - Ask the youth program worker to document the incident or evidence for suspicion. If he or she has not reported the abuse, make sure the abuse is reported either by him/her or by you.
  - Support the reporting SEYM youth worker in taking action as described in Section 5. Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse
- If you observe abuse, suspect abuse or receive a report of abuse from someone who is not a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker, follow the procedures for Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers described in Section 5. Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse.
- Make a written report of the incident, including information supplied by the reporting person, any actions taken, and resolution, if any. The report should be given to the SEYM secretary, to be kept locked up, as the records of Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers are.

## **Section 7. Responsibilities of the SEYM Administrative Secretary**

- Process applications for Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker.
  - Send the packet of materials to the applicant
  - Receive applications from prospective Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers.
  - Request child abuse background checks from FDLE, following FDLE instructions
  - Inform the committee to review applications when an application is received and when FDLE responds to a request for background check.
- Maintain the confidential records related to registration of SEYM youth program workers and reported incidents of child abuse or questionable behavior. By FDLE requirements, the background check information is to be maintained in a locked file box, cabinet or safe in an access-controlled room. The other information should be treated the same way.
- Receive and maintain records of completion of child abuse prevention training for Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers.
- Release information as needed.
  - Background checks may be viewed by the committee to review applications for Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker. By FDLE regulations, these background checks may not be copied and sent to others, with the following exceptions:
    - Release a copy of the FDLE file to the applicant upon written request by the applicant.
    - Release a copy of the FDLE file to other FDLE-approved entities, upon written request by the applicant.
- Other parts of the applications for Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker must be made available to the review committee.
- Identification of Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers may be made to any SEYM member or attender.
- Records of training completion should be made available to SEYM event youth program planners and coordinators.
- Incident reports should be made available only to review committee members, members of the SEYM EC when it is functioning as the SEYM personnel committee, SEYM event youth program coordinators and the individuals who are the subject of the reports.

- Any Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker may access his or her records, except for letters of reference.
- Any collected information must be released as required by law or court order.