

Southeastern Yearly Meeting Youth Program Worker Training Manual

Edition 1

October 16, 2006

History of Revisions

This section must be updated whenever significant changes are made to this document.

- First edition, October 2006. This edition has been adopted as a working paper after review by the SEYM Executive Committee. Please refer questions and requests for changes to the Executive Committee, Nancy Fennell, clerk.

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SEYM Youth Program Training

Section 1. Introduction

Purpose of Youth Program Worker Training

The purpose of the SEYM event youth program worker training is to train youth program workers to:

- Recognize and report child abuse
- Provide a safe environment for youth in the SEYM event youth programs.
- Avoid suspicion or unwarranted accusation of child abuse in SEYM Event Youth Programs
- Comply with legal and insurance requirements. SEYM has stipulated to the insurance company that it will provide child abuse prevention training for youth program workers.

Content of Youth Program Worker Training

The SEYM Youth Program Worker training is 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 Religious Society of Friends. However, the development and implementation of a good Friends' youth program are outside the scope of this training.

The most critical elements of the training are the requirements for adult youth program workers at SEYM events and the recognition and reporting of child abuse. Those aspects are covered in the following documents:

- 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.
- The *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures*.

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.

This training manual provides guidelines for working with youth in the SEYM Event Youth Programs, in order to provide a safe environment for youth and avoid suspicion or unwarranted accusations of child abuse.

One of the ways that children can be hurt is by violent fights or bullying among children. Some of the guidelines in this manual are designed to help avoid and deal with misconduct which could result in hurt children.

Guidelines for Volunteers

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 in this 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.

Definitions

Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined in the presentation, “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse” and the *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures*.

Other Unacceptable Behavior

The following are other definitions of unacceptable behavior. When such behavior falls within the definitions of child abuse, it *is* child abuse. Otherwise, such behavior, particularly when exhibited by a child, is not child abuse, but is unacceptable in the SEYM event youth programs.

Sexual harassment: Verbal or physical teasing, touching, or intimidation of a sexual nature or with reference to one’s gender or sexual orientation. Also, persistent or insistent, unwanted sexual advances or persistent, unwelcome use of sexual jokes or innuendo.

Bully: A person who is habitually cruel to smaller or weaker people. **Bullying:** Any behavior which causes or is intended to cause harm or intimidation. This may include, but is not limited to, physical violence, threats of violence, taunts, vicious or relentless teasing, and/or slurs or epithets regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or physical characteristics.

Inappropriate and Questionable Behavior

The following are definitions of inappropriate and questionable behavior which may not fall within the definitions of child abuse and unacceptable behavior.

Inappropriate behavior (by an adult with a child): Any behavior which could potentially harm the child. Inappropriate behavior may be a single instance of behavior which, if repeated, would be considered sexual harassment or bullying. Behavior which embarrasses the child is usually inappropriate except in cases where an adult youth program worker is appropriately dealing with misconduct by the child; discipline which avoids embarrassing the child is desirable but not always possible.

Questionable behavior (by an adult with a child): Any behavior which is advised against in Sections 2 through 7 in this document and is not covered under the above definitions. Questionable behavior may leave the adult open to suspicion of or accusations of child abuse.

Section 2. SEYM Youth Programs

Youth Program Structure

Depending on the event, the youth program structure may vary. The following information is most pertinent to the SEYM Annual Gathering, but may apply to other events

- The youth program is divided into groups by age and/or grade in school. Each group is assigned two or more Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers. Other volunteers may lead or participate in some sessions.
- Youth program sessions are scheduled at specified times during the day, as described in the event registration materials.
- Requirements of youth and their parents/sponsors are provided with the registration material for the event and at registration.
- Guidelines for adult to child ratios should be observed with pre-teen children, whenever possible. See Section 4: Guidelines when Working with Wee Friends and Section 5: Guidelines when Working with Elementary School Children. Volunteers may serve along with the Designated SEYM Youth Program Workers in order to accomplish this.

Responsibilities of Youth Program Workers

- The Designated SEYM Youth Program Workers are responsible for the safety of the children during the scheduled event youth program sessions. At other times, the parents or adult sponsors of the youth are responsible for them.
- No adult who is not a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker may be left alone with a child without parental or sponsor permission. Emergency situations are addressed in Emergency Situations on page 7. The Designated SEYM Youth Program Workers are responsible for maintaining a positive program environment, making sure guidelines for conduct are discussed in the program and followed.
- The Designated SEYM Youth Program Workers are responsible for preventing and responding to abuse, sexual harassment or bullying within the SEYM youth program, should they occur.
- The Designated SEYM Youth Program Workers are responsible for supervising unregistered volunteer workers in their sessions as described in Section 8: Supervising Unregistered Volunteers

Section 3: Guidelines when Working with Youth of All Ages

Maintain a Positive Program Environment

Maintaining a positive environment and establishing a relationship of trust between the youth and the youth leaders is important, not just for producing a good youth program. In the event of abuse or attempted abuse, it is desirable that the child knows he or she can turn to the youth program worker for help and support.

- Develop a positive program environment by:
 - Discussing acceptable behavior early in the program and repeating as necessary when newcomers enter
 - Including healthy physical activity in the program
 - Dealing with unacceptable behavior promptly, but without malice
- Develop a relationship of trust by:
 - Modeling acceptable behavior
 - Treating the child with respect
 - Using safe touch (shoulder, hand, unless child shies away)
 - Not intruding on a child's personal space
- Avoid:
 - Playing favorites
 - Encouraging competition
 - Using physical punishment or humiliation as discipline
 - Insisting that a child trust you. Avoid saying things like, "Don't you trust me?" Would-be child molesters often try to gain a child's trust. It is safer for a child to mistrust an adult who is too insistent that a child trust him or her.

Appropriate Behavior for Youth Leaders

Appropriate behavior shows how we value and respect our youth. The following are good ways to interact with the youth:

- Treating them with respect. Listening to them and discerning their needs are important to preventing conduct problems.
- Establishing a sense of trust early in the life of a class or group is essential to creating a safe environment.
- Being mindful of playing favorites and being fair.
- Taking children aside when possible during times of confrontation allows them to save face.

The following behaviors can aid in communicating with children:

- Make eye contact
- Observe appropriate interpersonal boundaries, as described in the next section
- Be clear regarding acceptable behavior
- Kneel or sit to be on the same physical level as small children
- Use activities to keep children involved

Appropriate Interpersonal Boundaries

Acceptable touching:

- On the hand (especially with younger children), shoulder or upper back
- In the company of other adults

Unacceptable touching:

- Against a child's will (unless in the case of clear and present danger – see also “Working with Wee Friends” on page 8)
- Against a child's verbally or non-verbally expressed discomfort
- When it would have the effect of over-stimulating a child
- In a place on a child's body that is normally covered by a bathing suit

Behaviors that might be interpreted as intrusive or invasive to youth:

- Teasing or embarrassing a child about his or her body
- Asking a child to sit on your lap or pulling him or her into your lap
- Asking a child to touch you other than on the hand, shoulder or upper back; asking a child for a hug or kiss
- Telling stories or engaging in conversation that is lurid or over-stimulating
- Giving someone a deep back massage

These guidelines should be used judiciously. For example, there are some popular cooperative games which may involve quite a bit of touching. These are acceptable, but the youth program leader should monitor to make sure the situation does not get out of hand. Do not insist that a child participate in this type of activity if she/he doesn't want to.

Maintain a Safe Environment

- Adhere to the requirements in the SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy for adult leadership in the program.
- Ask children of all ages to tell you if they are uncomfortable with or frightened by anything that happens to them at the SEYM event, whether in or out of the youth program sessions.

- Avoid activities which may be dangerous.
- If youth use violence, harassment or bullying, deal with it swiftly.
- Ask for help from other adults if necessary.
- Keep the rules/guidelines for acceptable behavior posted and refer to them if children misbehave.
- Make sure you have the pertinent information for each child, including name, age, and parent or sponsor's name and location.
- If there will be other adults joining the program as volunteers, determine ahead of time from the youth coordinator or event leaders who is coming and whether they are Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers.
- Youth program workers should only release young children to their parents or sponsors, or to persons specified by the parents or sponsors.
- Older youth may be released on their own to go to their parents, meals, etc., at the end of a session. However, the youth program worker should exercise judgment in this and, depending on the circumstances, may need to accompany older children as well. For example, older children should not be set off to walk a long distance through the woods alone.

Preventing Conduct Problems

Although we expect that children raised in Friends' homes will be non-violent and respectful of others, this may not always be the case. In addition, other youth may come as guests. Therefore, the full range of misconduct is possible.

The youth leader should work to avoid conduct problems by:

- Discussing appropriate behavior with the children. Ask them to participate in setting conduct guidelines for the group.
- Promoting cooperative activities, not competition
- Separating children who have a hard time getting along with each other.
- Attempting to distract a child, particularly a young one, if they appear to be starting to misbehave
- Providing for plenty of physical activity
- Providing for rest and quiet time

Dealing with Conduct Problems

- Use an appropriate level of response
- Separate individuals who are not getting along
- Introduce a new activity to change the pace of activity, distract from the problem, etc.
- Discuss the infraction and proper behavior with the perpetrator away from other children, if possible, but within view of another adult.

- Use physical restraint only in case of clear and present danger of harm and with children small enough that you can safely restrain them.
- Remain as calm as possible yourself.
- In extreme circumstances, contact the parent or sponsor of the child immediately.
- Discuss the behavior with the parent or sponsor after the session.

Emergency Situations

- Emergency situations include illness or injury to a child or an adult leader, violence or threats of violence by a child which the leader(s) can't handle and threats to the children from others. Uninvited adults or older youth intruding and behaving in an unacceptable manner could also constitute an emergency.
- If a child is sick or injured, the youth leaders are responsible for getting help for the sick or injured child while also making sure remaining children are properly supervised. In the case of an unconscious child or other severe injury or illness, the youth leaders may call 911 simultaneously with attempting to locate the parent or sponsor and the youth coordinator or other event leadership.
- Depending on the circumstances, response to an emergency will usually require someone to go seek help or find a parent or sponsor or a child to be taken to their parent or sponsor.
- A registered or non-registered adult or a responsible teen-ager may be sent to seek help, leaving at least one Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker with the children.
- If a sick or injured child must be taken to a parent or sponsor, a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker must accompany him/her. Another Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker must stay with the remaining children. If only one Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker is present, try to leave the remaining children with another group where there is a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker. If all else fails, all children should be taken together.
- If a Designated SEYM Youth Program Worker will not be able to be present during a session or must leave a session, he or she must notify the youth program coordinator, who will locate another Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker to take the designated worker's place.

Section 4: Guidelines when Working with Wee Friends

Characteristics of Wee Friends

- **Moral Development:** Preschoolers are very “me-oriented.” They are the center of their own worlds. Their entire view of right and wrong – along with their faith – is based upon what influential models (such as parents and teachers) tell them.
- **Cognitive Level:** Preschoolers' play is symbolic of real life.
- **Potential conduct problems:** Most preschoolers have not learned personal restraint and may use physical violence or tantrums if upset or frustrated.

- Children in this age group normally have a healthy curiosity about their own and others' bodies. They may or may not have been taught about acceptable touch. They should have little if any knowledge of sex. If a child displays a level of sexual knowledge inappropriate to his age, it may be an indication of abuse. (See the presentation "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse".)
- Some children in this age group are undergoing toilet training or have recently become toilet trained.
- While young infants are not usually shy with strangers, growing babies progressively discriminate between familiar people and strangers. Many children go through a very shy stage around two years of age. As they develop language skills, their shyness may diminish.

Working with Wee Friends

- As a general rule, the ratio of children per adult should be no greater than 3:1 for children under the age of 3; 5:1 for children between the ages of 3 and 6.
- Because wee Friends are least able to communicate verbally or to protect themselves, the most important factor in assuring their safety is to have at least two adults present, at least one of which is a SEYM Registered Youth Program Leader, in each group at all times.
- It is acceptable to hold babies if they do not show fear or discomfort. Only do so in the presence of another adult.
- Discussion of acceptable behavior should be concrete: no hitting, kicking, biting, etc. Even small children should have learned some rules of conduct from their parents and can contribute to a discussion of acceptable behavior.
- Explain to wee Friends what to do if they need to go to the bathroom.
- Children in this age group may need to be accompanied to the bathroom. Only a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker should accompany a child to the bathroom. Do not send a small child alone to the bathroom unless it is a bathroom for one, the bathroom door is in sight of a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker and there is no other entrance to it.
- When a parent or sponsor leaves a wee friend in your care, get pertinent information, such as where the parent will be, whether the child is toilet trained, etc.
- In the case of a wee Friend still in diapers, discuss changing diapers with the parent or sponsor. SEYM youth program workers are not required to change diapers. Registered SEYM youth program workers may change diapers by prior agreement with the parent or sponsor.
- There are some situations where a youth program worker may need to touch a very young child against his will. These include diapering a baby who doesn't want to be diapered and wiping the runny nose or messy hands of a child who doesn't want to be wiped, as well as restraining a child from hurting himself or others. In these situations, the adult leaders should act for the health, hygiene and safety of the children. Both adult leaders present should concur with any such action.

Section 5: Guidelines when Working with Elementary School Children

Characteristics of Elementary School Children

Ages 6-8

- **Moral Development:** For younger children, the moral code is “an eye for an eye.” If they are pinched, they pinch back. Personal values are rooted in a “law and order” approach. Things that benefit young children are almost always seen as right, whereas harmful things are almost always viewed as wrong. The world, like their faith, is black and white. At this age “might makes right”, which can lead to displays of aggressive behavior to solve problems between children.
- **Cognitive Level:** Young children think in concrete terms about the ideas and concepts they’re learning. They need help understanding symbolic or abstract ideas.

Ages 9-11

- **Moral Development:** Children at this age begin to see shades of gray in their world. They question authority more and understand that individual values can impact the lives of others. They also begin to understand that doing “wrong things” means more than just “getting into trouble” or facing punishment from parents or teachers. Faith becomes a working, personal faith.
- **Cognitive Level:** Older children continue to think in concrete terms, although by the end of childhood they can more readily understand abstract concepts.

All Elementary School Children

- Children, especially boys, in this age group need plenty of healthy physical activity.
- **Potential conduct problems:** Use of violence, bad language, bullying.
- Children like bathroom jokes which can gross out adults.
- Children in this age group, especially the older ones, may have some curiosity about sex, but normally little knowledge. If a child displays a level of sexual knowledge inappropriate to his age, it may be an indication of abuse. (See the presentation “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse”.)

Working with Elementary School Children

- SEYM recommends a ratio of one adult for every 5 children of this age, at a minimum.
- Children should be involved in setting conduct guidelines for the group. Stress respect for others. Guidelines need to be prominently displayed during all sessions.
- Plan lively, creative, cooperative activities, not competitive activities

Section 6: Guidelines when Working with Middle School Youth

Characteristics of Middle School Youth

- Middle school youth are in a period of rapid change and there may be fairly large differences in size, development and maturity between individuals.
- **Cognitive level:** Cognitive development in the brain is basically complete by this age. All cognitive functions may be expected to be fully operative.
- **Moral development:** Youth of this age are well aware of right and wrong, very capable of empathy for others, and usually have strong interests in “fairness.” They have the moral concepts firmly in mind, but do not yet have the experience and maturity necessary to understand how such concepts are applied in the world.
- Children in this age group are often curious about sex, but may not have much accurate information. Most are not sexually active, but a few may be.
- Children in this age group have been exposed to and may use slurs and epithets which are insulting to women, minorities and those with different sexual orientation.

Working with Middle School Youth

- Middle school youth should be able to set guidelines for conduct within the group, with some guidance from adult leaders. Guidelines need to be prominently displayed during all sessions. They should include guidelines for acceptable or unacceptable public displays of affection within the group sessions.
- Provide an opportunity for the youth to discuss problems, such as bullying, which they have encountered.

When Middle School and High School Programs are Combined

- Combining middle school and high school programs puts together a wide range of ages and maturity levels.
- This provides the potential for older teens to develop leadership skills and for younger teens to benefit from the positive influence of older teen Friends. It also introduces the potential for some special problems, which could include bullying, intimidation, abuse, or harassment of younger children by older teens.
- Prevention of bullying and harassment in this situation begins by setting an expectation for the older youth to be positive role models and guides for the younger. This can be started during the planning process if teens are heavily involved in planning the program. Remind the older youth that the younger teens look up to them with admiration and will be eager to follow the older teens. Praise, acceptance, and approval from the older teens make a powerful and positive experience for the younger teens.

- Some discussions that are appropriate with older teens may not be appropriate with younger ones. The program needs to allow separation into smaller, age oriented groups when necessary.

Section 7: Guidelines when Working with High School Students

Characteristics of High School Youth

- High school age young Friends are very creative and are capable of being self-directed. They should be closely involved in designing and carrying out the program. In some situations they will completely plan and lead the program.
- These youth can understand the need for conduct guidelines. As a group they should be able to set reasonable conduct guidelines.
- Most if not all of these youth will know a good deal about sex, but some of it may be misinformation. Some may be sexually active.
- Potential conduct problems: abuse of others in the group or younger children, sexual activity, sexual harassment or bullying. In rare circumstances sexual battery (rape or attempted rape) may occur. Young people who come to the program with a boyfriend or girlfriend may present special problems.

Working with High School Youth

- The role of the adult youth program workers with the high school group may vary with the program. If the program is completely designed and led by the youth, the youth program workers serve as an adult presence, assist as requested, advise as needed, and are responsible for the safety of the participants. In other cases, the youth leader may lead sessions or cooperate with the student leaders in leading sessions.
- Some of the high school teens in an SEYM youth program may be over 18 years of age and may become SEYM Registered Youth Program Workers. A teen who is a SEYM Registered Youth Program Worker may be one of the designated youth program workers for the teen group. A teen who is over 18 may serve as one of the two adults who must be present, provided an older adult is also present.
- There must be at least one older adult designated as a leader for a teen youth program. As maturity level and judgment vary widely between individuals, the youth program coordinator and the committee responsible for the event should discern whether any individual qualifies as an “older adult”; in general this means at least post-college age.
- Make sure that conduct guidelines are discussed at the beginning and other appropriate times. Make sure the conduct guidelines effectively prohibit abuse, sexual harassment, bullying and sexual activity by youth. They should include guidelines for acceptable or unacceptable public displays of affection within the group sessions.

- Guidelines need to be prominently displayed during all sessions.
- Intervene if there are serious breaches of conduct guidelines or breaches that are not addressed by the participants.
- Discussion of sexuality may be appropriate with this age group. Care must be taken to avoid harassment of any participant or overly explicit or sexually stimulating discussion.

Section 8: Supervising Unregistered Volunteers

- Many adults may participate in one or a few sessions of the youth program. Registered SEYM Youth Program Workers are responsible for the Young Friends during youth program sessions and must supervise any other adult who participates.
- Ordinarily, supervision consists of being present and observant.
- Some adult visitors or volunteer leaders will not have had the SEYM Youth Program Worker Training. Before a volunteer works with youth in an SEYM event youth program, a Designated SEYM Youth Program worker should determine whether the volunteer has had the SEYM Youth Program Leader Training. If not, a Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker should give the volunteer a copy of the *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines for Volunteers* for the age group involved. The registered worker should answer any questions the volunteer has about the SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy or the guidelines. This process may also be performed ahead of time by the Event Youth Program Coordinator.

Section 9. Responding to Unacceptable, Inappropriate or Questionable Behavior by Unregistered Volunteers

This section describes responses to unacceptable, inappropriate or questionable behavior that does not rise to the level of child abuse, by adults or older children who are leading or helping in SEYM event youth program sessions. Refer to the definitions of child abuse in the *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures*. If the behavior falls within any of those definitions, follow the procedures for responding to child abuse. The definitions of unacceptable, inappropriate and questionable behavior are found in “Definitions” on page 2.

Although non-registered volunteers will receive copies of the summaries for volunteers, those summaries do not cover all possible situations. Volunteers may inadvertently do something which is advised against, such as taking a child to the bathroom alone or asking a child for a hug.

Other people may not exercise the best judgment in working with children. This could be from lack of experience or even senility.

Any undesirable or questionable behavior by any adult, teen, or older child working or volunteering in an event youth program session must be responded to, both for the protection of the children and for the protection of the worker or volunteer from suspicion or accusation of child abuse.

- If another adult does something with the children that is inappropriate or might appear to be intrusive or invasive to youth, the Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker should ask the adult to stop or take other action to get him or her to stop, even if the incident is apparently innocently intended.
- The response should be appropriate to the situation, not an overreaction, but it should be swift. Do not just “let it go” in the expectation that won’t happen again. It is

desirable to discuss minor and apparently innocently-intended incidents with the offending adult out of hearing of the children, if possible.

- If any incident occurs, regardless of how minor, discuss it with the youth program coordinator as soon as practical. A single minor incident may not be cause for alarm. A pattern of minor incidents may indicate a problem, which may be a simple lack of good judgment or something more.
- In a case where questionable behavior was observed by a number of children, it may be appropriate to discuss the incident with the group. For the benefit of the children, it is desirable to have this discussion sooner rather than later. However, this must be weighed against the privacy issues for the children and the adult and the potential further embarrassment of any child directly involved. If possible, consult with the youth program coordinator before having any discussion with the children.

Section 10: Responsibilities of Youth Program Coordinators and Planners

Refer to *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures*, Section 6 to review the responsibilities of youth program coordinators and planners for prevention and reporting of child abuse in SEYM Event Youth Programs.

If Unacceptable, Inappropriate or Questionable Behavior by Youth Program Volunteers is Reported

If the behavior meets the definition of child abuse (See Child Abuse on page 2), see the requirements for reporting child abuse in *SEYM Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures* Section 6. The present section provides guidelines for a situation where a youth program worker reports unacceptable, inappropriate or questionable behavior which does not meet the definition of child abuse.

- Discuss the situation with the reporting adult.
- Action may not be necessary for an isolated minor incident reported by a youth program worker, provided the person in question responded to the Registered SEYM Youth Program Worker's request to stop questionable activity, the incident was not repeated, and no apparent harm was done to any child. However, a written record should be made of the report, so that any pattern of questionable behavior can be detected.
- If you think further action is needed, consider the appropriate action for the circumstances. Actions may include the following:
 - Talk to an adult whose actions were questionable about the SEYM child abuse policies and guidelines for appropriate behavior of adults working with the youth.
 - Relieve the suspected adult from working with youth at that event.
 - Inform the parents or sponsor of any child who was involved in an incident with an adult. If the child relates the incident to the parents, they need to also hear from the youth program coordinator about the incident and what, if any, action is taken.
- If you take any action, discuss the situation with the clerk of EC. If warranted, the personnel committee (EC) may prohibit the adult from working in SEYM event youth programs in the future.
- Whether or not you take any action, 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.