

West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship

Child Protection Program

Annual Workshop

Sunday, September 30, 2018

Tim Martin Johnson opened the meeting by distributing copies of the policy to all meeting participants. He gave a brief summary of the over-arching themes, and explained the basic structure of the policy.

First and foremost, the policy is in place to keep children safe when they are in church, or involved in church activities.

One major strategy of the policy is that we want to avoid the situation where one child is alone with one adult, as this is the time when a potential abuser would be most likely to take advantage.

Tim instructed all present to sign the participation log, indicating that they have received and read the policy.

The group broke up into smaller groups of 4-6 for the purpose of discussion. Tim then proposed two situations for consideration:

Situation 1: You are alone in the kitchen working (preparing snack, cleaning up, etc) and a youth, perhaps 13, arrives and offers to help. This is a child that you know and have a relationship with, and you could use the help. What would you do? What should you do?

The groups discussed for 5 minutes, and then there was general discussion for about 20 minutes.

There was a lot of conversation about similar situations, and there was agreement that the inclination for most people would be to just let the child help. But it was emphasized that the proper thing to do would be to not let them help, but send them back to their parents.

The question was raised about whether this would apply if the two people involved were a mentor/mentee pair. In this case it would not apply because the parents have given consent for the two to be together alone.

Situation 2: When driving youth home from an activity there will often be a time when one child is left to drop off. What ideas do we have about addressing this situation?

The groups discussed for 5 minutes and then came together.

One idea is to drop off siblings last, so that one child is not alone with the adult. Another is to have two adults in the car. There was considerable discussion about communication with parents in this situation.

This is important, but in keeping with our policy it is really better to make every effort to not have one child and one adult alone in the car.

There was some general discussion about the Child Protection Policy in general. Dave Lapp made the concluding comment that the real value of the policy is in the very conversation we were having, increasing everyone's awareness of the importance of following the rules and keeping the children safe.

About 25 people were present.