

Please read the information below. These are the relevant sections for home church elders excerpted from the full Plan to Protect Manual. Elders of family friendly home churches are required to read the full Plan to Protect, which can be accessed at [themeetinghouse.com/plantoprotect](http://themeetinghouse.com/plantoprotect).

## **Introduction**

The Meeting House is committed to creating safe places for people to hear the message of Jesus. This includes safe spaces for children, youth and vulnerable people. We recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care and we take our responsibility to them seriously. We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in our ministry to the family.

Churches have unique features that can make them susceptible to incidents of child molestation – they have large numbers of children, a shortage of willing workers, and a culture of trust that assumes no Christian could be suspect of such exploitation. Children are naturally trusting and impressionable, and readily place their faith in adults who care for them. It is our God-given and legal responsibility to safeguard that trust.

We consider all forms of abuse to be a serious matter. Child abuse can potentially leave scars that last a lifetime, and the effects of abuse are too often minimized or dismissed. The degree of damage that results from abuse depends upon several factors including the intensity, duration and frequency of the abuse, as well as the nature of the relationship of the perpetrator to the child. If the abuser is a known and trusted authority figure in the child's life, the degree of impact increases dramatically.

The Meeting House is committed to providing a safe environment for children and youth, and maintains a policy of zero-tolerance for abuse, harassment, or neglect.. All staff and volunteers who teach, care for, have access to, or have positions of trust with children, youth, and/or vulnerable persons within The Meeting House are required to follow the guidelines and procedures as defined in this document. Every activity involves some risk, but this plan is designed to prioritize the safety of children and volunteers with the goal of making all programs and activities as safe as is reasonably possible.

## **One-on-Ones**

For home church elders,, it is useful to remember that vulnerable persons can be any age. Elders need to be wise and exercise judgement in where they meet with people, especially when it comes to one-on-ones. Public spaces are recommended for one-on-ones with people of the opposite gender.

## **Family Friendly Home Churches**

A Family Friendly Home Church is a specially designated Home Church that has met certain requirements so that parents can bring their children to Home Church. If children are in a separate room, childcare must be provided. It is recommended that childcare be provided on site at the Home Church. For Home Churches that are not designated "Family Friendly," only children of the host family can be present, unless the children are in the same room with their parents at all times.

### **Caregiver Requirements:**

- There must be at least 2 unrelated, screened caregivers in the room with the children
- One must be at least 16 years old, all others at least 10 years old (graduated grade 5)
- All infant caregivers should be at least 14 years old.
- Each caregiver must have attended The Meeting House for at least 6 months (or the home church leader has known them for at least 6 months)
- Each caregiver must be screened: <http://clearance.themeetinghouse.com>
- Anyone that has been security cleared for kidmax or theUNDERGROUND does not need to be screened again.

### **Home Church Leader Responsibilities:**

- Do a basic assessment of the environment (check for and remove hazards).
- Ensure the above Caregiver Requirements are met for all childcare providers interacting with children.
- Ensure proper ratios are met with a minimum ratio of one leader for every 7 children (see the "Classroom Staffing" section of Plan to Protect for details).
- Check in on the child care area at least once during each meeting to ensure that the environment remains safe and that the caregivers are able to maintain adequate control of the group.
- Read through the full [Plan to Protect manual](#) to gain an awareness of the potential issues involved in providing childcare.

### **If Childcare is provided in a different location than the home church meeting:**

- You will need to follow the normal Sunday morning requirements for kidmax including attendance tracking, full adherence to required ratios, and full security clearance of all childcare providers
- We will need standard permission forms signed by parents and submitted to The Meeting House offices for this offsite gathering