

NPYM SC 08-04 — TO DO

From MMM MfWfB to Oversight cmte: Review with MM the Harassment information for consideration at July SC

AGENDA ITEM D

March 2008

Dear Steering Committee members:

Two years ago Steering Committee asked Monthly Meetings to review Montana Gathering of Friends' Minute on Conflict and Abuse in preparation for writing their own Minutes on Harassment and Abuse. For a variety of reasons, this did not work very well. I continue to think that it is important that NPYM have an explicit policy that defines harassment—sexual, racial and harassment based on sexual orientation—and guidelines for dealing with harassment when someone believes it has happened. At some point we may also want to develop a policy on abuse but I thought we should start first with harassment.

Enclosed find the first draft of a North Pacific Yearly Meeting Policy on Harassment. We will be considering this at our April Steering Committee Meeting. Please bring any questions or suggestions to the meeting.

Thank you. Dorsey Green, Steering Committee Representative from UFM

North Pacific Yearly Meeting Policy on Harassment

North Pacific Yearly Meeting wants its Annual Session and other Yearly Meeting events to be free of harassment. One of our Quarterly Meetings, Montana Gathering of Friends has adopted a similar policy which begins with:

Within any community, there must be guidelines to help the individual members to live and grow together. ... Our community's goal is to be a vehicle in which each of us will pursue life's most joyful journey, the search for God. Every one of us has come to Friends as seekers, hoping to experience the realm of spirituality and the inner light. To embark on this path we must strive to shed our fears and our coverings, fully open to the light and journey together, soul naked.

Canadian Yearly Meeting also addresses harassment and their policy contains the following quotation which speaks to our concern:

We do need to address behaviour which diminishes that of God within us, and we need to address situations where people do not have the power to keep themselves free from violation. Let us be mindful that one person's expression of love and caring is not

always acceptable to another person. We encourage people to verbalize their levels of comfort.
Canadian Yearly Meeting, approved, 1997.

We embrace their words and intention, first, to prevent harassment, and second to provide policies for dealing with such behavior if it does happen. This policy addresses sexual harassment, racial harassment, and harassment based on sexual orientation. In writing this document we have relied heavily on the Friends General Conference "Gathering Policy and Procedures on Harassment." We appreciate their generosity in sharing their policies with us.

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual or gender based behavior generally involving the exercise of formal or informal power by one person over another. Similarly, racial harassment is unwanted race based behavior, and harassment based on sexual orientation is unwanted behavior based on someone's sexual orientation, both generally involving the exercise of formal or informal power in inappropriate ways. The key words are "unwanted" and "formal or informal power," plus the basis of the behavior in differences in gender, race, or sexual orientation.

Harassment is defined both by the feelings of the person who experiences it and by the intentions of the alleged perpetrator. What one person might consider an innocent comment or behavior could actually be experienced as harassment by another person, particularly if the alleged perpetrator persists in the behavior after the impact on the other person **have** been brought to his or her attention.

Does this mean that we must refrain from offering hugs to friends, or making comments about a friend's appearance? No--not if the person welcomes the hug or the comment. But we should be sensitive to the possibility that another might be made uncomfortable by such behavior. If there is any question about how another may feel, ask first (e.g., "May I give you a hug?"). This is simply part of our responsibility as members of a caring community of Friends.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL HARASSED

1. **If you feel harassed by the comments or behavior of another person at Annual Session, and if you feel able, please tell that person clearly that you find his/her behavior objectionable and ask him/her to stop it.** If it is difficult to confront such behavior on the spot and you feel able to talk to that person some time later, please tell that person when you are ready to do so.

If someone does tell you that s/he has been offended or embarrassed by something you did, please do not argue about her/his feelings or how you intended your behavior. You cannot tell someone else how s/he should feel about something you say or do. Just apologize and be mindful so as not to repeat the objectionable behavior.
2. **Reporting incidents of sexual harassment, racial harassment, or harassment based on sexual orientation.** If you feel unable to confront the person, or find that he/she repeats the objectionable behavior despite your request to stop it, you may contact NPYM's Ministry and Oversight Committee with your concern. If you are attending another NPYM event, contact either M&O or the committee that has organized the event. Junior Friends have organized a Concerns committee, to which initial complaints can be taken if the unwanted exchange involves a Junior Friend. If the committee feels that they cannot handle it well enough, they have an Honor Board, which consists of the Clerks, two advisors, the Clerk of Concerns Committee, and two other Junior Friends.
3. **If you witness or are told about a situation involving possible harassment:** Try to check it out with the person who appears to be experiencing the harassment; if s/he feels uncomfortable about the behavior, encourage her/him to confront it or report it. If it is impossible to talk with the person, or if the person is not prepared to make a report her/himself, yet you are convinced that harassment occurred, then a report may be made directly to M&O.

Possible outcomes of reporting behavior that you find objectionable.

- 1. Informal procedure:** If you feel embarrassed or offended by another's behavior, you may simply want an opportunity to discuss the experience with another Friend and think together about how to handle it. If so, a member of Ministry and Oversight will be glad to meet with you for a confidential discussion of the incident(s). If this discussion is sufficiently helpful, and you are able to stop or avoid further objectionable behavior, M&O will consider your concern to have reached closure and no further steps will be taken unless the committee member determines that the nature of the complaint is serious enough to warrant further action, such as a formal procedure. In which case you will be informed.
- 2. Formal procedure:** If you wish a formal investigation and more assistance in dealing with the alleged harassment than that afforded by the informal procedure, you will be asked to submit a written, signed complaint. This complaint may be brief, but it should include name(s) and a description of the objectionable behavior, date it occurred, the context, and your feelings. When such a complaint is received, members of M&O will meet with you in confidence, discuss the alleged harassment with you, and then proceed with a thorough investigation of the complaint. Such investigation will always include, but not necessarily be limited to, a meeting of the committee members with the alleged perpetrator. The alleged perpetrator should be able to see the written complaint and may also bring a witness to the alleged harassment and/or a support person to this meeting. M&O reserves the right to make an independent decision to initiate the formal procedure in any case which it deems sufficiently serious to require a formal investigation. M&O may impose any of the possible consequences [as](#) listed below. In this event, both the complainant and the alleged harasser will be notified of such a decision.
- 3. The investigating members of the committee will reach a decision as to the merits and gravity of the complaint and how to handle**

the situation. If members of M&O determine that harassment did indeed occur, they may take one of the following actions:

- a) Ask the harasser to acknowledge and stop the offending behavior;
- b) Require the harasser to stay away from the person who experienced the harassment for the duration of the Annual Session or other event,
- c) Require the harasser to leave Annual Session or other event, and/or
- d) Refuse to accept the harasser at future Yearly Meeting events.

The investigating team will communicate its decision and the action taken to the individual who submitted the formal complaint and to the full M&O Committee. Any decision to exclude a harasser from future Yearly Meeting events may be appealed by the harasser to M&O.

4. **Complaints will be treated with confidentiality and discretion.**
5. **Every effort will be made to protect persons making bona fide complaints from any kind of retaliatory action.**
6. **Every effort will be made to protect alleged perpetrators from being presumed guilty before all the evidence is weighed.**

Submitted by Dorsey Green
March, 2008