

DRAFT Bellingham Friends Meeting Guidelines for Participation by people accused, charged, or convicted of sex offenses (Version 4.5)

The Worship and Ministry Committee of Bellingham Friends Meeting, (hereafter W&M) will hold in the Light each person who wishes to participate in Bellingham Friends Meeting and who has been accused, charged, or convicted of a sex offense. Of primary concern are the needs of the Meeting as a whole, with special attention to the safety of children and the needs of survivors of sexual assault and childhood abuse. Given the challenges of balancing the needs of the Bellingham Friends community and any given individual, W&M may also want to consider:

1. Does the Meeting as a whole have Friends to fill needed positions, and structures in place to keep children safe, meet the needs of the Meeting as a whole, and to nurture the spiritual journey of the offender? (Monitors will likely be needed, not only for the safety of children and the peace of mind of adult Friends, but also for the safety of the accused, charged, or convicted person, against mistaken or false accusations.)

2. Does the Meeting have the wherewithal to meet the physical safety, emotional, and spiritual needs of Friends with painful histories related to the type of offense in question? Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is common for people who have had physically or emotionally traumatic experiences. Support is one of the most effective tools available when it comes to treating the causes and symptoms of PTSD. A strong network of family and friends is crucial to the recovery process and our Meeting can play a role in this support. W&M needs to be aware that, as with most mental illnesses, no cure exists for PTSD, but the symptoms can often be effectively managed to restore the affected individual to normal functioning. The best treatment for PTSD includes a combination of medication and therapy. ^{1, 2, 3}

3. Is the person who is accused, charged, or convicted known to Bellingham Friends? Is the accuser a part of our congregation or known to Bellingham Friends? Will the accuser be able to continue attending BFM if the accused, charged, or convicted person does?

4. If the Meeting does not have the resources to accommodate a given person accused, charged, or convicted of an offense within the setting of our Meeting for Worship and other Meeting activities, can Pastoral Care Committee find individual Friends willing and able to meet in worship with that individual outside of our usual gatherings? Can Pastoral Care Committee check with regular BFM groups, such as Spirit Study or Book Group, to see if their membership would be able to accommodate the individual's participation?

5. If W&M determines that the Meeting does not have the resources to meet the needs of the whole Meeting, while nurturing the spiritual life of the accused, charged, or convicted person, can we refer that individual to another congregation that we know has a supportive program and similar theology or practices?

6. If the person accused, charged, or convicted acknowledges the essential truth of the accusation or charge, are they remorseful? Have they served their sentence through the criminal justice system? If the person has a mental health condition, does it contribute to their behavior and/or their ability to take responsibility for their actions? Are they committed to practicing Friends' testimonies in

the future, and healing their spiritual life through restitution, taking responsibility for their actions, and committing themselves to healing transformation?

7. Whether the person accused, charged, or convicted acknowledges fault or claims innocence, is W&M persuaded that they are committed to Friends testimonies, including equality (between all individuals regardless of age, gender, race, etc.), integrity, peace, and community? Are they willing to participate in educational opportunities regarding how the testimony of equality plays out in our society in terms of dominance (whether sought or not) for people of privileged groups?

8. Have the circumstances of their life changed substantially between the time of the offense (accused, charged, or convicted) and the present? Some things to consider might be:

a. Are they now in a stable, supportive relationship or network of relationships?

b. If they suffer from a mental illness which was inadequately treated at the time of the offense, are they now under the care of a psychiatrist and/or therapist?

c. Are they willing to be open with W&M and their care committee (see last paragraph of this page) about the progress of their spiritual journey in the wake of this accusation, charge, or conviction?

d. If the person has been convicted and served their sentence as a sex offender, does the criminal justice system assess them as a Type I (least likely to reoffend), Type II (moderate risk to reoffend) or Type III (high risk to reoffend)? Given all available information, does W&M concur with this assessment?

e. If they were under intense stress at the time of the offense (financial, emotional or psychological), are they now supported and/or in circumstances supplying stability in their life, other than their desired participation in BFM?

9. What was the charge, and was the person convicted of that or a lesser charge? Friends are aware that the prosecution in our criminal justice system often brings higher charges in order to compel a “guilty” plea bargain, and also that inequities in ability to hire legal counsel can alter the outcome of our judicial processes.

If W&M determines we do have the resources to meet the needs of the Meeting as a whole, including children and adult survivors of violent crimes, and to nurture the spiritual journey of the accused, charged, or convicted person, the following agreement will be filled out and signed by the offender, clerk of Meeting, and clerk of W&M (and/or of a W&M-appointed care committee).

¹ <https://www.psychguides.com/pstsd/treatment/>

² <https://www.bridgestorecovery.com/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/is-ptsd-curable/>

³ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20355973>

This Agreement is made between Bellingham Friends Meeting, as represented by Worship and Ministry committee, and a person accused, charged, or convicted of a sex offense who wishes to attend Bellingham Friends Meeting. Depending on all the factors above and any others that may be considered, some or all of these listed responsibilities may be waived as long as the safety of children and our entire Quaker community is held as the primary goal.

I, _____, (*print name*) understand that I will be attending Bellingham Friends Meeting or sponsored activities in accordance with this agreement signed by myself, clerk of W&M and clerk of Meeting, based on our collective discernment of leadings of the Spirit, regarding the safety and health of Bellingham Friends Meeting, its children and adult attenders. This agreement includes:

Offender Responsibilities

1. I will arrange in advance of attendance to have an approved monitor for all Meetings or BFM events. If I am uncertain how to proceed with that, I will contact the current clerk(s) of Meeting, W&M, and/or Pastoral Care committee for guidance. These Friends may be reached by using the Bellingham Friends Meeting directory or by phone (360-671-1395) or email (info@bellinghamfriends.org.) Pastoral Care committee may assist in finding monitors, who are approved by W&M or a subcommittee of W&M appointed for my care. (I understand that generally romantic partners and family members are not preferred monitors, as the Meeting wants to offer its support to the family, rather than ask them to perform this duty for the Meeting. If there are compelling reasons for an exception to this guideline, I will submit to W&M clerk an explanation of these reasons.) I will only attend when an approved monitor is available. _____ Agree _____ Waived by W&M

2. While participating in the BFM community, I will stay within my monitor's view at all times, including kitchen and outdoor areas, for example. When I am visiting the restroom, the monitor will assure that I have privacy. _____ Agree _____ Waived by W&M

3. If I visit the home of any member or attender of BFM where children under 18 may be present, the parents' knowledge of my legal status regarding the accusation, charge, or conviction of a sex offense will be provided by me or Worship and Ministry. _____ Agree _____ Waived by W&M

4. I will disclose to W&M any conditions of my release imposed by the Department of Corrections. _____ Agree _____ Waived by W&M

5. I understand that monitors will report any violation of this agreement to W&M and Pastoral Care committees. If W&M concludes that a report is valid and that I have violated conditions of my community supervision (if any), the violation may be reported to my Corrections Officer. I accept these conditions on my participation in the Bellingham Friends Meeting for Worship or any other BFM activity. _____ Agree _____ Waived by W&M

Consequences of Violations

If I, _____, (*print name*) violate any of the conditions agreed upon above:

1. My monitor will tell me to leave and will report the incident to the Clerk of Meeting or Clerk of W&M within 24 hours; if neither is available, the monitor will report to other members of W&M.

2. W&M will investigate any report of a violation. If it is confirmed beyond a reasonable doubt and if it involves rules set by the Department of Corrections (if any), then W&M will report it to the community corrections officer.
3. W&M committee will impose consequences as it deems appropriate for the violation, up to and including the possibility of my being required to stop attending. I will not attend any BFM activities until W&M has made a determination;
4. W&M will report on the incident and resolution at the next Meeting for Worship for Business if my status is known to Meeting as a whole.

Bellingham Friends Meeting Responsibilities

1. Worship and Ministry committee may oversee compliance by _____ (*print name*) with the guidelines outlined in this and associated documents, or designate an appropriate care committee to do so.
2. Pastoral Care committee will assist _____ (*print name*) in finding Friends or attenders willing and able to serve as monitors. Romantic partners or family members of the offender are not preferred (see note above). Monitors must pass a WA State Patrol background check and be approved by W&M or the care committee.
3. If applicable, the care committee and W&M will remain vigilant to changes in mental health status of _____ (*print name*). Becoming educated about mental illness is useful to all of us, and W&M, Pastoral Care and a care committee are especially encouraged to seek information. Changes in mental health status may require changes in the conditions of this agreement (see “Changes to These Conditions” below).
4. W&M committee or a subcommittee will ensure that monitors understand the expectations that must be met, as well as the procedure for reporting violations using an incident report.
5. A monitor will meet _____ (*print name*) when they arrive at BFM or at the location of BFM activities. _____ (*print name*) will not enter until a monitor has arrived. A new monitor may assume the responsibility by mutual agreement and by meeting with the original monitor and _____ (*print name*).
6. W&M committee will bring an annual report regarding this contract to the BFM Business Meeting, if the status of _____ (*print name*) is known to Meeting generally, which would be determined by W&M under the Guidelines on Confidentiality. Such a report would include a record of contacts with the offender's therapist as long as they are in therapy and with the Department of Corrections as long as they are under the supervision of Department of Corrections.

Changes to These Conditions

These conditions may be modified or suspended by action of Worship and Ministry committee, depending on the committee’s assessment of risks to Meeting safety, especially that of children, to the health of our worship, as well as to the needs of the accused, charged, or convicted person. Proposed modifications will be brought to Meeting for Worship for Business by W&M committee if the status of the person in question is known to Meeting generally. The clerk of W&M will maintain and store a record of this agreement and any changes to it in a secure location.

_____ (Person accused, charged, or convicted)

Date: _____

_____ (Clerk of Worship and Ministry and/or appointed care committee)

Date: _____

Date: _____

_____ (Clerk of Meeting)

Date: _____

Date of original draft: Dec. 2, 2018
Latest revision **January 27, 2020** SQCC meeting