

**BOULDER MEETING OF FRIENDS  
STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES  
REGARDING HARRASSMENT AND ABUSE**

Friends have a longstanding commitment to tolerance and generosity of spirit that customarily prevails whenever we encounter someone whose behavior seems inappropriate or bothersome. These issues are usually resolved through informal problem solving efforts. The practice of “eldering” can also discourage or question an individual’s inappropriate behavior in ways that bring about positive change. However, these strategies may not be effective or appropriate in situations that involve harassment or abuse. This statement of principles was created to help Friends discourage and respond to such behavior.

Harassment or abuse occurs when a person repeatedly or egregiously behaves in ways that are hurtful, threatening, or offensive to another person. This may include, but is not limited to: insults, stalking, intimidation, slander, or unwelcome sexual advances.

We recognize that some actions may have destructive effects even when there is no malicious intent. For example, harassment and/or abuse may arise from ignorance. An individual’s background, race, gender, sexual orientation, mental or physical condition, generation, education, or religious views may result in behavior that is perceived as harassment or abuse when there is no intent to cause such harm or no awareness of doing so. Harassment or abuse may also occur with full awareness of its harmful effects.

Harassment and abuse compromise the safety of the individuals who are directly involved. It also threatens the climate of trust and mutual respect that is needed to sustain the spiritual life of the meeting community. The Meeting remains open to all, in the spirit of answering that of the divine in everyone. However, appropriate participation in our community also requires behavior that respects the needs, perceptions, and feelings of others.

Any instance of harassment or abuse should be reported to the Meeting’s Oversight and Membership Committee. Their goal is to stop harassment and abuse, prevent its recurrence, and limit the harm done to those involved and to the Meeting as a whole. The Committee is available for anyone who wants to discuss issues related to harassment or abuse, whether the person seeking information is a complainant, a person who believes his or her actions may be the subject of criticism (even if unwarranted), or some third party concerned by actions he or she feels are inappropriate. Retaliation against such reports is not acceptable.

The following general principles offer guidance for the committee’s response to any instances of harassment or abuse:

- 1) Give highest priority to providing support and safety for anyone who is targeted with harassment or abuse.
- 2) Treat the offender with loving respect while setting appropriate limits to prevent harmful behavior.

The Committee will respect the confidentiality and privacy of all concerned to the extent reasonably possible. However, in certain situations confidentiality cannot be maintained—for example, when the law requires disclosure or when the Meeting’s need to protect the rights of others demands it.

Consider employing restoration justice principles, when appropriate. The central queries in that approach include: What harm was done? Who is responsible? Can the harm be repaired, and if so how?

If other strategies for stopping harassment, abuse, or retaliation prove to be ineffective, anyone who engages in such behavior may be expelled from the meetinghouse or, in the case of volunteers and employees, released from their responsibilities. Such expulsion would not preclude the provision of spiritual support or pastoral care at some other location, if that seems appropriate. Meanwhile, employment with the Meeting is “at-will.” Nothing in this statement shall be construed to create an express or implied contract to employees.

Harassment and abuse are prohibited by state and federal law. The Boulder Meeting of Friends is a non-profit organization administered by volunteers with limited resources and capabilities. Individuals who believe they have been harassed or abused should always consider pursuing their complaints directly with local law enforcement and other governmental agencies that deal with unlawful harassment and abuse.

This statement of principles is designed to provide only general guidance for addressing circumstances which may vary dramatically from case to case. To maintain optimal flexibility, we have intentionally avoided creating procedural instructions. We hope to respond to any instances of harassment or abuse with all deliberate speed, providing the utmost care to those who are injured or threatened, and minding the light in all concerned.

-- Approved on 9/12/10 by Boulder Friends Meeting.