

Convention Guidelines distributed to local Montana meeting June 2023

Jun 13

Dear friends,

Welcome to convention season! As we look forward to our upcoming days at conventions, we want to communicate a few guidelines that could help our time together be restful and profitable. In light of recent events, we feel especially compelled to create a welcoming environment where all feel at home.

- Encourage kids of all ages to utilize the buddy system when playing, walking around the grounds, going on walks, and entering dorms, tents, or campers. We can reinforce this by asking kids, "Where's your buddy?" if you see them alone. Teens should also be encouraged to stay in group settings, or have a friend with them as much as possible.
- Not all children and teens are comfortable giving hugs. Adults should not expect or require children of any age to give hugs, it is encouraged to ask permission. A good rule of thumb is to ask children, 'Hug, handshake or high five?'
- A parent should accompany younger children to the bathroom and shower.
- Older children and teens are encouraged to make their time out of meeting for bathroom breaks or other needs as brief as possible.
- If you have a child under 18 staying on the grounds semi-independently, consider the following:
 - Assign an adult point of contact on the grounds in case of incident or emergency.
 - Reinforce Buddy System with teens, encourage them to not be alone between Meetings or at bedtime.
 - Talk to your teen about expected curfew times, what is appropriate behavior in a dorm/tent, and the importance of staying on the Convention grounds at all times.

- Consider practicing scripts with children that include saying no to a 'secret', unsafe or unwanted interaction, and includes getting away and telling a trusted adult. For example. If your friend thinks it's funny to show you his bottom or asks to see your bottom, say, 'No! Stop. Private parts are private. ' Then walk away and tell your parent or trusted adult. "
- Encourage children to ask permission from their parents before entering the dorms or someone else's tent/camper.
- Have children check in often. Communicate where parents will be, and have them tell you where they plan to be. Designate check-in places and times.
- Talk to your children and teens before convention and have them identify 3-4 adults with whom they feel safe. These adults can work together to supervise and check in with children.
- Peer-to-Peer sexual abuse constitutes one third of all reported abuse cases in the US, and actually tends to be under reported. Encourage children to play group games or hang out and talk in common areas that are easily supervised.
- Remind children of safety guidelines each morning, and check in with your children at the end of each day.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING. Any criminal conduct should be reported DIRECTLY TO AUTHORITIES.

If any youth discloses sexually inappropriate behavior or sexual abuse, do not overreact. Often children can be more traumatized by poor responses to disclosures, than they are by the incident. Calmly and carefully ask the child/youth who might be supportive in this situation. Never blame a child/youth when they disclose. Get help from three other trustworthy adults with determining if it is criminal, reportable or a situation that indicates behavior change or a new safety practice.