

IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY COORDINATORS & SUPERVISORS

Volunteer Service

The Archdiocese of Baltimore has developed an Application for Volunteer Service and requires that all volunteers working with young people have a completed form on file with the parish Screening Coordinator prior to working with young people. The volunteer who works with youth must also complete the Volunteer Criminal Screening Consent Form and submit three references. Reference checks are not required for those volunteers who were actively providing service before September 1, 2002. Volunteers must also receive training regarding child abuse and the protection of children, including the STAND video.

All volunteer members of the Parish Youth Ministry Planning Team as well as all regular volunteers in the youth ministry program should complete an Application for Volunteer Service. This includes but is not limited to; catechists, athletic coaches, scout leaders, drivers, and any adults attending an overnight event with young people. In short, any adult who has regular access to adolescents needs to complete this form.

Note that the Msgr. O'Dwyer Retreat House requires that all volunteer adult leaders on youth retreats have a volunteer application on file at the parish or school.

All volunteers who work with young people must complete the training: STAND for the Protection of Children and Youth prior to working with young people.

Note that all coaches in Archdiocesan Sports Programs must also attend the Coaches Orientation Meeting prior to beginning their second year of coaching in the program.

The person who will supervise the volunteer should meet with him/her to discuss the role that the volunteer will have in the program. A clear job description should be provided for every volunteer. Supervisors should help adult volunteers working with youth to be familiar with contact procedures in case of emergency and familiar with basic warning signs for at risk issues.

Transportation:

The preferred method of transportation to all youth ministry activities off of parish property would be bus. In a situation where that is not affordable, the youth ministry team may arrange for drivers. All drivers should be 21 years of age, be properly insured and have a good driving record.

All volunteer drivers need to complete the Archdiocesan Driving Record Check Consent Form. *Under no circumstance is it acceptable for the parish/school to arrange for youth to drive other youth to an activity.* If a parent allows a son or daughter to drive directly to an activity, the parent(s) should understand that they assume liability for that transportation. If a parent would like a son or daughter to ride with another young person to or from an activity, the parent(s) need to communicate that to the youth ministry team. Of course when a youth rides with another young person it is important that both sets of parents understand that the liability is assumed by the holder of the policy on that car.

Transportation to and from all activities held on parish property is the responsibility of the parent. In situations where young people are walking to and from the activity, parents are again responsible for their young people before they arrive and after they leave parish property.

In some cases it may be arranged to have young people gather at another site in the community other than the parish. If parents are notified of this other location, then the parents can be asked to assume

responsibility for transportation to and from this site.

The parish youth ministry team should make sure that adults are present at the gathering site early enough to greet all youth as they arrive. Adults also need to be present until the last youth has left.

When renting vehicles to transport youth for parish or school events, vehicles should be rented in the name of the parish or school and not in the name of a parish employee. This allows the insurance to cover the vehicle rented.

Our Archdiocesan Insurance no longer covers 15 passenger vans that are rented or owned by parishes or schools.

Permission Forms:

All activities held outside the parish and all activities that include an overnight, require a permission form. A permission form should be accompanied by an information sheet for the parents/guardians, outlining the program and noting emergency phone numbers. Permission forms are intended to:

- ❖ Seek permission for the young person to participate;
- ❖ Express the intention of the youth ministry team to provide adequate and responsible supervision;
- ❖ Get important information regarding where parents can be reached during activity;
- ❖ Get important information regarding medical insurance coverage for the young person;
- ❖ Get the parent's permission to obtain medical assistance in the event that the parent cannot be contacted.

Note: it is not appropriate to use one permission form for the entire year or even several different types of activities. It is ok for the permission form to cover multiple

meetings for the same activity, for example, 4-week bible study, or 8 week peer ministry training.

Guidelines for Volunteer Supervision:

Determining the number of adults needed for supervision of adolescents depends on a number of factors: the nature of the activity, the age of the adolescents and the location of the activity. For starters, all activities require a minimum of two adults, 21 years of age or older. Unless the group being supervised is either all boys or all girls, there must be a chaperone of each gender.

Looking at the ratio of adults responsible for supervision to adolescents, overnight activities require a minimum of one adult for every eight young people. Some activities such as bowling or a dance at the church may allow a greater adult/youth ratio. An activity at an amusement park may require less supervision if the group is high school age as opposed to a group of middle school students. It may be appropriate to provide a constant supervising presence for younger and/or less mature adolescents.

Proper supervision does not always require constant presence. Periodic contact is sufficient in most situations. [Of course this must be balanced by the realization that building relationships between youth and adult leaders requires more than periodic contact.] In cases where risk is greater due to the nature of the experience, constant presence may be appropriate (for example: white water rafting, rock climbing). At all times, youth should be aware of the quickest way of reaching their adult and at no time should youth be unable to do so. It is inappropriate for adults to drink any alcoholic beverages while supervising a youth ministry activity.

Guidelines for Disclosure and Reporting:

In regards to the following referral and disclosure policies, should a youth minister hold professional qualifications (Doctor, Nurse, Counselor, Social Worker) they should respond in a manner appropriate to their qualifications.

➤ **Crisis referral**

A crisis (situation where a young person could potentially cause serious foreseeable and imminent harm to themselves or others, for example a young person makes a suicidal threat) can occur at any time. In case a crisis occurs, attempt to contact parent/ legal guardian/ emergency contact, communicate your level of concern, suggest the need for an assessment and ask about initiating the process.

If they cannot be reached or refuse to come and get the individual or appear to be unconcerned and are not going to do anything, as a last resort call the police, as they have emergency numbers they can call in such situations; persons may be admitted for assessment when there is a concern for their or someone else's safety.

Call an emergency contact number provided for local crisis line or counselors (MD Crisis Hotline 1-800-422-0009)

If the situation escalates beyond your control, call 911 or the legal authorities.

➤ **Referral**

Should a young person or parent request information regarding a counseling referral it is advised that the youth minister recommend that the family meet with their primary care physician and receive a referral within their insurance plan. It is not recommended that Youth Ministers make referrals directly to counselors.

➤ **Disclosure**

Youth ministers recognize a young person's expectation of privacy and try to honor that in a professional way. This does not include information that would cause serious foreseeable and imminent harm to themselves or others.

Examples of issues that would contravene a young person's privacy include child abuse, sexual/ physical threats to others, abortion, and suicide threats.

By law, conversations between youth ministers and young people do not have "privileged communication". This means that if information about what a young person says to their youth minister is requested by a parent, a court of law, or other individual who has a need to know, the youth minister must share the information.

Overnight Accommodations

On overnight trips, participants should be clear about the restrictions concerning sleeping areas. In general, there should never be mixed gender gatherings in the sleeping areas. Whether you are camping in tents, using a retreat house or hotel rooms, boys should never be in the girls sleeping areas and vice versa. It may be appropriate to restrict any social gatherings in the sleeping areas.

While adults have supervision responsibilities, they should also try to observe restrictions about being in the sleeping areas of the opposite gender. With the exception of large dormitory sleeping accommodations [at workcamp or on pilgrimage], adults and youth should never room or tent together.

While it may be appropriate to have hotel phones restricted from making outside calls, you should not restrict phones from making calls to other rooms. Youth need to be able to call their leader in case of emergency.

Adults should continue supervision after lights out to ensure that young people are safe and where they belong. All-night supervision is not always necessary.

Alcohol Policy

It is out of concern for the safety and well being of young people that the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry issues the following policy regarding alcohol consumption in youth ministry settings in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. This policy recognizes both our responsibility for the supervision of young person as well as the statutes of the State of Maryland.

Policies for Youth

Youth and young adults under the age of 21 who are under the influence of or consume alcohol at Archdiocesan Youth Ministry events will be dismissed from that activity at the first opportunity. The Archdiocese reserves the right to restrict young people at future youth ministry events for underage drinking. When it is appropriate, young people who are in violation of our policy will be encouraged to seek counseling or support.

Parishes and Catholic High Schools reserve the right to set and enforce their own policies regarding under age alcohol consumption at parish/school events. Parish policy needs to be consistent with the statutes of the State of Maryland.

Policies for Adult Youth Ministry Leaders

Adult leaders may not consume alcohol at any Catholic Youth Ministry youth events. On overnight events, this restriction applies around-the-clock. This restriction applies during the evening hours after the young people have gone to sleep.

Adult leaders should consider refraining from alcohol consumption whenever they are present with youth in a youth to youth minister relationship. This might include youth ministers who go out for pizza with young people after an event or attending a graduation party at the home of a young person.

These policies are set as such in recognition of our supervision responsibilities which are ours 24/7 as well as our desire to stand in

solidarity with the young people whom we are ministering.

Adult leaders who provide or assist youth in obtaining alcohol for their consumption will be dismissed immediately. The Archdiocese will cooperate with local police to pursue prosecution for this offence.

Adult youth ministry leaders must inform the parents of any young person who has consumed alcohol. Parents have a right to know. This is in keeping with our partnership with parents.

Recommended Policies for Parish/School Events with Youth

Gatherings that are primarily youth oriented should not serve alcohol. (For example, basketball awards ceremonies.)

Parishes or schools who sponsor events for intergenerational audiences where alcohol will be available have the responsibility to insure that no under-age drinking will be allowed.

Parishes or schools who sponsor events for intergenerational audiences where alcohol will be available should make sure that parents of youth are aware that alcohol will be available/served.

Parishes or schools who sponsor events for intergenerational audiences where alcohol will be served should act to insure that responsible drinking is modeled for the young people present.

An underage person should never be placed in the position of tending bar, or serving alcohol.

Parishes or schools should make it their responsibility to remind parents of the danger of allowing under-age youth to consume alcohol in their home.

Statement of Policy & Procedures in Cases of Child Abuse

In 1992 the Archdiocese published a comprehensive policy statement addressing issues of child sexual abuse. All church personnel, every paid staff member and every volunteer should receive a copy of this policy statement as they begin their employment or volunteer service. You can obtain copies of this booklet by contacting the Department of Human Resources secretary, Jessica Clarke at 410-547-5425 or jclarke@archbalt.org. All church personnel are expected to be familiar with and comply with these policies and procedures. With this booklet the Archdiocese restates its commitment to healthy ministry and expresses its clear intention to take aggressive actions in addressing incidences of child sexual abuse. A Statement of Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth was last revised in January 2002. For more complete information about compliance see Procedures for Implementation and Compliance: A Statement of Policy for the Protection of Children & Youth.

Criminal Background Checks

In 1987 the State of Maryland mandated criminal background checks for all staff working with children in a licensed facility (school, day care centers, day camps). The Archdiocese extended this mandate to include all church employees and all volunteers who have substantial contact with children. Information on criminal background checks may be obtained from Alison D'Alessandro at 410-547-5599 or adalessandro@archbalt.org.

Application for Volunteer Service

At a minimum, all volunteers must complete the Archdiocese of Baltimore Volunteer Application and review a copy of the “Statement of Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth” of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Volunteers who will have Substantial Contact with children, must complete the following before beginning their service with children:

- a. Application for Volunteer Service
- a. Name of references
- b. Volunteer Criminal History Screen Consent Form
- c. Training regarding child abuse and protection of children, including the STAND video.

More information about the implementation of screening procedures see Procedures for Implementation and Compliance: A Statement of Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth.