

- Retreat team members
- Assisting the youth ministry coordinator/director with programs and special events (e.g., service projects, retreats, prayer experiences)

Policy: Those who are out of high school and aged 18-20, and who have met all archdiocesan ministry team member clearance requirements, may assist in supervision at activities and events, but may not be solely responsible for supervision of minors.

Policy: The policies and procedures set forth under the formation and responsibilities of Supervising Adult Team Members apply to all adult ministry team members aged 18-20.

Best Practice: Have an individual wait one year after

graduating high school before becoming a regular ministry team member. This enables them to have time to develop a spiritual community of individuals their own age and essentially “grow” out of the youth ministry community as their source of faith growth.

Best Practice: It is helpful and appropriate to pair those out of high school and 18- to 20-year-old adults with a supervising ministry team member who will serve as a mentor.

Best Practice: Small group breakout discussions within a larger setting may appropriately be facilitated by those out of high school and 18-20 years of age, with a supervising ministry team member in the vicinity and with consideration of the training, skills and maturity of the particular adult who is age 18-20 and serving as a ministry team member.

GENERAL INFORMATION

APPROPRIATE AND PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

Policy: All youth ministry team members—paid or volunteer—must adhere to the Archdiocese of New York’s Safe Environment Policies and the Code of Conduct found on the Safe Environment web page.

Policy: It is the responsibility of the youth ministry coordinator to ensure that ministry team members have access to, know and follow the Safe Environment Policies and the Code of Conduct.

Policy: Although all employees are employees “at will” and all volunteers serve at the pleasure of their pastor, any violation of the Safe Environment Policies, Code of Conduct or the policies in this manual that represents a risk to minors, or violations that are repeated after having been corrected, shall be the basis for termination of a person’s employment or volunteer service.

It is important to recognize that the inevitable inequality of power in relational ministry demands clearly established and appropriate boundaries. The burden of responsibility always falls on the youth ministry leader to respect and maintain appropriate boundaries. Boundaries include professional, personal, ethical, ministerial, physical, emotional, behavioral and sexual boundaries.

It is the youth ministry team members’ sacred responsibility to promote, protect and safeguard the well-being of each individual entrusted to their care. Youth ministry team members serve as examples to others for appropriate behavior, setting boundaries and following a Christian lifestyle.

Professionalism requires that adults maintain clear boundaries in their relationships with the minors they are serving.

Adults bear the responsibility to ensure that:

- Their relationship with minors is clearly professional in nature.

- Proper boundaries are maintained at all times.
- Minors are made aware of these boundaries.
- Any minor who intrudes upon these boundaries is counseled as to proper behavior.

Here are some specific guidelines to help maintain proper professional boundaries with minors:

- Excessive familiarity or intimacy between adults and minors is not permitted.
- Adults should not relate to minors as if they were peers or friends.
- Adults are never to take on a role of surrogate parent or confidant to a minor with whom they are working.
- Adults must take special care to observe boundaries when they are dealing with minors who are especially vulnerable (e.g., children who have experienced sexual or other kinds of abuse).
- Adults may not give undue attention or favorable treatment to a minor or group of minors, such that there is the appearance that there is a special relationship with the adult, or that a minor is a favorite of the adult.
- Adults must always be with another adult or be in the proximity of another adult when working with minors in unsupervised settings.
- Adults may not be alone with minors in private locations. In any location where an adult is alone with a minor, they must always be observable and interruptible. The door must always be open and the adult and minor may never be behind a locked door or blocked window.
- Adults may not engage in peer-like relationships with minors, including during school and non-school events and activities.
- Adults may attend a supervised graduation party or participate in a ministry-approved sporting event. All adults who work with minors must request permission to attend said event.

- Adults may not enter into a dating relationship with a person who is in a youth program, even if that person is now an adult (e.g., a youth minister dating a current member of the youth group).

Definition of Child Sexual Abuse

Child Sexual Abuse shall include, but not be limited to: any sexual act between an adult and a minor; soliciting sexual acts or sexual materials from a minor; possession of child pornography; providing sexual materials to a minor; performing a sexual act or the indecent exposure of the private or intimate parts of the body under circumstances where it is reasonably likely that the act may be witnessed by a minor; and any offense involving sexual conduct committed against a minor that is prohibited by civil or canon law.

Physical Contact with Minors

Physical contact between adults and minors must be approached with a high degree of caution and must be very strictly limited. Adults are responsible for ensuring that there is no inappropriate physical contact with minors.

Physical contact with a minor is only permissible if:

- It is fully appropriate to the situation.
- It is appropriate to the age of the minor.
- It is entirely nonsexual.
- The minor consents to the contact and is fully comfortable with it.
- It will not be misconstrued by the minor or others.
- It does not constitute an abuse of the adult's position of power or trust.

Here are some specific guidelines regarding physical contact with minors:

- Physical contact with minors may never take place in private.
- Physical contact in the context of any kind of counseling may never take place.
- Physical contact with minors may never be routine behavior for an adult.
- The kinds of prohibited physical contact include, but are not limited to:
 - Physical acts of a sexual nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, kissing, hugging, grabbing or brushing against a minor's body.
 - Any contact with the areas of the body that are ordinarily covered by a bathing suit.
 - Kissing on the mouth or prolonged hugs (these are never permitted under any circumstances).
 - Routine greeting/departure hugs or social kisses to the cheek.
 - Extended physical contact, such as allowing a minor to sit on his/her lap or giving a rubdown or massage.
 - Holding hands (other than briefly holding the hand

of a young child in public for their safety, for example while crossing the street).

- Placing and leaving one's arm around a minor's shoulder, back or waist for a prolonged period.
- Patting a child on the backside (even during a sporting event).
- Repeatedly touching on the arm, back, or legs.
- Touching on any part of the body in a way that may be construed as a caress.
- Physical horseplay, roughhousing, tickling, wrestling or other inappropriate games.
- Placing and leaving hands on the shoulders of a child sitting at a desk.
- Having a child sit on one's lap.
- Placing and leaving hands on the legs of a minor who is seated alongside.
- Sitting with one's legs crossed with the legs of another.
- Some kinds of incidental and brief physical contact may be acceptable under special circumstances, such as:
 - Briefly shaking hands as a social greeting.
 - Very brief public social contact in connection with a special event or circumstance (such as a public greeting hug, an arm placed around the shoulder for a moment, or a short pat on the back, to congratulate a student at graduation).
 - Lightly and briefly tapping on the arm or shoulder to get their attention.
 - A "high five" or "fist bump," for instance during a sporting event.
 - An arm briefly placed around the shoulder of an upset or injured minor in public.

Please note: These kinds of behavior should be rare, and under no circumstances can they be regular or routine behavior. Adults must use extreme caution to ensure that these behaviors cannot be misconstrued by an observer or by the minor and that they do not otherwise violate appropriate boundaries.

- Adults may not discipline minors in any physical manner. However, they may engage in physical contact to protect a child from harming himself/herself or another.
- The age of the minor is a very significant factor in determining whether physical contact is appropriate.
- Otherwise unacceptable behavior does not become acceptable if it is done by a minor to an adult. The adult has the obligation to stop the conduct and counsel the minor as to proper behavior. The adult should also report any such incident to their supervisor.
- Cultural customs, or the ordinary behavior of minors toward their peers, do not give permission for otherwise inappropriate physical contact by adults.

SUPERVISION OF YOUTH AND ADULT/YOUTH RATIOS

It is the sacred duty of youth ministry leaders to ensure the young people entrusted in their care are able to grow in their faith in an environment that is safe physically, emotionally and spiritually. A key way to accomplish this is with appropriate adult supervision. Determining the appropriate number of supervising team members depends on several factors. The two primary considerations are safety and ministerial experience. Other factors include type of activity, location of activity and age of the young people participating.

For high school youth, proper supervision does not require constant presence if there is an event with sufficient, appropriate boundaries and young people are in groups of at least three (e.g., at a conference where there is a set venue with security that young people can freely navigate with personal check-ins with ministry team members throughout the day between workshops and events).

Policy: Younger adolescents (grades 6-8) need to be under constant supervision.

Policy: At all times, older and younger adolescents should be aware of the quickest way of reaching a supervising ministry team member/chaperone. At no time should an adolescent be unable to quickly contact a supervising ministry team member/chaperone.

Policy: All youth activities and gatherings require a minimum of two adults who are qualified to serve as supervising team members.

Policy: For on-site, non-overnight activities, the ratio is 1 adult per 10 youth after meeting the two-adult requirement. In practice this means:

- 1-20 youth: minimum of 2 adult leaders (over 21)
- 21-30 youth: minimum of 3 adult leaders (over 21)
- 31-40 youth: minimum of 4 adult leaders (over 21)
- Etc.

Policy: For off-site and overnight events, the ratio is 1 adult per 8 youth after meeting the two-adult requirement. In practice this means:

- 1-16 youth: minimum of 2 adult leaders (over 21)
- 17-24 youth: minimum of 3 adult leaders (over 21)
- 25-32 youth: minimum of 4 adult leaders (over 21)
- Etc.

Policy: For overnight events, adult ratios must reflect the sex of the young people participating, with a minimum of two adults over 21 of the same sex as the young people participating.

Best Practice: Small-group dynamics and effective relational ministry can be challenging when there are not enough adults to interact with the youth participating. Consider an on-site ratio of 1 adult to every 6-8 young people (with a minimum of two adults).

Best Practice: When thinking through the number of

supervising ministry team members needed, one should consider how many would be needed in case of emergency. Will the gathering be in a rural or urban environment? What transportation options are available? Will there be enough adults to accompany a young person to a hospital and still have enough to appropriately supervise the remaining youth?

Best Practice: For activities that will be in crowded areas, such as theme parks, or farther away from home, like the National Catholic Youth Conference, consider a chaperone ratio of 1 adult to every 5-6 youth (with a minimum of two supervising adult leaders).

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Policy: All those ministering with/to minors in the Archdiocese of New York must comply with the archdiocesan Policies on Sexual Misconduct.

Some of the policies are highlighted in sections of this document. However, **all of the Safe Environment policies not highlighted in this document must still be followed.**

Answers to frequently asked questions regarding the archdiocesan Safe Environment Policies can be accessed online.

Best Practice: Complete a Safe Environment Checklist (see Forms) at least twice a year to ensure compliance.

MINISTRIES THAT INCLUDE YOUNG ADULTS (OVER 18) AS PARTICIPANTS

Many parishes have adopted a style of youth ministry that includes young adults – individuals aged 18 and older – as participants. An example is a parish prayer group for young people aged 14-29. The young adults in this group may not be in charge of planning gatherings nor supervising participants who are minors. However, they are in direct contact with minors on a regular basis and could potentially be alone with a minor.

Policy: All individuals over 18 years of age who participate on a regular basis in ministries that include minors must have background checks and safe environment training regardless of their supervision status.

Policy: Young adults participating in such groups cannot be romantically involved with any minor participants.

Best Practice: Separate groups into youth (middle and/or high school) and young adults (18+). Young adults need their own space to discuss issues unique to them and to develop a more adult spirituality.

USE OF PRIVATE HOMES OR PUBLIC SPACES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

Parishes often seek options for gathering young people off-site when physical space in the parish is limited. The use of public spaces, such as coffee shops, may be neces-

sary for some parish communities when physical space for small group ministry may be limited.

Policy: Because of potential liability and concerns regarding safe environment, private homes/apartments cannot be used for youth ministry.

If public spaces are used, then the following policies must be observed:

Policy: The use of public spaces can be considered after all on-site options have been explored and must have written approval of the pastor.

Policy: Parents must have explicit knowledge of the details, nature and location of the program in which their young person is involved. These details need to include:

- Date, time and topic(s) of gatherings.
- Names and phone numbers of adult leaders.
- Name, address, and phone number of location.

Policy: Permission slips must be provided to parents with regard to their young person's involvement in a program held in a public space.

Policy: Students must remain in the designated areas.

Policy: Individual young people should never be left alone.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Preparedness

Policy: Youth ministries are to ensure that processes, individuals, organizations and resources are identified and accessible to prevent and respond to emergency situations. Minimally, this needs to include:

- Procedures for dealing with immediate treatment of youth in case of emergency, including providing the parent/guardian(s) of all youth with a written form authorizing emergency medical treatment.
- Procedures for an annual practice for emergency situations: fire, active shooters and tornado drills.
- Records of fire drills and seasonal tornado drills.
- Emergency procedures posted in meeting rooms and available to parents, youth and youth ministry team members.
- Identification of nearest emergency rooms and trauma centers.
- Emergency telephone numbers posted by office telephones.
- Supervision of parish grounds, recreational areas and other facilities when scheduled for use by youth.
- A file of written incident reports.

Medical Emergency

Policy: In life-threatening situations, always call 911.

Youth Ministry Leaders must be aware of directions to the nearest hospital or medical facility (both locally and when traveling off-site).

911 should be called when a person:

- Becomes unconscious.
- Has trouble breathing.
- Has chest pain or pressure.
- Is bleeding severely.
- Has pain or pressure in the abdomen that does not go away.
- Is vomiting/passing blood.
- Has seizures, a severe headache or slurred speech.
- Appears to have been poisoned.
- Has injuries to the head, neck or back.
- Has possible broken bones.

Accidents and Injuries

Policy: If there is an accident, do not make any judgment regarding liability or negligence. If an accident prompts a police investigation, cooperate fully by stating what you witnessed, but do not speculate or offer opinions about any matter. Politely refer all additional questions to the pastor or the Office of Legal Affairs at the Archdiocese of New York. You should not make any statements or comments to the press or news media; refer them to the pastor.

If there is an accident:

- Assist those involved and call for professional help if the injury warrants it.
- Wear gloves if blood is present.
- Comfort and protect the injured person.
- Complete an Incident Report (found in Forms).
 - Do not presuppose that the injury is minor enough not to warrant the completion of an Incident Report. Even minor cuts and bruises can become a health concern.
 - Be as concise and accurate as possible in completing all information.
 - Do not speculate or make any judgment regarding liability or negligence or commit to paying for medical treatment.
 - Immediately file the incident report with your pastor or the appropriate parish administrator and the archdiocesan Catholic Mutual (insurance) representative.

First Aid

Policy: Each parish youth ministry program must have a well-stocked and easily accessible first aid kit, which also includes feminine hygiene products. This kit is to accompany the group on any events off parish property.

Red Cross First Aid Kit recommendations: www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/anatomy-of-a-first-aid-kit

Best practice: Supervising ministry team members should have basic first aid and CPR training.

Policy: If a young person is injured and needs first aid, an incident report must be completed within 24 hours and submitted to the pastor.