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# PERSONNEL

## DEFINITIONS

### *Youth/Young Person/Minor*

These terms will be used to describe anyone under the age of 18 **and those aged 18 or over who are still in high school.**

**Policy:** Those 18 or older but still in high school and those considered vulnerable adults **are to be regarded as minors** for the purposes of these policies. An adult who habitually lacks the use of reason or a person of any age who lacks the capacity to give consent due to a mental/developmental condition/disability is also considered a minor for the purposes of these policies. “Vos Estis” defines *vulnerable person* as “any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offence.”

### *Youth Ministry Coordinator*

Any individual, lay or ordained, who serves with the authorization of a pastor as a coordinator/director of a ministry with, to and/or by youth.

This may be a paid or unpaid position. Titles in the parish setting may include, but are not limited to, director of youth ministry, youth ministry coordinator. Responsibilities in this area are often also included in the work of directors/coordinators of religious education, coordinators of confirmation, etc. The persons filling these positions must be least 21 years of age and able to supervise minors within safe environment policies and the guidelines outlined in this manual.

### *Ministry Team Member*

An individual, lay or ordained, who serves within a parish-structured ministry to youth.

This term is not linked to age, but to role. This role may include organizing activities to evangelize and catechize youth, facilitating small group discussions, leading prayer or providing direction for an activity or retreat. Ministry team members are typically volunteers from the faith community.

### *Supervising Adult Team Member/Adult Team Member*

A ministry team member at least 21 years of age who is able to supervise minors within the safe environment policies and the guidelines outlined in this manual.

These individuals engage with young people on a regular basis by committing to participate in activities such as youth nights, service experiences, and retreats. Supervising adult team members/adult team members are typical volunteers from the faith community.

### *Occasional Adult Helper*

An individual, lay or ordained, who serves within a parish-structured ministry to youth. This role is typically filled by a volunteer from the faith community. Helpers are not committed to ministering with young people regularly but assist on an as-needed basis. This could include chaperoning, preparing meals or giving a presentation.

### *Chaperone*

This term applies to adults at least 21 years of age whose sole role is to provide supervision.

Chaperones who are serving within the ministry are ministry team members. Those used for a special event are occasional adult helpers.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Relationships among people are the foundation of Christian ministry and are central to our life as a church. Our standards pay particular attention to those whose ministry calls them to work with minors, to ensure they do this important work in a manner that is genuine and respectful.

Parish youth ministry is not a separate “club” within the parish but a fundamental ministry of the church to all the young people in the parish community. In light of this, youth ministry programs need to reflect the mission of the Church and vision of the pastor.

**Best Practice:** Youth ministry coordinator should meet with the pastor monthly to discuss past events and upcoming programs to ensure he is aware of the direction of the ministry, share any concerns, and seek insight.

**Best Practice:** Embrace the principle of “no surprises.” The pastor should never be surprised to hear about any incident or event from anyone but the youth ministry coordinator. When the time is appropriate, the youth ministry coordinator should contact the pastor.

**Policy:** Follow the principle of “going one up.” Confidentiality does not mean secrecy. Going one up means sharing with your supervisor (e.g. pastor, pastoral associate, DRE, youth ministry coordinator) difficult conversations with and/or concerns for young people and/or their parents. This practice helps to ensure healthy decision-making, contextualizing of issues within the larger family situations, and awareness of the pastor to potential situations.

The following ethical standards upheld by the Archdiocese of New York are based on principles of integrity articulated by the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry as essential to effective ministry leadership.

- Ministry team members shall exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity reflective of the

- teachings of the Gospel and shall avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
- Ministry team members shall at all times conduct themselves in a professional manner, including by developing and maintaining a level of professional competence commensurate with their ministerial duties.
  - Ministry team members shall witness God’s love for every person by showing sensitivity, reverence, and respect for each individual with and to whom they minister.
  - Ministry team members shall be conscious of the unique power they have in relationships due to the trust they are given and the visibility of their witness and leadership.
  - Ministry team members, whether paid or unpaid, are obligated to comply with archdiocesan policies related to protection of minors, including Safe Environment Policies, the Policy on Sexual Misconduct, the Code of Ethics for Youth Ministry Leaders, and the Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers Working with Children and Young People.
  - Ministry team members, as people of God, share actively in the ministry of Christ and the Church by living lives of Christian witness and by proclaiming the message of the Gospel in word and deed. They share in the mission God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the gifts and talents they possess. These gifts and talents are shared with all members of the Church, thus providing for the continual building up of the Kingdom of God.

**Policy:** All adult team members and regular ministry team members aged 18-20 must read and sign the Code of Ethics for Youth Ministry Leaders. A copy will be placed in their personnel file. A copy of this Code of Ethics is found in the back under “Forms.”

### ***Code of Ethics for Youth Ministry Leaders***

The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry has developed the following code of ethics for youth ministry leaders. The Archdiocese of New York has adapted this code. The code is for youth ministry leaders regardless of employment status. This code is to be used in conjunction with existing archdiocesan policies, protocols or codes.

### **Professional Ethical Obligations**

- I. Ministerial Role – Youth ministry leaders:
  - a. Work collaboratively with the pastor (and/or other supervisors) and associates in ministry.
  - b. Faithfully represent the teachings of the Catholic Church with integrity in word and action.
  - c. Are competent and receive education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities (§ 231, Code of Canon Law).

- d. Respect the diversity of spiritualities in the faith community and will not make their personal form of spirituality normative.
- II. Inclusion – Youth ministry leaders:
  - a. Recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from behaviors or words that are disrespectful of anyone or any group.
  - b. Serve all people without regard to sex, creed, national origin, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, immigration status or political beliefs.
  - c. Ensure all persons have access to the resources, services and opportunities they require with particular regard for persons with special needs or disabilities.
  - d. Exercise intercultural competency in their ministries.
- III. Accountability – Youth ministry leaders:
  - a. Are accountable to the pastor or other duly appointed representative, under the authority of the archbishop.
  - b. Are called to serve the faith community, carrying out their ministerial functions “...conscientiously, zealously, and diligently” (§ 231, Code of Canon Law).
  - c. Exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding the fiscal matters placed in their trust.
  - d. Upon having reasonable cause to suspect abuse of a minor, must notify the appropriate civil authorities, including law enforcement, the local District Attorney’s Office and/or the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, as well as church leadership responsible for responding to alleged abuse, including either the director of the Safe Environment Office or the general counsel of the Office of Legal Affairs, in accordance with civil law, ecclesial law and the archdiocesan Policy on Sexual Misconduct.
- IV. Confidentiality – Youth ministry leaders:
  - a. Respect confidentiality, yet are not held to confidentiality in the same way as ordained ministers and licensed, certified counselors.
  - b. Adhere to civil and ecclesial law concerning the reporting of neglect and abuse or when physical harm could come to another person. There is no confidentiality where there is a reasonable suspicion that abuse of a minor is, has or will occur.
  - c. Support the rights and roles of parents while ministering to the needs and concerns of their children.
- V. Conduct – Youth ministry leaders:
  - a. Know that they have considerable personal power because of their ministerial position. Therefore, they will sustain respectful ministerial

relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power.

- b. Maintain appropriate professional boundaries (e.g., physical, sexual, spiritual, relational and emotional). Romantic, dating or sexual relationships between a youth ministry leader and any youth is inappropriate, unethical, illegal and impermissible.
  - c. Shall exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity reflective of the Gospel and will avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
  - d. Shall not use alcohol while supervising youth; shall never use illicit substances; and shall never provide alcohol or illicit substances to youth.
  - e. Shall not share, show, watch or discuss any sexually suggestive materials, including pornographic videos and images, with minors.
- VI. Referrals and Intervention – Youth ministry leaders:
- a. Know the signs of neglect and physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.
    - i. Indicators of physical abuse can include: injuries to the eyes or both sides of the head or body, frequently appearing injuries such as bruises, cuts and/or burns, especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause. These may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns or impressions of other instruments; destructive, aggressive or disruptive behavior; passive, withdrawn or emotionless behavior; and fear of going home or fear of parent(s).
    - ii. Indicators of sexual abuse can include: symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases; injury to genital area; difficulty and/or pain when sitting or walking; sexually suggestive, inappropriate or promiscuous behavior or verbalization; expressing age-inappropriate knowledge of sexual relations; and sexual victimization of other children.
    - iii. Indicators of maltreatment can include: obvious malnourishment, listlessness or fatigue; stealing or begging for food; lack of personal care – poor personal hygiene, torn and/or dirty clothes; untreated need for glasses, dental care or other medical attention; frequent absence from or tardiness to school; and a child inappropriately left unattended or without supervision.
  - b. Know their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.
- VII. Parish/Diocesan Policies – Youth ministry leaders:
- a. Know of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational and/or archdiocesan policies, with special attention to sexual misconduct, safe

environment, risk management, safety, transportation, parental permission and medical emergency policies.

## References

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- Gula, Richard (1996). *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*. New York: Paulist Press.
- National Association for Lay Ministry Standards Code of Ethics. Downloaded from the Internet on October 16, 2002, at [www.nalm.org/standards.html](http://www.nalm.org/standards.html).
- National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry's Organizational Code of Conduct. March 2000.
- NALM, NCCL, and NFCYM (September 29, 2002). *Common Competency Project Core Certification Standards and Competencies*. Draft 3. Copyright ©2008 by the NFCYM, 415 Michigan Avenue NE, Suite 40, Washington DC 20017. All rights reserved. The NFCYM grants permission to Catholic dioceses and parishes to reproduce and distribute this document for educational purposes. Approved by the NFCYM membership February 2008. Adapted with permission July 2019.

## FORMATION AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

### Youth Ministry Coordinator

- I. Safe Environment Formation
- a. **Policy:** Prior to starting in youth ministry, the youth ministry coordinator must successfully complete the screening process, which includes a background check and Safe Environment Questionnaire. He/she must complete the “VIRTUS: Protecting God’s Children” safe environment training within 45 days of starting youth ministry. If a youth ministry coordinator is arrested or informed that he/she is under investigation by any law enforcement agency, he/she must immediately disclose this to the Safe Environment Office.
  - b. **Policy:** The youth ministry coordinator must know, follow and comply with all archdiocesan Safe Environment Policies, Policies on Sexual Misconduct and the Code of Conduct found at [archny.org/safe-environment-program](http://archny.org/safe-environment-program), as well as the policies in this manual.
  - c. **Policy:** The youth ministry coordinator will renew his/her background check at intervals established by the Safe Environment Office.
  - d. If a supervising adult team member is arrested or informed that he or she is under investigation by any law enforcement agency, he/she must immediately disclose this to the Safe Environment Office.
- II. Ministry Formation
- a. **Policy:** The youth ministry coordinator must complete the Office of Youth Ministry Starting Smart course within the first 15 months of ministry in this archdiocese.
  - b. The youth ministry coordinator is expected to participate in ongoing annual formation.

- c. **Best Practice:** The youth ministry coordinator completes a CPR/first aid course and keeps certification renewed.
  - d. **Best Practice:** The youth ministry coordinator engages in ongoing ministerial and spiritual formation regardless of certification level or experience.
- III. Key Responsibilities of the Youth Ministry Coordinator
- a. **Policy:** Work under the authorization and authority of a pastor to coordinate an adult team to direct programs and services to and with young people that reflect the principles found in the U.S. Bishops' document *Renewing the Vision* and the needs and gifts of the parish community.
  - b. **Policy:** Monitor adult volunteers for compliance with safe environment policies, general youth ministry policies of the archdiocese and applicable local and federal laws.
  - c. **Policy:** Annually report to the parish safe environment coordinator a list of all adults engaged in youth ministry in the parish.
  - d. **Policy:** Review the safe environment compliance (background checks, etc.) of adult team members at least twice a year.
  - e. **Policy:** Maintain records and forms.
  - f. **Policy:** Follow the principle of "going one up" as outlined earlier.
  - g. Foster an environment where young people can encounter Christ and grow in their Catholic faith.
  - h. Build healthy relationships with youth of the parish.
  - i. Provide tools, resources, and programs that help families grow in their faith together.
  - j. Minister as a teaching representative of the Church.
  - k. Communicate frequently with the pastor or an individual designated by the pastor regarding youth ministry events, successes and issues.
  - l. Develop and publish an annual calendar of activities.
  - m. Ensure clear communication of youth ministry events and programs to parish leadership, parents and youth.
  - n. Actively communicate with the archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry.
  - o. Provide resources and professional referrals to parents and youth as needed.
  - p. Collaborate with the parish religious education office and other ministries.
  - q. Operate within an established budget; monitors and fully accounts for spending and receipts.

### ***Supervising Adult Team Member***

- I. Safe Environment Formation
  - a. **Policy:** Prior to beginning in youth ministry, supervising adult team members must successfully

complete a background check and the Safe Environment Questionnaire. They must complete the "Safer Spaces" training within 45 days of starting youth ministry. If the adult team member facilitates programs or activities where the coordinator of youth ministry is not present, he/she must participate in the VIRTUS class.

- b. **Policy:** Supervising adult team members must know, follow and comply with all archdiocesan Safe Environment Policies, Policies on Sexual Misconduct and the Code of Conduct found at [archny.org/safe-environment-program](http://archny.org/safe-environment-program) as well as the policies in this manual.
  - c. **Policy:** Supervising adult team members will renew their background check at intervals established by the Safe Environment Office.
  - d. If a supervising adult team member is arrested or informed that he or she is under investigation by any law enforcement agency, he/she must immediately disclose this to the Safe Environment Office.
- II. Ministry Formation
- a. It is recommended that supervising adult team members complete the Office of Youth Ministry Starting Smart course before or during the first 15 months of ministry in this archdiocese.
  - b. Supervising adult team members are expected to engage in ongoing ministry and faith formation.
  - c. **Best Practice:** It is strongly recommended that supervising adult team members have completed a CPR/first aid course and keep certification renewed.
  - d. **Best Practice:** Supervising adult team members should engage in ongoing ministerial and spiritual formation regardless of certification level or experience.
- III. Key Responsibilities of Supervising Adult Team Members
- a. **Policy:** Ensure compliance with archdiocesan safe environment and ministry with youth policies.
  - b. **Policy:** Follow the principle of "going one up" as outlined earlier.
  - c. Work collaboratively with the team to provide programs and services to and with young people that reflect the principles found in the U.S. Bishops' document *Renewing the Vision* and the needs and gifts of the parish community.
  - d. Minister as teaching representatives of the Church.
  - e. Attend scheduled planning meetings.
  - f. Build healthy relationships with the youth in the parish community.
  - g. Foster an environment where young people can encounter Christ and grow in their Catholic faith.
  - h. Assist in helping families foster a stronger faith at home.



## ***Occasional Adult Helper***

### **I. Safe Environment Formation**

- a. **Policy:** Prior to assisting in youth ministry, occasional adult helpers must successfully complete a background check and complete the Safe Environment Questionnaire and the online or video training “Safer Spaces.”
- b. **Policy:** Occasional adult helpers must know, follow, and comply with all archdiocesan Safe Environment Policies, Policies on Sexual Misconduct and the Code of Conduct found at [archny.org/safe-environment-program](http://archny.org/safe-environment-program) as well the policies found in this manual.
- c. **Policy:** Occasional adult helpers will renew their background check at intervals established by the Safe Environment Office.

### **II. Ministry Formation**

- a. Occasional adult helpers should receive the ministry formation appropriate to the help they are offering.
- b. **Best Practice:** Occasional adult helpers should be invited to participate in any youth ministry training and spiritual formation being offered by the parish or archdiocese.

### **III. Key Responsibilities of Occasional Adult Helpers**

- a. **Policy:** Ensure compliance with archdiocesan safe environment and ministry with youth policies.
- b. **Policy:** Follow the principle of “going one up” as outlined earlier.
- c. Build healthy relationships with the youth in the parish community.
- d. Foster an environment where young people can encounter Christ and grow in their Catholic faith.
- e. Engage in the aspect of the ministry in which they are called to help.

### ***Special Note on Ministry Team Members Who Are Adults Aged 18-20***

These guidelines refer to those who are at least 18 years of age and have graduated from high school. Adults aged 18-20 can be a major asset in the development and implementation of a youth ministry program. It is the youth ministry coordinator’s responsibility to appropriately and effectively utilize adults aged 18-20 to assist with ministry and supervision of minors in a variety of roles. These might include:

- Ministry team members
- Facilitators of small groups

- 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.