

ber that specialized training and licensing is necessary to serve as a counselor. It is important to be clear that a minister is not a counselor. It is important to acknowledge the limits of one's own competence and be willing to make referrals to professionals whose perspective is in line with the moral and ethical beliefs of the Catholic Church.

### ***Professional Referrals***

**Policy:** Each parish should maintain a readily accessible list of social agencies whose work is in line with the moral and ethical beliefs of the Catholic Church.

**Best Practice:** Catholic Charities has a parish counseling network that provides low-cost, short-term counseling to parishioners referred by the pastor or an individual designated by him. Talk to your pastor about this program.

**Best Practice:** Should a young person or parent/guardian request information regarding a counseling referral, it is advised that the ministry leader recommend that the family meet with their primary care physician and receive a referral within their insurance plan. It is not recommended that ministry leaders make referrals directly to counselors; however, in cases where the family does not have a primary care physician or requests a referral, ministry leaders making any type of referral should furnish at least three resource options.

### ***Disclosure***

We are partners with the parents/guardians of those to whom we minister and are to act as such. Transparency is an essential element of the youth ministry-parent/guardian relationship.

**Policy:** Youth ministry leaders recognize a young person's expectation of privacy relating to information the young person may share, and honor that in a professional way. While a young person may request that the youth ministry leader keep information confidential, a youth ministry leader may not under any circumstances ask or require a young person to keep their conversations with the youth ministry leader confidential. Moreover, a young person's privacy considerations do not extend to information regarding serious foreseeable and imminent harm to the young person or others. Examples of issues that would contravene a young person's privacy include, but are not limited to, child abuse, sexual/physical threats to others, abortion and suicidal ideation. In these situations, it is essential to seek the appropriate resources for assistance for the young person(s) and family(ies) involved in partnership with parent/guardian(s). If a minor discloses abuse in the home, the parents or guardian will not be notified, and a report should be made to Child Protective Services immediately. If a minor discloses abuse outside the home, the parents or guardian will be notified immediately, along with appropriate authorities.

**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.

## **FINANCES**

### ***Budget***

It is good stewardship for all youth ministries to keep a clear record of how money is collected and used.

**Best Practice:** Work with your pastor or parish manager to develop and maintain an annual budget.

### ***Deposits and Expenditures***

**Policy:** A record of all money collected and spent shall be kept and submitted monthly to the parish manager or pastor.

**Policy:** Youth ministries cannot keep separate checking accounts from the parish. Parish youth ministry is not a separate "club" but an intrinsic ministry of the parish.

**Policy:** All money must be deposited into the parish accounts. No collected money can be deposited into personal accounts.

## **RECORD KEEPING AND RETENTION**

**Policy:** The following forms/electronic records need to be kept for the indicated time. All forms associated with an injury or other incident are to be kept permanently:

- Youth Ministry Information Sheet: 12 months
- Sign-In/Sign-Out Sheets: 12 months unless an incident occurs
- Volunteer Records: Permanently
- Permission Forms/Medical Release Forms: Permanently
- Incident Reports: Permanently

**Policy:** Ensure that there is a locked location to keep forms. Medical forms contain personal information and must be locked in a safe location.

**Best Practice:** Scan forms annually and place the electronic files on two password-encrypted USB drives. See storage policy below.

**Policy:** If forms are scanned, scan them annually and place the scans on two encrypted USB drives. Place one drive in the parish safe and keep the other drive in a secure location in case of fire. Create a binder for each year that contains the Youth Ministry Information Sheets and Sign-In/Sign-Out Sheets.

**Best Practice:** Consider electronic data and record-keeping programs such as MinHub.

## CONTRACTS

Contracts are legally binding agreements between two or more parties. Contracts should not be entered into lightly no matter how small or how well one knows the individual or group with whom one is contracting. For that reason, youth ministry coordinators do not have the legal authority to sign contracts on behalf of the parish or cluster.

**Policy:** All contracts must be approved and signed by the pastor. In cases of multi-parish sponsorship of events, the contract needs to be reviewed and signed by the pastor of the parish from which payments are being made.

## USE OF OUTSIDE PRESENTERS AND/OR GROUPS FOR RETREATS, PRESENTATIONS, OR EVENTS

Bringing in an outside presenter for youth ministry can provide young people with a voice, perspective, expertise, or experience that cannot be found within the parish community. These individuals and groups are a valuable resource for parishes; however, a certain amount of caution must be taken to ensure that the individual or group is appropriate for your young people.

**Policy:** The following policies should be followed:

- Approval by the pastor must be given prior to confirming the presenter/group.
- Parishes that bring in presenters or organizations from other dioceses to conduct retreats or presentations must fill out a Speaker Approval Form (see appendix). This form should be given to the pastor.
- Parishes are responsible to make sure that the presenter and/or members of the group are in compliance with the archdiocesan Safe Environment Program and have had background checks.
- Speakers and groups must be informed of and follow Office of Youth Ministry policies regarding Inappropriate Environments and Experiences for Youth and archdiocesan Safe Environment Policies.

**Policy:** If the presenter or group is from outside the Archdiocese of New York, the following policies should be followed:

- Presenters must submit a letter from the presenter or group's home archdiocese's chancery stating that this individual or group is in good standing within their archdiocese and is in compliance with the Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People as specified by the policies within their home archdiocese. This form should be given to the pastor.
- If the presenter is a member of the clergy, parishes must also present the cleric's faculties to the Office of Priest Personnel for permission to use those faculties within the archdiocese.

**Best Practice:** Check references for presenters and

groups. Ask specific questions to discern whether this individual or group is appropriate for your needs.

**Best Practice:** Call the Office of Youth Ministry to check on their experience/knowledge with the presenter or group.

## ORGANIZATIONS AND/OR INDIVIDUALS DESIRING TO HOST REGIONAL OR ARCHDIOCESAN EVENTS ON ARCHDIOCESAN OR PARISH PROPERTIES

Parishes and youth ministries are often approached to host an event, gathering, or retreat facilitated by an outside organization for young people in the region or the archdiocese. It is important that these events reflect the vision of youth ministry of the archbishop.

**Policy:**

- Approval by the pastor is required prior to confirming the event.
- Organizations and individuals that desire to host events within the archdiocese on archdiocesan or parish property must first notify the pastor/principal and then Office of Youth Ministry of their intent and reasoning.
- To ensure that the content of the events reflects the vision of youth ministry promoted by the cardinal/archbishop, a schedule of the event and outline of content should be submitted to the Office of Youth Ministry prior to marketing of the event.
- Event structure and content must comply with Safe Environment Policies and policies on Inappropriate Environments and Experiences for Youth.
- Scheduling of events must not conflict with major events of the archdiocese and the Office of Youth Ministry.
- Speakers must also have a letter from the presenter or group's home archdiocese's chancery stating that this individual or group is in good standing within their archdiocese and is in compliance with the Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People as specified by the policies within their home archdiocese. (See "Forms" for sample.)
- If the presenter is a member of the clergy from outside of the Archdiocese of New York, he must also present his cleric's faculties to the Office of Priest Personnel for permission to use those faculties within the archdiocese.

## INAPPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTS AND EXPERIENCES FOR YOUTH

Environments and experiences for youth events must be paragons of acceptance, growth and freedom. It is

never appropriate to manipulate either an experience or the environment in order to obtain a specific response. Spiritual and emotional manipulation are inappropriate, and it is essential to assure young people that whatever emotions they experience at any given time during an event are valid and have no moral overtones or consequences.

The following actions may be seen as manipulative and inappropriate and must be avoided at all times:

- “It is absolutely forbidden under any circumstances during an overnight event for minors to be physically restrained or deprived of their ordinary senses in any way (e.g., blindfolded, kept in darkness), subjected to any humiliating or demeaning treatment (e.g., any form of hazing), deprived of a reasonable amount of sleep, or deliberately frightened.” (Safe Environment Policy of the Archdiocese of New York)
- “Contradicting any authoritative teaching of the Church on faith and morals, or encouraging youth to disagree with or act contrary to any authoritative teaching of the Church on faith and morals.” (Safe Environment Policy of the Archdiocese of New York)
- Damaging images of Christ, overtly or covertly.
- Public confession of sins.

- Public admission of sinfulness that implicates another.
- Altar calls that elicit pledges of conversion.
- Not providing opportunities for adequate sleep at overnight events.
- Manipulating the physical environment in order to cause dissonance (e.g., covering windows so one is unable to see the time of day).
- Pressure to display physical action/reaction to prayer/music.
- Singular emotional attachments between youth minister and adolescent.
- Counseling teens without a professional license.
- Showing of R-rated movies or PG-13 films with morally objectionable content.
- Sexual contact between adult minister and adolescent.
- Activities or consultation that involve isolating a youth with an adult minister – for private discussion, transporting, dating, etc.
- Public displays of affection.
- Encouraging teens to idolize youth ministry personnel.
- Encouraging dissension or division between youth and parents.
- Encouraging young people to be secretive about the content and experiences of events.

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## ON-SITE SUPERVISION

### PARTICIPATION

Youth ministry is the outreach, evangelization, mentoring, support, and formation provided by the parish to the young people of the community. Youth groups can be an aspect of youth ministry but should not be the only one. A key component is evangelization. It is important that all young people are welcome to participate in the parish youth ministry; however, some activities or programs, such as peer ministry or confirmation preparation, can be limited to specific youth.

**Best Practice:** Youth ministry teams should annually discern how well they are reaching a variety of young people who have different spiritual dispositions by using a diversity of methods and programs.

**Best Practice:** Include programming that all young people can participate in regardless of whether they are registered members of the parish or Catholic.

### REGISTRATION AND FEES

Since youth ministry can consist of a variety of programs and activities, registration may not be the best method of keeping track of students. Registration can be required for components of youth ministry, such as con-

firmation preparation or small group ministries.

It is important to keep a record of young people who participate in your youth ministry. This record can give the youth ministry team easy access to emergency contacts and information regarding health concerns as well as birthdays, interests, and contact information.

**Policy:** Students and parents/guardians should complete a Youth Ministry Information Sheet each year. This form should be kept on file.

It is up to the parish community whether to charge a fee for participation in youth ministry. Fees are often a necessity for events and some programs. However, no young person should be denied the ability to participate in youth ministry because of financial constraints.

**Best Practice:** Budget for “scholarships” for events and programs for young people whose families cannot pay full fees.

**Best Practice:** If possible, budget to cover the costs of chaperones and adult leaders for activities.

### ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Youth ministry has a responsibility to know where young people are at all times when they are in its care. This means being intentional: knowing who has attended, when they arrive and when they leave, and having appropriate