

## ***Inclement Weather***

**Policy:** Know your parish’s disaster preparedness plan and follow all evacuation warnings when facing severe weather.

- If local public or Catholic schools cancel, youth ministry events should be canceled as well.
- Monitor weather conditions prior to events.
- Notify parents/guardians regarding cancellations/early dismissals.
- Do not allow youth who drive to leave without notifying a parent/guardian.
- Secure property after all have departed.

## **POLICY: REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF ABUSE**

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a minor has been the victim of child abuse or maltreatment, including sexual abuse, the Office of Legal Affairs or the Safe Environment Office will be notified and will make an immediate report to 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 if applicable. Staff members who are New York State mandated reporters must also fully comply with the requirements of the law. Any adult who has reasonable cause to suspect any incident of child abuse, sexual misconduct, violations of safe environment policies, or violations of Codes of Conduct must report it immediately to the youth ministry coordinator. If that is not practical (e.g., if the complaint involves conduct by the youth ministry coordinator), then the complaint must be reported to the pastor or the director of the archdiocesan Safe Environment Office. Any allegation of child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct must also be reported to the director of the archdiocesan Safe Environment Office. If there is an emergency situation or an immediate threat or danger, call 911 and seek medical attention (if necessary). Persons who report alleged incidents pursuant to this policy, and those who cooperate with investigations of such reports, shall be entitled to the protections of the archdiocesan “whistleblower” policy. The archdiocese expressly prohibits any form of retaliation, including harassment, intimidation, or adverse employment actions against personnel who in good faith raise suspected violations of law, cooperate in inquiries or investigations, or identify potential violations of archdiocesan policies.

### ***Process to Be Followed in Response to Suspected Child Abuse Internal to the Youth Ministry Program and Involving a Parish Employee or Volunteer***

An “internal incident” is an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor made against any person within the parish youth ministry program (priest, deacon, sister, brother,

layman, laywoman, employee, volunteer). In response, the following is done:

- The person(s) receiving the information immediately informs the youth ministry coordinator.
- The youth ministry coordinator notifies the pastor and immediately calls the archdiocesan Safe Environment Office (646-794-2807). If Safe Environment Office cannot be reached, the Office of Legal Affairs is called.
- The Safe Environment Office or the Office of Legal Affairs will immediately notify law enforcement. The minor’s parent or guardian must be immediately notified as well.
- If there is an emergency situation or an immediate threat or danger to the security or safety of the child, the pastor or coordinator of youth ministry must call the police immediately. In an emergency, they should not wait to speak to the Safe Environment Office before dialing 911. The first priority is to ensure the child’s safety.

### ***Process to Be Followed in Response to Suspected Child Abuse External to the Parish Youth Ministry and Not Involving a Parish Employee or Volunteer***

An “external incident” is something that happens to a child/youth outside of the parish youth ministry program and not committed by a member of the parish staff. The report is typically a self-report by a child/youth to a youth ministry leader. In response the following is to be done:

- The person receiving the information immediately notifies the coordinator of youth ministry.
- The coordinator of youth ministry notifies the pastor and immediately calls the archdiocesan Safe Environment Office (646-794-2807), which will direct the parish leadership through the situation according to archdiocesan policy.
- The Safe Environment Office or the Office of Legal Affairs will immediately notify law enforcement. The minor’s parent or guardian will be notified as well, unless the suspected abuse took place in the home, in which case Child Protective Services should be notified.
- If there is an emergency situation or an immediate threat or danger to the child, the coordinator of youth ministry or pastor must call the police immediately. They should not wait to speak to the Safe Environment Office before dialing 911. The first priority is to ensure the child’s safety.

## **COUNSELING, PROFESSIONAL REFERRALS AND DISCLOSURE**

### ***Counseling***

When ministering to individuals who are encountering a time of crisis or difficulty, it is important to remem-

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.