

SECTION FIVE – Leadership in Youth Ministry

Comprehensive youth ministry includes effective and appropriate community life. This includes creating an environment, which nurtures meaningful relationships among youth and between youth and adults. These relationships are characterized by Gospel values (e.g. acceptance of all people, trust, respect, cooperation, honesty, taking responsibility, willingness to serve) and help young people feel like a valued part of the church community; providing opportunities for social interaction and meaningful participation in the life of the church and civic community.

Community life is essentially the fun of youth ministry. If we don't establish an environment where young people can enjoy themselves, few will participate. It is not an accident that this section follows the one on catechesis. While catechesis to, with, and for our young people is at the heart of comprehensive youth ministry, more is required to keep young people engaged in the life of the parish.

This section outlines the ways leaders create fun in ways that are healthy, appropriate, and legal. It also outlines ways youth ministry leaders can care for themselves so that their ministry can continue to grow and improve.

Personal and Ministerial Standards for Youth Ministry Leaders

Self Care

The unquestioning adulation of an infatuated young person can be very alluring, and ministers are not immune from sexual attraction for those whom they serve. To complicate matters, American popular culture encourages young people to "grow up" quickly. Material affluence, provocative clothing styles and the trend toward using make-up at an early age can create the illusion of maturity in a young person. But while popular culture often equates physical and emotional maturity, those in ministry must know the difference.

Youth ministers have the same needs as other human beings, but it is crucial that we not look to young people to fulfill those needs. If we are to be free to minister youth, we must not develop an unhealthy dependence on them. Following are some ways in which those in ministry can care for themselves so that they can more effectively serve young people:

- Schedule regular time off and stick to it. If you are to properly serve young people you need to get away from them once in awhile. Gently but firmly teach the youth to respect your private time. Of course, there will be unplanned times when you need to be present to a young person, but afterwards make sure you take compensatory time away from work.

- Develop interests outside of youth ministry. Church work can absorb one's whole life, if one lets it. Seek out social and recreational opportunities in the community in which you live, and get away from town occasionally.
- Develop relationships outside of youth ministry. While youth ministry is a form of friendship with youth, it is not the kind of balanced friendship an adult can only have with another adult. Seek out healthy adult friendships that nurture and support you both personally and as a minister.
- Those in full time ministry are encouraged to maintain a relationship with a spiritual director. Seek a director with whom you are comfortable, one who is empathetic, experienced, and insightful and one who has a healthy appreciation of his or her own spiritual journey. A good spiritual director is an invaluable asset for anybody in ministry.
- If a situation arises in which you question your objectivity, or the appropriateness of your actions, you should seek the counsel of a qualified mental health professional. If you ever feel compelled to act in a way which you know to be unhealthy, inappropriate or illegal, remove yourself immediately from the ministerial situation and seek professional counseling.

Christian Witness

Always keep in mind that Christianity is counter-cultural, and part of youth ministry is bearing witness to this. Young people today are under tremendous pressure to conform to societal values that are directly contrary to the values of the Gospel, and youth ministers are called to name this truth both in word and in lifestyle. The way a minister acts, how he or she dresses, the language he or she uses, the jokes he or she tells, the objects he or she chooses to possess, the way in which he or she uses alcohol; all of these things speak volumes to youth, who observe more than we often realize and are very perceptive when it comes to spotting inconsistencies in word and deed.

One is certainly entitled to a life of his or her own apart from ministry, but one who chooses youth ministry should appreciate the fact that his or her lifestyle is, in effect, part of the visible Christian witness he or she provides. Perhaps a good question for one to ask is, "Is there any aspect of my life which I would be ashamed to share with young people?" and, if so, "What can I learn from this about myself and my ministry?"

If you are like most that enter youth ministry, you probably can recall at least one time in your life when you were profoundly touched by a caring Christian presence. This person was Christ enfleshed for you. The nature of the Body of Christ is that those of us who have been touched by this loving Christ are called to pass that healing touch on to others. You are called to be Christ enfleshed for the young people you serve. If you keep that as your focus, to act as Christ would act, your ministry will not only be beyond reproach, it will be a model of service to others.

Professional Duty

Adult leaders must realize that when you accept the call to public ministry, your personal life becomes public.

Young people should see adult leaders in ministry continue their own faith development and that development should look like something that is desirable to young people, something worth imitating.

Adult leaders in youth ministry, whether paid staff or serving as a volunteer, have a professional and moral duties to the ministry to which they are called. Specifically:

- Adult leaders have a moral duty to seek and maintain competence in one's specialized area of expertise.
- Adult leaders have a moral duty to become theologically competent, especially in the skills of theological reflection. We must always ask, "How do we connect our faith to young people?"
- Adult leaders have a moral duty to represent the church in faithful and loving ways through its various ministries. Put more directly, whether at work or at play, you represent the church because you have chosen to answer the call to serve as an adult leader in ministry.
- Adult leaders have a moral duty to internalize professional standards of practice, to abide by them, and to hold one another accountable to them.
- Adult leaders have a professional duty to subordinate self-interest in order to give greater degree of preference to serving those who seek pastoral service.

Avoiding Scandal

There will be times when lay employees and lay volunteers who work with young people will desire to be involved in events sponsored by secular organizations that raise money or awareness for diseases, but which also subscribe to beliefs or practices not in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church, for example promotion of contraception or support of embryonic stem cell research. Participation in an event is not intrinsically evil. The moral concern is in the indirect support given to those beliefs or practices that are contradictory to church teaching or to partnering organizations working with the sponsor.

Take, for example, a youth minister whose life has been touched by breast cancer. That individual might wish to participate in the Susan G. Komen "Race for the Cure." He/she should be aware that some will question whether participation in the event is acceptable as a lay employee or volunteer charged with leading ministry to and with young people given the organization's vocal support for embryonic stem cell research and its links with Planned Parenthood.

Individuals who choose to participate in an event like the "Race for the Cure," could avoid giving scandal by making it clear to those who may be influenced by their decision that their participation is aimed at fighting the disease, and that they strongly oppose that organization's support of the immoral practices already noted. There is still a risk of scandal and so participation should be well thought out and well documented. It would also not be inappropriate for an individual to request in writing (and receive written assurance) that funds raised by participating not to be used to support intrinsically evil practices such as embryonic stem cell research.

The possibility of giving scandal is greater for a Church group than it is for an individual, because the Church has a broader sphere of influence. Church groups cannot avoid giving scandal. Therefore, it should be the practice of those who work with young people that organized sponsorship (i.e., a youth group or school club participating in one of the events listed above) be avoided.

Signs of a Professional in Youth Ministry

An adult leader who understands his or her moral and professional duties and acts in accordance:

- Knows and adheres to the chain of command within the structure of the church
- Is able to say, "I don't know" to young people
- Is a committed life-long learner
- Seeks to separate the personal and professional sides of life, making room for personal time and regular vacation
- Understand the Human Resource aspects of the job (job descriptions, performance appraisals for self and volunteers)
- Supports justice issues for self and for ministry
- Understand that building a team is more important than building self image
- Collaborates with others
- Represents the Catholic Church faithfully in word and by example
- Enjoys a healthy personal life
- Is committed to healthy spiritual growth and seeks the guidance of a spiritual director

General Tips for Leaders

What follows is a quick list of tips that one who works in ministry should always keep in mind.

- Model for youth behavior that is expected of them.
- Be respectful and courteous to youth and to other adults. Never put down or make fun of youth or other adults.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited at events where young people are present, even if the only young people present are your own.
- Do not use profanity and please discourage the young people from using it.
- Do not smoke when with young people.
- When you are driving, model good driving habits.
- Follow all the schedules, rules, of the program and facility.
- Enjoy being with young people and let them know you care about them.
- Do not allow youth to bend the rules (such as curfew, check-in, leaving the grounds etc.)
- Do not play favorites or give different youth different rules.
- Do not hesitate to stop irresponsible or dangerous play (Don't let young people do things where they could get hurt - even if they say they do it all the time. Don't ask them to do things that could leave us open to liability. If in doubt, ask).
- Do not be afraid to discipline - but do it with love (never put down a young person). Learn the names of all young people and call them by name.
- Adult leaders should provide an emergency contact number to parents of participants. Parents should be instructed to contact the adults with news of a family emergency rather than calling the young person directly.
- Enjoy the young people and have fun.

Diocesan Certification

- 5.1 All persons involved in youth ministry are to obtain the required level of certification.**
 - 5.1.1 All coaches are required to attend face-to-face training at least once every three years.**
 - 5.1.2 All other youth ministers should be committed to attending at least one training session every year.**
 - 5.1.3 Paid Coordinators of Youth Ministry must enroll in the Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies within the first two years of service and must complete the certification within four years.**

Youth ministry leaders should understand that their formation is constant and should be consistent. Failure to participate in parish and diocesan training can lead to ineffective ministry and outdated programming.

The Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies, offered by a sponsoring diocese and the Center for Ministry Development, is a ministry education program for those in ministry with youth in both parish and school settings. It equips leaders with the knowledge, skills, practical tools and techniques needed for creative and comprehensive ministry with youth.

This program is designed for persons involved professionally or as volunteers with younger (10-14) or older (14-19) adolescents in a parish or school setting. The potential audience for the program includes: coordinators of youth ministry, directors of religious education, youth ministry volunteer leaders, junior high leaders, high school campus ministers, teachers, clergy, university students and seminarians. Individual weekend courses are also helpful for leaders who specialize in particular ministries. For example, the Justice and Service course can serve leaders involved in social justice ministries.

The primary aim of the program is to promote personal, spiritual, and ministerial growth. Courses in the first year cover youth ministry principles and practice, and leadership theory, processes, and skills. The second year course focuses on fostering the faith growth of youth through evangelization and catechesis, prayer and worship, justice and service, and pastoral care.

The Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies program includes eight courses. Each course consists of fourteen hours of instruction provided in two days. Participants need not start their coursework with a particular course; rather, they may join any time courses are offered.

A Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies is awarded by the sponsoring institution (diocese and/or university) and the Center for Ministry Development to students who participate in all eight courses and complete the certificate assignments and learning journal for each course. For more information, visit www.cmdnet.org.

Youth Ministry and the Law

In these days, when recourse to courts to settle differences is common, youth ministers avoid an awareness of and compliance with the law at their own peril. Much more than that, however, their responsibility to youth and to their parents, conservators, and guardians is paramount. Youth ministry demands that church personnel, paid or volunteer, clearly communicate at all times with youth and their parents/guardians regarding programming; that they carefully screen those volunteers who minister in the program; that they appropriately supervise all activities; and that they implement Diocesan policies regarding the proper maintenance of facilities in order to prevent accidental injury. Youth ministers must strive to model their leadership on that of Jesus, and, as He was, be committed to care in every way for those young people in Catholic parishes: The following guidelines and Diocesan policies are presented to help the Coordinator of Youth Ministries and others involved with ministry to youth.

Liability Guidelines

The following legal theories are most particularly applicable to youth ministry.

Law of Agency

This legal principle governs who is responsible for the actions of another and under what circumstances liability exists.

An employer (called the principal) can be held responsible for the acts of an employee (called the agent) under the law of Respondent Superior ("The employer must answer") if two conditions are met:

- The one who acts is the agent of the employer; and
- The employee/agent's wrongful acts are within the scope of his or her employment/ministry.

At issue is whether the questionable act was of the kind for which the employee/agent was hired or engaged to perform; did it occur within the authorized time and space limits of the job, and was the act undertaken, at least in part, by the intent to serve the employer?

The employer, in this case, is the parish and, ultimately, the Diocese. The agent is the Youth Minister (hereafter designated as the CYM or Coordinator of Youth Ministry). Under the law, even volunteers in the program can be considered as agents of the CYM as well as of the parish and/or Diocese.

The CYM does not need to be a paid employee to be considered an agent: The issue is whether the parish has the right (expressed or not) of control over the person's work. That is, does the parish have the authority to hire and fire a CYM and govern the manner in which work is done? The answer will always be, "Yes," even for volunteer CYMs.

The CYM however, may still be held responsible for acts caused by his/her own negligence and intentional assault.

For example: The parish youth ministry is out on a planned caroling expedition at Christmas time: At a stop light, everyone gets out of their cars and runs around them (including, or not including the CYM in a game of "Fire Drill." One of the young people is hit by a car and injured. The CYM is personally liable because of negligence. The parish is liable, because the CYM is the agent of the parish and is acting within the scope of his/her employment (caroling as part of the YM programming), regardless of whether or not the parish would ever condone this action on the part of the CYM. Ultimately, the diocese is responsible.

The Law of Negligence

A person (or institution) is negligent for his/her/its actions if

- there was a duty
- the duty was breached
- there was injury or damage
- the injury or damage was caused by the breach of the duty.

For example: If the parish youth ministry sponsored a swim party and the CYM was reading a book while the some youth were diving dangerously and a young person was seriously injured, the youth minister would be liable (as may be the parish and diocese because of the law of agency.) There was a duty to supervise the event; the duty was breached; there was an injury; and the injury was caused by the breach of that duty.

The above information (admittedly limited) and the following guidelines are not offered in order to limit CYMs in their ministry or to frighten pastors, pastoral councils and parish staff. Instead, the following guidelines are offered so that parishes and CYMs will take necessary precautionary measures in order to keep risk at a reasonable level. Hopefully, an increased sense of responsibility on the part of CYMs will enhance their ministry to and with youth.

People sue people they don't know; therefore, the call to be in relationship with the youth and their parents/guardians is one that must be taken seriously. All CYMs and their volunteers should be aware that they are never immune from the possibility of injury or lawsuit. Despite all their best efforts, precautions, training and planning, someone may get injured. The diocese has retained coverage that will protect CYMs and volunteers, while acting within the scope of their ministry, and it should offer them security as they go faithfully about their ministry. Recall, though, as was said above, that CYMs are liable for their own criminal or negligent acts.

Confidentiality

At some point in ministry, a young person will come to you and say, "I want to talk to you but, promise not to tell anyone." Do everyone a favor: Do not make such a promise.

It is important for both you and the young person to understand that confidentiality can never encompass a statement that indicates a young person is a danger to themselves or others. Being a danger to ones self does not always mean suicide, by the way. Being an advocate for young people sometimes requires us to say no to situations that are bad for young people. For instance, a young person who may be involved in drugs, alcohol or other at risk behavior (including premarital sex) may choose to confide in you as a cry for help. Such reckless behavior may require a conversation with the child's parents and a licensed counselor. For example, if you get the sense from speaking with a young person that he or she is considering suicide or violent acts against another, you must seek counsel from others immediately. This might include a conversation with the pastor and perhaps the child's parents.

There may also be situations where a child wants to confide in you and what he or she shares may have legal ramifications. For example, "Susie wants to talk about how uncomfortable she is around some of the young people at the youth group meetings. They don't get along at school and there is a history of teasing. " It would be appropriate to keep Susie's confidence and to work with her towards getting along. You may also be able to use this conversation to pull together a session on bullying. If, however, "Susie confides in you that she is uncomfortable because she was physically assaulted by one of the young people, that is NOT information that you can keep in confidence. Professional advice should be sought from our pastor and/or a license counselor.

So what do you do when a young person asks, "Can you keep a secret?" The best response would include, I would love to talk to you and hear what you have to say but, I need you to know that I cannot keep something a secret if I fear for your safety or the safety of others. Chances are, if the young person is looking for help, they will confide in you anyway.

For the Sake of God's Children: Diocesan Guidelines

For the Sake of God's Children, the response of Diocese of Wilmington to the Charter for the Protection of Young People, published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, outlines what is required of youth ministry leaders.

5.2 All youth ministry leaders must be familiar with this section in its entirety and to comply with the mandates contained therein.

The commentary that follows provides an explanation of checklists found in Appendix Four of this manual and in Section Three of the *For the Sake of God's Children* Manual.

Supervision and Supervisors

The following are Diocese of Wilmington policies and are to be followed in all activities that involve young people.

5.3 Maintain the appropriate ratio of cleared adults to youth participants:

- 5.3.1 Two cleared adults per the initial 7 youth for 8th grade and below**
- 5.3.2 Two cleared adults per the initial 10 high school youth**
- 5.3.3 One cleared adult per each additional 10 youth in all age groups**
- 5.3.4 Never one cleared adult working alone with youth**
- 5.3.5 Cleared adults should be in proportion to the gender breakdown of the youth participants attending the event**
- 5.3.6 Reasonable consideration should be given to the number of cleared adults required for events with greater number of participants**

Chaperons may include young adults who are a **minimum** of 21 years of age.

5.4 Young adults who are 18 (and out of high school) to 20 years of age, who assist with youth ministry, are not considered chaperones.

5.5 All chaperones must have received clearance for service (acceptable background check) from the Diocese of Wilmington, and every chaperone must have a Volunteer Covenant on file with his or her respective parish office.

Supervision of youth ministry includes the following:

- Ensuring the safety of the young people while at a program or activity
- Assisting the Coordinator with the implementation of a program or activity
- Seeing that the guidelines for behavior and safety are followed

Chaperons should be apprised of their role and responsibilities for each distinct youth ministry program or activity, as it may be different depending on the situation.

Many times young people arrive early and stay late after youth ministry events. Parishes are responsible for providing adult supervision while they are on parish grounds, both before and after programs. Parishes can be found responsible for accidents and injuries occurring on parish grounds.

Because of the requirements of the For Sake of God's Children program, adult leaders are reminded that they must plan earlier and better.

Cleared Adults

For an adult leader in ministry to be considered cleared, he or she must have completed a background check and received clearance through the diocese or, in the case of private Catholic institutions, their respective parish or school. In addition, the adult leader must have a signed copy of the Volunteer Covenant on file with their parish or school. Finally, some training about Safe Environments must have taken place either through one on one conversation or via CYM's annual coaches training.

Volunteer Covenant

The Volunteer Covenant present adult leaders in ministry with general guidelines of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. It is not exhaustive in nature. To be cleared for service, every adult leader must have completed a Volunteer Covenant each year. These signed documents must be kept on file with the FSGC compliance officer for your parish or school and must be available upon request to the diocesan auditor. After a new covenant is signed, the previous year's covenants should be shredded.

Visiting Instructors/Camps

The guidelines outlined the FSGC do not provide for every situation in ministry. Hosting a sports camp or inviting someone to give a presentation to young people in your parish or school is one such area.

If a parish or school is hosting a sports camp and the person directing the camp is not cleared through the Diocese of Wilmington FSGC program, that adult must never be left alone with young people. As long as the parish or school is operating within the guidelines of FSGC regarding the number of cleared adults required, the camp director does not have to be cleared for service, though it is reasonable to make sure a request.

In the case where a guest speaker attends a parish or diocesan event for a one time performance or presentation, that person is not required to be cleared through the Diocese of Wilmington FSGC program so long as no opportunity exists for him/her to be alone with young people.

For the protection of young people, it is reasonable to ask a visiting presenter or camp counselor to be cleared through the Diocese of Wilmington FSGC program.

CYM ID Badges

5.6 All coaches must wear their ID badge at all practices and games, matches, and other official CYM contests.

Catholic Youth Ministry provides, free of charge, identification badges for all youth ministry volunteers who are classified by the Diocese of Wilmington as “cleared adults” (have received an acceptable background check through the diocese).

“Cleared for service” and the presence of an ID badge do not indicate that the individual has received the training necessary to fulfill his/her duties as a volunteer in youth ministry.

Parishes should encourage volunteers to wear their ID badge when serving as a volunteer in parish youth ministry.

There is a \$5 cost to replace any badge that has been lost or stolen.

Code of Conduct for Youth

See Appendix Four of this manual, Form G, for the diocesan Code of Conduct form.

The youth minister should have clearly defined guidelines for participation and procedures for dealing with violations of those guidelines. Guidelines should be based on the mission statement of the parish youth ministry, and should be communicated to both parents and young people. Guidelines should be stated in writing. Parishes may consider asking parents and young people to sign a statement confirming that they have read the guidelines and agree to abide by them.

The diocesan Code of Conduct, Form G, can be used in conjunction Form A or Form B. In most cases, Form B will be sufficient, however, when it is necessary to have a more comprehensive code of conduct, Form G should be used. Having a young person and their parents sign this at the beginning of the year would indicate that they understand the guidelines while participating in onsite ministry. When taking young people on a trip, on a retreat, to work camp, or other off site events, Form G can serve as a reminder of the standards to which they have agreed.

Adult leaders in ministry are advised to have a clear plan in place regarding the consequences of young people (or other adults) who fail to follow the Code of Conduct. Use of the Guidelines for Sending a Young Person Home in Appendix Four is recommended.

Form G can be edited for specific events (specific behaviors in a hotel setting, for instance).

5.7 The following must be part of any statement of a Code of Conduct for youth for participation in youth ministry.

- **Possession of alcohol, drugs and tobacco products are not permitted at any time at any youth ministry function. Anyone found in possession of these items will be sent home immediately. If the youth function is held off parish grounds, the parents will be requested to come and retrieve their son/daughter. In the event the function is a distance away from the parish, the young person will be sent home with the cost borne by the parents.**
- **No types of weapons are permitted at any youth ministry function. Persons carrying a weapon will be dismissed immediately to the custody of a parent.**
- **Inappropriate behavior, including the use of offensive language, and inappropriate attire, will not be tolerated.**

On-site Parish Youth Ministry

Ministry to and with youth, or any events or activities in which youth are involved as participants in the parish youth ministry programming require the following.

Permission, Medical Release Consent Forms

The following are Diocese of Wilmington policies and are to be followed in all activities that involve young people.

- 5.8 Obtain written consent from parents/guardians for all participants in one of the following ways:**
- **Annual consent: required yearly and kept on file for all on-site events less than 6 hours long** (see Appendix Four of this manual, Form A)
 - **Event specific consent: required for all events off site, and for all events overnight or day-long, that are more than 6 hours in length** (see Appendix Four of this manual, Form B)

Consent forms not only are a means of protecting the diocese and the adult leaders, they are also a sign of the Church's care and concern for the young people. While giving parents and guardians a sense of security about the safety of their children, they also provide valuable information in an emergency situation. Consent forms will not ward off lawsuits, but they will and do shift the burden of proof in a legal proceeding.

Consent forms can be altered by parishes to include information necessary for a particular event, so long as the wording regarding consent and liability remains unchanged. In other words, you can add to the form but never subtract.

- 5.9 The Annual Consent and Release Form must be on file for every young person who is active in any youth ministry programming, including religious education, and must be renewed each year.**
- 5.10 Event Specific Forms must be used for events held off site** (taking a group ice skating, for instance) **AND for all events** (even on-site events like Lock-ins) **lasting more than six hours.**
- 5.11 All Consent and Release Forms must be kept on file for two years** (the standard statute of limitations for personal injury cases) **after which they are to be destroyed.**

The resumption of more regular activities in the fall of each year is one time when Annual Consent and Release Forms may be distributed, signed and returned with a minimum of work. They also may be included in any information mailed prior to the beginning of a new program year. Another opportune moment for obtaining these forms is at the time of re-registration. There should be an understanding that youth are not registered for any programming or classes until these forms are on file.

Consent forms should be copied and a copy of all forms should remain in the possession of another cleared adult that does not attend a particular trip or event. This allows a cleared adult not attending the event to contact parents in the event of an emergency and frees the cleared adults on the trip or event to tend to the emergency at hand.

Annual and Event Specific consent and release forms include a provision for the collection of email addresses and cell phone numbers, as required by the Acceptable Use Guidelines, found later in this section. This provision implies parental permission is given for adults to contact young people using those email addresses and/or cell phone numbers collected on the forms.

It should be noted, however, that this permission does not extend to catechists or other cleared adult leaders in ministry. If it is a coordinator's intention to share young people's personal information (email address, home address, cell phones numbers, etc.) with catechists or other adult leaders in ministry, it is incumbent upon the primary contact person in a parish or school to alert parents of that intention and to give them the option of opting out of having that information shared.

Attendance

Keeping accurate records of attendance at scheduled parish youth programming will be helpful to track the participation of young people in the parish. Attendance records are also helpful if there is ever a question of presence of youth at a particular event, program, class, etc. Parents may believe youth, especially those who drive themselves, were at a particular event, when, in truth, they were not. Youth present on the premises but not at an activity when it begins should be invited to come in or asked to leave. CYMs who contact the parents of youth unexpectedly absent from events or classes will have a way both to link up with parents and to encourage future participation by being welcoming and showing concern.

Arrival and Dismissal

Adult leaders have a responsibility to and for youth between the time of arrival and the time of departure. Clearly state parish policy regarding both: Generally, fifteen minutes prior to an event and fifteen to fifteen minutes after an event gives parents and/or youth ample time to make connections and meet deadlines.

5.12 Youth are never to be left alone on the parish premises. Another cleared adult, in addition to the cleared adult responsible for the program must remain with the youth until all youth have left.

If it is necessary for a young person to leave a program early, clearly state that notification from the parent or guardian is required. Do not dismiss a young person to the care of an adult who is not the parent or guardian without expressed permission.

Medical Injuries and Emergencies

Each parish youth ministry should have a well-stocked and easily accessible first aid kit. It would be ideal if one or two adults on the youth ministry team had been trained in rudimentary first aid and CPR. If a young person complains of minor discomfort, Tylenol, cough drops, etc. may be given if there is a signed medical release form on file indicating that this type of medicine (listed by name) can be administered.

Often times, young people who are taking prescribed medication on a regular basis will participate in events. In such cases, the group leader (or Registered Nurse, if participating on the trip/event) should be the one to keep the medication in their possession. Parents should be informed before the event that only the amount necessary for the duration of the trip should be sent with the young person and that the prescribed medication must be sent in the container in which it was dispensed from the pharmacy, such that the instructions from the doctor are clearly visible. When the time arrives for the medication to be administered, the group leader should hand the medication bottle to the young person and watch them take the medication. The bottle is then collected by the group leader and secured until the next dosage time.

- 5.13 Prescription medicine is not to be dispensed without written consent of parents or guardians. The directions for administering the medication must be submitted through Form C found in Appendix Three.**
- 5.14 Do not dispense aspirin to anyone under the age of eighteen.**
- 5.15 In the case of serious injury, or any injury or discomfort requiring treatment, the Incident Report Form is to be filled out within twenty-four hours and submitted to Catholic Youth Ministry.**

Be aware that aspirin given to those eighteen years of age and younger has been known to result in Reyes Syndrome.

If a more serious injury occurs or the young person complains of serious discomfort, the adult supervising the activity, if other than the Coordinator, should notify the Coordinator immediately. The parent or guardian is also to be notified immediately. If there is any question regarding the seriousness of the injury or discomfort, the young person is to be taken immediately to an emergency medical care facility. The medical release/permission to treat form should also be taken.

Injury/Incident Report

If a participant requires professional medical care following an injury or illness that results from participating in a parish youth ministry or diocesan CYM event or trip, Form I (Injury/Incident Form) must be completed and submitted to CYM no later than thirty (30) days following the injury. Catholic Youth Ministry offers supplemental insurance to help families pay some expenses related to CYM (including CYM Athletics) injuries. Claims will be denied if Form I is not received within thirty (30) days of the injury.

Keep a copy of the Injury Report form for your files. Giving one to the pastor also keeps him informed. If there is an accident, do not admit any liability or negligence, or make any promises of payment or insurance coverage to the parties involved. Politely refer them to the pastor with their questions, or the Diocesan Office for Catholic Youth Ministry. Take the necessary precautions to ensure that no other youth will be injured in the same way.

Off-site Parish Youth Ministry

As part of a holistic, intentional, year-round youth ministry in a parish, youth often participate in activities and events that take place away from the parish premises. These activities may be parish, multi-parish, deanery, or Diocesan sponsored, and also requires us to be concerned for the safety and well being of our youth.

Site Selection

If you use a site other than parish property (including a private home) for activities, the property owner should be aware of the increased liability risk he/she incurs. In the case of private homes, homeowners should check with their insurance agent to see if they are protected for church group activities. Some policies cover such activities while others require an additional rider.

- 5.16 Youth Ministry Leaders must use the appropriate form (GUIDELINES FOR SITE SELECTION FOR A PARISH YOUTH ACTIVITY IN A PRIVATE HOME) found in Appendix Four of this manual prior to ministry in a private home.**
- 5.17 For any youth ministry events and activities off-site, Youth Ministry leaders must use the appropriate form(s) in Appendix Four of this manual prior to ministry.**

Water Activities

Water activities require special precautions. Whenever swimming, whether at a beach, lake, private or public pool, engage a certified lifeguard to be present.

5.18 When using any type of watercraft, young people must wear certified life preservers and be instructed on the proper handling of the craft before using it. Each craft is to have an adult on board. Motorized craft must be driven by those 25 years of age or older who are properly instructed in the use of such watercraft.

Physical Challenge Activities

Recreational activities are included in youth programs for their inherent values of leadership, team play, discipline, and socialization.

5.19 Certain high-risk activities are strictly prohibited. These activities include, but are not limited to:

- sky diving
- hang gliding
- parasailing
- bungee jumping
- rodeo activities
- use of trampolines
- use of all-terrain vehicles
- any bus or vehicle “pulls”
- skateboarding (permitted by BSA with guidelines)
- sledding or inner-tubing is prohibited when the sled or inner tube is pulled by a motorized vehicle of any sort
- scavenger hunts that require young people to leave an event site are prohibited
- Martial Arts (competitive Boxing, etc.)
- fireworks
- participations in motorized speed events
- motorized personal watercraft

Certain high-risk activities may be undertaken only in planned events with the assistance of certified (or appropriately trained when certification is not necessary) instructors:

- SCUBA Diving
- Snorkeling
- Waterskiing
- Board Sailing
- Whitewater activities (canoeing, rafting, etc.)

Shooting and hunting sports
Caving
Defensive martial arts
Climbing and rappelling
Laser tag (removed from prohibited list August 09)
Paintball (removed from prohibited list August 09)

By the very fact that these activities are more physically challenging, they involve a greater risk of personal injury.

5.20 In order to manage the risk and ensure that the youth experience the activity at its best, youth ministry leaders must provide the following:

- **Licensed, certified instructors who, either as part of an organization or on their own, have a good safety record.**
- **Proper safety equipment.**
- **Match between the difficulty of the activity and the skill ability of the participants.**
- **Training for adult sponsors/volunteers particular to this type of activity.**

Hotel Rooms/Camp Settings/Private Homes

When sponsoring an overnight event off parish grounds, every attempt should be made to secure hotel rooms that enter and exit into interior halls. The hotel/institutional rules should apply for the number of persons per room or cabin.

On occasion, a coach or other adult leaders in ministry may wish to host an overnight gathering at his/her private home for the members of a particular CYM team or group. Such team or group gatherings are prohibited unless the appropriate number of cleared adults is present and the sponsor of the gathering is a parent of a team or group member.

5.21 Under no circumstances should an adult be housed in the same hotel/motel room with a youth under the age of 18, unless that youth is the child or ward of said adult.

5.22 Adult leaders in ministry, including coaches, who do not have children on the team or in a particular group are prohibited from sponsoring overnight gatherings for that team or group in a private home. This rule applies to coaches in season and off-season.

In cabin settings, every attempt should be made to house adults in separate quarters than the youth. When this is not possible, adults should be housed together (for example, in a group by the doorway) away from the youth participants. Guidelines for volunteer checklists and all chaperon policies apply. *[Note Well: Young adults between the ages of 18 and 20 who are not considered chaperons must be housed apart from youth participants.]*

In hotel settings, room checks (or bed checks) should be done by two cleared adults of the same sex as those rooms being checked (i.e., women chaperons checking female participant's room, etc.). The most effective way is to knock on the door and ask the young people to present themselves (make themselves visible to the adults standing at the door). If an adult must enter the room, two adults should enter together and one should keep the door open while the other checks the room.

When staying overnight in an hotel, rules about coming out of the sleeping rooms after curfew should be clearly outlined and discussed with the participants. Adult leaders must know the participants well enough to know whether the young people can be trusted to stay overnight without wandering the halls of the hotel. Using tape on the doors to ensure the young people remain indoors sets the wrong tone for the trip. It assumes unacceptable behavior will take place it leaves open the possibility that a young person could innocently open a door, break the tape, and suffer the consequences. If adult leaders are not confident that the young people will stay in their rooms, an adult should be posted in the hall until such time that adults are confident that the young people are asleep.

CYM makes no requirements that either tape on the doors or a hall monitor be used.

Other options include hiring a security guard, discussing security procedures with the hotel staff, outlining the consequences of leaving a hotel room with the participants, and having a plan in place to follow through on those consequences. In most cases, a conversation about expectations and mutual trust of the young people is sufficient. If it is not, those young people should not be attending a trip that extends overnight.

In private homes, overnight gathering of teams or youth groups are prohibited unless the coach or other adult leaders in ministry have children on the team or in the group.

In all cases, FSGC and simple common sense are a good rule of thumb. If the coach is a male and the team consists of female team members, it is inappropriate for such a gathering to occur without the presence of other cleared female adults, regardless of whether the coach is a parent.

It is reasonable for a team member to host his/her friends for a private party, but this would not constitute a gathering of the team unless the coach was present and team related activities take place. If the coach is a parent and his/her own child wishes to host an overnight gathering, any responsible parent would ensure the safety of the young people by having more than one adult present in the house. Such a gathering becomes a team activity when a coach, who does not have children on the team, arrives at the gathering or when the gathering becomes an addendum, of sorts, to a practice (gathering a team to watch video of a previous competition, for instance).

All adult leaders in ministry are reminded that because of their role as Church Personnel, they have the responsibility to behave in way that is beyond reproach and always in the best interest of the young people.

Inspecting Bags

Unless you are a parent of the participant whose bag is to be searched, the random inspection of young people's possessions could constitute a breach of privacy and certainly shows a breach of trust. If an adult leader has probable cause to believe that the young person is in possession of drugs, alcohol, or other illegal or immoral materials, that adult leader, in the presence of another cleared adult, may ask the young person to empty the contents of his/her pockets and/or bags in front of the two chaperons. Adult leaders may, at no time, personally search the young person or his/her bags.

Collecting Personal Electronic Devices

In this age of instant connection, young persons will often arrive to a parish or diocesan event with a cell phone and perhaps other personal electronic devices. These can become a distraction and allow the young people to be virtually present elsewhere. CYM makes no requirements about banning cell phones or other personal electronic devices, although parishes and schools are free to do so.

The alternative to collection is education. Young people should be invited to an understanding regarding the ministry of presence and the importance of putting away modern technology in favor of being physically and emotionally present to the experience for which they have gathered.

In some cases, however, it is appropriate to collect cell phones and MP3 players. Retreats, for instance, provide an opportunity for technology-free experiences. When personal electronic devices are collected, the adult leaders become responsible for these items so care must be taken to keep the devices safe. In addition, if adult leaders plan to collect personal electronic devices, the parents of participants should be notified ahead of time and time should be given during the event when the devices are returned to the young people for a specified amount of time.

When cell phones are collected, and even when they are not, adult leaders should provide an emergency contact number to parents of participants. Parents should be instructed to contact the adults with news of a family emergency rather than calling the young person directly.

Any restrictions placed on young people regarding personal electronic devices extend to adult leaders in ministry as well. If adult leaders in ministry encourage the young people to present to an experience then those adult leaders should be equally present. Cell phone use by adults during ministry activities and events should be limited to that which is necessary for the activity or event. Coordinating with a bus driver, for example, for pick up after an event would be appropriate. Texting personal messages or making phone calls not related to the event models inappropriate behavior.

Water Parks and Amusement Parks

The guidelines outlined the FSGC do not provide for every situation in ministry. Taking a group of young people to an amusement park or a water park is one such area.

CYM makes no additional policies in this area but offers the following recommendations:

- The two-adult rule always applies. When taking Jr. High or younger participants, split the group up (or better, let them split up into groups) to go off into the park with two adults. The adults can sit together on most rides and if you keep the groups even in number, no participant will be seated with a stranger (on most conventional amusement park rides).
- High school students could be allowed to venture into the amusement park on their own as long as cell phone numbers have been exchanged among adult leaders and young people (one of the rare times adults would ask for the cell phone number of a young person).
- All groups, regardless of age, should meet at least once every three to four hours so group members and adults can change groups if necessary (i.e., to keep those who like thrill rides together, etc.) A meeting time and place should be agreed upon before the group breaks apart.
- The consequences for missing a meeting time should be clearly outlined and a plan should be in place to enforce those consequences.

Participation in water parks is up to the discretion of the group leader or event coordinator. If an event coordinator, for instance, deems an attraction unsafe (i.e., a wave pool), then participants are prohibited from using that attraction.

Participation at any water park should not take place until the group leader or event coordinator has ensured that all participants are able to swim. This can be accomplished by editing Form B for this particular event.

Going to a water park is also a good time to have a conversation with young people about appropriate/modest swimming attire.

Movies Ratings

When showing movies to young people (up to the age of 18), only G, PG, and PG-13 rated movies are appropriate. Movies that are rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America are inappropriate for use in ministry. No movie should be shown unless the group leader or event coordinator has previewed the movie in its entirety prior to showing the movie to young people. Movies that pervert the faith or are blatantly immoral must be avoided.

Adult leaders must follow the guidelines outlined at the end of this section regarding copyright laws when showing movies in ministry.

Video Game Ratings

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings are designed to provide concise and impartial information about the content in computer and video games so consumers, especially parents, can make an informed purchase decision. ESRB ratings have two equal parts: rating symbols suggest age appropriateness for the game and content descriptors indicate elements in a game that may have triggered a particular rating and/or may be of interest or concern.

To take full advantage of the ESRB rating system, it's important to check both the rating symbol (on the front of the box) and the content descriptors (on the back).

Only games with the ratings of Early Childhood, Everyone, Everyone 10+, and Teen are appropriate for use in ministry.

No matter how popular, games with the ESRB rating of Mature, Adults Only, or Rating Pending are not appropriate for use in ministry.

Transportation: Drivers

Finding and selecting appropriate adult drivers is essential to youth ministries "on the go" scheduling. Competent, responsible, mature adults are in great demand. Drivers for youth ministry activities, events, programs, retreats, etc. must be responsible adults at least 25 years of age.

- 5.23 Only cleared adults 25 years of age or older may be drivers to and from parish youth activities (drivers acting on behalf of a parish).**
- 5.24 All vehicles must meet safety standards as outlined in the Vehicle Inspection Checklist that appears in Section Three of the FSGC Manual (see Appendix Four of this manual).**
- 5.25 High School-aged students are never to serve as drivers for youth ministry.**

This includes youth who are seniors in high school and who have reached the age of 18. A young person may drive himself/herself from home to a youth ministry program at the parish and then home again. In addition, a young person might bring a friend to and from an event, but these situations are at the discretion of the young person's parents (the parents of both the driver and the passenger) and not under the purview of the youth ministry leaders.

Drivers and Insurance

The Diocese of Wilmington carries secondary liability insurance. Liability insurance is necessary if there is a question about responsibly and supervision of the young people entrusted to our care.

- 5.26 All drivers must complete and sign a Volunteer Covenant even if they will drive only once for youth ministry.**
 - 5.26.1 The insurance that a volunteer carries on their vehicle must meet the diocese's recommended minimum limits: \$50,000 per person/\$100,000 per occurrence.**
 - 5.26.2 The insurance on their car is considered primary insurance in the case of an automobile accident.**
 - 5.26.3 The medical insurance of the passengers in the car is considered secondary coverage.**
 - 5.26.4 The diocese does not carry insurance to cover automobile accidents of drivers of privately owned cars.**

The insurance on a vehicle follows the vehicle. This applies regardless of who is driving it or for whatever purpose, just so long as the vehicle is being driven with the owner's permission and within the scope of that permission.

If a parent gives permission to have his/her car used by the youth ministry, then that car's insurance must pay for any injury or damage caused by the use of that automobile. Also, if there is any damage to the car itself while it is being used; i.e., is in a collision, there is nothing in the diocesan insurance policy that would pay for the repair of the auto.

Whenever a car not owned by the diocese is to be used, the Coordinator is to make sure there is insurance on the car. If we can assume there is liability coverage, then it would be "primary" coverage. That is to say, the insurance on the car would have to be used first to pay any suits or claims arising out of any accident or injury caused by the car.

Minimum levels of required auto insurance

The insurance that a volunteer carries on their vehicle must meet the diocese's recommended limits: \$50,000 per person/\$100,000 per occurrence (See policy 5.25.1).

How to read liability limits

The following information will help you understand the table of liability limits.

First number: bodily injury liability maximum for one person injured in an accident.

Second number: bodily injury liability maximum for all injuries in one accident.

Third number: property damage liability maximum for one accident.

What is no-fault?

Some states have "no-fault" laws, meaning your auto policy must pay medical bills for injuries suffered in an auto accident regardless of who caused the accident. Maryland and Delaware are both "no-fault" states.

State	Liability required? Liability minimums (in thousands of dollars)	PIP required?	No-fault state?	Uninsured motorist coverage required?
Delaware	Yes, 15/30/5	Yes	No	No
Maryland	Yes, 20/40/15	Yes	No	Yes

Passenger Vans

In the interest of safety for youth and adult participants in Diocese of Wilmington programs, the evaluation and regulation of the use of 15-passenger vans is critical.

Federal law prohibits the sale of 15-passenger vans for school related transport of high school and younger students. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

(NHTSA) has issued warnings to users of 15-passenger vans due to increased roll over risks under certain conditions. It has been determined that risks increase significantly when vans carry more than 10 passengers.

5.27 The use of 15 passenger vans to transport young people (under 18) is prohibited by the Diocese of Wilmington.

5.27.1 Removing the back seat of a 15-passenger van does not render it acceptable.

Because of these risks, it is important that experienced drivers who are familiar with the handling characteristics of these vehicles operate passenger vans.

Participation in defensive driving courses is recommended where such courses are available.

In consultation with the insurance company for the Diocese of Wilmington, and because of the difference in how they are constructed, 12 passenger vans are acceptable for use in transporting young people.

Rental Vehicles

When renting vehicles for youth ministry activities, the agent of the parish (youth minister, secretary, pastor) should contact the parish or diocesan Office for Catholic Youth Ministry to request a certificate of insurance. This form will provide the rental agency with proof of insurance and will cover any damage incurred while the vehicle is in use. Be sure to include any additional drivers and to make the rental arrangements in the name of the parish, not a person's name. Public transportation and regularly scheduled airlines/vessels operate under strict equipment, personnel and insurance requirements and there are recommended means for large group travel. For in-town transit of large groups, it is recommended that Churches hire local school bus companies to transport youth to and from events.

Water Craft

Check that the vessel has a current Certificate of Inspection and that it is being operated by qualified personnel. Do not use uninsured watercraft.

5.28 U.S. Coast Guard regulations must be observed when using watercraft and such vessels should be used only for their intended purpose. No vessel shall carry more passengers than it is designed officially to carry.

All comprehensive liability policies contain exclusions for aircraft and watercraft. Check terms for legal liabilities before signing contracts. Additional insurance is required for chartering boats. When traveling long distances, it is important to make regular stops. Eight hours of daylight driving is a recommended maximum.

Additional Transportation Safety Procedures

- An itinerary is left with the pastor, all parents and at the parish offices
- Participants (youth and adult) are instructed in emergency procedures
- Pre-arranged meeting locations are set if two or more vehicles are involved.

Non-automobile Accidents

If there is injury or property damage that does not involve the use of automobiles, the diocesan insurance provides comprehensive general liability coverage that will pay for claims that do not arise out of the negligence of the diocese or its agents. It does not pay for injuries that are not caused by negligence. An example of this would be the situation where a young person is skiing, falls, and breaks a leg - with no fault resting with anyone other than the skier. The diocesan insurance program would not pay any type of claim arising from that. It would be the skier or the skier's parents who would have to pay the bills for medical treatment, etc. If there is negligence with the diocesan agent that results in injury, the diocesan insurance would handle the claim. The only problem that can arise here is a sometimes "gray area" as to who is an "agent" of the diocese. That designation of "agent" could only be resolved when the facts of a given situation are explored.

If a participant requires professional medical care following an injury or illness that results from participating in a parish youth ministry or diocesan CYM event or trip, Form I (Injury/Incident Form) must be completed and submitted to CYM no later than thirty (30) days following the injury. Catholic Youth Ministry offers supplemental insurance to help families pay some expenses related to CYM (including CYM Athletics) injuries. Claims will be denied if Form I is not received within thirty (30) days of the injury.

Emergency Plans

It is strongly recommended that the Coordinator develop an Emergency Action Plan for various crises that can arise while away from the parish on a youth ministry event or program. Emergency Action Plans should be developed for the following emergencies: fire, someone becoming lost, physical injury, drowning, hurricanes, tornadoes, car breakdown, etc. Before leaving for an off-site event, the Coordinator and adult chaperones/team members should be familiar with the strategies outlined in case of an emergency. All adults accompanying the young people as chaperons, drivers, team members should have in their possession a copy of the itinerary, directions, and necessary phone numbers.

Adult leaders should provide an emergency contact number to parents of participants. Parents should be instructed to contact the adults with news of a family emergency rather than calling the young person directly.

Security Plan

Coordinators should develop a security plan for their meeting place or activity area. Every youth must know where to go and how to act when confronted by strangers or intruders, and be able to sound an agreed-upon alarm.

Corporal Punishment

5.29 The use of corporal punishment is forbidden in the Diocese of Wilmington.

Corporal punishment includes hitting, pushing, shoving, and slapping. Christian principles do not support the use of corporal punishment.

Diocesan Events

The Office for Catholic Youth Ministry organizes annual events for young people and adult leaders.

- 5.30 Parish youth ministry leaders are responsible for complying with the registration deadlines as outlined in the materials advertising these events.**
- 5.31 Parishes and schools will be assessed the total cost incurred for the number of attendees that are pre-registered for events at the close of the event registration period.**
- 5.32 CYM will not refund registration fees except as delineated in event specific registration information.**

CYM will bill parishes for events where groups attend and the parish leaders would prefer to pay with one check. A bill will be sent in the week after the event and payment is expected within thirty (30) days. There is a \$25 return fee assessed on all returned checks. Unless otherwise announced, CYM will not bill individuals. Payment for individuals is expected at the time of on-site registration.

In the case where a parish pre-registers participants but arrives to the event with less than the pre-registered number, CYM will make every attempt to only bill the actual amount incurred for those who do not attend (the cost of lunch, for instance). CYM reserves the right, however, to bill the entire amount since the number of pre-registered participants has already become part of the planning process.

Technology In Ministry

Effective communication can be a valuable tool for adult leaders in ministry. Young people communicate constantly with one another; they are more tied to technology than any generation in history. If adult leaders are to adequately engage young people in the life, mission, and ministry of the Church, we must also communicate with them and with each other, consistently and appropriately.

Before gathering young people together, whether in a classroom or for a parish event, properly trained adult leaders in ministry must already understand the need for setting appropriate boundaries and creating safe environments.

Properly trained adult leaders in ministry also understand that the use of technology, no matter how effective, is never a substitute for human connection. Rather, technology makes available a new avenue for the Church to communicate the Good News.

Adult leaders in ministry are committed to life-long learning. This continued education must include technology. As technology and means of communication continue to evolve, it is the responsibility of adult leaders in ministry to keep pace with the latest tools and threats that this evolution brings about.

Establishing a safe environment for face-to-face relationships is the responsibility of all church personnel. Ministry in a virtual setting must reflect the same principles. All technology-oriented activity performed in the execution of ministry to, with, and for young people must be in full compliance with the ethical and moral standards of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, and its program for safe environments, *For the Sake of God's Children*.

Parental Consent

Effective August 2009, Form A (Annual Consent and Release) and Form B (Event Specific Consent and Release) includes parental permission for adult leaders to communicate electronically with young people. This permission does not extend to other adult leaders in ministry that might communicate on behalf of the parish or school. If a Coordinator of Youth Ministry, for instance, intends to share the personal information that is gathered with catechists or other adult leaders in ministry, parents should be informed of such intention and be given the ability to opt out of having that information shared.

Adult leaders may not initiate electronic communication without explicit parental consent. Even when consent is granted, adult leaders should not assume carte blanche access to young people. Communication should always include appropriate and healthy boundaries.

A Word of Caution

As effective as techno-savvy ministry can be, there are realities that adult leaders would be wise to consider:

The Internet gives individuals a false sense of anonymity/security.

Individuals, especially young people, will often be more apt to disclose personal information via the Internet, than they would if the conversation took place in person. It is impossible to adequately communicate emotion electronically and it is easy for inappropriate relationships and unhealthy attachments to develop online. Adult leaders in ministry must understand appropriate boundaries and when it is necessary to involve other adults, namely parents, into the conversation.

Important online or mobile technology exchanges should be followed-up with an in-person conversation.

Technology can give a false sense of availability.

Adult leaders in ministry, whether paid or volunteer, should not be accessible to the young people they serve on a constant on-call basis. Adult leaders must be equally present to their own personal, spiritual, and family life as they are to their ministry. Twenty-four hour access by parents or young people does not promote a healthy lifestyle or a safe environment.

Once published online, it is forever online.

Adult leaders in ministry inherently have the greater power in relationships and therefore are the party responsible for maintaining appropriate boundaries. Anything posted on the Internet will remain there indefinitely. Adult leaders can be terminated from paid or volunteer positions should their online activities reveal behaviors that are inconsistent with either the law or the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Going in Search of Information

Adult leaders in ministry should avoid purposely searching for information about the young people to whom they minister for the purpose of catching young people in the act of illicit, immoral, or illegal behaviors. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Performing a Google search to find information about your students, youth group members, or team members
- Searching social networking sites to seek information about the young people with whom you work or the organization for which you are employed or are a volunteer
- Searching video sharing sites for videos of the young people and/or their family members

Confiscating and/or Searching Cell Phones

There will be times when adult leaders in ministry are made aware of materials or information on a young person's cell phone that is offensive, illegal, or immoral.

If a parish or school has a written policy that cell phones are not permitted and that if phones are found they will be confiscated, such policies should be enforced fairly, judiciously, and uniformly. Parents should be made aware of such policies in writing.

The question of whether a cell phone can be searched is more problematic. If a cell phone is found on the floor and its ownership is unclear, a quick scroll through the phone to locate the phone's owner is appropriate. Searching the phone to read texts, emails, or view pictures of that same phone is inappropriate.

To that end, any search of a phone should only occur if the phone is suspected to contain materials that pose a threat to the welfare of the student population. Materials on a cell phone that might pose a threat to the welfare of the student population could include evidence of textual harassment; inappropriate pictures or videos involving nudity, drugs, weapons, or other contraband; or even web history files that indicate the student was visiting a bomb-making or anti-establishment web site.

Probable cause dictates that there must be credible information that such materials exist before the phone is searched.

For the protection of the student and the adult leaders in ministry, any search should be done in consultation and, if possible, in the presence of, the parents of the young person.

Sexting: A New Phenomenon

In a new nationwide survey of 1,280 teens and young adults, researchers found that one in five teens are using technology to do what else? Send sexually explicit pictures of themselves to others — either posted online or sent via cell phone. One in five teens and one-third of young adults said they had sent a nude or semi-nude image of themselves to others.

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2009/01/06/teens-sex-and-technology/>

Adult leaders in ministry must communicate the moral and legal ramifications of "sexting" to the young people they serve as well as their parents. Sexting (a combination of the words sex and texting) is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos electronically, primarily between cell phones. Because this is a relatively new activity, there are not many laws pertaining directly to sexting. But the laws on child pornography in our nation are clear, and when nude photos of minors are electronically distributed, whether over the Internet or via cell phone transmission, senders and recipients are potentially looking at serious penalties, including jail time and felony charges. Parents who provide cell phones to their young people are potentially liable in such cases, depending on state laws, evidence and other factors.

In Maryland, sexting can result in charges of felony sexual exploitation of a minor and creation, possession and distribution of child pornography. In the nine Maryland counties of our diocese, young people who “sext” on cell phones run the risk of imprisonment of up to ten years and a fine of \$25,000 or both for a first offense. For each subsequent violation the penalties double to 20 years and a fine of \$50,000 or both (Annotated Code of Maryland under the Criminal Law Article, Section 11-207 and 11-208).

An adult or young person in possession of a film, videotape, photograph, or other visual representation, including an image on a cell phone, media card, or computer of an individual under the age of 16 years engaged in sexual conduct, a state of undress, or a state of sexual excitement is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction for a first violation, is subject to imprisonment not exceeding one year or a fine not exceeding \$2,500 or both; and for each subsequent violation, imprisonment not exceeding two years or a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or both (Criminal Law Section 11-208)

In Delaware, sexting can result in possible charges of sexual misconduct with a minor.

Throughout the United States, it is against federal law to possess lewd photographs of minors.

Adult leaders in ministry would be well advised to share this information with parents and with teens to encourage the avoidance of such behavior

Technology in Ministry Acceptable Use Policy

E-Mail

When using electronic mail (e-mail) to communicate with young people, parents, or colleagues, adult leaders in ministry must:

- Obtain permission from parents before using e-mail to communicate with young people who have not yet graduated from high school
- Protect the privacy of others by using the “blind carbon copy” (BCC) sending protocol when sending to more than one recipient
- Use an e-mail account on a computer that is protected by anti-virus software
- Maintain a separate electronic mail address for their professional communications and personal communication
- Communicate only in ways that are kind and respectful
- Never consider electronic communications to be private
- Never distribute private information about others or themselves
- Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation; your electronic communication should be professional and clearly worded
- Never use email to discuss confidential matters. Face-to-face conversations are more appropriate and professional
- Never infringe copyrights by illegally sharing copyrighted materials (i.e., music, games, or movies)
- Refrain from using “Reply All” feature even if others in the communication thread have done so
- Never intentionally access, transmit, copy or create material that is illegal or immoral (including but not limited to obscenity, stolen materials, pornographic materials, discriminatory, sexist, or racist materials)
- Refrain from sending spam, chain letters, or other mass unsolicited mailings, even if it is religious in nature
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in compliance with the ethical and moral standards of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, and its program for safe environments, *For the Sake of God's Children*
- Report any violation of this policy to the appropriate supervisor

Instant Messaging

When using Instant Messaging services (including but not limited to AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), Microsoft Instant Messenger (MSN), Yahoo! Instant Messenger, Google Talk (gtalk), Skype, Jabber, ICQ, Facebook messenger, Gadu-Gadu, or Zephyr), adult leaders in ministry must:

- Obtain permission from parents before using instant messages as a means of communicating with young people who have not yet graduated from high school
- Protect the privacy of others by not sharing access to your database
- Set boundaries as to when and by whom adults can be contacted
- Establish a separate user name or screen name for professional use
- Never publicize a screen name used solely for personal use
- Document conversations that raise concerns and follow-up with an in-person conversation at an appropriate time
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in compliance with the ethical and moral standards of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, and its program for safe environments, *For the Sake of God's Children*

Text Messaging

When using Mobile Text Data (Texting) & Short Messaging Service (SMS), adult leaders in ministry must:

- Obtain permission from parents before using text messages as a means of communicating with young people
- Protect the privacy of others by not sharing access to your database
- Set boundaries as to when and by whom they can be contacted
- Discuss appropriate content with those given permission to contact you in this manner
- Use mass-texting services when available (i.e., bloove.com, group2call.com, closingalerts.com, clearSMS.com, and gismoSMS.com)
- Avoid one on one text messaging conversations
- Know when not to respond to a text message (content is inappropriate)
- Know when to inform the parents about inappropriate behavior
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in compliance with the ethical and moral standards of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, and its program for safe environments, *For the Sake of God's Children*

Social Networking Sites

Adult leaders in ministry who use social networking sites (Facebook, MyCatholicVoice, DisciplesNow, etc.) as a means of communication to those involved in ministry must:

- Establish a separate account for personal and professional use
- Do not use your personal page for professional use
- Set all account settings to private on your personal or professional page
- Never accept a “friend request” from a young person
- Utilize the group feature or fan page feature to establish communication with young people or with parents
- Set group to closed and only admit those for whom you have permission to electronically communicate
- Monitor all activity on your professional page on a regular basis
- Establish a secondary administrator for all youth related groups as an added means to protect you and the young people
- Hide the “Show Related Groups” feature on all group pages (Facebook)
- Only post pictures of those young people for whom you were given permission to photograph
- Never let young people upload their own photos on the group page
- Report any inappropriate behavior or content to parents, supervisor(s), and/or law enforcement agencies
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in compliance with the ethical and moral standards of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, and its program for safe environments, *For the Sake of God's Children*

Please Note: Due to its more explicit material, and the lack of sound internal controls on content and material that is supported by the site proprietors, the use of MySpace is prohibited for use in ministry.

Blogs

Adult leaders in ministry who use online journals and web based logs (blogs) as a means of communicating with young people or their parents must:

- Maintain a separate blog for personal use and for professional use
- Not express opinions or promote beliefs not in keeping with Roman Catholic tradition or doctrine on either your personal or professional blog (*Note: signing a volunteer covenant or ethical guidelines for work in a parish or school has broad implications for your life outside ministry*)

- Maintain appropriate boundaries in compliance with the ethical and moral standards of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, and its program for safe environments, *For the Sake of God's Children*

Websites

When creating websites for ministry with young people, including but not limited to parish websites, adult leaders in ministry must:

- Update the site regularly
- Never use the site to buy, sell, advertise, or otherwise conduct business unless approved by the appropriate supervisor
- Never share the list of registered users with unauthorized persons
- Establish a privacy policy if personal information is collected on your site
- Never post pictures of those for whom you did not have permission to photograph
- When linking to external sites, include a disclaimer that alerts users that they are leaving your site and going to another (i.e., the following disclaimer is on the Diocese of Wilmington website under Catholic Youth Ministry → Youth and Young Adults → Youth Ministry Resources: *This web page contains some hyperlinks to web sites operated by parties other than Catholic Youth Ministry and the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington. These hyperlinks are provided for your reference only. Catholic Youth Ministry and the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington do not control such web sites and is not responsible for their contents. The inclusion of hyperlinks to other web sites does not imply any endorsement of the material on these web sites or any association with their operators.*)
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in compliance with the ethical and moral standards of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, and its program for safe environments, *For the Sake of God's Children*

Failure to follow this acceptable use policy can result in the removal of adult leaders from ministry settings.

For More Information

http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PageServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=245

<http://www.philly.com/philly/news/breaking/41924602.html>

<http://www.theantidrug.com/advice/teens-today/teens-and-technology/default.aspx>

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2009/01/06/teens-sex-and-technology/>

http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech_Summary.pdf

<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2005/Teens-and-Technology.aspx>

Copyright Laws

5.33 All youth ministry programming and events in the Diocese of Wilmington are to abide by Copyright Laws as outlined in this section.

Copyright law is designed to protect the "authors" of materials, including the creators of music, film and video. There are specific laws that govern our ability as ministers to use copyrighted material. Copyright infringement is stealing because it denies authors the income from sale, licensing, or rental of their property. Copyright law gives authors exclusive rights to:

1. Reproduce the work
2. Prepare derivative works
3. Distribute copies of the work
4. Perform the work publicly
5. Display the work publicly

This protection extends to literary works, musical works, and accompanying words, dramatic works and music, pantomimes and choreographic works, pictorial graphical or cultural motion pictures other AV's (including videos), sound recordings.

Print

Printing a poem, article, drawing, etc. is a violation of copyright law unless permission of the author is obtained. Merely citing the source is not adequate.

Exceptions: Copies of educational use may be exempted under the following circumstances:

The "fair use" portion of the copyright law will allow use of some works for criticism, scholarship or teaching. Several factors have to be weighted: purpose, nature of work cited, amount used possible effect on market value. Possible exceptions under fair use section: one Section of a book, a single short poem or essay, articles of less than 2500 words, or part of a longer article if the portion to be copied does not exceed 100 words or 10% of the whole. Consumable texts, workbooks, and standardized tests may not be copied.

What the Law Says About Showing Movies

The Federal Copyright Act (Title 17, United States Code, Public Law 94-553, 90 stat. 2541) governs how copyrighted materials, such as movies, may be used. Neither the rental nor the purchase of a videocassette or DVD carries with it the right to use the movie outside the home. To assist in your understanding of the law, the Office for Catholic Youth Ministry provides the following commentary to the law in brackets [].

"Fair Use"

In some instances, it is not required to obtain a Movie Copyright Compliance Site License when exhibiting copyrighted materials such as videocassettes or DVDs. This "face-to-face teaching exemption" applies only to full time non-profit educational institutions and only IF:

- A teacher [or youth ministers/DRE, etc.] is in attendance and
- The showing takes place in a classroom setting [even a parish hall will suffice] and
- The movie is used as an essential part of the current curriculum being taught

[According to the Motion Picture Licensing Association, parochial schools and parishes affiliated with the schools are exempt from purchasing a site license so long as the above criteria are met. This means, for instance, that a youth minister or classroom catechist can show a movie or clip(s) of a movie as part of the educational process or in ministry setting (and not solely for entertainment). Writing out the curriculum is recommended and adult leaders should be reminded that the law prohibits the use of pirated movies. Only an original (rented or owed by the teacher) are to be used in a classroom setting.]

Examples of situations where a Movie Copyright Compliance Site License must be obtained are public libraries, day-care facilities, and non-classroom entertainment movies being used at schools for after school activities. This legal requirement applies:

- Regardless of whether an admission fee is charged
- Whether the institution or organization is commercial or non-profit
- Whether a federal or state agency is involved

If you are uncertain about your responsibilities under the copyright law, consult the Office for Catholic Youth Ministry.

[This part of the Copyright Code can present a problem for parishes and schools as it prohibits the use of movies for purely entertainment purposes. This would include showing movies on a bus while on a trip or at an after school care program, as well as a 'movie night' with no written curriculum, educational purpose or oral evaluation or discussion of the event. To show movies or clip(s) of movies in such settings, a Site License should be purchased from the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation (www.mplc.com). Before purchasing a license and for more information, contact the Office for Catholic Youth Ministry as discounts may be available.]

Why is Copyright Infringement a Concern?

The concept of "Public Performance" is central to copyright and the issue of protection for intellectual property. The men and women who work for and in the films' production receive royalties as part of their compensation for their labor and skill. Such royalties are the only way publishers, writers, composers and many workmen are paid for their work.

Copyright Infringement Can Result in Costly Penalties

In addition to clouding one's media compliance reputation, computer software and other areas, copyright infringement can be very costly and can easily be avoided. [Failure on the part of individuals or institutions to adhere to the Federal Copyright Laws can result in fines and unwanted publicity. It benefits everyone to follow the guidelines presented here.]

Copyright Infringers Can be Prosecuted

The Motion Picture Association of America and its member companies are dedicated to stopping film and video performance theft in all its forms, including unauthorized public performances. By its very mission, a school [or parish] should not appear to encourage copyright violation less it be considered a contributory infringer.

TV Broadcasts

When the criteria for fair use are met, it is possible to use a part of a copyrighted television program. However, there are very specific guidelines "for classroom copying in non-profit Educational Institutions". This document allows teachers to video tape programs from television for classroom use if the following provisions are met:

- Tapes will be used only in the ten days immediately following the broadcast
- Tapes are erased within forty-five days after the original broadcast.