

## SECTION THREE – The Parish Community as Advocate

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Youth Ministry is often the conversion moment for young people. Participation in retreats, service projects, extended trips, and regular youth ministry gatherings can spark desire for deeper understanding and catechesis. Therefore, youth ministry must be able to form young people beyond the four to six years that young people are involved in formal ministry experiences.

Advocacy is the *interpreting* the needs of youth and their families, especially the social problems facing them, and *acting* with or on behalf of youth and their families for a change in the systems (policies, procedures, programs) which create or contribute to the social problems; *giving* young people a voice and *empowering* them to address the social problems that they face.

In Comprehensive Youth Ministry, it isn't enough to *identify* the needs of young people we must create an environment where relationships exist that *meet* those needs. A parish that advocates for its young people establishes a team of leaders that oversee this relationship. Coordinators of Youth Ministry who advocate for youth ministry help to create a parish that is youth friendly, not youth *tolerant*. Young people who are taught to advocate for themselves do so because they feel welcomed into the life, mission and ministry of the parish community.

All members of the parish community are, by their baptismal call, youth ministers. That is, all share in the responsibility for building our relationship with the young people of the parish. In each parish, however, there should be one person who is the *animator* or *coordinator* of the parish's response to the needs of the young people.

- 3.1 Every parish is to have a Primary Contact for Youth Ministry.**
- 3.2 Every parish is to have a Youth Ministry Leadership Committee.**
- 3.3 Regardless of the school a young person attends (parish, private, public, home schooling) and regardless of a young person's involvement, or lack of involvement, in the parish Religious Education program, every effort should be made to invite, inform, welcome, and serve all young people in a parish community through that parish's ministry to youth.**

The Primary Contact for Youth Ministry may be a full time or part time Coordinator of Youth Ministry (CYM). He/she may be paid or a volunteer. The pastor may not serve as the Primary Contact or as the Coordinator of Youth Ministry.

Because passing on the faith requires the skills of many, adult leaders in ministry must constantly seek to form a team of leaders. Any team of adult leaders must be as comprehensive as the young people themselves. A lone ranger approach to ministry will only attract those who can relate to the lone ranger.

The Parish Youth Ministry Leadership Committee will oversee the parish's response to the needs of its young people. The committee serves as a subcommittee of the Christian Formation Committee. Its membership includes representatives from multiple youth-serving entities within the parish as well as parish leadership. Their primary goal is to be the "keeper of the vision" for a parish's ministry to its young. For a full outlined of this committee's membership and responsibility, please see Appendix Two.

Comprehensive Youth Ministry is the response the of the parish community to the needs of *all* young people. Adult leaders in ministry must always remember that the parish community is nothing more than a group of people drawn together by a common faith. If ministry with young people does not constantly draw these youth into the life, mission, and ministry of the parish community, it is not effective. With every activity, adult leaders must ask, "How have I integrated young people into the greater community?"

To do this, adult leaders themselves must be converted and they must continue to be converted. Adult communities whose faith is well formed will more effectively pass on that faith (*Our Hearts Were Burning*, #40).

Many young people today are experience rich and language poor. Adult leaders in ministry must provide more than experiences of faith. Young people must be provided with opportunities to understand the experiences through theological reflection and thoughtful discussions. Adult leaders must remember that it is a privilege to share our faith. To that end, adult leaders in ministry must know well who they are as children of God, they must know what they believe and they must have the courage to share that belief with young people. Like the Good Shepherd whose sheep understand to whom they belong, we must help young people understand that they belong to God. This starts by helping young people understand that they belong to a family, namely, a parish.

In the end, we do not have parishes with youth ministry and those without. Rather, we have parishes in relationship with young people and those who are not.

## **Assessing the Needs, Interests, and Resources of the Community**

**3.4 Every parish is encouraged to conduct an assessment of the needs and interests of the parish community at least once every four years.**

Youth ministry is effective when the community of faith responds to the needs and includes the gifts of young people. It is essential to keep in mind that we minister with individuals, not categories. To uncover the unique needs and concerns of youth, we must listen to their stories and experiences.

An assessment is important because in many parishes, the institutional church has not earned the right to be heard because it has not listened to young people. To effectively minister with young people, adult leaders must build meaningful and appropriate relationships with young people, they must help young people understand that life has a purpose, they must introduce young people to adults who will listen to the needs of the youth, they must provide a sacred, safe space for young people to gather, and they must provide an opportunity to serve and to reflect upon that service.

There are several recommended approaches for surveying interests and identifying issues of concern: **Surveys**, **Personal Interviews**, **Observation** and a **Youth Hearing**. You can select one approach or use several of them together.

### **1. Interviews with Youth**

Interviewing youth is an excellent way to get to know them up close and personal. Let the youth you contact know that they are a part of a listening process to understand better the needs and concerns of youth in the community. The personal contacts that are made in these interviews can become a tool to welcome and accept youth as members of the faith community. Create an interview form for your use.

Consider interviewing one or two youth who are involved in ministry such as regular youth meetings, confirmation candidates, retreat participants, altar servers, etc. In addition, interview one or two young people you do not know that well such as youth who live in your neighborhood or who are children of friends of your family or who have had contact with the parish. It is important to interview teens who are not involved or active in church life to get a balance in the information gathered.

There are two ways to conduct the interviews:

#### **Face-to-Face Interviews**

Meet with the youth for about thirty minutes in a relaxed atmosphere. It would be good to gather a small group of 3 or 4 to help young people to be comfortable in this setting. At the end of your time together answer any question he or she might have about the parish, your ministry, or how the interview will be used. Follow up this interview with a thank you note to the teens who participated.

#### **Phone Interviews**

Use the phone to contact youth. Once again, it is important to be an active listener and to record accurately the responses of the interviewee. At the end of the conversation answer any questions the youth might have about the parish, your ministry, or how this interview will be used. Follow up this interview with a thank you note to him or her. An alternative to adults making these phone calls is to have other teens who are already in some leadership capacity in the parish call their peers.

## **2. Surveys of Youth**

An interest survey of youth, parents, and parish leadership is an excellent way to determine the issues that your youth ministry must address. It provides a solid basis upon which to build your youth ministry. It also builds interest and ownership in the people you consult. In addition to surveying interest and determining what issues are important, you may also want to conduct a community resource inventory to determine what programs, services, and resources already exist in your community, who is providing them, and how you can take advantage of them.

If you select a youth survey, keep the questionnaire brief, ask only what you need to know, use simple language and format, distribute questionnaires in person, ask for pertinent demographic information, but no names! If you select the survey approach, distribute surveys where people are already gathered (e.g. after the Sunday masses, at programs, etc.). You may want to consider conducting a parallel interest finder by surveying the parents as well. Start by asking them what topics and issues concern them and what interest they would have in participating in particular programs or activities. You can determine their own interest in parent programming as well as their expectations for youth ministry. Publish the results and thank all who participated.

In designing your interest survey remember that parents and youth respond more readily to topics offering help on issues they are facing at the moment rather than on those ahead of them.

## **3. Observation**

If you select **observation**, ask yourself and other members of the youth ministry team what you see as the needs of youth and families/parents in your community, research the characteristics, issues, problems, and concerns of youth and families/parents in your local community, observe the efforts of other churches and community organizations, etc.

## **4. Hearings with Youth**

To understand youth today, it is vitally important to let them tell their stories. Gathering a group of youth to answer key questions is a quick and effective way of obtaining the needed information.

The invitation to youth needs to be two-tiered. First, conduct blanket invitations through the parish bulletin, announcements at Sunday liturgies, and a direct mailing to all youth. Second, use personal invitations through phone calls, email or direct contact with youth by all team members and other parishioners who are willing to extend a personal invitation to youth they know. Strive for diversity in your personal invitations. The youth who come should be representative of the ethnic, vocational, age, socio-economic and other realities of the youth population within your parish or campus.

## **Conducting a Community Inventory**

In addition to surveying interests and issues of youth and parents, you and/or your planning team need to identify the programs and resources in your broader community

(community organizations, schools, libraries, other churches, etc.) and diocese. If you do not have access to this information you may want to gather it by conducting a community inventory. Your survey should include youth services and organizations, counseling resources, and family programs and services. Too often we duplicate resources and programs already available to youth and families/parents in our community. Survey your community organizations and diocesan agencies for programs, services, and resources. Arrange meetings with leaders in each organization to introduce yourself and to gather information. Develop a binder of information on the programs and resources available in your community.

Knowing what already exists will allow you to utilize the expertise and resources of these organizations, to advertise their programs, and to co-sponsor programs with them.

## Evaluation of Parish Youth Ministry

**3.5 Every parish must complete the Youth Ministry Effectiveness Tool once every four years or as part of the Diocesan Religious Education Accreditation Process, whichever comes first.**

The Youth Ministry Effectiveness Tool is designed to assess the effectiveness of youth ministry in your parish by asking a series of questions of youth ministry leaders. The Parish Youth Ministry Leadership Committee members should complete the assessment as accurately and honestly as possible. During this process committee members should be sure to keep in mind the environment and realities of the parish as they currently exist-- not as they may/could/should exist at some point in the future.

It should be noted that this instrument is designed as a resource to assist you in discovering where your ministry to, with, and for young people could be enhanced. It is not intended as an indictment against parish leadership or as a means of demeaning ministry efforts currently underway.

The Youth Ministry Effectiveness Tool can be found in Appendix One.

## How To Use This Tool

First and foremost, this tool requires a committee. Completing the process with one person, however well intentioned, limits the perspective. Here are a few ways your team may consider using this tool:

### **Within the Context of Meetings**

Some parishes have had great success completing the assessment tool at meetings and have conversations around the topics at meetings. Using the tool this way, you must be prepared to spend the better part of a year working through the list. Taking this

time is not a bad thing – the tool is meant to assist you to determine the strengths and weaknesses in the parish.

### **Let Team Members Vote**

Gather as a team and give orientation of the tool, have team members to fill out the assessment individually to gather in the large group again using everyone's input to determine the score. Then follow up with discussion.

### **Start Here**

Use it as a jumping off point if youth ministry is new to the parish. To help name strengths that already exist, gather a team to assess what the gifts are of the community.

Regardless of how your team utilizes the Effectiveness Tool, the process is not complete until CYM staff members have met with your team to discuss the results. The expertise CYM brings to the table will be helpful in determining if your answers are accurate or if your team has short changed your ministry. Sometimes, the expert is the guy (or girl) from out of town, who simply brings a different perspective to a situation.

## Leading Change: Developing Effective Parish Youth Ministry

To become more effective, parish communities need to initiate and support change in the community and in their model for youth ministry. These steps are adapted for a church setting from the work of John Kotter in *Leading Change*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996) and linked to *Effective Practices in Dynamic Youth Ministry* (Winona MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004).

Building comprehensive youth ministry can be challenging. It takes hard work by a team of trained leaders, sharing a common vision, equipped with the right skills. CYM can help you meet this challenge with its **Leading Change** program. This process of training, consultation, and team development provide the knowledge and skills that are vital to effective youth ministry. Our consultation helps your parish develop priorities and programs, assess the needs of your young people and master your youth ministry calendar. We can help you gather young people together to evaluate past successes and failures and assist your team of leaders in creating a new vision of youth ministry when necessary.

The CYM staff facilitates training, consultation and team development at your parish. This process includes:

- Assessing readiness and needs
- Developing a mission, vision, goals, plans and calendar
- Designing an effective leadership structure
- Supporting and advising parish leaders along the way
- Regular, ongoing consultation
- Coordinating the hiring process, where necessary
- Evaluating the planning process and the ministry as it occurs

Parish leaders interested in bringing the **Leading Change** program to their parish should contact Catholic Youth Ministry.

### Eight Steps to Leading Change

There are eight steps to the **Leading Change** program.

1. Establishing a session of urgency
  - a. Examining the current reality of the pastoral situation
  - b. Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities
2. Creating the Guiding/Coalition Team
  - a. Putting together a group with enough power to lead the change
  - b. Getting the group to work together as a team by building trust
3. Developing a Vision and Strategy
  - a. Creating a vision to help direct the change effort
  - b. Developing strategies for achieving that vision
4. Communicating the Vision

- a. Using every vehicle possible to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies
  - b. Having the guiding coalition role model the behavior expected of the community
- 5. Empowering Others to Act on the Vision
  - a. Getting rid of obstacles
  - b. Changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision
  - c. Encouraging risk taking and non traditional ideas, activities and actions
- 6. Planning for and Creating Short Term Wins
  - a. Planning for visible improvement, or "wins"
  - b. Creating those wins
  - c. Visibly recognizing and rewarding people who made the wins possible
- 7. Consolidating Improvements and Producing More Change
  - a. Using Increased credibility to change all systems, structures, and policies that don't fit together and don't fit the transformational vision
  - b. Developing people who can implement the change vision
  - c. Reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents
- 8. Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture
  - a. Creating better ministry through effective leadership and planning
  - b. Articulating the connections between new behaviors and organizational success
  - c. Developing means to ensure leadership development and continuity

## Starting from Scratch

Parishes often struggle to organize and launch youth ministry efforts. Three things are needed: training, facilitation and consultation.

Training provides the necessary knowledge and skills. Facilitation moves a group of people through a planning process. Consultation involves advice and problem solving as parish leaders apply the training to their particular situation. The combination of training, facilitation and consultation that makes up **Starting from Scratch** can effectively provide what a faith community needs to implement effective youth ministry in their community. Note: **Starting from Scratch** is designed for parishes with little or no (recent) history of comprehensive youth ministry.

### What's involved in Starting from Scratch?

1. Initial Assessment: An initial assessment with a member of the Office for Catholic Youth Ministry can determine whether this program is suitable for your parish. Pastor, parish staff and pastoral council should be involved in the assessment process. A key criterion for determining readiness includes:
  - a. General readiness in the parish faith community for developing comprehensive youth ministry
  - b. A sufficient number of adults and youth willing to commit themselves to the steps of the process and to follow through afterwards
  - c. A designated leader on the parish staff (Primary Youth Ministry Contact, catechetical leader, pastoral minister, etc.)
  - d. A leader (at least in potential) to guide the ministry after the conclusion of the process
  - e. A budget equal to the task of any and all photocopying, postage, office supplies, food and beverages anticipated throughout the process – as well as adequate financial support for the team(s) and plans generated by the planning process
  - f. The willing support of pastor/parish council and parish staff.

If the program seems right for your parish, the formal assent of the pastor is necessary to ensure parish backing and support. If, on the other hand, the program seems inappropriate or untimely for the parish, the Office for Catholic Youth Ministry staff will assist in identifying steps necessary to address obstacles. It is much better to postpone the planning and address obstacles — or completely discontinue the process — than to raise expectations only to have those expectations dashed.

2. **Appoint a Leader of the Planning/Design Process:** A designated leader is appointed, usually a Coordinator of Youth Minister, Director of Religious Education or a Pastoral Minister. This person must be a parish staff person, so as to avail the process of the necessary information and resources. (Note: this does not necessarily suggest that this staff person will be responsible for overseeing the developing ministry, although that is recommended.)
3. **Gather a Planning/Design Group:** The designated leader gathers a planning/design group and the first sessions of the process are scheduled. The planning team should ideally include youth and adults in sufficient numbers and diversity to adequately represent the parish faith community (usually 10-15 persons).
4. **Form & Train Parish Leadership:** Both the Design Group and other parish leaders (staff, pastoral council) will need to be oriented to the bishops' vision of comprehensive youth ministry as described in their document *Renewing the Vision - A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (NCCB, 1997). This best takes place in one meeting where all the key leaders are present and can interact with one another.
5. **The Design Phase:** The initial design phase typically requires a minimum of four or five meetings of 2 hours in length, as well as activities between meetings (e.g. need assessment, editing the mission statement, clarifying goals and objectives, consulting with the pastor, etc.). Meetings typically include prayer, training and group work.
6. **Build Team(s) & Launch the Ministry:** Once the design phase is concluded, the parish is ready to develop a team (or teams, depending upon how ambitious the planning is — and how available the people resources are). Some of the original design group will likely stay on and become team members; however, more recruiting of youth and adults is usually necessary.

Once the recruiting stage is complete, an Office for Catholic Youth Ministry staff member can facilitate a team-building and planning retreat that will effectively launch the ministry. Thereafter, Catholic Youth Ministry serves as a consultant to the implementation of the mission, goals and plans as they unfold, intervening when called upon by the leadership and available by phone and email throughout.

Perhaps the most critical part of this stage is to authorize and empower the person who will serve as the ministry leader. Whether volunteer or paid, this person should have the capabilities (at least in potential), and the time, energy and commitment to lead the ministry. A competency assessment of this leader will assist in determining his/her readiness to lead the ministry. This person will likely need to pursue additional training.

7. Ongoing Training: Additional training will likely be necessary for both adults and youth. Catholic Youth Ministry will provide training modules to the team as needed.
8. Regular Ongoing Consultation: The ministry leader and CYM staff determine a mutually- agreed upon schedule of ongoing consultation, consisting of meetings in person or by phone, at least monthly.
9. Evaluation: At the conclusion of a mutually agreed-upon time period (e.g. six months or a year), Catholic Youth Ministry will assist in evaluating the planning process and the ministry flowing from it.

### **How Long Will It Take?**

The initial design steps are fluid and may be accomplished within a 6-8 week period, if parish participants are willing and able to devote the time. Usually more time is necessary. The team- building, training and implementation steps normally take six months to a year. The covenant with the Catholic Youth Ministry typically concludes between six months to a year from the first gathering, at the conclusion of the evaluation process.

### **What's the Cost?**

This service is offered at no charge to diocesan parishes. The process will likely require the expenses of photocopying, mailings, providing food and beverages at some meetings, etc. Additionally, the planning process will lead to the implementation of youth ministry activities and events that will require some level of funding. A participating parish needs to acknowledge that it will need to financially support the youth ministry team(s) and the plans that will result from the process.

### **What's Next?**

Obviously, this process demands a considerable outlay of resources, by the parish and Catholic Youth Ministry. Due to the extensive and intensive nature of this service to parishes, and to its limited personnel resources, Catholic Youth Ministry is limited in terms of the number of parishes that it can work with in this way. Therefore you are encouraged to contact CYM right away if you are interested. You may be placed on a waiting list.

## Opportunities for Young People

Part of being an advocate for young people is making sure that you are aware of the opportunities that exist outside your parish community for young people.

The **Youth Leadership Team** provides an opportunity for young people to gather on a monthly basis with other young people from around the diocese for intensive leadership training. This training includes assisting young people in becoming better public speakers, honing their skills as facilitators and small group leaders, and helping them make a connection between what they learn at YLT meetings and how they can use it in their parishes and schools.

**Pitcher and Basin** is a summer service experience that invites high school youth to spend a week living at a parish in the diocese and working with Habitat for Humanity to construct homes for those in need. The participants participate in prayer services and catechetical sessions in the evenings and work at the local job site during the day. A small fee paid by the participants offsets meals and lodging.

Parish leaders can also advocate for their young people with simple “quick wins” that shows the parish community how much you care for the youth. Annual **Blessing of Athletes** at all the Masses lets the young people and their families how much you appreciate their giftedness. Semi-annually **Blessing of Drivers** shows the community how important it is to celebrate the milestones in the lives of young people.

Both of these blessings can be found in Appendix Two (Resources) of this document. In addition, if you send CYM the number of drivers you plan to bless, we will even send you key chains you can give to each young person.

## Supporting the Youth Minister

### **The Pastor As Advocate**

Once a pastor has identified the person who will coordinate the parish's response to the needs of young people, the work of helping the CYM develop a successful ministry effort with youth begins. Pastors must now create a positive working relationship between the parish and the CYM.

### **Welcome and Orient the New CYM to the Parish and Diocese**

First things first. Now it is time to introduce and welcome the new staff member or volunteer to the parish community. This step is an important one, because it provides the parish the opportunity to welcome the CYM formally and focus attention on the importance of parish youth ministry at the same time.

### *Orienting the CYM to the Parish and Diocese*

In addition to introductions, the CYM needs to be oriented to the life of the parish and the local community. Share information and resources about the parish and diocese that will help the CYM. Consider providing past copies of meeting minutes from parish organizations related to youth ministry. These minutes can help the CYM form a historical perspective of parish youth ministry. It is crucial to provide the CYM with copies of the information gathered in the needs-assessment process. A copy of last year's parish calendar that highlights important parish events is beneficial as well.

The local community also may have resources to which the new CYM should be given access: examples include other churches or youth-serving organizations in the area, and contacts with local businesses, such as pizza restaurants or entertainment companies. Also, contact the diocesan office of youth ministry to inform officials that the parish has hired a CYM, and to identify additional resources to support the work and continuing education of the CYM.

### **Support the New CYM**

The parish plays a crucial role in both launching a successful youth ministry program and providing for its ongoing support. If the CYM continues to develop in all aspects of ministry and personal development, then youth ministry will as well. However, the opposite is true also. One effective way a parish can support a CYM is by encouraging and enabling his or her continuing education and ongoing spiritual development. The *NFCYM Competency-Based Standards* provide a guide in this area.

### *Mentoring and the CYM*

A new CYM may be in need of a mentor. A mentor is a person who walks beside the CYM and serves as a confidant and guide. Mentoring can be done individually or communally. The diocese may have a mentoring program in which new people in ministry are matched up with an experienced minister. Otherwise, a member of the parish staff may serve as a mentor.

### *Using the **Competency-Based Standards** in Support and Assessment*

The four sections of the standards provide an outline of the major areas for continuing education and development for the CYM. The sections are:

- Person of the Minister
- Theology
- Leadership and Administration
- Foundations of Youth Ministry

Encouraging the CYM's personal, spiritual, theological, and professional development is a concrete measurement of the parish's support of youth ministry.

### *Person of the Minister*

The continued personal faith development of the CYM is crucial to the program's ongoing success. Two ways to address this issue are: (1) by expecting the CYM to attend a yearly retreat, or by encouraging the CYM to take periodic days for prayer and spiritual renewal; and, equally important, (2) providing financial support for these activities and approving time away from the office. Also encourage the CYM spiritually by inviting him or her to have a spiritual director with whom they can meet regularly.

If the parish expects the CYM to be a person who can balance personal and family responsibilities with work and ministry responsibilities while remaining both physically and emotionally healthy, the parish policies regarding the hours the CYM works must reflect that expectation. While youth ministry often demands weekend and evening work, the parish can assist the CYM by establishing a work schedule that provides a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

### *Theology*

A solid foundation in Catholic theology and spirituality is essential for sharing faith with young people. The CYM needs a comprehensive background in theology; therefore, he or she must participate in continued theological formation. Use the theological standards found in the *NFCYM Competency Standards for Coordinators of Youth Ministry* to make a yearly commitment to supporting the CYM by budgeting time and money for continued formation in this area.

### *Leadership and Administration*

Often, people applying for church ministry positions have backgrounds in ministry or education. Few will have management or business training, yet this is an ongoing part of the CYM's job. Managing volunteers, planning a budget, long- and short-range planning, time-management skills, communication skills, conflict-resolution skills, and computer skills are essential for the CYM's ongoing development, and in turn, for the development of the youth ministry program. After completing an assessment using the *Competency-Based Standards* in regard to the skills cited above, encourage the CYM to seek further development in the areas identified for growth.

### *Foundations of Youth Ministry*

*Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* is an excellent starting place for discovering what is foundational to comprehensive youth ministry. The foundations include three goals, eight components, and four dimensions of youth ministry that, when implemented, enable the total faith formation of youth. The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry sponsors a biennial conference that provides in-service training in all foundational areas. See [www.nfcym.org](http://www.nfcym.org) for more details on the National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry.

### **Supervise the New CYM**

For some pastors, supervision is a new and difficult experience. It is, however, a critical part of the employment relationship. CYMs need to know how they are succeeding in achieving the goals of parish youth ministry and how they can improve. In looking at how the parish can help the CYM to grow, it is appropriate to note that the CYM needs to have one person identified as her or his direct supervisor. This responsibility often belongs to the pastor; however it can be delegated to another administrator.

The relationship with the supervisor should be one of both accountability and support. Often, the desire to avoid conflict causes a leader in the supervisory position to avoid giving productive feedback and guidance to those whom they supervise. Giving in to this desire can have potentially negative consequences. Like all people who work, the CYM wants to be effective and competent. Any successful employment relationship is built upon clear, constructive, and regular communication. Another part of the evaluation process involves forming a team of parishioners with whom the CYM works to give both affirming and critical feedback. One aspect of performance appraisal includes an opportunity for self-assessment. (See Appendix J for Sample Self-Assessment Questions.)

In addition to informal supervision through regularly scheduled meetings throughout the year, an annual formal review should be held between the CYM and the supervisor (see Appendix D). Keep the signed and dated written report of the review in a confidential file. Maintaining an accurate personnel file for the CYM is vital in tracking professional growth.

*What do you do when the relationship between the CYM and the parish is not working?* Unfortunately, sometimes the match between the CYM and the parish is not a good one. What should the parish do? The first step is to go back and review the information on support, supervision, and assessment. Before deciding to end the employment relationship, consider whether the CYM has had adequate time to make adjustments based on feedback from the supervisor. If the pastor and parish community have done their part to make the employment relationship work but the relationship is clearly not working, then it may be time to begin the “counseling out” process.

An important part of this process is communication, both verbal and written. Documentation of how the parish has supported and nurtured the relationship and how the CYM has responded is crucial. Another key step is contacting the diocesan office of human resources to obtain policies on termination of employment relationships.

It may sound optimistic, but most of the time the situation does not have to come to termination, especially if both parties try to work together to serve the needs of the young people. If effective support, supervision, and assessment are given, most often the CYM will thrive in a parish, or come to the conclusion that his or her skills do not match the parish's needs.

### **Tips for Supporting Your CYM**

- Encourage the CYM to participate in diocesan support groups that gather in shared ministries. Local support groups are like buried treasure; CYMs can come together for program sharing, mutual in-servicing, prayer, and support.
- Offer prayerful support in a structured way by the parish community. For example, offer prayer petitions during the first Friday Mass for young people and those who minister to youth.
- Hold regular staff meetings for prayer, sharing, community building, and planning.
- Be attentive to simple things like the CYM's birthday, anniversary, and other significant personal events.
- Encourage the CYM to develop a learning plan that states goals for professional development and continuing education, as well as how these goals will be achieved.

### **Supporting Your Volunteers**

Recruiting youth ministry volunteers is only half the battle. Once you have a team of volunteers working with you, be sure to say "thank you" often and offer as much support as you can. Part of the ministry of Advocacy is to constantly support your volunteers. In Appendix Two (Resources), we have listed 100 different ways to thank and support your volunteers.