

SAFETY GUIDELINES

Archdiocese of Detroit Youth Ministry Handbook

GUIDELINES FOR SAFETY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Transportation	1
Permission and Medical Release Forms	2
Guidelines for Volunteer Supervision	2
Guidelines for Disclosure, Reporting and Referrals	3
Overnight Accommodations	4
Relationship Boundaries for Coordinators of Youth Ministry and Volunteers	4
Guidelines on Alcohol Consumption	5
Guidelines on Smoking	6
Appendix	
A. Code of Conduct for Volunteers	7

GUIDELINES FOR SAFETY

Transportation

The preferred method of transportation to all youth ministry activities off of parish property, when parents are not driving their own children, would be bus. In a situation where that is not affordable, the youth ministry team may arrange for drivers. All drivers should be 21 years of age, be properly insured and have a good driving record.

As of October 1, 2002, any vehicle with a manufacturers seating capacity of 11 or more including the driver, must meet federal safety guidelines typically applied to yellow school buses. Therefore 12-15 passenger vans may no longer be used to transport students for school related events. In keeping with the spirit of the law for students, we are recommending that these 12-15 passenger vans not be used to transport students for church related events.

Our standard advice regarding travel is to outsource trips of significant length to professional transportation companies who have:

- **appropriate vehicles**
- **experienced, professional drivers**
- **a documented preventative maintenance program for their vehicles**
- **adequate limits of insurance (\$1,000,000 CSL minimum)**

All volunteer drivers need to complete the Volunteer Driver Information Consent Form. *Under no circumstance is it acceptable for the parish/school to arrange for youth to drive other youth to an activity.* If a parent allows a son or daughter to drive directly to an activity, the parent(s) should understand that they assume liability for that transportation. If a parent would like a son or daughter to ride with another young person to or from an activity, the parent needs to communicate that to the youth ministry team. Of course when a youth rides with another young person, it is important that both sets of parents understand that the holder of the policy on that car assumes the liability.

Transportation to and from all activities held on parish property is the responsibility of the parent. In situations where young people are walking to and from the activity, parents are again responsible for their young people before they arrive and after they leave parish property.

In some cases it may be arranged to have young people gather at another site in the community other than the parish. If parents are notified of this other location, then the parents can be asked to assume responsibility for transportation to and from this site.

The parish youth ministry team should make sure that adults are present at the gathering site early enough to greet all youth as they arrive. Adults also need to be present until the last youth has left.

When renting vehicles to transport youth for parish or school events, vehicles should be rented in the name of the parish or school and not in the name of a parish employee. This allows the insurance to cover the vehicle rented.

Permission and Medical Release Forms:

Medical Release Forms for all participants should be held at the parish and copies be carried to all youth events. All activities held outside the parish and all activities that include an overnight, require a permission form. An information sheet for the parents/guardians, outlining the program and noting emergency phone numbers, should accompany a permission form. Permission and medical release forms are intended to:

- Seek permission for the young person to participate.
- Express the intention of the youth ministry team to provide adequate and responsible supervision.
- Get important information regarding where parents can be reached during activity
- Get important information regarding medical insurance coverage for the young person
- Get the parent's permission to obtain medical assistance in the event that the parent cannot be contacted.

Note: it is not appropriate to use one permission form for the entire year or even several different types of activities. It is all right for the permission form to cover multiple meetings for the same activity, for example, 4-week bible study, or 8 week peer ministry training (*see Policies and Procedures appendices for forms*).

Guidelines for Volunteer Supervision:

Determining the number of adults needed for supervision of adolescents depends on a number of factors: the nature of the activity, the age of the adolescents and the location of the activity. All activities require a minimum of two adults, 21 years of age or older. Unless the group being supervised is either all boys or all girls, there must be a chaperone of each gender.

Looking at the ratio of adults responsible for supervision to adolescents, overnight activities require a minimum of one adult for every eight young people. Some activities such as bowling or a dance at the church may allow a greater adult/youth ratio. An activity at an amusement park may require less supervision if the group is high school age as opposed to a group of middle school students. It may be appropriate to provide a constant supervising presence for younger and/or less mature adolescents.

Proper supervision does not always require constant presence. Periodic contact is sufficient in many situations. [Of course this must be balanced by the realization that building relationships between youth and adult leaders requires more than periodic contact.] In cases where risk is greater due to the nature of the experience, constant presence may be appropriate (for example: white water rafting, rock climbing). At all times, youth should be aware of the quickest way of reaching their adult and at no time should youth be unable to do so. It is inappropriate for adults to drink any alcoholic beverages while supervising a youth ministry activity.

See appendix A - Archdiocese of Detroit Code of Conduct for Volunteers on page 7 of this section taken from the *Code of Pastoral Conduct* booklet Section IV.

Guidelines for Disclosure and Reporting:

In regards to the following referral and disclosure policies, if a youth minister holds professional qualifications (Doctor, Nurse, Counselor, Social Worker) they should respond in a manner appropriate to their qualifications.

Crisis Referral

A crisis can occur at any time. In case a crisis occurs, (situation where a young person could potentially cause serious foreseeable and imminent harm to themselves or others, for example, making a suicidal threat) **the Coordinator of Youth Ministry must** contact a parent, legal guardian and/or an emergency contact, communicate the level of concern, and suggest the need for an appropriate assessment.

If they cannot be reached, refuse to come and get the individual, or appear to be unconcerned and are not going to do anything, as a last resort call the police; persons may be admitted for assessment when there is a concern for their or someone else's safety.

Referral

Should a young person or parent request information regarding a counseling referral it is advised that the youth minister recommend that the family meet with their primary care physician for a referral or refer them to any of the affiliated Catholic Social Service agencies posted on the Archdiocesan Website:

<http://www.aodonline.org/AODOnline/Affiliated+Agencies+6059/Affiliated+Agencies.htm>.

It is not recommended that Youth Ministers make referrals directly to counselors.

Call an emergency contact number provided for local crisis line or counselors:

- National Youth Crisis Hotline: 1-800-442-4673
- Wayne County Crisis Hotline: 313-224-7000
- Macomb County Crisis Hotline: 586-307-9100
- Oakland County Crisis Hotline: 248-456-0909

If the situation escalates beyond the Coordinator of Youth Ministry's control, calling 911 or law enforcement is recommended.

Disclosure

Youth ministers recognize a young person's expectation of privacy and try to honor that in a professional way. This does not include information that would cause serious foreseeable and imminent harm to themselves or others. **See Pastoral Standards, section 1 and 2 of the Code of Pastoral Conduct, pages 4-6, available for download at [aodonline.org](http://www.aodonline.org). Click on *Promise to Protect. Pledge to Heal*.**

Overnight Accommodations

On overnight trips, participants should be clear about the restrictions concerning sleeping areas. In general, there should never be mixed gender gatherings in the sleeping areas. Whether you are camping in tents, using a retreat house or hotel rooms, boys should never be in the girls' sleeping areas and vice versa. It may be appropriate to restrict any social gatherings in the sleeping areas.

While adults have supervision responsibilities, they should also try to observe restrictions about being in the sleeping areas of the opposite gender. With the exception of large dormitory sleeping accommodations [at work camp or on a pilgrimage], adults and youth should never room or tent together.

While it may be appropriate to have hotel phones restricted from making outside calls, the adult leader should not restrict phone calls to other rooms, in case of an emergency, to contact the person in charge.

Adults should continue supervision after lights out to ensure that young people are safe and where they belong. All-night supervision is not always necessary.

See Pastoral Standards, sections 3 and 4 of the *Code of Pastoral Conduct*, pages 6-7, available for download at aodonline.org. Click on *Promise to Protect. Pledge to Heal*.

Recommended Relationship Boundaries for Youth Ministers and Volunteers

Personal email contact with youth should only occur through use of Parish owned computers, except for broadcast emails to the entire group.

Coordinators of Youth Ministry and Volunteers should visit homes of youth only when parents are present. Home visits should not be a common occurrence.

Personal phone calls between youth and Coordinators of Youth Ministry or volunteers should only occur using parish phones.

Young people should not be visiting Coordinators of Youth Ministry or volunteers in their homes without having their parents present.

Recommended Guidelines Regarding Alcohol for Youth

Youth and young adults under the age of 21 who are under the influence of or consume alcohol at Archdiocesan Youth Ministry events will be dismissed from that activity at the first opportunity. The Archdiocese reserves the right to restrict young people at future youth ministry events. When it is appropriate, young people who are in violation of the policy will be encouraged to seek counseling or support. Parishes and Catholic High Schools reserve the right to set and enforce their own policies regarding under-age alcohol consumption at parish/school events. Parish policy needs to be consistent with the statutes of the State of Michigan.

Recommended Guidelines Regarding Alcohol for Adult Youth Ministry Leaders

Adult leaders may not consume alcohol at any Catholic Youth Ministry youth events. On overnight events, this restriction applies around-the-clock. This restriction applies during the evening hours after the young people have gone to sleep.

Adult leaders should refrain from alcohol consumption whenever they are present with youth in a youth-to-youth/minister relationship. Youth Ministers who go out for pizza with young people after an event or attend a graduation party at the home of a young person should not consume alcohol at these events.

Adult leaders who provide or assist youth in obtaining alcohol for their consumption will be dismissed immediately. The Archdiocese will cooperate with local police to pursue prosecution for this offence.

Adult youth ministry leaders must inform the parents of any young person who has consumed alcohol. This is in keeping with our partnership with parents.

These guidelines are set “as such” in recognition of the full-time supervision responsibilities of adult leaders.

Recommended Guidelines regarding alcohol for Parish/School Events with Youth

Gatherings that are primarily youth oriented should not serve alcohol. (For example, basketball awards ceremonies.)

Parishes or schools who sponsor events for intergenerational audiences where alcohol will be available have the responsibility to insure that no under-age drinking will be allowed.

Parishes or schools who sponsor events for intergenerational audiences where alcohol will be available should make sure that parents of youth are aware that alcohol will be available/served.

Parishes or schools who sponsor events for intergenerational audiences where alcohol will be served should act to insure that responsible drinking is modeled for the young people present.

An underage person should never be placed in the position of tending bar or serving alcohol.

Parishes or schools should make it their responsibility to remind parents of the danger of allowing under-age youth to consume alcohol in their home.

See Pastoral Standards, sections 3 and 4 of the *Code of Pastoral Conduct*, pages 6-7, available for download at aodonline.org. Click on *Promise to Protect. Pledge to Heal*.

SMOKING

Youth under the age of eighteen are not permitted to smoke at any Archdiocesan gathering. No one (young person or adult) is permitted to give, lend or sell tobacco products to a minor. Any one who sells, loans, or gives tobacco products to a minor is in violation of the law.

Guidelines For Adults Who Smoke

Adults are free to make choices about smoking. We would hope that adults would consider their sphere of influence, and choose not to smoke at youth events. This would keep adults in greater solidarity with young people.

We know that cigarettes are addictive. We ask that adults, who find it difficult to avoid smoking, smoke in discreet, designated smoking areas.

Archdiocese of Detroit

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The following is a reprint from the *Code of Pastoral Conduct For Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff and Volunteers*. The *Code of Conduct for Volunteers* can be found on the Archdiocese of Detroit website at www.AODonline.org. Click on Promise to Protect Pledge to Heal and then on Volunteer Code of Conduct.

IV. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS

Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. A volunteer must strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this *Code of Conduct for Volunteers* as a condition of providing services to the children and youth of our archdiocese.

A volunteer must:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration.
- Avoid situations where he or she is alone with children and/or youth at Church activities.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children, youth or their parents without prior written approval from the pastor or administrator.
- Refrain from giving expensive gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
- Report suspected abuse to the pastor, administrator or appropriate supervisor and the local Child Protection Services agency. Failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities (by required reporters) is, according to the law, a misdemeanor.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

A volunteer must not:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children and/or youth through fevers or other contagious situations.
- Strike, spank, shake or slap children and/or youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten or degrade children and/or youth.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and/or youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.

A volunteer working with children and/or youth is subject to a thorough background check, including criminal history. Any action inconsistent with this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* or failure to take action mandated by this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* may result in removal as a volunteer with children and/or youth.