



YOUTH MINISTRY **TOOL KIT**



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The following handbook assists the staff person responsible for the coordination of youth ministry within a parish. This will offer a thorough overview of what a youth ministry might look like, though the circumstances of each individual parish might impact the overall picture of youth ministry in your setting.

YOUTH MINISTRY FOCUSES ON:

DISCIPLESHIP FORMATION:

- Young people are empowered to be disciples of Jesus Christ
- Catechesis is provided within the Mass, through Sacramental preparation and at both gathered and non-gathered sessions for youth and families.
- There are opportunities to serve others and reflect theologically on that service
- Youth are given access to retreats, Adoration, prayer services and extended pilgrimage experiences that allow them to encounter the Risen Lord
- Opportunities are offered for young people to participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis
- Youth are engaged in conversation that helps them to examine their lives in the context of the Gospel and discern a path for their future

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

- Youth are welcomed into leadership roles within the parish and properly trained to provide confidence and success within that role
- ALL adult team members are CaSE trained and prepared to understand adolescent development and our Catholic theology. Volunteers are evaluated on their effectiveness with the youth
- Parents are empowered to partner with leaders in ministry and engage in their own learning to better accompany their emerging disciples
- Stewardship contributions of the youth are celebrated and encouraged
- Interaction with youth is intentional NOT accidental
- Youth are valued and welcomed
- Youth are empowered to be a Christian witness to their peers and share their own faith stories

ADVOCACY:

- The Parish regularly assesses the needs of their young people and allows the vision for youth ministry to be shaped according to those needs
- Young people are continually invited to participate in the life blood of the parish and youth ministry offerings. Youth ministry is not an exclusive club but is a ministry to every young person in the parish.
- The parish supports youth ministry with financial resources for growth development, understanding that it is an investment in the future of the parish.
- Connections are made between elementary programs and youth ministry to provide a seamless link to continue parish involvement and faith development and post-graduation connections are made to assimilate youth into an adult relationship with the parish.
- All parishioners play an essential role in youth ministry. It is most effective through a team approach and current research names a need for no less than 5 faith-filled adults in each young person's life.
- A parish is intentional about celebrating their youth in the parish bulletin, social media, and newsletter. The youth ministry coordinator should let stakeholder groups such as parish council know that the youth are active and thriving in the parish.

ENGAGEMENT:

- Young people are encouraged to see the parish as a place of inclusion, and an opportunity for service, relationship and education.
- Those who may be of other cultures or special needs are ministered to in an appropriate and welcoming fashion.
- Youth are given skills and opportunities to pray before the Blessed Sacrament.
- Young people are invited to connect to our diocesan Church and the wider community.
- Milestones in the lives of youth are celebrated.
- Communication to the young people of the parish is consistently provided through a variety of platforms.
- Planning involves consideration of the demands of the family and the impact of family life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INVITATION



If you have lost your inner vitality, your dreams, your enthusiasm, your optimism and your generosity, Jesus stands before you as once he stood before the dead son of the widow, and with all the power of his resurrection he urges you: “Young man, I say to you, arise!”
(#20) Pope Francis, Christus Vivit



MISSION

Pope Francis has been clear in his belief that your youth are the driving force of the Church today and in the future; he continually speaks to the young people of the word, inviting them to engage in our Catholic Faith

SO, HOW WILL YOU ENGAGE THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR PARISH IN ANSWERING HIS CALL?

Through personal invitation: Build relationships with the young people of your parish both AT church and AWAY from church. Let them see you as a witness of Christian living. Your joy as an Easter person is contagious to young people who are seeking happiness, acceptance and relationship! Young people need to be reminded that they are in the presence of a loving God who yearns to hear their prayers and commune with them; providing hope and compassion is an essential part of your mission!!

Through Parents: Support the domestic church with resources to help them become a holy family. Those who see the parish as a great support to their family life will want to continue to provide that support to their sons and daughters through the youth ministry offerings of the parish. Make the offerings valuable and meaningful. Each family wrestles with their own challenges and obstacle that may remain unseen by us. It is important to empathize with families and provide opportunities for them to deepen their faith NOT burden the family schedule

Through Pastoral Leadership: The participation and connection of the pastor and pastoral staff of a parish is a wonderful witness that the young people matter. Youth Ministry is part of parish life as a whole, not a separate entity.

Through Media: Share the message of discipleship and witness to those who may not be physically present, using a variety of social and print media to engage youth in hearing the message of God, not the calendar!

PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

Parental support can make or break your youth ministry. Remember that parents are still the primary catechists of their children and will ultimately form their child spiritually and morally. They need to be your partner, not just a satellite object to the ministry program. Equip parents with knowledge and model faith sharing so that they can experience it within their own home.

Be PROACTIVE! Don't wait for parents to get involved. Contact them directly and build personal relationship with the parents. The role of ministering to parents in youth ministry is equally as important as ministering to youth!



THE IMPORTANCE OF A TEAM APPROACH

The Youth Ministry Team or Committee assists parish leaders in establishing and maintaining a health relationship with ALL the young people in the parish. This team works with the Coordinator of Youth Ministry and the Pastor to:

- Develop a vision, goals and directions for all aspects of youth ministry
- Assure ongoing assessment of youth and family needs to aptly recommend youth ministry programming and focus
- Coordinates youth ministry schedule
- Ensure adequate recruitment, training and support for leadership (adult to teen)
- Provide regular feedback to the Pastor and Staff as well as key stakeholders such as Parish Council
- Advocate for youth in the wider community
- Provide channels of communication between youth ministry, families, parish, and diocesan coordinator of youth and young adult ministry
- Select needed resources

Ideally, this team would consist of:

Pastor or Parochial Vicar

Youth Ministry Coordinator

Representation from any CYO program

Representation from any parish scouting program

Confirmation Coordinator

Parents and Parishioners committed to youth ministry

At least 2 young people who want to serve as peer leaders

Supporting volunteers is an important aspect of maintaining a valuable youth ministry team. Thank them, as often as you can, with notes, gatherings and personal conversations. Provide orientation, training and ongoing spiritual development. Highlight their achievements. Ask for and listen to their advice when you can! Match their gifts to their role..don't place them where they can't be successful!



Some Unique Roles for Volunteers:

- **Couples:** A married couple who takes responsibility for small group leadership and building meaningful relationships with those teens
- **Mentors:** Parents who undergo a training process to serve as a faith mentor for a teen other than theirs (part of the 5:1 ratio)
- **Sponsors:** Assist with practical concerns of gatherings such as snack prep, logistics, event attendance, at-home tasks
- **Youth Boosters:** Assist the team through serving as a fundraising squad
- **Parent Council:** Meet a few times a year to offer important feedback to the staff and team and communicate about youth ministry to the wider parish
- **Prayer partners:** Agree to pray on behalf of the youth and are assigned specific community members to pray for over a year's time

Welcoming Young People into a Leadership Role within the Parish

Effective and comprehensive youth ministry calls for young people to be welcomed into leadership roles.

BRAINSTORM the activities, ministries, and committees young people could provide energy and enthusiasm to

RECRUIT young people for specific roles via personal invitation NOT a blanket bulletin announcement. If you are inviting young people to an adult committee, add them in pairs so they share peer support, and provide them with an adult mentor on the committee

TRAIN each young person for their leadership role. Help them with facilitation, presentation, time management and listening skills, and provide them with the tools that are specific to their ministry.

Engage them in the process of discernment over their role. Our office provides a leadership training weekend, every two years, that is an excellent opportunity for the growth of young leaders

FOLLOW UP with the young leader regularly. Provide a safe space for them to ask questions, get clarification and hear about their experiences. Help direct his or her energies within the role and serve as a liaison as needed.





**Comprehensive
Youth Ministry with
flexible and
adaptable
programming**

One model does not fit the needs of all young people and the busy lives of our youth can make it impossible to all gather at the same time for in-person sessions. There is a need to provide a diversity of opportunities to meet the needs of today's youth and families which should include:

Age-specific programs for both younger and older adolescents

Small group options

Intentional Catechesis (we strive for 30 catechetical hours)

Family-centered programs that empower parents to keep serving as the primary catechists of their kids

Intergenerational parish programs that connect youth to the wider community and access to the 5:1 ratio!

Community outreach that engages youth in living the Gospel

Prayer experiences that appeal to young people

Diocesan-wide events and large church events such as mission trips, NCYC or Steubenville

Special community-building events just for youth

On-line presence AND communication

Non-gathered presence at youth activities in the community

Early Adolescent 10 yrs-Freshman

Typically learn and respond best
when:

- Learning happens in small groups
- There is engaged learning not lecture
- There are both structured and abstract lessons to meet learning styles
- Critical thinking is engaged
- Interpersonal relationships are formed with adult leaders
- Lessons include expressive arts or wellness connections
- Lessons involve opportunities for emotional and social development
- Students have a choice in the activities (such as learning center format)
- Students are honored and respected and energy and emotion levels are channeled into productive activities
- Youth are in a safe space where they are not put on the spot, humiliated, disrespected or mistreated
- There are opportunities to develop and discuss moral principles as they relate to God and the world

Older Adolescent 10-12 grade

Typically learn and respond best
when:

- There is an openness to think and converse about the abstract gray areas and not just examine things in black and white
- They have an opportunity to share in the planning and leading (with guidance and oversight)
- They can have conversations about the future and issues of justice through the lens of faith
- They can discuss logic and debate
- The teacher has patience with their roller coaster of emotions
- There is an opportunity to discuss the tough social issues facing teens today
- They have enough sleep (**don't overdo the schedule if planning a retreat)
- Their listening skills are engaged through activities and conversation with their peers NOT lecture or extensive advice-giving
- The leader shows them genuine interest and concern and takes the time to hear about their lives
- They have opportunities to develop interpersonal skills

Please consider...



Many (most) parishes use or have a history of a traditional youth group model. These models **assume:**

- All youth needs are similar
- All youth like to join groups
- All youth want to be apart from their parents
- All youth are available at the same time
- One or a few adults can meet the needs of the youth

Successful Comprehensive Youth Ministry TODAY Takes a Different Approach:

Within the life of a parish, competent and caring adults are identified and formed to lead youth ministry. These leaders provide a variety of ways for youth to experience God's presence including:

- Peer gatherings
- Involvement in parish life
- Service to the community
- Intentional Prayer
- Attendance at THEIR events
- Family options

and it assumes:

- Youth have differing needs
- Youth prefer to CHOOSE how to be involved
- Youth have hectic schedules

Youth benefit from interaction with a variety of caring adults

Doing a little can get A LOT accomplished because many hands make light work

Niche programming will speak to those at different points on their faith journey



Creating a Safe Environment

Diocesan policy states that all adults who come in contact with youth either on a regular, permanent basis or in a one-time settings such as chaperoning an events, MUST adhere to the Creating a Safe Environment regulations as outlined by the bishops of our country. These adults must be both trained and background checked. In addition to the prescribed training, those who will be engaged in driving youth to a parish sponsored event off campus, must have DMV clearance. Please familiarize yourself with all safe environment policies and adhere to the timelines and requirements. Should you have questions, you may contact Tammy Sylvester or Renate Parks in our Diocesan office of Safe Environment.

Teens who serve as volunteers in your ministries are also required to take the teen CASE training. This is a 2 part process that involves a brief online component in DOR.TRAINING with an in-person follow up session during which you can process the Code of Conduct for teen volunteers and discuss possible scenarios and desired responses.

Beyond our CASE training here are some things you should keep in mind when providing youth programming:

- If you have evening programs, and your group is alone in the building, all exterior doors should be locked
- A first-aid kit should be well-stocked and easily accessible
- Have at least one member of your team Red Cross Certified
- Consider possibilities and outcomes when playing a game and adjust accordingly
- Practice food safety rules when preparing a snack or meal
- Limit "roaming" unsupervised
- Be aware of medicine use, health concerns, and allergies and understand the proper conditions that must be met for those needs.



A Word about Events

In youth ministry, we often have the privilege of engaging in extended time with the youth we serve through retreats, conferences, or mission trips. With this privilege, comes a great deal of responsibility as we want to always provide the best opportunities for our young people that connect them to a deeper relationship with Christ as well as their community. For that reason, it is imperative that a great deal of thought and planning go into any extended event, whether it is a day or a week.

Most importantly, those who accompany our youth in that experience must be well-trained and prepared. It is also essential to prepare the youth for the experience that lies in front of them. To this end, please keep the following in mind:

- Review the Chaperone Training materials provided by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.
- Engage all chaperones in Safe Environment training as well as background and DMV checks as required
- Plan your event at an approved location. Please contact our office if you need referrals or advice
- Provide any speaker information to the Bishop's office for approval
- Meet with all chaperones and require them to attend any preparation sessions provided by you or the hosting entity. For example, an NCYC chaperone must attend our Diocesan chaperone meeting.
- Meet and pray with youth. Engage them in community builders and sessions that will prepare their hearts and minds for the experience
- Follow all diocesan chaperone to ratio policies and if you are partnering with another parish, be sure that they provide adequate adult supervision from a person known to the youth. It is ineffective to bring youth who do not know any adults on the trip.
- Follow all guidelines for appropriate conduct and dress and maintain all disciplinary policies for inattention to those guidelines

Serving Today's Young People

Their CHALLENGES

1. An Identity Crisis: Many are wondering “Who AM I?”
2. Lack of Self-confidence and low self-esteem exacerbated by social media.
3. A sense of hopelessness.
4. Confusion and ambiguity concerning moral issues: What is right and wrong?
5. The negative impact of electronic media on their experience of the world.
6. Competitiveness / Busyness

These are challenges that coincide with the traditional challenges, faced by generations, of substance abuse, violence, and sexuality.

In Youth Ministry, we have an incredible opportunity to help young people find a place of belonging where they can identify themselves as a beloved Child of God, learn to be people of peace, discern their vocations, debate societal issues through a lens of faith, and help them to see a safe and successful path for their lives