

**OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY
ARCHDIOCESE OF MIAMI
SAFETY POLICIES AND PASTORAL GUIDELINES**

These policies apply to all individuals or entities doing youth ministry in the Archdiocese. All organizations, movements, or entities doing youth ministry in the Archdiocese need to comply with them.

I. Safe Environment

Youth Coordinators will organize group meetings using prudent judgement in their decisions as to ensure the safety and protection of all the young people. Careful supervision of the group, enough adult support to oversee the arrival and the departure of the youth at every week's meeting and other activities is essential. A system of signing in and out may be a good tool to ensure that each member's participation is accounted for.

Other elements of safe environment are: Screening of personnel in contact with youth, avoiding high risk activities, obtaining permission from parents and the youth's medical information, establishing clear codes of conduct for both adults and youth, informing parents of the group's program. All adults working around minors need to follow Archdiocesan policies on background screening, Code of Conduct, and Safe Environment Training.

2. Participation of young people in group activities

For each youth that participates regularly in group meetings and/or activities the Coordinator of Youth Ministry should obtain an *Annual Permission and Release Form with Medical Info*. A meeting with the parents at the beginning of the year's program should explain what the group's purpose is and the regulations regarding transportation, drop off/pick up from the group, as well as the opportunity to get these forms signed. Whenever an activity or field trip requires overnight stay or takes place outside of the Archdiocese, the Event Release Form should be obtained. This also applies to special events and conferences where transportation may be required.

3. Transporting young people

It is always better for parents to drive young people to the place of the event/activity. Neither the parish nor the youth coordinator is responsible for arrangements made between parents to transport youth to weekly meetings or other events; although they should advise them on the responsibilities involved. When the parish or youth coordinator organizes transportation of youth for an event or activity the following guidelines should be followed:

a. Have parents/guardians sign a permission form/release of liability with medical information. (Forms may be downloaded from our webpage: www.miamiyoungchurch.com- or made available through our Office)

b. All drivers must be 18 years of age or older. Parents may exercise their discretion in not allowing their child to ride with drivers younger than 21. If no such driver is available, the parent has to provide the transportation.

c. All **drivers** need to fill out:

1) Driver's information form and provide insurance/driver's license information.

If concerned, check for DUI records.

2) Code of Conduct

d. No minor should ride alone with an adult, unless parents have specifically given permission. If no alternative to giving youth a ride is found, we suggest to always drop off the last two youth together and have their parents pick them up at that house.

e. When **renting automobiles** for youth events:

-If the person renting the automobile is **an employee** of the Archdiocese no additional insurance is necessary. The diocese's insurance will cover in the event of an accident. Obtaining a Certificate of Insurance from Gallagher may be necessary¹. However, coverage is subject to the conditions set in the agreement.

-If the person is **not an employee** of the diocese, they need to check their insurance coverage to see if they have sufficient liability coverage; if not, it is safer to purchase the additional insurance offered by the rental agency. However, coverage is subject to the conditions set in the agreement. Volunteer Driver Questionnaire should be obtained. (Form available on our website)

-The Archdiocesan insurance no longer gives coverage for 15 passenger vans. Use of 7 passenger vans, 12-22 person school buses or contracted bus company is recommended. The rollover problems in 15 passenger vans has led Federal law to prohibit the sale of new 11-15 passenger vans to transport children. Parishes who OWN these vans may still use them for a certain period of time. For details:

¹Archdiocesan Insurance: Arthur J. Gallagher (305) 592-6080

contact Archdiocesan insurance, *Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. (305) 592-6080*.

f. If a Bus service is contracted, they need to show proof of insurance, for it is their insurance that will cover in the event of an accident.

4. Liability Coverage for Special Events:

a. The Archdiocesan insurance has liability coverage for events taking place at Archdiocesan facilities and parishes.

b. For activities outside the Archdiocese, request liability coverage from Archdiocesan Insurance Company *Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. (305) 592-6080*.

This does not include medical insurance (for illness or accidents that may occur). For local events parents need to be called in to assume responsibility for medical care expenses. When traveling outside of the area, organizers need to make sure every participant has medical insurance. Buy group accident insurance from Gallagher or Brotherhood Mutual (www.brotherhoodmutual.com) or help teens from low income families obtain basic medical insurance in programs such as Kid Care (www.floridakidcare.org).

b. For major sports events, where liability may be a concern, it is wise to contact the Archdiocesan insurance for extra coverage.

c. When going to a retreat house or renting a facility not owned by the Archdiocese, we may need to show proof of insurance. Contact the Archdiocesan insurance.

d. All youth should submit a medical form and parent release form. Keep these on file for at least 4 years.

e. In case of an **accident**, which is not life threatening

1) Contact parents/legal guardian(s) immediately and let them decide what to do.

2) If parents aren't available and/or immediate medical care is necessary call 911 or transport child to nearest medical facility.

3) The parent/guardians are responsible for the medical expenses. They have agreed to this by signing the Release Form. Parishes may obtain medical insurance for groups or special events.

4) Inform parish authorities, and the Office of Youth Ministry, if the accident occurs in the context of a parish or Archdiocesan youth activity.

- 5) Document the incident (what happened, have those involved and witnesses sign the report attesting to its truthfulness), retain release forms as instructed above.
- 6) Do not share incident information with anyone but police, church's designated representative, and legal counsel.

5. Standards of Conduct for all adults working (paid or volunteer) with minors:

- a. Adult leaders or group advisors are at least five years older than oldest group members.
- b. Age for chaperons is 21 years or older. The adult/minor ratio should be 1/7. At least two adults should be with the youth in any activity or event.
- c. Adults should never be alone with a minor. If an adult needs to speak alone with a youth, it should never be in a room with the door closed or out of the view of others (room with glass door or window, in a hall or outside).
- d. Under no circumstance can adults share a bed with a minor, nor a bedroom, unless it is dormitory style room and not one-on-one situation.
- e. Adults should not engage in email or instant messaging friendship with minors. Permission to exchange e-mails or chat via instant messaging with minors should be obtained from parents. Email should be used only to communicate matters related to the ministry.
- f. Youth ministers, adult leaders, and chaperons should have clear understanding of their responsibilities and boundaries. They carry the burden of setting *and maintaining appropriate physical and emotional boundaries*. They never initiate romantic or sexual behavior with a minor and refuse it even if the other invites or consents to it. Young adults serving as youth ministry leaders may not date underage group members.
- g. Adults never put themselves in a position where touch may be misconstrued. The way touch is received and interpreted often depends on the young person's age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnic background, emotional condition, prior experience, and present life situation.

The following are always considered inappropriate behaviors:

- any type of massage given by an adult to a minor and vice-versa

- having extended full-body hugs
- allowing youth to sit on your lap
- tickling and wrestling with youth
- playing with youth's hands, hair, feet
- patting youth on the bottom, chest or private parts
- holding hands for extended periods
- kisses on the mouth

h. Adults working in a ministerial setting with young people never provide them with alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, videos or reading or graphic material that is inappropriate.

i. Adults engaged in ministry to youth and chaperons must refrain from illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs at all times, and the use of alcohol when working with youth.

j. Adults in a ministry situation avoid exploiting the trust of those under their care by not using them to satisfy their need for attention, intimacy, and affection.

k. Adults in ministry do not use foul language

l. Youth ministry leaders respect confidentiality, yet are not held to confidentiality in the same way as ordained ministers and licensed, certified counselors.

6. Archdiocesan policies on background screening of personnel

(See www.miamiarch.org, Protecting God's Children>Policies>Employees)

a. Employees: Part-time or full time employees are required to submit to their pastor the following documents:

- 1) Attestation of Good Moral Character for employees
- 2) Fingerprints for FBI background check (fingerprint cards may be obtained from and submitted to the Office of Human Resources / Screening of personnel: 305-762-1057).
- 3) Archdiocesan Code of Conduct or similar
- 4) If the youth ride in their cars some times, Driver's Questionnaire
- 5) Proof of having taken the Virtus Training (Call the Office of Safe Environment for a schedule of Trainings: 305-762-1250, 954-525-5157 x1250 or check Archdiocesan website)

b. Unsupervised Volunteers: All non-paid Youth Coordinators or Youth Ministers are considered “Unsupervised Volunteers;” also their assistants that are in situations where they are unsupervised*² with youth or give more than 20 hours a week. Most volunteer youth ministers do not spend 20 hrs with the youth, but **still they must** submit the following documents to their pastors:

- 1) Volunteer Application
- 2) Fingerprints for background check (for an appointment contact the Office of Human Resources /Screening of personnel: 305-762-1057).
- 3) Code of Conduct
 - 4) If they are driving the youth, Driver’s Questionnaire
 - 5) Proof of having taken the Virtus Training (Call the Office of Safe Environment for a schedule of Trainings Phone: 305-762-1250, 954-525-5157 x1250 or check Archdiocesan website)

c. Supervised Volunteers: Defined as non-paid personnel working with minors in a **supervised** environment (See pg. 5*) and who are in contact with youth **less than 20 hrs/week.**

Everyone in this category has to submit to the pastor the following documents:

- 1) Volunteer Application
- 2) Fingerprints for background check (for an appointment contact the Office of Human Resources /Screening of personnel: 305-762-1057).
- 3) Code of Conduct
- 4) If they are driving the youth, Driver’s Questionnaire
- 5) Proof of having taken the Virtus Training (Call the Office of Safe Environment for a schedule of Trainings Phone: 305-762-1250, 954-525-5157 x1250 or check Archdiocesan website)

7. Abuse

a. Warning Signs: Adults working with minors should be able to recognize the warning signs of abuse: presence of bruises, unusual interest or avoidance of all things of sexual nature, recurring nightmares, depression or withdrawal from friends or family, seductiveness, delinquency/conduct problems, secretiveness, unusual aggressiveness, aspects of sexual molestation in drawings, games, fantasies, suicidal behavior.

The presence of one or more of these signs does not constitute ground to report abuse, but it is a lead for us to seek further information to help the young person or find someone that can help him/her.

*According to Archdiocesan Policies for Screening Church Personnel, “supervision of volunteers” consists of being overseen and in the physical presence of a **paid** employee of parish or Archdiocese.

b. Reporting: When informed of or suspecting abuse or neglect of any kind, an adult has the legal obligation to report to the proper authorities: Florida Dept. of Children and Families (1-800-96-ABUSE or 1-800-962-2873), not doing so represents a misdemeanor under the Florida statutes (39.201.04).

Any person reporting **in good faith** shall be immune from civil or criminal liability. Any verbal report must be confirmed in writing within 48 hours. State of Florida Statutes on this subject are available online: <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/>

c. Accusations involving Church personnel: If the accusation is against church personnel of the Archdiocese of Miami or the abuse has taken place on Archdiocesan property, the Archdiocese should be notified. Check the Archdiocesan website for the Form to Report Abuse (www.miamiarch.org "Protecting God's Children"). Also, anyone claiming to have been abused by church personnel of the Archdiocese, may call Vicky Kaufmann, Victim's Assistance Coordinator 1-866-802-2873 (1-866-80ABUSE).

-For complete Archdiocesan policies on Safe Environment and Florida Bishops' policies check archdiocesan website <http://www.miamiarch.org/> "Protecting God's Children."

-For United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's Office of Child and Youth Protection: <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp>

d. Educating Young people: Young people need to be informed as to what constitutes abuse, harassment, and exploitation and how to report it. It is important to give young people the tools they need to protect themselves from someone that might harm them by addressing this issue on a yearly basis at groups. Under the Virtus program there is a resource to educate youth called "Touching Safety" (See www.virtus.org). The Safe Environment Office (305-762-1250, 954-525-5157 x1250) has purchased this material and has it available to parishes.

e. Responding to abuse: In responding to young people who say that he or she has been abused the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry makes the following recommendations.

What to Say If a child even hints in a vague way that sexual abuse has occurred, encourage him or her to talk freely. Don't make judgmental comments.

- Show that you understand and take seriously what the child is saying. Child and adolescent psychiatrists have found that children who are listened to and understood do much better than those who are not. The response to the disclosure of sexual abuse is critical to the child's ability to resolve and heal the trauma of sexual abuse.
- Assure the child that they did the right thing in telling. A child who is close to the abuser may feel guilty about revealing the secret. The child may feel frightened if the abuser has threatened to harm the child or other family members as punishment for telling the secret.
- Tell the child that he or she is not to blame for the sexual abuse. Most children in attempting to make sense out of the abuse will believe that somehow they caused it or may even view it as a form of punishment for imagined or real wrongdoings.
- Finally, offer the child protection, and promise that you will promptly take steps

to see that the abuse stops.

<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/rspdabus.htm>

f. Identifying a predator: If you are concerned about an adult that behaves in a suspicious way around young people, check the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's webpage on predators (child abusers)

(http://www3.fdle.state.fl.us/sexual_predators/)

8. Reporting Cases of Impregnation of Minors

Florida Statute number 39.201 deals specifically with mandatory reporting of impregnation of minors. In instances of suspected child abuse (impregnation of a minor is always considered child abuse, and therefore considered a felony) that involves impregnation of a child under the age of 16 by a person 21 or older, reports are to be made immediately to the county sheriff's office or other appropriate law enforcement agency.

9. Suicide

a. If someone states or gives signs of contemplating suicide, the well being of the person overrides the need for confidentiality.

b. Be aware of the following signs of adolescents who may try to kill themselves:

- change in eating and sleeping habits
- withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
- violent actions, rebellious behavior, or running away
- drug and alcohol use
- unusual neglect of personal appearance
- marked personality change
- persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork
- frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- loss of interest in pleasurable activities

- not tolerating praise or rewards
- **A teenager who is planning to commit suicide may also:**
 - complain of being a bad person or feeling "rotten inside"
 - give verbal hints with statements such as: "I won't be a problem for you much longer," "Nothing matters," "It's no use," and "I won't see you again"
 - put his or her affairs in order, for example, give away favorite possessions, clean his or her room, throw away important belongings, etc.
 - become suddenly cheerful after a period of depression
 - have signs of psychosis (hallucinations or bizarre thoughts)

c. If a child or adolescent says, "I want to kill myself," or "I'm going to commit suicide," always take the statement seriously and seek evaluation from a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other physician. People often feel uncomfortable talking about death. However, asking the child or adolescent whether he or she is depressed or thinking about suicide can be helpful. Rather than "putting thoughts in the child's head," such a question will provide assurance that somebody cares and will give the young person the chance to talk about problems.

d. If one or more of these signs occurs, parents need to talk to their child about their concerns and seek professional help when the concerns persist. *With support from family and professional treatment, children and teenagers who are suicidal can heal and return to a more healthy path of development. (Taken from the website of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, www.aacap.org)*

10. Safety Guides for Sports Activities

Minors: Please, be sure to have the appropriate parent release form with medical information (www.miamiyouthchurch.com/forms) signed before participating in a sport event. The burden and responsibility of obtaining such documentation is on the youth minister, not on the event organizers. Youth Ministers or adults accompanying the minors should have these with them at all times during the activity and keep them for **4 years** in church files.

Young Adults & Adults: Since adults get injured too, they should fill out the appropriate medical form and release of liability (www.miamiyoungchurch.com/forms).

11. Travel Abroad

Taking minors to foreign countries is very risky, especially mission trips. Adults may also run into problems overseas. If you are planning such trips, please:

- Explain clearly to parents the activities and risks involved.
- Contact the Health Dept. to find out if there are recommended vaccines, medications for that particular area.
- Contact the State Department to find out if there are safety alerts issued for travel to that country.
- Do not take anyone that has no medical insurance, get travel insurance for everyone if possible. In many cases you will have to pay up front for medical expenses and get the insurance to reimburse you. Carry enough cash and keep all receipts.
- Have everyone sign a release of liability.
- For minors, parents need to sign a Permission/Release Form or give you power of attorney in some other way, because if a minor has a medical emergency (unless life-threatening), hospitals may not treat them without the parents' permission.
- Have everyone fill out a medical form.
- Carry the Forms with you at all times.

12. World Youth Day Policies

a)Everyone participating needs to have medical insurance. World Youth Day registration provides insurance coverage only for the days of the event. Since it requires strenuous walking and some physical endurance, it may not be advisable for individuals with certain medical conditions.

All Archdiocesan participants need to submit a signed release of liability provided by the Office of Youth Ministry.

b)Since each participant will be carrying a certificate signed by their bishop or his delegate, all registrations must be done before June 1st, so there is time to submit these certificates to the Archbishop or his delegate to be signed. All those under the age of 18 must complete the "Parental Permission" section of the WYD certificate.

c) *The age limit for the event is 16-39. Individuals outside this age bracket should be strongly discouraged from participating. The program is not geared for young people under 16.*

d) *Groups bringing minors will have to conduct a criminal background check on each adult traveling with them. Please contact the Central Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at (305) 762-1057 on how to go about this.*

e) *WYD offers a variety of registration packages. Groups with minors may not choose the simple accommodations package, which involves the possibility of staying with local families.*

f) *Groups with minors who are staying at hotels are reminded that no adult may share a bedroom with a minor.*

g) *Chaperones and group leaders must be at least 21. The adult/minor ratio is 1 per 6.*

h) *Everyone participating will be asked to sign an Archdiocesan Code of Conduct.*

i) *Spiritual preparation of those participating is important. Studying and reflecting on the Holy Father's message for WYD, using the materials on USCCB's web page, will help participants understand this experience as a pilgrimage and not as tourism.*

13. Use of the Internet

Posting pictures of minors on your group's or parish web page should not be done without express written consent from parents. When planning an activity where pictures will be taken for the purpose of posting them, include this element in the parent's release and permission form.

14. AIDS and Other Infectious Diseases

AIDS and other diseases present discrimination issues. "Lower courts have supported the right of students with such illnesses to education and employment so long as the disease does not interfere with their work and no one is placed in danger." (*Religious Education and the Law*, Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, p. 34) If there is clear knowledge (by parish coordinator, parents or other parish personnel) that a young person has tested HIV positive, he/she cannot be denied participation in the group. This knowledge is strictly confidential and may not be shared except by the affected person or his/her family willingly. Youth and adult leaders should practice universal precautions with regard to body fluids at all times, since neither a youth infected with HIV nor his/her parents have any obligation to inform group leaders or the parish about his/her illness.

14. Emergency Plan

Each Youth Coordinator with the assistance of other parish leaders and the pastor should develop an Emergency Plan for possible crisis that may develop while in the course of a youth activity, such as: fire, bomb threat, weather emergency, power failure, serious illness or injury, intruder or violent attack, terrorist attack, possession of weapon by a participant. See appendix A.

15. Copyright laws:

a. Photocopying song sheets, words of songs to make song books, and the like, is against the law unless you obtain a copyright permit (See form on our website). For a one time use of a song, publishers may not charge you. Always ask for permission to print the songs and acknowledge author, publisher, etc.

b. Rented videotapes/DVDs labeled or containing the statement "For Home Use Only", or facsimile thereof, are prohibited from classroom or other school broadcast use absent prior written permission from the copyright owner or a label or on-tape statement which specifies permission granted for educational use.

c. Downloading music or other media files is also a violation of copyright laws.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX A

CHECKLISTS

I. For Events/Field Trips

- A. If contracting a bus service
- Ask the company for proof of liability insurance
 - Read the small print of the contract to make sure other fees are not going to be added (room and board for driver, etc.)
 - Have the driver's cell phone number or contact number before the event (in case he is delayed or does not show up).
- B. If renting a vehicle, follow the guidelines on page 2. Obtain Driver Questionnaire from drivers.
- Provide parents/guardians with complete information about the activity, location, duration, etc.
 - Obtain in advance Permission Forms with Medical Information (on Youth Office's website).
 - Keep a copy of Permission Forms at the Office or home and take originals with you. If the youth are riding in different vehicles, provide the supervising adult in each vehicle with a copy of these forms.
 - Have a list of cell phone numbers for adults and parents serving as chaperons.
 - If this is an overnight event, follow Standards of Conduct for adults working with minors (Section 5) and Screening of Personnel (Section 6).
 - First Aid Kit

2. Emergency Preparation

Leaders should have and carry emergency procedures plan to all events in case of crises, such as accidents, severe illness, violence, natural disaster or terrorism. .

- Have a plan in the event any of the above crisis occurs during a youth activity. Depending on the situation a lock down (all doors closed) maybe called for or evacuation of the place. Know where the emergency exits of your regular meeting place are at. Read Appendix B to be prepared in case there is a need to "Shelter-in-Place."

- Leaders must know the number of participants and their whereabouts at all times.
- Leaders must take frequent roll calls.
- If you are in an event in a large complex, establish a meeting point and check in times for the group.