

Resolution: Standards of Best Practice in Youth Ministry

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Youth Steering Committee that all youth events in the Diocese provide a safe learning environment, be enjoyable, and nurture spiritual growth for all involved in youth ministry; and

WHEREAS, youth leaders and youth workers have asked the Diocesan Youth Ministry office for common directions and standards for leading successful youth programs; and

WHEREAS, the Youth Steering Committee operates its youth events under standards that they have established in accordance with the Diocesan Policy for Prevention of Sexual Misconduct as the “best practice” of diocesan youth events and believes that ethical behavior should be the norm for all interactions occurring between youth and youth workers, and has drafted a document for all youth ministry in the Diocese;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this 166th Diocesan Convention affirms the work of the Youth Steering Committee for developing the “Best Practice in Youth Ministry” in order to encourage and protect youth and youth workers in their programs of spiritual growth, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this 166th Diocesan Convention adopt the “Standards of Best Practice in Youth Ministry” as the approved guidelines for youth ministry in the Diocese of Indianapolis and encourages congregations to do the same.

Submitted by: Diocesan Youth Steering Committee

Standards of Best Practice in Youth Ministry For the Diocese of Indianapolis

1. Youth (*) or adult (**) will not be required to say or participate in anything that would make him/her feel uncomfortable.
2. Every person has the right to at least seven (7) hours of sleep time every night and to adequate and balanced meals. Everyone is expected to comply with quiet time and lights out.
3. All overnight activities will provide separate sleeping arrangements for males and females. A single adult and a single youth will not sleep in the same room. In addition, separate bathroom/shower facilities by gender (or specified times to use a single facility) will be provided. Youth and adults should have separate shower times.
4. To ensure everyone's safety and well being, no person, youth or adult, will possess or use tobacco products, alcohol, illegal controlled substances, weapons or fireworks during the youth event/function. If anyone is found with any of the aforementioned items, it is understood that said person will be sent home at his/her own expense, or the expense of their parent/guardian. The nurse (or designated adult) will be notified immediately upon arrival of all medications (prescription or over the counter) or medical devices needed or required by the participant. The designated adult will be responsible for collection and disbursement of medications.
5. Everyone will/should remain with the group under the supervision of adults until departing from the event/function. No person, youth or adult, attending the event/function will leave the group without notification and permission of the adult in charge of the event/function. Adults who participate in an activity and/or bring youth to an event are to assist and ensure that the youth exhibit proper behavior at all times.
6. All youth events/functions are to be safe environments. No one will be discriminated against based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, physical disability, country of origin or ancestry or religion. Everyone will/should respect each other's physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual well being. Everyone will/should refrain from harming or devaluing anyone in any way. (See the Baptismal Covenant in the Book of Common Prayer)
7. Everyone is expected to respect the personal property of all participants, the property of the host and the host site, and the property of all places visited. It is understood that if any participant causes damage to any property, the participant or his/her parents/guardians will be held financially responsible for the damages.
8. All youth events/functions shall have at least two (2) adults. The adult leadership will be reflective of the youth attending, so that if there are male and female youth there must be male and female adults. At the minimum, National Church ratios of two (2) adults for the initial ten

(10) youth and one (1) adult for every additional five (5) youth should be followed.

9. Except in an emergency, adults supervising youth activities will practice "two deep ministry" meaning that at least two adults will be present at all times. For all adults, this policy specifically prohibits:

- a. Secluded one-on-one interactions with youth without another adult being present or at least aware of the place of consultation and who is being counseled.
- b. Home visitations in the absence of parents or guardians.
- c. Any gathering of youth with less than two adults at the church (or event/function) or in the adult's home in the absence of other authorized adults.
- d. Transportation of any single youth by a single adult or a married couple.

(Exception: The youth and his/her parent/guardian agree in writing to the specific deviation(s) of part 9 a-d)

10. All youth [eighteen (18) years old or younger] must have written parental/guardian permission to attend any event/function, and must have a medical release form signed by the parent/guardian on file at the event/function. Adults also are required to have a medical release on file at the event/function.

11. Adults are not to date, or become romantically or sexually involved with a youth. All adult advisors are to refrain from giving personal gifts or money to youth without first consulting the parents/guardians.

12. All adults (paid or volunteer) should be screened through a background check by the church group to whom they are accountable. An interview with church leaders, the checking of references and an internship period may be required. Adults should meet regularly to openly discuss problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings and issues that interfere with youth ministry efforts. There should be a constant monitoring of all programs involving youth.

13. All youth events/functions should operate with an open-door policy. Clergy, parents, church staff members and parishioners all have the right to observe any youth activity.

14. People may seek guidance from adults or peers if experiencing difficulty or if they are encountering problems with the program, parents, peers or adults. If in the course of the event/function someone shares that he or she is being harmed physically or emotionally or is going to harm their self, it is necessary to share the information with an adult in charge. (See Prevention of Sexual Misconduct Guidelines for the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis for protocol for reporting abuse or call the Child Abuse Hotline - 1-800-800-5556)

(*) "Youth" is defined as anyone under the age of 21.

(**) “Adult” is defined as anyone age 21 or older who has documented training in the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct. (Such training is provided by the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis. Call the Diocesan Office for more information.)