Episcopal Diocese *of* Washington  Diócesis Episcopal *de* Washington

Standards for Youth and Children's Ministries: On the Diocesan Level

The Diocese of Washington is committed to welcoming and protecting the well-being of all children and youth to participate in activities at our congregations and in our diocese. Toward this end, we have established the following Standards for Youth and Children's Ministries. These Standards are rooted in our Baptismal Covenant and seek to embody our commitment to safeguard the children and youth who are entrusted to our care.

BASIC INFORMATION AND POLICIES

The following statements are designed to assist you as you prepare for attending diocesan-level youth events. Many of these policies have grown out of questions from youth leaders and parents. Some of this information may change due to the design of an event or its location. These changes will be provided in pre-event information.

Adult Sponsors

There is an expectation that for every 1 to 6 youth present, one adult sponsor should also be present for that congregation. Adults are expected to be at least 18-years old for Middle School events and at least 22-years old for High School events. There should be both a male and female sponsor for co-educational events; for same-sex events, sponsors should be the same gender as the attendees. All of these adults should have completed the Diocese of Washington's Prevention of Child Sexual Misconduct Training. Please call the Deputy for Youth Ministry for any exceptions to this policy.

Adult Sponsor Problems

Youth who are unable to obtain a sponsor should contact the Deputy for Youth Ministry to make alternative arrangements

Presence

All participants, youth and adult, are expected to be present from the time the program begins to its conclusion. Please contact the Deputy for Youth Ministry for exceptions to this policy.

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Parish Registration Form

This form must be received by the registration deadline and include the names and information for all participants, youth and adults, who are expected to attend the event. Registration fees are also due at this time.

Individual Registration Form

Each participant, youth and adult, must have an individual registration form. This form must be completed and signed by the participant, and if under 18, must also be signed by a parent or guardian. This form must be turned in with the Parish Registration Form and come directly from the Parish Youth Leader, unless other arrangements have been made with the Deputy for Youth Ministry.

Registration Fee

The Registration Fee will be based on the number of expected participants and the cost of the facilities that will be used. One-half of the registration fee is refundable if the participant drops out at least 10 days before the start of the event. All participants, youth and adult, are expected to pay the registration fee for each event they attend. However, financial concerns should never be the reason for persons not attending an event. Scholarship assistance is available. Most congregations pay these fees for adult sponsors.

Scholarship Assistance

The common practice for scholarship assistance is that individuals are expected to pay at least 1/3 of the registration fee, with assistance coming from the congregation and diocese, each contributing 1/3. Before contacting the Deputy for Youth Ministry for scholarship assistance, please determine what assistance can be obtained at the congregation level. Again, financial concerns should never keep a young person from attending an event.

Travel to and from Diocesan Youth Events

It is the responsibility of the parents and youth leaders of a congregation to provide transportation to and from diocesan youth events. It is also the expectation that an adult will transport young people to and from these events. If exceptions are made to this policy: 1) Young people who are under 18 are expected to have written permission from a parent or guardian to drive to an event, and 2) if young people are transporting other young people to and from a youth event, written permission must be provided for driver and passenger from a parent or guardian of the youth participant and a parent or

guardian of the driver that identifies who is driving, who is being driven, and location they are being driven.

Sleeping accommodations

All diocesan youth events must provide 8 hours of scheduled time for sleep on all overnight events. The exception to this policy is the Cathedral Lock-Ins which will provide 6 hours of scheduled, but not required, time for sleep. It is never appropriate for two people to share a bed or other sleeping space (i.e. sleeping bag) designed for one person, or for a young person and an adult to share a bed. Males and females (both youth and adult) should sleep in separate rooms at all events and have separate access to bathroom facilities. It is desirable that youth and adults should have separate sleeping quarters, and, when possible, separate bathing facilities. If separate sleeping quarters for adults and youth are not possible, adults should sleep at a different end or side of the room.

Training & Oversight

Every Youth Event Design Team shall provide proper training for its design team and staff. Minor youth leading small groups will be supervised and accountable to adult leadership.

NON-NEGOTIABLE ITEMS FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS AT DIOCESE OF WASHINGTON YOUTH EVENTS

- No participant or leader may be in possession of or use alcohol, illegal and illicit drugs, or any tobacco products at a diocesan youth event. Any adult or youth in violation of this standard will be sent home immediately.
- Sexual relations or excessive displays of affection are strictly prohibited: no touching or exposure of the breast, buttocks or genitalia (this includes adult-to-adult, child/youth-to-child/ youth, and adult- to-child/youth behavior).
- There are to be no weapons, firearms or fireworks at any youth event.

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EXPECTATIONS OF ADULT PARTICIPANTS AT DIOCESAN YOUTH EVENTS

Being an adult participant at a youth event can be a challenging experience. The Diocese of Washington youth events are designed and led by young people, for young people, with the help of adults. The young people who help lead these events come with a variety of gifts and talents, as well as areas ripe for growth and development. Adult participants can and should encourage the young people in the task of leadership.

This means:

- Saying supporting things to them
- Actively participating in games, songs, small group discussions and other activities
- Modeling the behavior we would like of all the participants
- When appropriate, offering gentle feedback or criticism

Participate fully in the event, being supportive and encouraging of the young people.

Help to supervise the young people from your parish, as well as all the youth participants. If you see behavior that is in violation of the covenant, you must report it to the adult in charge of the event, typically the Deputy for Youth Ministry. DO NOT be afraid to ask a young person his or her name in order to identify them. If you see behavior not strictly violating the covenant, but clearly inappropriate (aggressive, disruptive, offensive, overly negative or insensitive, etc.), you as an adult participant should feel free to gently tell the young person or people that what they are doing is not appropriate (i.e.: Hey, watch the language OR your talking is disrespectful to the people up front and around you).

Yours is a ministry of presence. Just be there. Be there in the cabins or sleeping areas, in the meeting spaces or in the common areas. Go where the young people are and where they might be. Gather up the stragglers and gently engage those at the fringes. Your mere presence does a lot to prevent unwanted behavior. Just because our events are youth led does not in any way mean that you are relieved of your responsibility to safeguard the emotional, physical and spiritual safety and wellbeing of everyone present.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you are unsure what to do about something, please do not suffer in silence. Talk to one of the event's adult staff or to the Deputy for Youth Ministry.

In the event of an unusual incident, it is to be reported to the person in charge of the event. Information about the incident is to be shared only with individuals who are impacted by the incident. A response will be made to the incident within 24 hours, consistent with local statues and Diocesan Policy.

SOME TIPS ON HOW TO HAVE A GOOD EXPERIENCE

Small Groups: If you are in a small group with young people, and not all adults will be, the best thing you can do is to be a really good listener, ask follow-up questions, and share about yourself (but not too much). And as always, keep your sharing within the bounds of propriety when sharing with young people.

Dressing & Showering: Get yourself some privacy for dressing and showering. Wait until the young people are finished showering before you go in. Or get into the bathroom before they do so you can have some privacy.

Meals: Encourage the young people to take only what they will eat. Also, keep an eye on the young people around you. If they seem to eat an abnormal level of food or are not eating much at all, bring this to the attention of that young person's youth leader and the Deputy for Youth Ministry.

The Floor: Please try to sit on the floor among the youth. It sets a better example for them and will really encourage their participation. If it will help, please bring a floor-chair, which you can get from Crazy Creek, L.L. Bean, R.E.I. and other outdoor suppliers.

Have Fun: Laugh, be silly and use this time to build relationships with the young people.