

Standards for Diocesan Youth Events and Leaders

Accepting the charge of the Children's Charter to "...love, shelter, protect and defend..." our younger brothers and sisters in Christ the Episcopal Diocese of WNY has established these standards for youth events and for adult leaders. These guidelines are not intended to supplant or override existing diocesan policies. They are intended to address the specific needs of youth ministry within those policies.

Definitions:

Youth – Any person 18 years of age or under.

Adult – Any person older than 18 years of age.

Supervising adult – a person at least 21 years of age who has accepted a role as a leader in youth ministry and who meets the following requirements:

- Has completed the Diocesan "Safe Church" and Anti-racism training or the equivalent with written documentation.
- Has regularly attended church at one congregation for at least a year.
- Has NO history of sexual misconduct or abuse. Persons with such a history may not be used in any capacity with a youth event. Any person accused of improper behavior is to be removed from diocesan youth ministry until the issue is resolved.

Chaperone – Any adult assisting at a youth event under the direction and authority of a supervising adult.

Community Covenant:

This agreement delineates how we deal with one another during diocesan youth events. If we accept Christ's charge to "Love one another" and to "Love our neighbors as ourselves" then we must accept that certain behaviors are unacceptable. Some of these behaviors are:

- **Discrimination** – No person shall be discriminated against on the basis of his or her race, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, origin, ancestry or religion.
- **Violence** – No person is to strike or hit anyone else at any time. Bullying, intimidation and/or threats of violence are forbidden. No weapons of any kind are to be brought to diocesan youth events. Anyone found in the possession of such weapons will be sent home.
- **Alcohol or illegal drugs** – No alcohol or illegal drugs may be in the possession, or used by, any adults or youth at diocesan youth events. Exception is made for wine used in the

Eucharist. Anyone found in possession of, or having consumed these items will be sent home. The Diocese does not rule out the possibility of legal action against such persons.

- **Physical, emotional or sexual abuse** – No person is to be abused while attending a diocesan youth event. Physical abuse is defined as non-accidental bodily injury of one person by another. Emotional abuse is the spoken or unspoken devaluing of another, such as, name calling or indicating that s/he is worthless. Sexual abuse is any sexualized behavior between people where there is an unequal distribution of power, such as where one person is older or larger than the other. It also includes sexual harassment, such as sexually oriented humor or language (written oral or graphic), unwelcome physical contact, inappropriate comments on clothing, appearance, sexual behavior or preference, repeated requests for social engagements.
- **Tobacco** – while we recognize the intensity of the addiction associated with tobacco the use of tobacco products by youth is prohibited. We encourage all adults to refrain from smoking as much as possible during youth events. Any smoking by adults must be done discretely at a designated location.
- **Denial of basic human needs** – No person is to be denied access to the basic human needs of food, shelter, sleep and clothing at any diocesan youth event.
- **Displays of affection/ sexual relations** – Inappropriate displays of affection and sexual relations are inconsistent with this community.

Other behaviors may also be added to this list as required for youth events.

Leaders Standards

In addition to the requirements listed above all adult leaders at a youth event must meet the following standards of behavior:

1. No adult may date, become romantically or sexually involved with a youth. Adults must be aware of their physical, mental and emotional interaction with youth at all times.
2. No adult is to give personal gifts or money of inappropriate value to youth without first consulting with the parents or the other adult leaders.

Youth Event guidelines:

All diocesan youth events must meet the following standards:

1. Two Adult Rule – Two supervising adults are present. The ratio of youth to adults should never exceed 10 to 1. Adult leadership should reflect the youth attending. Events with both male and female youth required male and female supervising adults.
2. Parental Permission – Parental permission in writing must be obtained IN ADVANCE for events. A basic medical release form is also recommended
3. No Isolated Counseling – No adult should be alone with a youth outside of the eyesight of other counselors or staff. If being alone is unavoidable the adult should be sure that another adult is aware of the meeting and is checking in periodically. Counseling should never be done between youth.
4. Overnight events – Separate sleeping facilities for males and females are required. A single adult and a single youth must never sleep alone together. Appropriate toilet/shower facilities, by gender, must be made available or be made available at specific times by gender if only one facility is available.
5. Open Door policy – No youth event is to function with a closed-door policy. Clergy, parents, church and staff members have a right to observe any youth event at any time. Such a request to view an event MUST take into consideration the needs of the event and be as respectful of those needs as possible.
6. Late arrival/ Early departure – Once a youth has arrived at an event they will remain there until the end of the event unless there is an emergency. Late Arrivals or Early Departures must be negotiated with supervising adult(s) in charge of the event PRIOR TO THE EVENT.
7. Transportation – Unless otherwise stated youth and their families are responsible for transportation to and from events. If a youth arrives in their own vehicle for an event s/he must park the vehicle for the duration of the event (except as noted in #6)

Reporting a problem

Any person who believes s/he has experienced improper behavior is strongly encouraged to report it to the proper authorities – supervising adult, event leader, diocesan staff person, clergy or the bishop as soon as possible. Any adult who receives such a report must respond. The event leader and other supervising adults should investigate the allegations and make a report on them. Reports that are made during a youth event need to be carefully documented including – Name and personal information of person(s) making the report, the person(s) affected by the improper behavior (if different) and the person(s) who allegedly committed the behavior. A complete description of what is alleged to have happened including when, where and how

often. If there is any question about how to proceed the event leader/supervising adults should contact additional support people including clergy, diocesan staff or the bishop for guidance. All legal reporting requirements must also be met.

Note: These guidelines were developed from the Safe Place policies of the Diocese of WNY (dated 5/97) in addition to standards from the following dioceses and churches: Diocese of Newark, Diocese of Pennsylvania, Diocese of California, Diocese of North Carolina, Diocese of Central Florida, St. Luke's Episcopal Church Jamestown NY, Orchard Park Presbyterian Church Orchard Park NY