

Training Your Ministry Staff (paid or volunteer)

When an accident or an act of misconduct puts the spotlight on your ministry, investigators will check the appropriateness of the staff you have chosen to employ (paid or volunteer). They will also check the training you provided to your staff members to prepare them to do their jobs. With regard to the safety aspect of your training program, you should consider providing at least the following training.

Orientation session. Volunteers need a five- to ten-hour basic training and orientation to the ministry. They need to know the following to get started:

- what is Catholic Youth Ministry today (RTV, USCCB, 1997, goals, components, direction of the parish)

- how the organization works and their role in it (who will they be accountable to)

- go over the forms used in youth ministry (release forms, registration forms, etc.)

- attend the Keeping Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults Safe Training Program of the Diocese of Fort Worth

Basic Certificate in Youth Ministry. This is a training program offered by the Diocese of Fort Worth to volunteer ministry leaders from parishes and schools that work with young people. Ideally, every volunteer youth ministry leader would go through this diocesan training program that volunteers in any kind of consistent way for at least a year or who is planning to work in a key role and needs some basis skill development so they can be effective in their role. This program is offered 2-3 times a year in different parts of the Diocese. Parishes can ask to be a host site for the Certificate program.

The National Certificate in Youth Ministry. This is a more intensive training program for those looking to make a lifelong commitment to youth ministry or people who need in depth training for a role they are assuming in youth ministry. The program takes place at the University of Dallas. They are 4 two full day sessions each year for two years for a total of 16 full days of training. One hour graduate degree credit is available at the University of Dallas for each 2 day session. For more information, contact the office of Youth Ministry at kprevou@fwdioc.org .

First aid training. A certain number of the staff need to complete a certified first aid training course. The remaining staff can take a simplified version of the first aid course to learn the basics. Enough staff should complete first aid training that every event can have a trained, certified staff person in attendance.

Identifying child and sexual abuse. All staff members need to go through the Keeping Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Safe Training Program established by the Diocese of Fort Worth along with annual update training.

Suicide prevention training. Teenage suicide is on the rise, so find a social worker who can help train you and your staff to respond to suicide threats made by teenagers. See Crisis intervention training below for additional information.

Crisis intervention training. If staff members build relationships with kids, they will witness crisis. The crucial part of this training is helping staff members learn how to recognize when they are in a situation in which they are over their heads and how to get professional help. All Youth Ministry programs should have relationships with licensed counselors that specialize in adolescent counseling, family counseling, marriage counseling, and addiction counseling at the very least so that you can refer teens, families, or family members to appropriate counseling when needed. Additionally, should crisis hit the church or one of the schools in your parish borders you can call on these people to help during the crisis. Finally, every parish should be training a group of young people for “PEER COUNSELING” since it is well known that young people talk with young people first when they have a problem. There are book resources that you can use for this training, as well as video programs and/or asking a licensed counselor to do this training. All of these pieces working together will make for effective crisis prevention and intervention.

Pregnancy, drug abuse, and AIDS training. These conditions touch more and more young people every year, so staff members need to be aware of what to do when they encounter them. Some volunteers can pursue additional training to specialize in these social problems. As a Church, we cannot pretend like these problems don’t exist or stop talking about these topics because some people say that we shouldn’t. But let’s make it our mission to get solidly trained people to coordinate these efforts so that people don’t opt out because they are afraid that wrong information is being passed on or that the information being passed on is not consistent with Church teaching.

Activity training. Training also covers the specific activities and events, such as canoeing, biking, or backpacking, sponsored by your youth ministry.

Maintain records of all your staff meetings and training sessions. Keep a file for each staff member, including his or her application, references, any notes from supervision meetings, and a record of the training the staff member has completed.