

Youth Ministry Coordination and Administration

Coordinator of Youth Ministry

Effectiveness in leadership of youth ministry is measured by the amount of positive influence the community exerts in the lives of young people. This influence is the life changing message of our faith tradition lived out in the choices, relationships, and the emerging self of the adolescent. Influence is possible if we work with youth in the context of the existing communities and systems in which they live. Supporting families and linking youth to existing programs becomes an essential part of this model which views ministry more as parish process than as a leader's program.

The first shift in leadership is from children and youth minister as the doer of ministry to coordinator of youth ministry as the enabler of ministries. The Coordinator facilitates the gifts of the parish in organizing and coordinating ministry with youth by encouraging and empowering the community to minister to and with young people. The comprehensive approach puts the emphasis on the *parish process*. Youth ministry is not centered around the work of an individual. It happens most effectively when a team of adults and youth are supported by the parish in taking responsibility for developing ministry to, with, by and for young people.

Parishes utilize a variety of strategies in organizing the many people involved in ministry programs for youth. Some parishes employ a full or part time coordinator for children and youth ministry. Some parishes assign coordination of youth ministry to a member of an existing pastoral team. Others rely upon volunteer coordination. (See the "Position Description for a Coordinator of Youth Ministry" on the following page.) Each of the strategies can be effective. The key factor in effective programming is organization, support and formation for teams of people working on diverse strategies, including those that link youth ministry with existing programs and resources. The team approach can be a uniting and motivating experience for the parish community, leading towards the development of many other important ministries. By empowering adults and youth for ministry, the leader multiplies his or her energy beyond anything that could be accomplished by one person working solo.

A second shift in leadership is from youth minister focusing solely as gatherer of youth to coordinator of youth ministry as advocate and link for young people to inclusive parish and community programs. The coordinator of youth ministry interprets the needs of young people for the broader community and identifies strategies for making parishes "youth friendly". An example of this is a parish that is seeking to improve the worship life of young people. One popular approach is the development of a "Youth Mass." This parish, however, chose an alternative option. Youth are gathered every Monday night to hear proclaimed the Scriptures for the upcoming Sunday Liturgy. After

listening to the readings, the young people identify the connections between the message and the reality of their daily lives. Stories, examples and current popular music that relate to the message are identified. This gathering of the youth community's story is typed up and placed into the mailbox of each of the parish staff members so that it can be used in liturgy and homily preparation. The aim of this effort is to include youth in the existing parish liturgies and help the liturgies address their concerns. Strategies such as these help the parish community to make youth valued members of the community.

The first step in linking and partnering with broader community programs is to identify the services and resources within the schools, civic community, churches and other worship communities. In assessing these programs, we can find those projects with whom we share values in serving youth. This becomes at the starting point for building relationships and connecting communities. Even a very practical step, such as putting each other's events in the newsletters becomes a start in the direction of partnership.

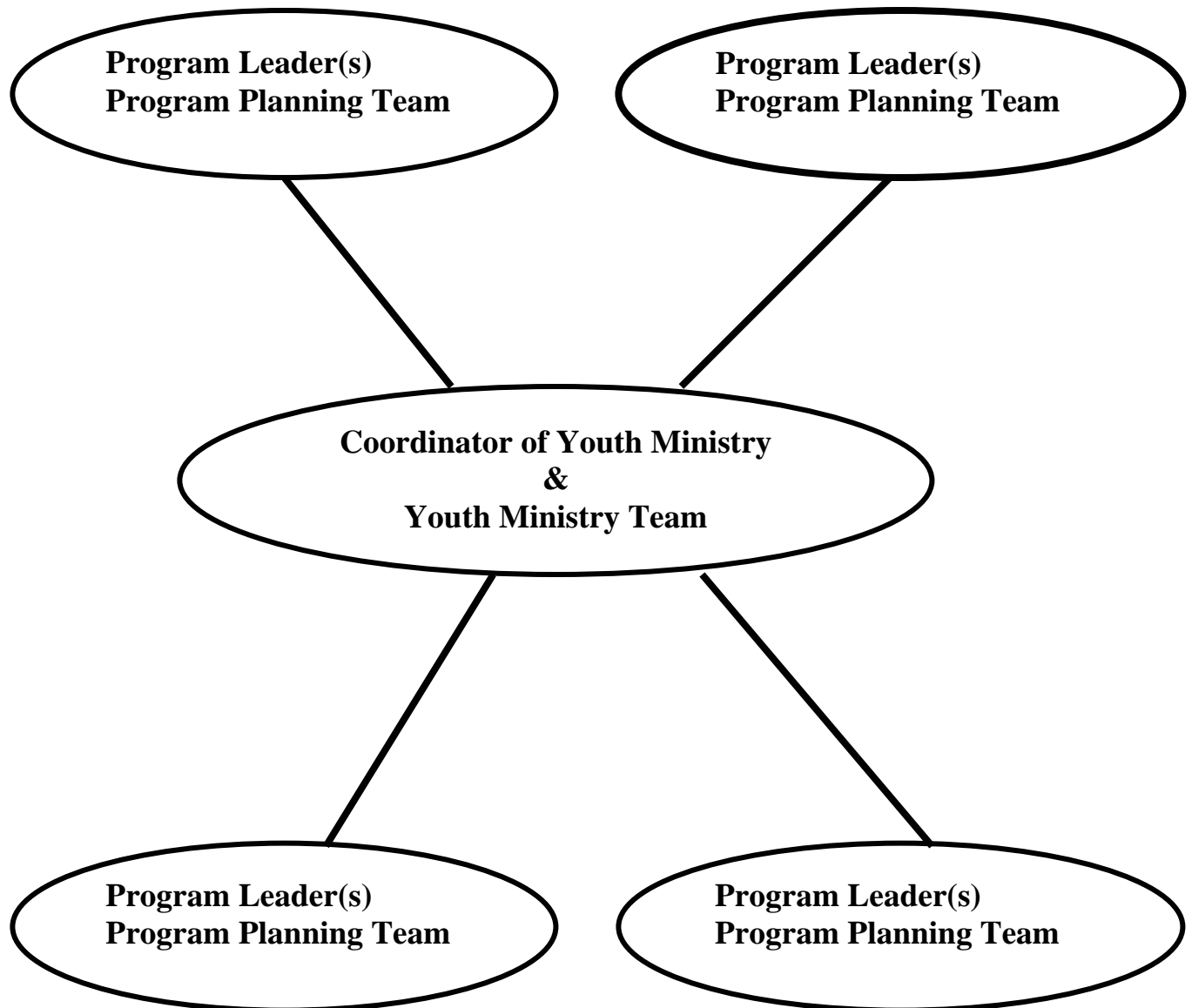
A third shift is from youth program as oasis from parents to youth ministry as support, partner and resource for families. In much of the history of youth ministry programs, there was a prevailing notion that the biggest help we can offer youth is a place to get away from their parents and family. Recent research and pastoral experience has revealed that effective youth programs provide activities, resources, and support that help families to promote healthy growth and faith development. Rather than "over-function" for families by trying to provide remedial support for youth to compensate for gaps in their families, effective leaders minister to parents and families through special consideration of family needs and through supportive programming. In this way, we recognize the primacy of parents in ministry with youth and we take parents seriously as partners in the tasks of mentoring youth toward adult Christian living.

St. Blaze Catholic Community

Leadership Structure for Youth Ministry

*Evangelization
Catechesis*

*Service
Leadership Development*



*Prayer and Worship
Advocacy*

*Community Life
Pastoral Care*

Recommended Job Descriptions Coordinator of Youth Ministry

1. The Coordinator acts as an advocate and link for youth.
 - interpreting the needs of youth to the pastoral team and the community
 - facilitating the development of community among young people, their families, their parish and the local community
 - supporting families in their role of promoting healthy adolescent development and faith growth
 - partnering with schools and the civic community to promote effective services for youth and positive values in youth
 - providing multicultural and multilingual ministry as needed
 - promoting the pastoral care of youth and families
2. The Coordinator recruits, forms and supports adult and youth leaders in youth ministry.
 - promoting the spiritual formation of youth and adult leaders
 - leading the core team in planning and coordinating programs and services
 - developing job descriptions and recruitment processes
 - facilitating the training and support of leaders
3. The Coordinator promotes the faith formation of youth.
 - developing and implementing evangelization and outreach programs
 - developing and implementing catechetical programs
 - promoting active youth worship including inclusive and participative liturgy and prayer opportunities
4. The Coordinator empowers youth for Christian ministry.
 - facilitating the training and formation of youth as leaders
 - providing opportunities for service and linking such opportunities to the fostering of peace and justice
5. The Coordinator administers the parish ministry with youth.
 - facilitating the planning, implementation and evaluation of long and short range program goals
 - establishing a collaborative relationship with other members of the pastoral staff
 - developing and supervising the program budget
 - assuring that legal and moral responsibilities are provided for within the context of the parish program

Youth Ministry Committee or Team

The coordinator(s) needs to establish a *Youth Ministry Committee* or *Team* as the successor to the Youth Ministry Planning Team utilized throughout the planning process. Many of those who have been engaged in the planning process will want to consider their role on a coordinating team. You may also need to recruit new members for the team.

Recommended Responsibilities Youth Ministry Committee or Team

To assist you in developing a specific job description for your team, consider the following responsibilities for the team:

- Provide vision, goals and directions for all aspects of youth ministry
- Coordinating schedules and programs for youth ministry
- Providing channels of communication between the youth ministry and families, parish staff, and parish councils or committees
- Assuring ongoing assessment of youth and family needs and the development of recommendations for youth ministry programming
- Monitor program development and effectiveness
- Assuring continuing evaluation of programming based on goals and program plans
- Making recommendations for resources, budget and facility usage regarding youth ministry
- Assuring adequate recruitment, training and support for leadership in youth ministry
- Establishing and update any policies and/or procedures necessary for effective implementation of youth ministry
- Providing regular feedback to the parish staff and parish council regarding needs, recommendations and accomplishments of youth ministry
- Advocating for the needs of youth and families with youth within the parish and wider community

Youth Ministry Program Implementation

Program Leaders

A program leader is someone who is responsible for a particular youth ministry program, activity, course, or event. If this effort requires a team, the leader recruits and facilitates a program team. Since the job descriptions of program leaders vary considerably from job-to-job, we will not list their recommended responsibilities at this point. When you develop your recruitment plans we will provide guidance in developing job descriptions for all of your program leaders.

Program Teams

Program teams are the backbone of a successful youth ministry effort. These are the folks who populate our retreats and youth group meetings and service projects, etc. The program teams are the group of volunteers who work with the program leaders to implement the youth ministry programs and strategies that they or someone else has designed. Program teams usually take one of two forms:

1. You may organize the program and strategies of your youth ministry using the natural management system of the youth ministry components. So you may have 7 or 8 program teams that are responsible for implementing the programs in a particular area. For example, one team may be responsible for all of the justice and service activities and another for all of the worship times, another for all of the catechetical sessions and so on. This is a style that works particularly well in a smaller parish.
2. The second style of program team is responsible for individual events and activities. You might have a team who is responsible for the Polaroid scavenger hunt and other responsible for the fall retreat while still another would be planning the harvest dance. This model is well suited to trying to encourage greater participation in youth ministry by giving a variety of opportunities to volunteer for a limited commitment.

These are choices that you will be able to make as your youth ministry efforts grow. You may start out with a core group of people doing the lion's share of the work and grow into a leadership system that incorporates a larger number of people over time.

Recommended Responsibilities Program Teams

- design programs and activities
- determine leadership needs
- collaborate in recruiting and training leaders
- promote/publicize programs
- facilitate, conduct, and supervise programs

Program Support Staff

There are a variety of support roles that need to be filled for the effective functioning of a comprehensive youth ministry. Support staff job descriptions, levels of commitment, and required time of service will vary greatly. They range from short term such as chaperones, food services, and drivers to continuing jobs such as clerical support.

There are a lot of people in your parish who may be very supportive of youth ministry but would never imagine themselves on a program team. These support jobs are essential to the health of your youth ministry and would be a great place for these folks to find a way to work. Remember in youth ministry, *everything* counts, therefore *everybody* counts.