

Diocese of Southwestern Virginia Healthy & Wholesome Youth Ministries Policy

This policy was adopted by the Executive Board of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia May 22, 2004 to raise the awareness of our adults and young adults and to ensure the safety of our youth.

The term Youth will refer to all persons from infancy to 18 years old.

Adult will refer to all persons age 24 & older working with youth at parish & diocesan programs.

Young Adult will refer to all persons ages 18 (after graduating from high school -23 who help with youth events on the parish and/or diocesan level.

Evaluating and Monitoring Paid or Volunteer Youth Leaders

- ❖ All Adults who work with Youth on the diocesan level *must* complete the **Youth Ministry Questionnaire**.
- ❖ All Adults who work with Youth on the diocesan level *must* participate in the diocesan Healthy/Wholesome Youth Ministries Workshop, even if they have participated in the previous Sexual Boundaries training. Adults currently working with Youth *must* complete this training by January 2006. All new recruits *must* complete the training prior to working with any Youth. All Adults *must* also participate in a refresher course at least once every five years.
- ❖ All Adults working with Youth on the diocesan level *must* signed the **Covenant for Adult Youth Leaders***, and must agree to abide by the policies set by the diocese.
- ❖ All Adults working with Youth on the diocesan level *must* sign the **Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check**.
- ❖ Paid Adults working with Youth at the diocesan level *must* have a background check completed prior to employment. The diocese uses **The Oxford Document Management Company: Background Check**.
- ❖ At all times Youth will be supervised by 2 or more Adults and the ratio will never be less than 1/8. (See “Two or More Rule” under Safe Environments: Private Space)
- ❖ All Adult leaders working with Youth on the parish level *should* be active participants in their parish for at least one year prior to working with youth. Special diocesan youth programs such as the mission trip, camp at Phoebe Needles or the canoe program *should* have specific standards for each program.

Transportation of Youth

- ❖ All Adults working with or transporting Youth at the diocesan level *must* complete the **Transporting Youth in a Motor Vehicle** form, which gives permission for a DMV background check to be performed.
- ❖ All Adults working with Youth on the diocesan level *must* abide by the policy of having two or more adults present at all youth gatherings.

- ❖ All Adults working with or transporting Youth at the diocesan level *must* document any auto accident occurring during a youth event, however minor the accident may be.
- ❖ All Adult drivers of Youth at the diocesan level events *must* require all passengers be buckled any time the engine of the vehicle is running.
- ❖ It is highly recommended that any Adult driving a 15-passenger van participate in a training session, offered through most colleges. It is recommended there be no more than 12 people in a 15 passenger van.
- ❖ All Adults should check on the insurance policies (personal and church) regarding their coverage as Adults employed by the church (personal and church).
- ❖ Adults should check into extra liability insurance coverage for Youth mission trips, especially if out of the country.
- ❖ In the event an Adult is to transport one Youth, it is recommended that the Adult record the time he or she picks up the Youth and he or she call the parents at the time of arrival.

Safe Environments: Private Space

- ❖ All Adults working with Youth at the diocesan level *must* abide by the “Two or More Rule.” The “Two or More Rule” is that two or more Adults must be present with Youth. For purpose of the “Two or More Rule” a Young Adult may be counted as one of the Adults.
- ❖ All Adults working with Youth at the diocesan level *must* abide by the “Open Door Policy.” The “Open Door Policy” is that no two people may be unobservable at anytime. An example would be two individuals behind a closed door with no window in the door for easy viewing inside.
- ❖ All Adults working with Youth at the diocesan level *must* monitor and ensure that appropriate body contact is maintained.
 - No lap sitting among participants and/or leaders
 - No wrestling
 - No hugs from behind
 - No body massages
 - No intimate contact
 - No unwanted body contact

Safe Environments, Medical Concerns

- ❖ All Adults working with Youth at the diocesan level *must* read thoroughly before the event all completed youth medical forms. They should be mindful of any food allergies, physical restrictions, disabilities, and/or medications.

- ❖ All Adults working with Youth at the diocesan level **must** take possession of, supervise and administer all medications, both prescription and over the counter. All distribution of medications, prescription or non-prescription, **must** be recorded in a medical log, dated and signed by the Adult administering the medication. Adults should verify that the medication in the container matches the label on the container.
- ❖ All Adults working with Youth at the diocesan level **must** have copies of current (at least yearly) medical forms from each Youth.* These forms **must** be available during every event, even during short outings such as going out for pizza.
- ❖ All Adults working with Youth at the diocesan level **must** have current first aid kits easily accessible during all youth activities.
- ❖ All Adults working with Youth at the diocesan level **must** document all accidents, all questionable behaviors, and all confidential conversations with youth and other adults.
- ❖ All Adults should pre-plan and assess any potential hazards.
- ❖ All Adults should review the fire escape plan for any facility where youth will gather.
- ❖ All Adults should have an emergency plan.
- ❖ Adults working with Youth should ask about their individual parishes' insurance coverage of them while working with youth.
- ❖ It is recommended that all Adults work with their Youth in designing community standards for their group.

The Parishes ...

By January 2006, all parishes in the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia will be expected to have adopted the diocesan Healthy and Wholesome Youth Ministries Policy or have developed their own, which are at least as strict.

- ❖ Parishes **must** select from the parish at least two individuals, who are involved in the recruitment and/or hiring of adults working with youth, to participate in the Healthy and Wholesome Youth Ministries Workshop. These individuals will then be required to lead a shorter training with all the Adults and Young Adults in the parish who work with youth. The training will include the Church Insurance video "Safe Guarding God's Children: Parents and Congregations," and a thorough review of the diocesan Healthy and Wholesome Youth Ministries Policy. Copies of the policy must be given to Adults who work with Youth within the parish. A copy must also be easily accessible to all.
- ❖ Parishes **must** establish procedures for monitoring Adults and Young Adults who work with Youth.

- ❖ Parishes *must* require the following forms to be completed by all Adults working with Youth; these forms should be kept in a confidential location at each individual parish. Should this adult also volunteer with diocesan youth events, copies of these form *must* also be kept in a confidential location at the diocesan office.
 - **Youth Ministry Questionnaire**
 - **A Covenant for Adult Youth Leaders**
 - **Transporting Youth in a Motor Vehicle**
 - **Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check**
 - **Criminal Background Check for all employees (paid)**

- ❖ Parishes *must* review procedures for reporting suspected child abuse with adult leaders. These procedures include:
 - The adult observing possible abuse *must* complete the **Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse**.
 - The observing Adult *must* share this report with his or her priest, senior warden, or bishop. The priest or senior warden *must* share this report with the Bishop, who then *must* report to the diocesan chancellor.

- ❖ Parishes are encouraged to provide and participate in annual workshops (discussions) for Adults working with Youth by parish, convocation, and/or at the diocesan level. These workshops should review and discuss topics related to healthy children and youth ministry. Topics might include: types of child abuse, sexual harassment in youth ministry, medical care in youth ministry, how to talk about sex with youth, etc.

- ❖ Parishes are encouraged to lead their high school age Youth in the “Safeguarding God’s Children,” program, as well as provide opportunity for future programs for youth such as sexual harassment among Youth, sexually transmitted diseases, teen sexuality, etc.