Groundbreaking

A How-To Guide for Building a Comprehensive Youth Ministry Program

This resource is provided through the courtesy of the Archdiocese of Baltimore's Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

This resource has been revised for use as a general youth ministry resource in parish settings

Revisions were made by the NFCYM

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Introduction

Welcome to youth ministry! This is truly one of the most exciting and important areas of ministry in our church today. Like all ministries, youth ministry requires intentional planning in order to be effective.

How to Use This Manual

This manual provides a clear process for developing a parish youth ministry program. *Groundbreaking* is the initial step in building a comprehensive approach to ministry with young people. Once the program is established, the planning team can utilize the Basic Resources Section and further expand the parish youth ministry. *Groundbreaking* enables the planning team to:

- a) create a shared vision of youth ministry
- b) develop a program of ministry to, with, by, and for young people
- c) handle the important issues in the field

This manual should serve as a guide in developing your parish program of youth ministry.

Definition

According to the U.S. Bishops' 1997 document, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, the goals of youth ministry "state what it means for the Catholic community to respond to the needs of young people and to involve young people in sharing their unique gifts with the larger community" (RTV, 9). The three primary goals in our ministry to young people are:

- 1) To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today. We know that young people are seeking. They look for ways to contribute something important to the world. They look for a cause to which they can belong. As a faith community, offering young people the challenge of life as a disciple means providing a spiritually challenging world. It means evangelizing youth and drawing them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Empowering young people means helping them join in service, ministry, and leadership while providing them with meaningful catechesis.
- 2) To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.
 - Young people are striving to be part of a community. They want to feel connected to other young people with whom they will feel safe. As a church, we offer young people community. We help them to become more connected in their own families, in our parishes, and in the wider community including school, and other youth-serving organizations. We help to support families by providing them with resources, programs, and other information. We help youth connect to a network of support by integrating them into the liturgical and pastoral life of the parish community. Building participation in other youth-serving organizations within the community further strengthens this network of support for young people.

3) To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

This time in the life of an adolescent brings dramatic physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual changes. As the body of Christ, we offer youth a place to grow. We offer experiences and opportunities for youth to grow in positive ways, to learn their faith, and use their gifts in service to others. As a community, we use our creativity and resources to respond to youth that are seeking, striving, and growing. We foster this growth through active engagement of youth in the life of our communities. We seek to support the development of healthy, competent, caring, and faith filled youth by addressing their unique developmental, social, and religious needs. By addressing the obstacles and challenges to healthy adolescent development, we hope to foster positive growth and promote Catholic identity.

Components

The response to young peoples' personal and spiritual needs and the call to involve them in the faith community are most effectively done by establishing holistic and comprehensive programs. There are eight fundamental components described in the Renewing the Vision (RTV) document, which provide a framework for youth ministry.

1) Advocacy

"The ministry of advocacy engages the Church to examine its priorities and practices to determine how well young people are integrated into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic community" (RTV, 27).

2) Catechesis

"The ministry of catechesis most effectively promotes the faith development of young and older adolescents when the curriculum is focused on important faith themes drawn from the teachings of the Church and on the developmental needs and life experiences of adolescents" (RTV, 30).

3) Community Life

"The ministry of community life builds an environment of love, support, appreciation for diversity, and judicious acceptance that models Catholic principles; develops meaningful relationships; and nurtures Catholic faith" (RTV, 34).

4) Evangelization

"The ministry of evangelization shares the good news of the reign of God and invites young people to hear about the Word Made Flesh" (RTV, 36).

5) Justice and Service

"The ministry of justice and peace nurtures in young people a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, and in Catholic social teaching; empowers young people to work for justice by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering; and infuses the concepts of justice, peace, and human dignity into all ministry efforts" (RTV, 38).

6) Leadership Development

"The ministry of leadership development calls forth, affirms, and empowers the diverse gifts, talents, and abilities of adults and young people in our faith communities for comprehensive ministry with adolescents" (RTV, 40).

7) Pastoral Care

"The ministry of pastoral care is a compassionate presence in imitation of Jesus' care of people, especially those who were hurting and in need" (RTV, 42).

8) Prayer and Worship

"The ministry of prayer and worship celebrates and deepens young people's relationship with Jesus Christ through the bestowal of grace, communal prayer and liturgical experiences; it awakens their awareness of the spirit at work in their lives; it incorporates young people more fully into the sacramental life of the Church, especially Eucharist; it nurtures the personal prayer life of young people; and it fosters family rituals and prayer" (RTV, 44).

Underlying Assumptions for a Comprehensive Vision

Renewing the Vision encourages integrating parish ministry with young people and their families into the total life of the church, recognizing that the whole community is responsible for this ministry. The following themes of comprehensive ministry ensure that youth ministry utilizes all available resources and is all inclusive:

a) Developmentally Appropriate

"Effective ministry with adolescents provides developmentally appropriate experiences, programs, activities, strategies, resources, content, and processes to address the unique developmental and social needs of young and older adolescents both as individuals and members of families" (RTV, 20).

b) Family Friendly

"Ministry with adolescents recognizes that the family has the primary responsibility for the faith formation of young people and that the parish and Catholic school share in it" (RTV, 21).

c) Intergenerational

"Ministry with adolescents recognizes the importance of the intergenerational faith community in sharing faith and promoting healthy growth in adolescents" (RTV, 22).

d) Multicultural

"Ministry with adolescents is multicultural when it focuses on a specialized ministry to youth of particular racial and ethnic cultures and promotes multicultural awareness among all youths" (RTV, 22).

e) Community-wide Collaboration

"Community collaboration means building partnerships among families, schools, churches, and organizations that mobilize the community in a common effort to build a healthier community life and to promote positive adolescent development" (RTV, 24).

f) Leadership

"Ministry with adolescents mobilizes all of the resources of the faith community in a comprehensive and integrated approach. ...This approach involves a wide diversity of adult and youth leaders in a variety of roles necessary for comprehensive ministry" (RTV, 24).

g) Flexible/Adaptable Programming

"Ministry with adolescents creates flexible and adaptable program structures that address the changing needs and life situations of today's young people and their families within a particular community" (RTV, 25).

Developing youth ministry takes time. It takes time to develop relationships with young people. And it takes time for youth to get the message that the church is really interested and committed to them. It takes a team of dedicated, loving adults who are willing to be models for youth. Youth ministry takes a variety of program activities, formats, and time frames to meet the differing needs and interests of young people.

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Ten Steps in Planning Youth Ministry

The *Groundbreaking* approach to developing youth ministry utilizes a team of interested adults and establishes a structure for assessing the needs of young people, designing appropriate programs as responses to their needs, and fosters an ongoing planning and evaluation process.

Step One: Get the Right People Together

The first step is developing a team for the youth ministry program. The team should include people who can be good adult role models, who are comfortable sharing their faith with youth and who like young people. The team should include a member of the parish staff if possible (pastor, director of religious education, pastoral associate, etc.). The team can also include selected young people who have demonstrated initiative, interest, and leadership abilities. The key is to avoid the "lone ranger" trap. Youth ministry is a team effort! It is also important for someone to serve as the team coordinator. A more formal coordinator can be chosen later, if necessary. In the early planning stages, someone has to facilitate the group and provide leadership. Consider the following:

- a) Who should be on the youth ministry team?
- b) Who will facilitate the team meetings?
- c) Who should serve as coordinator?
- d) How do we gain support of the parish staff?

Step Two: Understand Your Goals for Youth Ministry

The overview of youth ministry presented in the Introduction could be distributed and used as the basis for a team discussion. Be sure to begin each planning session with prayer. Pray for young people and their needs. Take time to pray for the willingness of the parish to welcome young people. The team needs to spend time clarifying their vision of youth ministry by considering the following:

- a) What is our vision of youth ministry?
- b) What do we want to accomplish?
- c) What do we want to provide the youth of our parish?
- d) Does our team have a holistic and comprehensive approach to ministry to young people?

This is a time for building team relationships and developing good communication within the group. The team should also discuss whether the program is for junior high, senior high, or both. This decision will affect the style and type of programs to be developed.

Step Three: Past Programs and the Current Situation

It is important for the team to look at the history of the parish's youth ministry.

- a) What's been done in the past?
- b) What's going on right now?
- c) Do we have adolescent catechesis?
- d) Confirmation programs?
- e) Catholic Scouting?
- f) Athletics?
- g) Do we have a Catholic school?
- h) Have there been problems in the past?
- i) What worked and what did not work?

This step is an opportunity for the team to assess the history of youth ministry in the parish and look at the current situation in terms of ministry to youth. Sometimes it may be necessary to break from past failures by changing the name of your current efforts.

Step Four: Conduct a Needs Assessment

The purpose of the needs assessment is to identify what young people would like to see the parish offer and assess the best times and formats for meetings and activities. Your youth ministry efforts must begin with an understanding of the needs and wants of the youth and their families. This can be done through interviews with select youth, phone calls to parish youth, questionnaires or surveys distributed during or after Mass, or through a town meeting (described in Getting Started: A Town Hall Meeting). The key with the town meeting is to invite a good cross section of parish youth. This can be achieved through personal invitations by phone, flyer, or newsletter (get names and addresses through the parish census). Also use the parish bulletin and pulpit announcements.

- a) What will our team do to assess the needs, interests and concerns of our young people?
- b) Who?
- c) When?
- d) How?

Step Five: Brainstorm Program Activities and Ideas

Based on the needs from the assessment, it is time to generate program ideas. The discussion should use a holistic and comprehensive framework, developing ideas for each of the eight components in youth ministry, described in the Introduction. Prioritize your ideas. Do not try everything at once; do some things very well! Plan for quality activities and do not evaluate solely on the number of participants. Good programs and publicity will attract youth. Go for the short term, immediate successes at first. Then plan for the long term. Do not plan more than your team can actually do.

- a) What ideas do we have for each of the eight components?
- b) What are the top two in each area?
- c) What are our time and personnel limitations?
- d) How can we bolster our team effort?

Step Six: Develop the Ideas into Actual Programs

This step can be accomplished in smaller planning groups of 4-6 adults and youth. Each group could plan one event or activity. Good planning always answers the what, when, where, how, and who questions. (See the sample event planning form in Getting Started.) Plan a variety of program formats, times, and content. Plan activities that youth want. Gather youth ministry resources for planning (see Appendix). Plan well and plan for good publicity. Use flyers in the schools (if allowed), a newsletter sent to each parish teenager, personal phone contacts, the parish bulletin, the parish website, and posters around the parish. Be creative and always overpublicize!

- a) Have we answered all the basic planning questions?
- b) Have we planned for good publicity?
- c) Have we considered refreshments?
- d) How do we respond to positive responses?
- e) How do we respond to negative responses?

Step Seven: Develop a Youth Ministry Calendar

It might be easier to plan in seasonal or three month blocks. Don't forget that the summer is an important time for programming, especially for younger adolescents. In planning, try to achieve a balance of programs among the eight components of comprehensive youth ministry. Check with the parish and local high school calendars, so you are not competing for your teens' time. Also check the diocesan office of youth ministry calendar. There is usually something going on that your young people can attend. It makes for easy planning and early success. You should also touch base with surrounding parishes for activities to which your young people can be invited. It is good for teenagers to see what others are doing and it helps them experience a larger sense of church.

- a) Have we checked the diocesan, parish, and school calendars?
- b) Do we have our activities spread out over the next few months?

Step Eight: Assign Responsibilities and Leaders

It is important to enable young people to take some responsibility for the program activities. Early in the process, however, adults should provide the leadership, if the youth are not ready for the responsibility. Each activity should have a lead agent or co-lead agents with a teen and adult together. This leadership could come from the planning team for that event.

- a) Do we have a planning team for each activity?
- b) Do we have a person assigned to each task?
- c) Have we discussed an appropriate role for youth?
- d) Is the team building confidence in itself by doing positive things for parish youth?
- e) How are young people being included in implementing and leading activities?
- f) How are we praying as a team for each activity?

Step Nine: Develop an Organizational Structure

An organizational structure provides the ongoing leadership and coordination needed for a comprehensive youth ministry program. The structure can vary according to the members and needs of your team. Program committees with youth and adults, a coordinating team, a youth board and adult advisory board are all options for your organization. Use the structure that will work for your team. Also, it is important to determine regular meeting times for the committees, team, or board and to identify the person who will coordinate the organization, set agendas, and facilitate the meetings.

- a) What structure will we use?
- b) How often will our coordinating team meet?
- c) Who will facilitate the team meetings?
- d) Who will take minutes of the meeting?
- e) Who will set the agenda?
- f) How has time for reflection and prayer been incorporated into planning sessions?

Step Ten: Planning and Evaluation Process

As part of your calendar of events, schedule the times when this group will re-assess the situation and plan for the upcoming year. Planning is an ongoing and intentional process and includes opportunities for team building and social times. You might use spring as the time for new needs assessments and program calendaring, and June as time for the annual evaluation. Your planning will begin to incorporate some traditional events (things done every year; e.g., a Christmas social or Lenten Stations of the Cross), spontaneous events (spur of the moment activities; e.g., a trip during a sudden school holiday or a food drive in response to a natural disaster) and a cafeteria approach (variety of activities which allows youth some choice for participation). The team should also begin planning for leadership training for both youth and adult team members.

- a) When will we evaluate our year?
- b) When will we plan for the upcoming year?
- c) What opportunities for youth and adult training are available through the diocese or other means?
- d) Do we need outside consultation from the diocesan youth office in the evaluation process?

Youth Ministry Teams: Important Agenda Items

In addition to the tasks of planning, implementing, and evaluating the youth ministry program, the team must also consider several other important issues that affect both the planning process and the life of the team.

Nurture Community among the Team

Youth ministry requires that the team model the type of community it seeks to establish among young people. Take care to plan time for the team to work at getting to know and understand each other. Perhaps a retreat day just for the team is feasible. Do not be so anxious to get to the actual building of the program that you might overlook this essential step. Times for prayer, community building exercises, and opportunities to enjoy each other's company should be included on the agenda. Even after the team has been established, community building opportunities, especially prayer, should be continued. Remember too, that whenever new members join the team, time must be taken to re-build/re-enforce the team's community.

Youth Protection and Safety Issues

There are certain items dealing with youth protection and safety that should also be addressed with the planning team before each event. Check with the pastor or parish staff about diocesan policies and regulations regarding child and youth protection issues to ensure the safety of young people in your programs.

Volunteers

Check with the pastor or parish staff about the diocesan requirements for applying for volunteer service. Volunteers ought to receive and review a copy of *Diocesan Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth*, and receive and review the Code of Conduct for Church Personnel in their diocese.

If a volunteer will have substantial contact with minors, the following may need to be completed before he/she begins to serve:

- a) application for volunteer service
- b) names of references provided
- c) volunteer criminal history screening consent form
- d) training regarding child abuse and protection of children

For further information on processing volunteers and those having substantial contact with minors, refer to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' 2002 policy statement titled *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

All volunteer members of the parish youth ministry planning team as well as all regular volunteers in the youth ministry program should complete an application for volunteer service.

Transportation Guidelines

All trips that involve transportation must adhere to diocesan and parish policies. It is advisable to consult these policies for the most complete information to ensure a safe trip.

Permission Forms

All activities held outside the parish and all activities that include an overnight require a permission form. An information sheet for the parents/guardians, outlining the program and noting emergency phone numbers should accompany a permission form. Permission forms are intended to:

- a) seek permission for the young person to participate
- b) express the intention of the youth ministry team to provide adequate and responsible supervision
- c) get important information regarding where parents can be reached during activity
- d) get important information regarding medical insurance coverage for the young person
- e) get the parent's permission to obtain medical assistance in the event that the parent cannot be contacted

Note: it is not appropriate to use one permission form for the entire year or even several different types of activities. It may be acceptable for the permission form to cover multiple meetings for the same activity, for example, 4-week Bible study, or 8 week peer ministry training. Check with your diocesan and parish policies for requirements on permission forms. See the sample permission form at the end of this manual.

Guidelines for Volunteer Supervision

Determining the number of adults needed for supervision of adolescents depends on a number of factors: the nature of the activity, the age of the adolescents, and the location of the activity. For starters, in most dioceses all activities require a minimum of two adults, 21 years of age or older. Unless the group being supervised is either all boys or all girls, there must be a chaperone of each gender.

Looking at the ratio of adults responsible for supervision to adolescents, overnight activities require a minimum of one adult for every eight young people. Some activities such as bowling or a dance at the church may allow a greater adult/youth ratio. An activity at an amusement park may require less supervision if the group is high school age as opposed to a group of middle school students. It may be appropriate to provide a constant supervising presence for younger and/or less mature adolescents.

Proper supervision does not always require constant presence. Periodic contact is sufficient in most situations. [Of course this must be balanced by the realization that building relationships between youth and adult leaders requires more than periodic contact.] In cases where risk is greater due to the nature of the experience, constant presence may be appropriate (for example: white water rafting, rock climbing). At all times, youth should be aware of the quickest way of reaching their adult and at no time should youth be unable to do so. It is inappropriate for adults to drink any alcoholic beverages while supervising a youth ministry activity.

Guidelines for Disclosure and Reporting

Volunteers should have a clear understanding of the difference between counseling and guidance. The youth ministry planning team should develop a good list of referrals for counseling and youth at-risk services. Youth ministry coordinators, unless certified as a counselor, are not governed by public laws regarding disclosure. Young people should

understand that a youth minister, either volunteer or professional, is not restricted by law from disclosing information to parents, public authorities, parish staff or counseling services. On the other hand, youth ministers need to respect the trust that a young person exhibits when he or she confides in an adult leader. Some basic guidelines are these:

- a) Always encourage parental involvement in reaching a solution. Parents have the primary responsibility for their children and failure to respect that responsibility can lead to difficulty. Where appropriate, coach a young person on how to approach their parent/guardian. In some instances it may be necessary to accompany a young person when talking with their parents. Interceding for a young person by speaking with their parents before a meeting of the parents and young person is also an option.
- b) Involve a third party to use as a sounding board for your discussions and follow up actions with the young person. Using a third party as a sounding board is especially important in situations where it is inappropriate to contact the parents. Remember that state law requires all child abuse to be reported to the proper authorities.
- c) Be on the lookout for life threatening situations: suicide, substance abuse, runaway, sexual abuse, or other physical harm. Know the appropriate agencies to contact in these emergencies. Youth ministers should be aware of the warning sings of these situations. Failure to respond to a detected life threatening situations may be perceived as negligence.
- d) Encourage professional counseling where appropriate. Be willing to assist the young person in setting up the counseling and getting to the counseling. It is helpful to remain in contact, offering support to the young person while they are participating in the counseling.

Overnight Accommodations

Be sure to check with your diocesan and parish policies for information on overnight trips. Participants should be clear about the restrictions concerning sleeping areas. In general, there should never be mixed gender gatherings in the sleeping areas. Whether you are camping in tents, using a retreat house, or hotel rooms, boys should never be in the girls sleeping area and vice versa. It may be appropriate to restrict any social gatherings in the sleeping areas.

While adults have supervision responsibilities, they should also observe restrictions about being in the sleeping areas of the opposite gender. With the exception of large dormitory sleeping accommodations [at work camp or on pilgrimage], adults and youth should never room or tent together.

While it may be appropriate to have hotel phones restricted from making outside calls, you should not restrict phones from making calls to other rooms. Youth need to be able to call their leader in case of emergency.

Adults should continue supervision after lights out to ensure that young people are safe and where they belong. All-night supervision is not always necessary.

Alcohol Guidelines

It is out of concern for the safety and well being of young people that youth ministry leaders must consult diocesan policies, parish policies and state laws regarding alcohol consumption in youth ministry settings. These policies typically recognize both our responsibilities for the supervision of young persons as well as the statutes of the state.

Alcohol Guidelines for Youth

Youth and young adults under the age of 21 who are under the influence of or consume alcohol at youth ministry events ought to be dismissed from that activity at the first opportunity. The parish/diocese reserves the right to restrict young people at future youth ministry events for underage drinking. When it is appropriate, young people who are in violation of parish/diocesan policies should be encouraged to seek counseling or support.

Suggested Alcohol Guidelines for Adult Youth Ministry Leaders

Adult leaders should not consume alcohol at any Catholic youth ministry youth events. On overnight events, this restriction applies around-the-clock. This restriction applies also during the evening hours after the young people have gone to sleep.

Adult leaders should consider refraining from alcohol consumption whenever they are present with youth in a youth to youth minister relationship. This might include youth ministers who go out for pizza with young people after an event or attending a graduation party at the home of a young person.

Adult leaders who provide or assist youth in obtaining alcohol for their consumption ought to be dismissed immediately and are subject to State laws in this regard.

Adult youth ministry leaders should inform the parents of any young person who has consumed alcohol. Parents have a right to know. This is in keeping with our partnership with parents.

Recommended Alcohol Policies for Parish/School Events with Youth Gatherings that are primarily youth oriented should not serve alcohol. (For example, basketball awards ceremonies.)

Parishes or schools that sponsor events for intergenerational audiences where alcohol will be available:

- a) Have the responsibility to insure that no under-age drinking will be allowed.
- b) Should make sure that parents of youth are aware that alcohol will be available/served.
- c) Should act to insure that responsible drinking is modeled for the young people present.

An underage person should never be placed in the position of tending bar or serving alcohol. Parishes or schools should make it their responsibility to remind parents of the danger of allowing under-age youth to consume alcohol in their home.

Recommended Smoking Policy

Many diocesan policies state that youth under the age of eighteen are not permitted to smoke at diocesan gatherings. No one (young person or adult) is permitted to give, lend, or sell tobacco products to a minor. Any one who sells, loans, or gives tobacco products to a minor is in violation of the law.

Guidelines for Adults Who Smoke

Adults are free to make choices about smoking. Adults are encouraged to consider their sphere of influence, when considering smoking at youth events. This would keep adults in greater solidarity with young people.

Guidelines for All Adults

Parish policies should be clearly stated. Parents sometimes are under the mistaken impression that it is okay for their daughters or sons to smoke, if they grant permission. These influences should help to shape a pastoral response to young people who make the unfortunate decision to smoke at your events. Pastoral sensitivity needs to be applied. Should a young person smoke in an area where smoking is strictly prohibited, this will be seen as a far more serious offense.

Consider the Total Youth Ministry Effect

In planning your parish youth ministry program, you should be thinking larger than youth group. Total parish youth ministry includes many opportunities for youth. Parish sponsored Boy Scout and Girl Scout units are a common alternative for youth activities. Many parishes have athletic associations that sponsor youth teams in diocesan or recreation council leagues. A total parish youth ministry program should have some intentional outreach to parents of adolescents. An evangelization and outreach program that encourages youth participation might be an important part of parish youth ministry. All parishes must offer adolescents opportunities for continued catechesis beyond confirmation preparation.

Adolescent catechechetical efforts can include free standing weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly programs, retreats, lock-ins, Scripture study, and a variety of other models. The youth ministry team should address the faith themes in *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis* (NFCYM, 1986). Principles for designing such efforts can also be found in this document.

Beyond these different program possibilities, a comprehensive parish youth ministry should work with other parish organizations to encourage and enable them to include youth in their ministry. Youth can and should have a role in many different parish programs: liturgy committee, peace and justice committee, outreach and service program, planning teams for the parish activities, lectors, music ministry, vacation Bible school, etc.

Please realize that no parish can start with all of this. But it is important that the vision with which you start includes the big picture. Remember to not limit yourself to thinking that parish youth ministry is the youth group.

Plan for Ongoing Training

Once a team has been assembled, it seems that every parish is anxious to get youth ministry rolling. Certainly, it is important to get some positive things accomplished while the group's energy is high. But do not forget to plan for training. Successful youth ministry never happens by chance. Skilled leaders and committed volunteers require initial and ongoing training. Check with your diocesan office of youth ministry or the equivalent for possible training opportunities. Diocesan, regional, and national conferences also provide opportunities for training.

Plan for Advocacy within the Parish

Remember that not all parishioners agree on the importance of youth ministry. For that reason it is important to keep the parish and the pastor aware of what is happening. Use the parish bulletin to advertise upcoming events and also to thank key leaders for their work on past successes. Make regular reports to the pastor and/or the parish council. If the parish has a newsletter, make sure you include news about the good things that young people in the parish have accomplished. Because there are some adults who have a negative image of adolescents, it is important to help the parish learn about the positive impact that youth have in the community.

Praver

This is not "just one more item" that is important to your youth ministry team meetings. Prayer should be the first item on all meeting agendas. Moreover, prayer brings the team together and establishes a common ground on which to build youth ministry. Take the time to be creative with the prayer experiences. Do not be afraid to spend 15-20 minutes of the meeting in prayer. Utilize different forms of prayer, especially prayer that allows the team to share their faith or their vision of ministry. Prayer works best in bringing the team together when all members of the team take turns in planning the prayer. Utilize your resources. Where possible, the team might come together for Mass prior to the meeting. Be sensitive to the many different styles of prayer that members of the team prefer and make it known that all styles are welcome. Young people will learn to pray better when the adult team models good prayer habits.

Key Roles in Youth Ministry Programming

The previous chapters described the actual process of developing a youth ministry program and some of the important issues that a team must consider. Within this process, however, there are several very important functions and roles that are integral in developing a comprehensive approach to youth ministry. Though these roles have already been mentioned, each requires more specific description.

Coordinator of Youth Ministry

This role is crucial for providing coordination for a parish's youth ministry efforts. This person can be full time or part time, salaried, volunteer, or receive a stipend. It is **not** the function of this person to **do** the entire youth ministry in the parish. It **is** this person's responsibility to **enable** the parish's ministry to young people. Five key areas for the coordinator to focus their attention on include:

- a) Direct Programming
- b) Seasonal Programming
- c) Leadership Development
- d) Sacramental and/or catechetical programs
- e) Administration

Essential tasks of the coordinator include:

- a) Coordinate the parish's ministry to young people
- b) Facilitate the youth ministry team in its efforts
- c) Serve as the liaison with the parish council and/or the pastor

- d) Coordinate the recruitment, training, support, and evaluation of volunteers in the youth ministry program
- e) Provide resources (print, video, training opportunities, diocesan events, etc.)
- f) Advocate for using *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* in the parish

Youth Ministry Team

Youth ministry is a team effort. The team usually consists of committed adults and young people, many of whom are involved in the program as program or activity leaders. Sometimes there is an adult advisory committee that oversees the youth ministry efforts and provides resources and direction. The planning team, itself handles the practical implementation of the program. Sometimes the function of the advisory committee is absorbed into the planning team. Regardless of what model is utilized, the planning team has the following tasks:

- a) Responsible for needs assessments, setting goals and objectives, and designing programmatic responses
- b) Handles the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the designed program
- Watches for holistic programming, which might include the following: including scouting, sports, adolescent catechesis, confirmation, parent involvement and programs, justice and service activities
- d) Fosters the involvement of young people in the life of the parish, including serving on various parish committees and being involved in parish activities

Program and Activity Leaders

These individuals have the responsibility for specific areas or activities within the total youth ministry program. Their responsibilities include:

- a) Direct responsibility for the planning, implementation and evaluation of critical areas within the program, for example: confirmation coordinator, justice and service coordinator, parish sports program director, youth group coordinator, scoutmaster
- b) Direct responsibility for specific activities, for example: catechists, coaches, scout leaders, youth group advisors, trip leaders

Chaperons

This important role is often where the relational dimension of youth ministry is most evident. These individuals provide the necessary supervision and involvement for programs to exist. Their tasks include:

- a) Provide a consistent adult presence at youth ministry activities
- b) Provide appropriate supervision, as outlined by the planning team and/or coordinator
- c) Interact with the young people, developing relationships of respect, trust and care
- d) These are **not** just drivers or guards, their role is to build relationships with the young people

Gathering Young People: Publicity and Outreach

Now that you have a team of adults, a shared vision of youth ministry, some practical information on liability and permission forms, do you really reach out and invite the young people to participate in your programs and activities?

Hospitality

It is important to send out the message that young people are a priority. If your adult team begins to do some of the following, the parish at large and young people in particular will see their church as a welcoming setting in which they have a valued place.

- a) Establish a consistent space (on the parish bulletin board, a table in the entranceway(s) of the church for youth announcements or photos, etc.). Initially, this space could simply advertise a positive statement about youth such as, "We value YOUth..." The statement could be signed with the parish name "the church of ____ (e.g., St. Irenaeus)" and perhaps have signatures of the adult team. A youth section of a parish book rack is also a strategy that says "we're thinking of you." Consider *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, from St. Mary's Press (www.smp.org), and some of the Scriptographic books www.channing-bete.com that Channing L. Bete distributes.
- b) If the parish has a community gathering after a Sunday liturgy (coffee and donuts), make sure that there's plenty of soda and pretzels or chips in addition to the adult fare. Help the parish be aware of ways to say "you are welcome here" to youth.
- c) Advertise the meetings of your planning team as they occur with the same message above communicated. "We value YOUth: The youth ministry team will meet ______. Coming up.... a TOWN MEETING for all youth of the parish to gather, enjoy, and give input on youth activities for our parish. Stay tuned for time and place."

Presence

Although it is important that youth be gathered together at the parish, it is also important that the parishioners be present in the lives of youth. There are a number of ways that simple contact with youth can take place so that the parishioners can convey that they want to be part of young people's lives. Adult team members can organize and coordinate some of the "non-gathered" activities listed below.

- a) Send birthday cards to every young person (young and older adolescent) of the parish. Such cards should have no other agenda than to say happy birthday. (Do not make it a "please come" strategy).
- b) Send newsletters to all youth of the parish.
- c) Be present where young people are: visit high school sports games, drama events, regular school days, any special events and let them know you are present from the parish and wish them well.
- d) Send a special card with a prayer and a good wish at exam time to youth of the parish.
- e) Have a special sensitivity to any youth present at a funeral, a wedding, a baptism, or a celebration in the parish with an appropriate contact and perhaps presence of a youth ministry adult.
- e) Parishioners representing the parish and participating in community sponsored events (community/neighborhood fairs, for example).

f) Advertisements placed in high school play production programs, sports banquet programs, or school newspapers with "Best wishes to....from St. Irenaeus parish. We're rooting for you/are proud of you" (or a similar message).

Youth should be able to expect gathering events such as classes, programs, and social events to be offered by the parish. Gatherings are the means by which the parish chooses to be present in the lives of youth and this communicates an extra touch of particular care. The building up of relational connections is basic to a comprehensive youth ministry. Programs are at the service of quality relationships between faith filled adults and youth. They may communicate the faith story in effective ways and provide the companionship and witness of the Christian community present. Good questions to ask yourself are:

- a) Where are youth in our community? How can we be present there?
- b) Are there any other ways we can be present in the lives of young people in our community?
- c) How do we invite young people into our programs and make them feel welcomed?

Publicity

You want to bring young people out for an event, an assessment, a community builder, a town meeting. How do you get them there? Take a page from how Madison Ave markets. The more ways you get the word out, the more effective the publicity. The more creative the visuals and titles, the better the possibility of the publicity looking attractive to youth.

- **Do not** *only* put an announcement in the parish bulletin.
- **Do not** *only* have an announcement made at liturgies.
- **Do not** *only* put a notice up on your YOUth bulletin board.
- **Do not** *only* circulate flyers at local school sports or social events, or ask schools to post notices.
- **Do not** *only* send out the word through the mail...newsletter, postcard.
- **Do not** *only* send out the word through e-mail.
- **Do not** *only* create an identifiable name and logo to associate with youth ministry or this particular event and put it on all advertisement.
- **Do not** *only* divide up phone numbers and make personal contacts.
- **Do not** *only* ask youth known to you to make contacts with other youth or make the announcements at weekend liturgies.
- **Do not** *only* send out word through regular channels of communication: religious education programs, confirmation programs, parish/regional elementary or Catholic high school.
- **Do not** *only* put at the bottom of youth ministry calendars you distribute or announcements "POST ON REFRIGERATOR OR BULLETIN BOARD".
- **Do not** *only* advertise in "bytes" (sound or visual)—short slogans, recognizable phrases, catchy artwork/video clips.

Positive publicity ideas:

- **Do** all of the above or a healthy predetermined combination . . . and be creative in the ways you send out the word.
- Plan your marketing strategy for each event. Maybe announcements build to a blitz including buttons with the logo on it the week before the event. Remember that marketing strategy is where the media spends much money and time. It is their way of producing initial

- attraction to their product. We, too, need to create an initial attraction to what we have to offer (which has substance as opposed to the created needs of electronic media!)
- Always give plenty of lead time in your publicity to youth and their parents as they plan their schedules. Parents are often youth's means of transportation, so it is also good to consider what else the parish is offering or running that may affect the same target group.

Getting Started: A Town Hall Meeting

Objective

The Town Hall Meeting is a gathering of young people primarily designed to get ideas and input about the activities, events, and programs they would like to see offered in the parish. However, the Town Hall Meeting is also an opportunity to build community among the participants and let them know of the parish's concern, support, and interest in youth.

Description

The format should certainly be adapted to the local situation, but there are several basic elements:

- a) Welcome. As participants arrive, have them sign in with name, address, and phone number, e-mail address, school/grade, and birthday. This information could be on the Town Hall Meeting flyer, if one is used for publicity and registration. (e.g., "Bring this flyer with you").
- b) Prayer: Should incorporate symbols, music, and readings appropriate for young people. The team might decide to use prayer as a closing instead.
- c) One or two ice-breakers and introductions.
- d) Break into groups of 4-6 to brainstorm ideas for activities. The team can use pre-designated name tags, have the group count off by the number of desired small groups, or some other method for breaking into groups. Having a team member in each small group will facilitate the discussion. Begin with the participants sharing their name, school, grade, and favorite hobby. Having a suggested framework for the brainstorming activity would be helpful; e.g., using the eight components of comprehensive Catholic youth ministry: advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship. Groups could identify activities for each component or each group could have one component.
- e) Get back together as an entire group to share ideas. An option would be to prioritize the list of activities.
- f) Post the list of activities on the wall and have the participants sign their name and phone number under the activity they would be interested in helping plan. This is the beginning of planning teams for the chosen activities.
- g) Refreshments, social time, and announce the next activity or gathering.

Materials Needed

- Nametags (with symbol or sticker for breaking into small groups)
- Ice-breaker materials
- Newsprint and markers
- Tape
- Refreshments

Planning Team Tasks

- a) Secure site
- b) Check the parish census and send out personal invitations, put posters in the parish and schools (if feasible), have bulletin announcements and inserts, have the team make personal phone calls. Over-publicize!
- c) Gather the materials for the ice-breakers and small group process.
- d) Decide on the ice-breakers, breaking into small groups, and handling the large group reports.
- e) Secure food and drink. Perhaps some items can be donated.
- f) Assign tasks: registration, publicity, prayer, welcome, ice-breakers, small group process, refreshments, decorations, and clean up.

All Team Members Must Be Welcoming!

Planning team: 6-8 youth and adults.

Planning meetings: 3-4 including evaluation.

Basic Resources

The following are basic resources for your youth ministry library. You should consider adding new resources in all areas of youth ministry as your program develops.

Youth Ministry Websites

While there are many websites that have much to offer in the area of Catholic youth ministry, we recommend the following as a starting point:

Catholic Campaign for Human Development www.usccb.org/cchd/index.htm

Catholic Relief Services www.catholicrelief.org

Center for Ministry Development www.cmdnet.org

Cornerstone Media, Inc., www.cornerstonemedia.org

Disciples Now www.disciplesnow.com

Group Publishing www.grouppublishing.com

National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry www.nfcym.org

Saint Mary's Press www.smp.org

Search Institute www.search.institute.org

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops www.usccb.org

Youth Ministry Network www.ymnetwork.net

Youth Specialties www.youthspecialties.com

Youth Ministry Print Resources

There is a growing wealth of Catholic youth ministry resources. The following, which is by no means a complete list, are offered as a starting point. These publications will assist the youth ministry team as they begin to give shape to comprehensive youth ministry in your parish.

- Carotta, Michael, Sometimes We Dance, Sometimes We Wrestle: Embracing the Spiritual Growth of Adolescents, (Harcourt Religion Publishers, Dubuque, IA, 2001)
- Fields, Doug, Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: Effective Foundations for Transforming the Lives of Young People, (Zondervan Publishing Company, Grand Rapids MI, 1998)
- General Directory for Catechesis, (United States Catholic Conference, Washington, DC, 1998, Publication No. 5-225)
- Mercadante, Frank, *Growing Teen Disciples: Strategies for Really Effective Youth Ministry*, (St. Mary's Press, Winona, MN, 2001, originally published by Ave Marie Press in 1998)
- National Directory for Catechesis, currently awaiting final approval and publication of this document. See the USCCB website for further information about this resource, www.usccb.org.
- NFCYM yearly *Youth Ministry Resource Manual* with sessions, ideas for each month along with tools for the local celebration of World Youth Day in your parish. See the NFCYM website for further information, www.nfcym.org.
- Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Youth Ministry, (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. 1997. English: Publication No. 5-004, Spanish: Publication No. 5-005)
- Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal: Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington DC, 2002, Publication No. 5-540)

The Total Faith Initiative, (St. Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, Winona, MN, 2004)

- Includes resources from Scriptures and Tradition
- 6 youth ministry resource manuals
- 4 catechetical manuals
- A coordinator's manual
- CD-Rom

Youth Works (Center for Ministry Development, Nauguatuck, CT, 1996)

Over 200 programs and activities to create a vibrant ministry with older adolescents. Designed to implement *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, the Catholic bishops' pastoral plan for youth ministry. Contact CMD for further information at www.cmdnet.org

Appendix 1 - Youth Interest Survey

		our opinion! Please take a moment and tell us what days	
are good for your participation in you	ath ministry and the a	activities in which you would be most interested!	
Age:			
Grade:			
School:			
		your participation in programs that the parish would	
sponsor. Check all the days that are			
	☐ Thursday evening		
	☐ Friday evening		
	☐ Saturday afternoon	1	
	☐ Saturday evening		
☐ Wednesday evening			
Please indicate how frequently your	vould narticinate in r	programs that the parish would sponsor. Select all the	
options that are good for you!	удина ранистрате т р	orograms that the parish would sponsor. Select all the	
□ every week □ every other	week once a i	month	
d every week devery other	week unice a i	month	
Youth Ministry Events: Please indi	icate in which of the j	following activities you would participate!	
☐ weekly or bi-weekly youth group		□ parish sports program	
☐ confirmation program		youth retreats or lock-ins	
☐ youth liturgies and prayer experie	nces	service projects (soup kitchens, clothing drives, work	
		camps)	
☐ leadership training programs		☐ social events (camping, ski trips, dances, sports events)	
□ youth newsletter			
diocesan events (Youth Day, Nati	onal Catholic Youth		
		tress, relationships and sexuality, depression)	
Faith Topics: Please indicate all the			
discovering what is unique about		understanding parents and my family	
☐ developing skills for making and keeping relationships ☐ understanding my sexuality			
☐ developing a more personal relationship with Jesus ☐ learning how to make moral decisions			
discovering what it means to belo		developing a personal prayer life	
☐ exploring adult lifestyles (marriag		us life)	
☐ exploring the Bible (Old and New			
discovering what it means to be a			
☐ exploring the Christian response t			
☐ Are there other issues or activities	you'd like to see off	Fered?	
School and neighborhood involven	nent. Please indicate	e in what other activities or groups you are already	
involved.	icht. I tease thatcare	in what other activities of groups you are arready	
□ school sports teams	school clubs o	or organizations	
□ student council	□ school campus ministry		
☐ neighborhood rec/sports leagues	scouting	······································	
☐ 4-H Clubs	□ a job		
other	•		
_ 001	•		
Hobbies, skills, or interests: Please	list your special hob	bies, skills, or interests.	

Thank you for your time in filling out this interest survey. The Youth Ministry Planning Team will use the findings to develop our parish program for young people. So keep watch for future youth ministry events and gatherings!

Appendix 2 - Program Planning Worksheet Event: Time: **Objective:** 1. Planning Team Members Team Leader: Phone: E-mail: Member: Phone: E-mail: Advisor or Adult Contact: Phone: E-mail: 2. Basics Location: Location checked for availability: Who: Projected attendance: Adult chaperones: (who) Projected expenses: (what and how much) Projected income: (admission fee?) Permission Form Needed? Who: 3. Program Outline, Action Steps, and Assignments What: When: Who: 4. Equipment and Materials Needed What:

5. Publicity

What: When: Who:

Who:

6. Refreshments

What: Who: When:

7. Evaluation

How: When: Who:

Appendix 3 - Sample Parental Agreement and Permission Slip

Youth Name:
Home Phone:
Parent Name:
Work Phone:
Cell Phone:
Other # where Parent can be reached:
Address:
City/State/Zip:
In consideration of the wholesome recreation and/or learning experience in which my son/daughter will participate I/we, as parent(s) or guardian(s) of, allow my son/daughter to participate in the
By so permitting my son/daughter to participate, I/we expect reasonable and adequate supervision of my child. It is thus agreed that I/we will hold
and all their agents, servants and employees harmless from all liability and legal proceedings arising from this activity, unless caused by or due to the gross negligence of Corporation, their agents, servants or employees.
I hereby grant permission to, the group's adult advisor in charge, to obtain medical care from a licensed physician, hospital, or medical clinic for my son/daughter in the event that I cannot be reached.
☐ I am covered for hospitalization and medical care under policy # issued by
☐ I do not have medical coverage and assume responsibility for the cost of hospitalization and medical care for my son/daughter.
Witness our hands and seals this day of, 20
Father: (Guardian-Responsible Party)
Mother:(Guardian-Responsible Party)
Add any other medical information concerning medication, allergies, etc.: