



The Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina

Standards For Youth & Children's Ministries

In Our Parishes

The Diocese of East Carolina constantly strives to welcome and protect the wellbeing of all children and youth who participate in activities in our congregations and in the Diocese. As a result of this commitment the Bishop and the Department of Youth Ministries have established the following Standards for Youth and Children's Ministries. Each of these standards is rooted in our Baptismal Covenant (BCP pgs. 305-306) and seeks to exemplify our strong commitment to safeguard the children and youth entrusted to our care.

Our Commitment to Inclusion and Safety

We strive to respect the dignity of every human being. In doing so, we will welcome every child and youth regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, origin, ancestry or religion. We will ensure that basic human needs of food, shelter, sleep and/or clothing at any parish or diocesan event are met. We will do everything in our power to ensure that no staff or attendee of any event, on either a parish level or a diocesan level, is exposed to behavior that is physically, emotionally, spiritually, or sexually abusive or harassing of others.

Screening of Adults working with Children or Youth

Working as a leader among the children and youth in our congregations is a privilege. Individuals desiring to work with children and youth must meet with the rector or a person designated by the rector. In addition youth leaders require a written endorsement by the Rector. In the case of an interim, the Sr. Warden must provide a written endorsement. Congregations are encouraged to institute an appropriate application process for persons seeking to work as leaders of children and youth using a form similar to the application form included among the resource materials published on the web site of the Diocese (see above). Before beginning service, youth workers must provided with a copy of these Standards.

Volunteer adult leaders must have participated regularly in the life of a congregation for at least six months before serving in ministries with youth and children. It is possible for an adult who has been attending a parish for less than six months to volunteer in children's or youth ministry if they meet the following criteria: there has not been a lapse of more than three months between parishes (except for military deployment) and the Rector, or person designated by the Rector, from the previous parish has given their endorsement for this individual to continue in ministry with children and young people.

In addition, individuals who regularly work with children and youth as employees or volunteers must have a background check in accordance with the Diocesan policies prior to beginning service.

Training

All parochial clergy and leaders of Youth & Children and Sunday School teachers (volunteer, staff, lay people or ordained) must complete the Diocese of East Carolina's Sexual Ethics training before commencing any work with Children or Youth.

Operation Standards for Ministries for Programs, with, for and involving Children and Youth.

Team Leadership. A young person should never be left in the primary care of one adult. Teams of adults (male and female) should supervise youth activities. There should always be an adequate ratio between adults and youth. A ratio of five youth to one adult is recommended as a minimum. Adult leadership should reflect young peoples' participation, meaning that if there are male and female youth and children, there needs to be male and female adults. Non-related adults should be paired for team leadership.

For youth events (grades 6-12), adult leaders must be at least 18 years old and at least two years older than the oldest participant. Experienced youth leaders should be included with leaders who are newcomers to youth ministry. At every event at least one adult must be 25 years of age or older.

Overnight Activities. At least two adults (one adult must be 25 or older) must be present at an overnight activity. If this condition is not met, the activity must be canceled. If the participants are both male and female there must be both male and female adult chaperones. It is never appropriate for two people to share a bed or other sleeping space (i.e. sleeping bag) designed for one person, or for a young person and a chaperone to share a bed or sleeping space. Males and females (both youth and adult) should sleep in separate rooms at all events and have separate access to bathroom facilities. It is desirable that youth and adults should have separate sleeping quarters, and, when possible, separate bathing facilities. If separate sleeping quarters for adults and youth are not possible, adults should sleep at a different end or side of the room.

In addition all overnight events should be scheduled to provide participants, youth and adult, with a minimum of 8 hours of sleep.

Transportation. Adult advisors are to avoid transporting youth during a parish or diocesan-sponsored event without being accompanied by another adult. Families are encouraged to arrange their own transportation. No one under the age of 18 should transport any minor during a parish or diocesan-sponsored event. Another acceptable method of transportation would be for vehicles to caravan in close but safe formation. Only in rare circumstances should young people transport other young people. This requires prior written consent from the parents of all of the young people involved.

Volunteer Adult Youth Leaders assume a tremendous amount of liability when asked to drive young people on youth trips and other related activities. Currently, Church Insurance does not provide coverage for individuals driving their personal vehicle when transporting young people for a church related event. Therefore if an accident were to occur, the primary liability would lie with the individual adult youth leader who provided the transportation. It is possible for parishes to obtain a rider in addition to their regular Church Insurance in order to offset this liability. The cost of this rider is the responsibility of the parish.

At no time may any person convicted of a DUI, DWI or the like transport children or young people to, from or during a parish activity or event.

Individual Counseling. At times when one-on-one interactions are needed, an adult leader who is not participating in the one-on-one interaction should be provided advance knowledge of the time and place where such interaction is to take place. One-on-one counseling must happen in a public place where affording privacy yet is in plain view of others (e.g., an office with a window or with the door ajar, or the corner of the youth room or at a local coffee shop). When meeting with a young person one-on-one, youth leaders must tell a clergy person or other supervisor in the parish office who they are meeting with, where they will be meeting and an approximate amount of time. Counseling youth normally should take place in a team context. Where this is not possible, female adults should counsel female youth and male adults should counsel male youth.

If the same leader or team of leaders counsels a young person three times, it must be reported to the Rector, counseling ceased, and a referral to a licensed professional counselor made.

Age-Appropriate Supervision. Although older minor children may assist adults in supervising younger minors, minor children may never be solely entrusted with the care of other minor children.

Open Door Policy. All youth events are to function with an open door policy. Meaning all youth events can be observed by parents, vestry members, or clergy.

Community Expectations. At parish events designed primarily for youth or children there can be:

- No participant or leader in possession of or using alcohol, illegal or illicit drugs, nor any tobacco products.
- Sexual relations. Excessive displays of affection are strongly prohibited: no touching or exposure of the breast, buttocks or genitalia (this includes adult-to-adult, child/youth-to-child/ youth, and adult-to-child/youth behavior)
- No weapons, firearms or fireworks.

Technology. Technology has become an integral part of daily life for both youth and adults. Ever-changing technology allows us new and quicker ways to see, connect and communicate with each other. While it is important to be in communication and to remain connected, there are parameters on how to safely use technology between youth/child to youth/child, youth/child to adult, and adult to youth/child. Communication via technology includes, but is not limited to: E-mail, social networking sites and messages, instant messaging/online chatting, text messaging, phone calling, and video conferencing/chatting.

Appropriate boundaries for adults using technology in youth ministry include but are not limited to: limiting profiles and/or information (including photographs) on social networking sites, using texting and phone calling for the sole purpose of youth ministry business, phone calling and texting during appropriate times of day (ie: not during school hours or after 9 PM), copying and saving all online chatting/instant messaging conversations, and employing similar boundaries as they pertain to other technology resources in youth ministry.

Incident Reporting. A written report must be provided to the rector and the Sr. Warden with respect to any incident where there has been a claim of misconduct or which could give rise to such a claim. The rector or Sr. Warden shall consult with Diocesan officials to determine whether the incident is within the scope of applicable laws that require filing of a report with governmental authorities or has exceeded canonical boundaries in the Title IV Canons.