

# The Anglican Diocese of South Carolina

## Diocesan Events Policy Regarding Personal & Professional Conduct of All Youth Leaders

We live in an age where sexual abuse is a reality in our society and we as the church must deal with this issue taking steps to protect the young people (anyone under the age of 18) that God has entrusted to our care. It is believed this policy will safeguard our youth while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry. The policies below are to be strictly followed by all youth leaders (lay or ordained, volunteer or staff) within the Anglican Diocese of South Carolina in the context of diocesan events.

All Youth Leaders (volunteer, paid, lay or ordained) must have a cleared background check and complete the "Safeguarding God's Children" training. This must be renewed every two years.

All those who work with youth shall do their best to pattern their lives in accordance with the teachings of Christ, striving in all things to be wholesome examples to God's people. Thus it is not appropriate to have people working in youth ministry whose lifestyle is an affront to the Gospel, for instance, anyone known to be perpetrating fraud, a malicious gossip or someone known to be engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage.

### **Team Leadership**

A young person should never be left in the primary care of one adult. Teams of adults (male and female) should supervise all youth activities. This can protect youth and the adults from false accusations and questionable situations. Furthermore, it diffuses the possibility of an adult thriving on the dependency of the youth as well as an adult having excessive influence over individual youth. There should always be an adequate ratio between Adults and youth. A ratio of five youth to one adult for middle school events and eight to one for high school events is recommended as a minimum. (Always having at least two adults at a youth event.)

### **Overnight Activities**

A minimum of two adults should be present at an overnight activity. If the participants are both male and female the adult leaders must be both male and female. If these conditions are not met, the activity must be cancelled. It is never appropriate for an adult youth leader who is not a family member to share a bed with a youth. Males and females (both youth and adult) should sleep in separate rooms at all events and have separate access to bathroom facilities. Experienced adult youth leaders are to be included with adults that are newcomers to youth ministry.

### **Transportation**

Avoid dropping off and/or picking up youth without being accompanied by another adult. Encourage families to arrange their own transportation where appropriate. No youth leader should be driving alone with only one young person to any diocesan event or meeting. Youth Commission is not an exception to this.

### **Individual Pastoral Care**

At times when one on one interactions are needed, notify another adult of the place of consultation and with whom you are meeting. Try to counsel in a public place such as a corner of the youth room where you can talk privately but are still in plain view of others. Guard yourself against seclusion. Make every attempt to have female adults care for female youth and male adults care for male youth. A more favourable option is team care, a male and female adult team caring for an individual youth. Many times in working with youth, issues of abuse, alcoholism, neglect and such are raised. We need to be aware of these issues and be ready to refer the youth who have these issues to qualified

professionals. We also need to be sure that we are following the legal guidelines the State of South Carolina has for reporting instances of abuse, neglect or any criminal actions.

### **Age Appropriate Supervision**

It is not allowed to leave older minors responsible for the care of younger youth. Older youth such as youth commission can assist in supervision but must not be solely responsible. An adult's presence is required.

### **Gifts**

All adult youth Leaders are to refrain from giving personal gifts or money privately to youth without first notifying the parents and the youth ministry supervisor or clergy, remembering that gifts can be easily misinterpreted.

### **Dress**

All youth at Diocesan events should dress appropriately. We highly discourage youth wearing provocative clothing and swimsuits as well as advertising for tobacco or alcohol products. It is the task of youth leaders to enforce a proper standard at events so as to not offend or cause others to stumble.

### **Sleep**

All diocesan youth events must provide 8 hours of scheduled time for sleep on all overnight events.

### **Supervision and Communication**

The youth leaders must meet on a regular basis throughout diocesan events to openly discuss problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings and issues that interfere with youth ministry efforts.

### **Parish Policies**

It is expected that each parish youth ministry should have it's own sexual misconduct policy consistent with the diocesan policy. All youth leaders who attend Diocesan events must be in agreement with that policy including the guidelines listed below.

No adult youth leader is to date or be romantically or sexually involved with any minor youth. Sexual misconduct or allegations of such can be devastating to the parties involved and can lead to civil action as well as felony conviction and imprisonment.

Screening of adult youth leaders is mandatory. An interview with church leaders, the checking of references, and even a trial period are normative. Any adult with prior incidents of sexual child abuse may not be used in any capacity of a youth ministry program.

Parish policies should be reviewed regularly by youth leaders and as a condition of working with the youth. A copy of these policies should be signed by all youth leaders acknowledging their understanding and compliance with these policies. This should be kept on file at the church.