

Code of Ethics for Youth Ministry Leaders

The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry has developed the following code of ethics for youth ministry leaders. The Archdiocese of New York has adapted this code. The code is for youth ministry leaders regardless of employment status. This code is to be used in conjunction with existing archdiocesan policies, protocols or codes.

Professional Ethical Obligations

- I. Ministerial Role – Youth ministry leaders:
 - a. Work collaboratively with the pastor (and/or other supervisors) and associates in ministry.
 - b. Faithfully represent the teachings of the Catholic Church with integrity in word and action.
 - c. Are competent and receive education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities (§ 231, Code of Canon Law).
 - d. Respect the diversity of spiritualities in the faith community and will not make their personal form of spirituality normative.
- II. Inclusion – Youth ministry leaders:
 - a. Recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from behaviors or words that are disrespectful of anyone or any group.
 - b. Serve all people without regard to sex, creed, national origin, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, immigration status or political beliefs.
 - c. Ensure all persons have access to the resources, services, and opportunities they require with particular regard for persons with special needs or disabilities.
 - d. Exercise intercultural competency in their ministries.
- III. Accountability – Youth ministry leaders:
 - a. Are accountable to the pastor or other duly appointed representative, under the authority of the archbishop.
 - b. Are called to serve the faith community, carrying out their ministerial functions “...conscientiously, zealously, and diligently” (§ 231, Code of Canon Law).
 - c. Exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding the fiscal matters placed in their trust.
 - d. Upon having reasonable cause to suspect abuse of a minor, must notify the appropriate civil authorities, including law enforcement, the local District Attorney’s Office and/or the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, as well as church leadership responsible for responding to alleged abuse, including either the director of the Safe Environment Office or the general counsel of the Office of Legal Affairs, in accordance with civil law, ecclesial law and the archdiocesan Policy on Sexual Misconduct.
- IV. Confidentiality – Youth ministry leaders:
 - a. Respect confidentiality, yet are not held to confidentiality in the same way as ordained ministers and licensed, certified counselors.
 - b. Adhere to civil and ecclesial law concerning the reporting of neglect and abuse or when physical harm could come to another person. There is no confidentiality where there is a reasonable suspicion that abuse of a minor is, has or will occur.
 - c. Support the rights and roles of parents while ministering to the needs and concerns of their children.
- V. Conduct – Youth ministry leaders:
 - a. Know that they have considerable personal power because of their ministerial position. Therefore, they will sustain respectful ministerial relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power.
 - b. Maintain appropriate professional boundaries (e.g., physical, sexual, spiritual, relational and emotional). Romantic, dating or sexual relationships between a youth ministry leader and any youth is inappropriate, unethical, illegal and impermissible.
 - c. Shall exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal

integrity reflective of the Gospel and will avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

- d. Shall not use alcohol while supervising youth; shall never use illicit substances; and shall never provide alcohol or illicit substances to youth.
 - e. Shall not share, show, watch or discuss any sexually suggestive materials, including pornographic videos and images, with minors.
- VI. Referrals and Intervention – Youth ministry leaders:
 - a. Know the signs of neglect and physical, sexual and psychological abuse.
 - i. Indicators of physical abuse can include: injuries to the eyes or both sides of the head or body, frequently appearing injuries such as bruises, cuts and/or burns, especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause. These may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns or impressions of other instruments; destructive, aggressive or disruptive behavior; passive, withdrawn or emotionless behavior; and fear of going home or fear of parent(s).
 - ii. Indicators of sexual abuse can include: symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases; injury to genital area; difficulty and/or pain when sitting or walking; sexually suggestive, inappropriate or promiscuous behavior or verbalization; expressing age-inappropriate knowledge of sexual relations; and sexual victimization of other children.
 - iii. Indicators of maltreatment can include: obvious malnourishment, listlessness or fatigue; stealing or begging for food; lack of personal care – poor personal hygiene, torn and/or dirty clothes; untreated need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention; frequent absence from or tardiness to school; and child inappropriately left unattended or without supervision.
 - b. Know their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.
 - VII. Parish/Diocesan Policies – Youth ministry leaders:
 - a. Know of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational and/or archdiocesan policies, with special attention to sexual misconduct, safe environment, risk management, safety, transportation, parental permission and medical emergency policies.

I have read and understand the above code of ethics and commit to uphold this code in my ministry.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

References

- Coriden, J., Green, T. & Heinstschel, D, Editors, (1985). *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*. The Canon Law Society of America. New York: Paulist Press.
- Gula, Richard (1996). *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*. New York: Paulist Press.
- National Association for Lay Ministry Standards Code of Ethics. Downloaded from the Internet on October 16, 2002, at www.nalm.org/standards.html.
- National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry’s Organizational Code of Conduct. March 2000. NALM, NCCL, and NFCYM (September 29, 2002). *Common Competency Project Core Certification Standards and Competencies*. Draft 3.
- Copyright ©2008 by the NFCYM, 415 Michigan Avenue NE, Suite 40, Washington DC 20017. All rights reserved. The NFCYM grants permission to Catholic dioceses and parishes to reproduce and distribute this document for educational purposes. Approved by the NFCYM membership February 2008. Adapted with permission July 2019.