YOUTH RETREAT RESOURCE MANUAL

Practical tools, guidelines, principles and policies for youth retreat providers of the Diocese of Amarillo.

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INTRODUCTION

Why This Manual?

Youth retreats have become a central feature of most youth ministry and campus ministry programs in the Diocese of Amarillo. The reason for this is simple: they are effective! There is perhaps no other single youth ministry program that yields more profound and long-lasting results. Consider these findings in the National Study of Youth and Religion: Analysis of the Population of Catholic Teenagers and their Parents (December 2004) “Young people who have participated in at least one retreat, rally, conference, mission trip, or extended service project report significant increases in: the closeness they feel to God, the degree of importance faith has in their daily lives, and how often they read the Bible alone.”

And the word is out: since they are so effective, more adult youthworkers are planning and implementing youth retreats than ever before. In many of our parishes, youth ministers regularly plan multiple retreats during a given year, addressing the unique needs of younger and older adolescents, leadership groups, youth with special needs, etc. Confirmation programs now normally feature one- or two-day retreats. Many parochial high schools have moved from one overnight retreat during a student’s four-year career to at least one retreat per year for all students. Some high schools offer an array of retreat choices. Many elementary schools now include retreats or multi-day camp experiences for their students.

In short, retreat ministry has grown dramatically here in our diocese through the past decade or so. This is a wonderful development! More young people than ever before have the opportunity to experience a variety of retreats through their parishes, elementary and high schools. And more adults than ever are finding themselves in the role of retreat coordinators, responsible for conceiving, planning and implementing an array of retreat experiences for young people. It is to assist these adult leaders that this manual was written.

This manual is intended to offer necessary guidance and practical assistance to the growing numbers of adult youth workers who are responsible for making youth retreats happen in the parishes and schools of the Diocese of Amarillo.

The manual is comprehensive: it attempts to provide detailed information about every dimension of youth retreat planning and leadership. It is strongly recommended that those responsible for developing and coordinating retreat programs take the time to read the entire manual, in order to ensure a comprehensive picture of all the essential pieces. The manual may also be used as a regular reference; the detailed table of contents will assist retreat leaders in finding relevant information quickly and easily. Parishes, schools and other institutions of the Diocese of Amarillo are permitted to photocopy materials in the manual for use in any stage of retreat program development.

Youth Retreat Ministry: Emerging Critical Issues

The explosive development of youth retreat ministry has led to certain critical issues. This manual attempts to address these issues:

Critical Issue #1: Youth retreats need to contribute to a systematic process of faith formation within the comprehensive youth ministry of a parish or school.

Since many parishes and schools are currently offering multiple retreat experiences for their young people, it has become essential that adult retreat coordinators examine how these retreat experiences (a) connect with and build upon one another -- and other ministerial/catechetical experiences -- in a sequence that makes sound developmental sense; (b) in a parish - are integrated into the various catechetical and ministry goals of the broader youth ministry; (c) in a school - are integrated into the various catechetical and ministry goals of campus ministry and theology/religion department; (d) Meet the needs of young people as they mature socially, emotionally, morally and in faith.

Critical Issue #2: The need for a variety of retreat approaches, models and methods.
Clearly, no single retreat model can meet the broad spectrum of developmental needs across the span of adolescence. Adult retreat coordinators therefore must possess the ability to adapt models that they have inherited and to design new models in order to meet the changing pastoral and catechetical needs of young people. New models necessitate new methods as variety becomes the order of the day.

**Critical Issue #3: The need for trained and competent adult leadership.**
If we have more and varied retreats, we will need adults who are broadly competent in youth retreat ministry to design and lead them. Since retreats typically involve faith sharing, self-disclosure, complex group dynamics, group and individual prayer, simulation activities, etc., they require a specialized set of skills that are unique from those of teachers, counselors or coaches: ministry skills. Thus, those adults who design and lead youth retreats require special training and preparation.

**Critical Issue #4: The need for irreproachable standards of quality and ethics.**
Those who develop and implement youth retreats need to minister out of the highest standards of quality and ethical behavior. Stories of poorly-led retreats typically mention all or some of the following: poorly chosen retreat models and methods; sleep deprivation or emotional manipulation; lapses in adult supervision or behavior; unclear or unrealistic expectations; or too few or poorly prepared chaperons. It is important to note that these are adult problems. It is vitally important that our youth retreats, because they so effectively touch the hearts of young people, are designed and led with the utmost care to protect and nurture those hearts. Our youth deserve no less.

This manual responds to these critical issues by establishing under a single cover a set of clear, imminently practical, comprehensive guidelines for youth retreat ministry in the Diocese of Amarillo.

**Contents of the Manual**

The manual is organized around practical steps to develop retreats within the context of a comprehensive youth ministry in a parish or school. Following are a number of appendices containing further guidelines, principles, policies and practical tools.

**The Eight Steps of Effective Retreat Planning**

The main section of the manual includes a comprehensive planning process that may be utilized in parish or school settings:

- **Step One.** Creating Your Master Plan
- **Step Two.** Choosing and Contracting with Facilities
- **Step Three.** Developing Your Retreat Team
- **Step Four.** Developing Your Retreat Design
- **Step Five.** Preparing for Prayer and Worship
- **Step Six.** Involving the Community: Families, Parish and School
- **Step Seven.** Making Practical Preparations
- **Step Eight.** Evaluation and Follow-up
Appendices

This section includes:

- Guiding principles for designing retreats
- Sample retreats
- Sample retreat activities
- Sample letters and forms
- Retreat facilities guide
- Contracting with a retreat team leader
- Competencies for members of the retreat team
- The Diocese of Amarillo Safe Environment Policy
- Diocesan policies and guidelines
- An annotated bibliography

Other Retreat Resources

In addition to this manual, the Office of Youth Ministry has many other resources to assist adult leaders in developing their youth retreats. Our trained professional staff, with decades of youth retreat experience to draw upon, is but a phone call away. Our youth ministry libraries contain an array of written resources on youth retreats -- with literally thousands of practical activities and ideas. Videos and music are also available. (Note: see the annotated bibliography in the appendices for a sampling of these resources).

The Office of Youth Ministry is dedicated to ensuring that adult retreat leaders have the resources and training they need to provide quality retreat experiences for young people. This manual is a major contribution to that effort. We are proud and happy to make it available to our parishes and schools.
CHECKLIST FOR RETREAT PLANNING

Following is a reproducible checklist and overview of the manual to use as a convenient reference guide to mark your progress as you develop youth retreats in your parish or school:

The Eight Steps of the Planning Process

Step One. Creating Your Master Plan (p. 5 )
Step Two. Choosing and Contracting With Facilities (p. 15 )
Step Three. Developing Your Retreat Team (p. 17 )
Step Four. Developing Your Retreat Design (p. 25 )
Step Five. Preparing for Prayer and Worship (p. 37)
Step Six. Involving the Community: Families, Parish and School (p. 53)
Step Seven. Making Practical Preparations (p. 55)
Step Eight. Evaluation and Follow-up (p. 61 )
STEP ONE. CREATING YOUR MASTER PLAN

Retreats provide the opportunity for youth to experience and celebrate their faith in a very direct way. Retreats are most effective when they are part of a comprehensive parish or school ministry to, with, by and for youth. This section presents a rationale for youth retreats, followed by some basic models and some suggestions for how retreats might be used within a full-year youth ministry or Catholic school campus ministry program.

Youth Retreats Within Comprehensive Youth Ministry in the Parish or School

Retreats Within Comprehensive Youth Ministry. In their landmark document *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (NCCB, 1997), the U.S. Bishops call for a holistic approach to our church’s mission with youth -- an approach that is often referred to as “Comprehensive Youth Ministry.” Comprehensive youth ministry strives for these goals:

1. **Youth ministry works to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.**

2. **Youth ministry seeks to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the faith community.**

3. **Ministry with adolescents empowers young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.**

We are to accomplish these goals by means of all the resources at the disposal of the faith community: “The comprehensive framework for ministry with adolescents is designed to utilize each of the Church’s ministries -- advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship -- in an integrated approach to achieving the three goals of ministry with adolescents...” (Renewing the Vision, p. 20).

Retreats can be especially effective because they integrate many of these different ministries in a single program, for example, a typical overnight retreat may include:

- ice-breakers and social time (Social)
- input and sharing (Catechesis);
- prayer and sacraments (Spirituality)
- life reflection and opportunities to talk to trained pastoral guides (Guidance-Healing).
- trained peer ministers (Enablement)

*As effective as they can be*, retreats should be but one ingredient of a comprehensive youth ministry effort in a parish or school. As such, they need to be integrated into a broader scheme of service opportunities, ongoing systematic catechesis, leadership development, prayer and liturgy, etc.

**Scriptural Basis.** The importance of a "sacred time apart" is reflected in Scriptures. Jesus spent time in the desert to pray and reflect on his life and mission. Young people today are in great need of time to withdraw from their frenetic schedules in order to reflect on life questions, to learn to pray, to develop a sense of relationship with God and the faith community, and to establish their own sense of mission and discipleship. Retreats can provide these opportunities.

**Focus on Faith Formation and Spirituality.** Regularly scheduled opportunities for retreats and days of reflection should be part of every quality youth ministry and campus ministry. A well-prepared retreat provides the opportunity for young people to reflect upon and experience a new or deeper sense of faith.
Retreats can allow time to review and renew spiritual values and come to a re-awakened sense of personal and communal spirituality.

**Planning for Retreats Within the Comprehensive Youth Ministry of the Parish or School**

Retreats are most effective when they are part of an ongoing comprehensive youth ministry that includes social activities, religious education, opportunities for service, ministry to youth in their families, and involvement in the ministries of the faith community. An *annual* plan is best, both because it gives teens a range of options and because it can involve a variety of people doing a smaller number of tasks. In planning and preparing a plan for retreats within the context of Comprehensive Youth Ministry, it is helpful to consider the following basic questions:

**WHO ... will attend and who will facilitate the retreats?**
- Are there retreats for younger adolescents? Older adolescents? Young Adults? Families?
- Are there retreats offered for your youth ministry/campus ministry volunteers?
- Are a variety of persons involved in planning, participating in and evaluating the retreats?
- Are other members of the parish or school staff included in a variety of roles?

**WHEN ... are the retreats scheduled?**
- Have you checked the parish or school calendar for important dates and events?
- Have you checked high school calendars for homecomings, test periods, sports events, etc.?
- When are the best times for family events in your community?
- When are the most appropriate retreat times for particular groups such as seniors, early adolescents, Confirmation candidates, other different grade levels?
- Are there multiple opportunities for individuals to participate throughout the year?

**WHY ... will these retreats be held?**
- How will these retreats fit into the total youth ministry picture?
- How do these retreats reflect the mission of the school?
- What current issues and events are having an impact on youth? How could a retreat be helpful in responding to those needs?
- Which developmental needs will the retreats try to address?
- How will these retreats build on the past retreat experiences of the participants?

**WHAT ... will be the design and focus of the retreats?**
- What faith themes or other content areas need to be addressed?
- What retreat models are most appropriate for each group?
- Does the overall program provide for a variety of retreat experiences for each age group?
- What new designs will be tried or adapted this year?

**WHERE ... will retreats be held?**
- Is there a benefit to conducting the retreat at school or church facilities?
- Is there a desire or need to conduct the retreat away from the school or parish?
- Have you consulted the “Retreat Facilities Guide” in Appendix.E to guide you in selecting the facility which would best accommodate your groups needs and budget?
- If you choose an off-site facility have you factored in the transportation needs into your plan?
Formats and Styles of Retreats

Retreats can be created in a variety of formats and styles. We know that youth have a variety of spiritual needs. In order to meet those needs, it is important to consider a variety of retreat formats and styles within an annual youth ministry or campus ministry plan. Here are descriptions of a number of common retreat styles and formats. Each is adaptable to various groups and purposes.

Typical Retreat Formats:

Multi-day Retreat Away. This is a common youth retreat format. Its main advantage is that participants are away from their normal routines and environment. Living together creates a sense of community that cannot be established in shorter format retreats on site. Overnight retreats cost more for lodging and transportation, and require more communication with parents. These are typically done Friday-Sunday in parishes; in school settings, during weekdays. Some schools are opting for retreats during summer vacation so as to reduce the impact of multi-day retreats on class schedules, studies, testing, etc.

Day/Afternoon/Evening of Reflection. Short format retreats can be accomplished in an afternoon, evening, or full day either on site or at another location. The shorter time frame can be an advantage if scheduling is difficult, especially at very busy times of the year. However, it isn’t possible to develop content or process as much within the shorter time frame; also there are likely to be more local distractions.

Night into Day Retreat. A variation on the weekend retreat model is to stay only one night and continue until dinner time the next day (e.g. Friday night into Saturday; week night into a school holiday; Saturday into Sunday; Sunday night into Monday.). The shorter duration is easier to schedule while retaining the benefits of going away and community building. Disadvantages include transportation and lodging costs. Also, scheduling a retreat on a weekday can make it more difficult to find adult leaders.

Immersion Experiences. Week-long or multiple-week experiences are a format often used for service learning or leadership training retreats. The length allows for greater depth and focus, but obviously requires significantly more preparation. Usually this format involves fund-raising and other preparation time ahead of the actual experience, therefore demanding greater commitment from participants. The intensity of this retreat format also tends to surface other issues in participants--necessitating a more experienced retreat team leader and/or team and plans for referral or follow-up.

Lock-in. This is a popular retreat format. A lock-in is usually an all night retreat at a parish or school facility, often with no sleep involved. This format attracts youth because of its novelty and uses a time frame when most youth are available. Its disadvantage is that youth are sent home exhausted the next day, unable to be productive members of the family.

Typical Retreat Styles

Theme-Based Retreat. Retreats are often formed around a particular theme that relates to a specific issue or need of the target group. This style is frequently used for recurring or annual retreats for the same or a similar group. (e.g. The theme for this year’s senior retreat is “Discovering the Light Within,” etc.). The theme can be an advantage for planning and focus, but can also limit creativity if a flexible attitude doesn’t prevail. This retreat style is particularly effective when young people are involved in the planning or direction of the retreat.
**Leader Training Retreat.** The focus of this style of retreat is skills-building in addition to personal reflection. Learning experiences are placed in a “retreat-like” format, whether on-site or at another location. This dual purpose can be confusing to participants who may not expect to “work” on a retreat. However, connecting leadership issues with faith development can provide a powerful and effective mix.

**Intergenerational/Family Retreat.** Creating a retreat for multiple age groups can be tricky and requires attention to the variety of developmental needs within the group. At the same time, significant learning and sharing can occur in this style of retreat. There is a growing need for these types of retreats which allow participants to hear a variety of perspectives, spend time with one another, share stories and faith with parents and siblings, thus enhancing family life.

**Conversion/Witness Retreat.** A number of popular retreat models such as Kairos, TEC (Teens Encounter Christ), SEARCH (Search for Christian Maturity), COR, etc. involve a retreat style based on witness talks and related activities. These retreats are focused more directly on bringing about a faith conversion in the participants. They are very intense experiences and are generally not recommended until at least the latter half of the Sophomore year or for those who have little desire to be there. In addition, offering this style retreat in Senior year does not allow adequate time to offer necessary follow-up experiences. Integral to the conversion retreat experience is the opportunity to assist the participants in their journey of faith beyond the weekend. It is important that there is adequate time (a year or more) to allow the participants to stabilize their commitment and move into a solidly-owned faith. This style of retreat requires a well-prepared team and retreat team leader. Also, these retreats can potentially develop patterns of manipulative behavior when the focus becomes emotions rather than faith.

**Prayer/Reflection Directed Retreat.** This is a more traditional style of retreat focused more on individuals than a group. A directed retreat may involve some group presentations or sharing but often has the bulk of time allotted to personal prayer and reflection by the participants. This style assumes a more developed faith/prayer life of participants. Length can vary. These retreats can be held on-site or at another location.

**Social/Recreational Event and Reflection.** Some retreats combine prayer and social or recreational events such as a trip to a theme park, a sports event, etc. with periods of time for reflection. This is a more limited style of retreat but it can be very effective with younger adolescents and those less experienced in leading retreats. The primary focus is the social activity, while reflection is secondary which limits the nature of its retreat-like dimensions.

**Social Action/Service Learning.** Service activities, advocacy work, and other actions for justice and peace can be combined with time for reflection. Length can vary from an afternoon to more than a week depending on the nature of the activity. Participants are led through a process of service activity and guided reflection. Typically, models reflect the “Pastoral Circle” methodology; consequently, these retreats require a skilled and experienced leader or team.
Who Plans the Calendar?

Many parishes and schools have existing groups who might take on the responsibility of planning the annual calendar of retreats; for instance:

- High school campus ministry team
- Parish youth ministry core team
- Parish youth commission or board

It is important to note that members of such groups will not necessarily design or lead particular retreats. Rather, their task is to establish a retreat calendar by assessing needs, scheduling retreats and identifying specific purposes and objectives for each retreat. In a school setting, such a group may plan the retreat program for the next academic year during a late winter planning session. In parishes, youth ministry planning teams often establish a similar calendar of retreats in the spring or early summer for the following academic year. In any case, someone must take responsibility for long-range planning because retreats require so much advance preparation.

In the retreat planning process, there are two important, and very different, leadership roles:

**Retreat Coordinator** –

1. The person responsible for the overall development of an annual plan for youth retreats in a parish or school.
2. Normally facilitates the group that develops the annual retreat plan, including purposes and objectives for each retreat.
3. Ensures that retreats “fit” into the comprehensive youth ministry efforts of the parish or school.
4. May or may not actually lead any given retreat.
5. Due to their particular expertise, is responsible for team development.

**Retreat Team Leader** –

1. Ensures that Diocesan policies and good ethical/pastoral ministry practices are in effect throughout a retreat
2. Convenes and leads team meetings during a retreat
3. Is the principal spokesperson on retreat (i.e., making announcements, segues, etc.; also interfacing with facilities people)
4. Manages the segments of the retreat so as to stay on schedule
5. Negotiates and changes elements of the retreat model as necessary to stay on schedule and/or better meet the needs of participants
6. Problem-solves, troubleshoots and manages conflict as necessary (e.g., discipline/rules infractions, facilities issues, team misunderstandings/conflict, etc.)
7. Monitors quality control, intervening as warranted when elements of a retreat – talks, small groups, prayer services – don’t go as anticipated.

If your parish or school does not already have a group that can take on the responsibility for developing an annual retreat calendar, you will need to name a Retreat Coordinator and gather a Retreat Development Committee. Members should include persons who are familiar with youth retreats, with the faith community and with young people. Youth ministry or campus ministry volunteers, parents, high school teachers and counselors would form a good core. Also consider one or two recent high school graduates for their insights into both youth and young adult issues. A good Retreat Development Committee will also include a healthy representation of young people who have demonstrated leadership with their peers.

**Assessing Needs and Target Groups**

The first task of those responsible for developing the retreat calendar is to look at what current issues and
needs are affecting teens and their families. This process can be formal (surveys, questionnaires, etc.) or informal (discussion, newsprint process, etc.). The outcome of this process is to identify guiding themes for the year’s retreats. For example, suppose there recently had been a number of violent incidents among youth in the community and those incidents had different effects on younger and older teens. Younger teens seemed to be more concerned about their personal safety, whereas the older teens seemed to be losing hope that anything might ever change. In listening to and responding to these emerging needs, the Retreat Development Committee might plan special retreats, or recommend adapting retreats already scheduled.

The conclusion: the annual *Sexuality Retreat for Sophomores* might place a special emphasis on healing for victims of physical and sexual abuse; the *Confirmation Retreat* might place a focus on the role of the Church as peacemaker; and a special *November Remember* Evening of Reflection for all teens and their families be held on All Souls Day when the parish will remember all those in the community who experienced violence in the past year.

### Establishing an Overall Purpose for Each Retreat.

The group that is responsible for establishing the annual retreat calendar should also establish a clear set of purpose(s) and objectives for each retreat to pass on to the retreat team leaders and retreat teams. Unless they know what each retreat is supposed to accomplish, how will they know how to best design the retreat, or evaluate if the retreat has been successful? Unfortunately, retreats are often conducted without clear purposes. Establishing a purpose for each retreat answers the basic question, “*Why have this retreat?*” Every retreat has the potential for a variety of outcomes. By stating your purpose(s) clearly you’ll have a better chance of choosing objectives, content and activities which will help you accomplish it. You’ll also have clear criteria for evaluation.

In developing a clear notion of each retreat’s purpose(s), the following should be considered:

- What are the unique needs of the potential participants?
- How does this retreat fit into our overall plan for ministry/catechesis?
- What are some of the “givens” of the retreat, (i.e. the length of time available, the characteristics of the basic retreat model, the most likely facility, the strengths and personality of the retreat team leader, etc.)?

It's also important to consider what can be accomplished in a retreat setting. For instance, a single retreat cannot replace a number of community-building efforts over an extended period of time. However, a retreat *may well* break down some barriers between some of the cliques in the parish or school.

Sometimes a retreat will accomplish things you never anticipate. For example, the stated purpose of the *Training Christian Leaders* (TCL) program is to develop servant leadership skills in youth so that they can better contribute to their parishes and schools. However, TCL often results in better communication between the participants and their parents. This occurs because of the program’s emphasis on good listening and communication skills. Yet it would be a mistake to set “better parent-teen communication” as the primary *purpose* of TCL, since that would limit the kinds of leadership skills to be presented. Establishing a clear purpose for a retreat enables you to review the outcomes and evaluate whether the retreat design is on target. If your results are consistently unpredictable, you may need to restate the retreat’s purpose.

### Naming Specific Objectives for Each Retreat

Once you have identified a retreat’s purpose(s), you can name specific objectives which you hope to accomplish. Again, these should be measurable outcomes which you can evaluate at the end of the retreat. Be sure to consider pre-retreat and post-retreat activities which will allow you to meet these objectives.
For example:

**EXAMPLE: Confirmation Retreat Purpose and Objectives**

**Purposes:** To conclude the formation process of the Confirmation candidates; also to build a greater sense of identity with the parish community prior to the actual celebration.

**Sample objectives (Set A):**
1. Participants will be able to identify several models of the church from within their own parish and school communities.
2. Participants will be able to name the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and connect these gifts with examples from their faith community.
3. Participants will be able to identify communication barriers between those from different high schools and will attempt to break down barriers through communication.

A *different* target group might necessitate *different* objectives for this retreat, even though the *purpose* stays the same. For instance:

**Sample objectives (Set B):**
1. Participants will conclude and evaluate in-home small groups.
2. Participants will be able to identify their own talents, gifts, and strengths in the context of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.
3. Participants will hear from the pastor how their gifts are valuable and needed by the faith community.

Both these sets of objectives would result in very different retreats in terms of format, content and activities. That’s why knowing the unique need and context of the target group is just as important as knowing your overall purpose.

**A Sample Annual Plan for Retreats**

Following are sample annual plans that include a variety of retreats for a variety of age groups. Keep in mind that offering multiple retreats requires dividing tasks and creating specific job descriptions so that many more persons can become involved in the effort. Remember: true ministry duplicates itself, and good managers delegate! As the humorous parish and school names suggest, it would be impossible to offer *all* these retreats and opportunities for reflection; however, they are probably *all* needed:
St. Utopia Parish Sample Retreat Plan

FALL RETREAT OPTIONS (August, September, October)

Homecoming Day of Reflection. Designed to reach out to those seniors as they begin their last year in school. Focus on decision-making, friendship, Jesus as friend, and journaling. We’ll emphasize the use of scripture with popular music.

Sexuality Retreat for 9th and 10th Graders. They’re into relationships and dating. Time to focus on important questions, moral decision-making and Catholic values.

Peer Ministry Training Weekend. A special opportunity to train those who will serve as peer ministers throughout the year. This retreat is for key adults and youth.

World Youth Day Afternoon of Reflection. This event is for volunteers, parents and youth. It is scheduled to coincide with the annual celebration of World Youth Day in October—and finds a weekend when the local football teams aren’t playing.

WINTER RETREAT OPTIONS (November, December, January)

Thanksgiving Food Drive and Lock-In. A lively mix of social action and social interaction after the holiday when there’s lots of energy to be spent. Open to all ages.

Advent Faith-in-Action Retreat. An alternative to Christmas shopping for those who want to prepare for the season. Focus on the incarnation.

Advent Evening of Reflection. A special event for early adolescents and their parents. Focus will be on “being present” to one another in the next year.

SPRING RETREAT OPTIONS (February, March, April)

Confirmation Retreat. Designed specifically for these candidates. New twist this year will be involving the sponsors in a variety of roles.

Ash Wednesday Family Reflection Night and Soup Supper. A speaker or movie, discussion, Mass, and an add-your-own-can-of-soup supper. Open to all youth and their families.

Next-Steps Retreats for Seniors. An alternative offering to the Homecoming event in fall (for those involved in sports) but focused on journey, life maps, and relationship with God.

Bridges Retreat. This will be a collaborative effort with several neighboring parishes and the local Catholic high school to focus on understanding of cultural issues and communication.

SUMMER RETREAT OPTIONS (May, June, July)

Training Christian Leaders (TCL). We will identify 4-6 freshmen and sophomores to attend this diocesan leadership training event.

TACKLE. We will invite 6 juniors and seniors to attend this service learning immersion experience sponsored by the diocese.

Family Retreat/Camp Weeks or Weekends. A team of parents is preparing a full week for family fun and formation at a local camping area.

Theme Park Theme Days. Several trips are planned to local theme parks. A special outdoor prayer service will begin the day. The coach bus we will take has a VCR so the return trip will feature a solid movie and some pertinent questions for discussion.
Heaven Help Us Catholic High School Sample Retreat Plan

FALL RETREAT OPTIONS (September, October, November)

Peer Ministry Training Weekend. A special opportunity to train those who will serve as peer ministers throughout the year. This retreat is for your campus ministry team, both adults and youth.

Freshman Class Day of Reflection. Who am I? An opportunity to explore their relationships with each other, with God, and with the school community.

Sophomore Class Day of Reflection. Building Community and Communication. Building communication skills as well as discovering models of christian community.

WINTER RETREAT OPTIONS (December, January, February)


Next-Steps Retreats for Seniors. An alternative offering to the Homecoming event in fall (for those involved in sports) but focused on journey, life maps, and relationship with God.

Freshman Retreat. A one-night retreat designed to build community as a class and as a school, in relationship with Christ.

SPRING RETREAT OPTIONS (March, April, May)

Junior Retreat. A retreat that continues to build their Catholic identity and has as its focus a deeper sense of spirituality as well as a movement towards serving others.


Sophomore Retreat. A conversion style retreat that assists the youth in focusing on their personal relationship with God.

SUMMER RETREAT OPTIONS (June, July, August)

Week-long Workcamp. A variety of experiences for mission trips and workcamps are available through the Center for Ministry Development, Group and others.

Training Christian Leaders (TCL). We will identify 4-6 freshmen and sophomores to attend this diocesan leadership training event.

TACKLE. We will invite 4-6 juniors and seniors to attend this service learning experience sponsored by the Diocese.

(NOTE: Thanks to Chaminade-Julienne High School who provided much of the input for this page)
STEP TWO. CHOOSING AND CONTRACTING WITH FACILITIES

Every retreat takes place somewhere. The location and setting of a retreat dramatically impact its design. Sometimes a retreat site is “given” and the retreat is designed to match the space. Other retreats may be designed first and then a retreat site selected. Regardless of when the site is determined, it will play a crucial role in the retreat experience. A natural setting may be perfect for a retreat that focuses on God in nature; an urban setting suits a retreat that focuses on social justice; a peaceful setting assists a retreat that focuses on prayer and quiet reflection. A parish hall may be ideal for a junior high lock-in, yet poorly suited to a retreat focusing on lots of reflection and quiet time. Retreat facilities should be selected with careful attention to a retreat’s purpose(s) and objectives. Never secure a retreat facility without first inspecting it for suitability!

Checklist of Questions with Facilities

Listed below are sets of questions that can help you determine if the retreat center or space matches your retreat purpose(s) and objectives.

Questions about the Retreat Space

What are the sizes of the meeting rooms, sleeping areas, kitchen etc.? Are these areas suitable for young people?
What is the number of tables and chairs available in the meeting rooms?
What’s the capacity of the sleeping area? How are the areas separated for males and females?
What’s the capacity if we have a coed group?
How many showers and sinks are there in the sleeping area? Are they adequate for my group size or should I build extra time into the schedule?
Is there a chapel, a room for a quiet space, and/or a room for liturgical prayer?
Is there a fireplace (and firewood)? Other room amenities that I might take advantage of in planning?
What is the lighting like in the meeting rooms? Will I be able to show AV’s during the day? Is there sufficient access to electrical outlets?
Is there a place for recreation? Outdoor recreation? How is time for this space scheduled?
Will the facility be difficult to supervise? Is it compact or spread out? Are there numerous exits and hiding places?

Questions about Services and Features

Will I have access to any AV equipment (VCR, DVD, TV, LCD, tape recorders, screen, etc.)? Are linens and towels provided? Pillows? At what cost?
Is there recreation equipment available? Does the facility provide guided walks, ropes courses, swimming, sledding, etc.
Is there shopping nearby? Where is the nearest supermarket?
Is meal service provided? What are their meal times? Is meal service optional? What about snacks? Is there a place to call for pizza and how late are they open? What’s the location of the nearest fast food restaurants?
What kinds of refreshments/beverages are available? Do they have pop machines?
Questions about Location/Safety Concerns

What are the directions to your facility? Is there a map available? About how long will it take us to drive there? What is the emergency phone number people can use 24 hours a day?
Where are first-aid supplies, fire extinguishers?
What is the name and address of the nearest hospital? (This information should be included on your health form/parent release.) How distant? Directions?
What is the setting of your facility? Is it residential? Rural? Are there any safety or other concerns that I should notify parents about?
Is the facility handicapped-accessible?

Questions about Contract Issues

How are fees handled? Is a deposit required? Can the parish/school be billed, or should I have a check for the amount ready at the time of the retreat?
Who is responsible for set-up, clean-up, waste management?
What other expectations are there of groups using your facility?
Who is my contact on-site during the retreat in case of emergencies?
Are there other groups scheduled for the facility at the same time?
Is proof of insurance required in writing ahead of time?

Questions to Evaluate the Facility after the Retreat

Were the facilities a good match for this retreat design? For these participants?
Was the food service adequate for the participants?
What difficulties did you encounter which you need to note for next time?
What were the advantages of the facility?
Were the staff members hospitable to youth? Was the center/space “teen-friendly?”
Would you recommend this facility to others?
How much lead time is needed for booking?
STEP THREE. DEVELOPING YOUR RETREAT TEAM AND COORDINATING ROLES AND TASKS

It takes a team of people to staff a retreat. The number and roles of people needed will vary depending on the size and nature of the retreat, but one thing remains constant: the need for a well-prepared team. The best way to go about building a retreat team is to recruit a team of people based on the specific needs of the retreat.

Recruit for Roles and Task

Typically, the Retreat Coordinator recruits a Retreat Team Leader for a particular retreat. The Retreat Team Leader in turn recruits people for specific retreat roles and tasks. These individuals may perform tasks for one or more retreats based on their availability. There are several clear advantages to this approach:

- People can work in their area of strength, making it less likely they will fail or burn out.
- Specific retreat needs are met by those with the gifts to meet them.
- People are recruited for their real or potential ability to make a contribution -- it’s not a popularity contest!
- Recruiting for roles and tasks ensures that a retreat team will acquire a variety of personalities and differing gifts.

This approach takes greater organizational skill since more people are involved and a system has to be in place to manage them. Retreat team leaders have to be good managers.

Developing Job Descriptions

In order to effectively recruit people you need to know beforehand what tasks you are recruiting them for. Writing job descriptions for the roles on the team will help you clarify what you are looking for and let the potential volunteers know exactly what is expected. Job descriptions also allow you to affirm the talents and gifts of particular persons, since you are recruiting them for specific reasons. For example, if you know that Joan is a good “detail” person, you can recruit her to be on the team only to handle registrations, forms and finances. In this way you affirm her gifts while offering a manageable job that won’t overtax her time. Joan will likely say yes to your invitation to be part of the team!

Too often, recruiting volunteers is done out of an “any warm body will do” approach. The fact is, different tasks require different skills that not everyone possesses. Not everyone is good at facilitating discussions. Not everyone can cook for fifty people and be stress-free. Here are some sample job descriptions. Adapt them as needed or create your own.

Retreat Team Leader Job Description*

This person is responsible for managing all aspects of a particular retreat: publicity; facility; transportation; pre- and post- retreat activities; leading the retreat; and evaluation.

TASKS:
- Know all members of the team and know what their tasks are.
- Schedules and runs retreat team meetings.
- Delegates tasks and determines deadlines for completion.
- Follows up with retreat team members to ensure the tasks are being done.
- Develops permission forms/medical releases. Ensures that all paperwork is in prior to the retreat.
- Principal spokesperson on the retreat
- Problem-solve, troubleshoot, manage conflict (eg. discipline, team conflict, etc.)
ABILITIES NEEDED:
   Ability to manage and organize multiple tasks.
   Able to supervise others; possesses good people skills.
   Ability to work with and lead a team.
   Able to develop a time line and keep individuals on task.
   Knowledge of retreat principles and design.
(*See Appendix G for a complete listing of competencies for this position)

Retreat Transportation Coordinator Job Description

This person is responsible for arranging transportation for participants, team, and supplies.

TASKS:
   Find out the distance and route to the facility. Determine travel time.
   Check with the facility for policies or recommendations for transportation. Note: Some facilities may have limited parking or may not permit youth to bring cars.
   Determine the method of transportation most suited to the retreat. Factors to be considered are the distance and time, number of participants, amount of gear, parking available at the facility, insurance and liability, cost.
   Determine if the team will need special travel arrangements. For example, some team members may need to arrive early to set up.
   Make arrangements for transportation: e.g. charter the bus, arrange for drivers, etc.
   Attend to details according to method chosen; e.g. make sure that supervision is provided on the bus, all drivers have maps and directions, etc.
   Make sure all are accounted for at departure.

ABILITIES NEEDED:
   Basic organizational skills; knowledge of transportation and legal issues
   Ability to gather information from a variety of sources
   Good phone skills.

Retreat Finance Coordinator Job Description

TASKS:
   Develop a budget for the retreat. Expenses such as facility, retreat team leader, food, supplies, gifts, food and lodging for team, publicity, music and clergy stipend should be included.
   Determine with youth minister and/or retreat coordinator whether the cost of the retreat will be covered entirely by fees of the participants. Determine other sources of income (parish budget, fund raisers, donations) if appropriate.
   Meet with retreat team to discuss budget.
   Pay all deposits.
   Keep track of all money received from fees, fundraisers, etc.
   Report on financial status regularly to the retreat team.
   Develop a contingency plan if funds are not raised or if retreat goes over budget.
   Keep track of expenditures. Pay all bills. Reimburse people as necessary.
   Prepare a final budget report.

ABILITIES NEEDED:
   Organizational skills and knowledge of financial matters.
   Ability to keep good financial records.
   Creativity in developing sources of funds.
   Ability to work with the team.
Retreat Meal Coordinator Job Description

TASKS:
Determine which meals, snacks and beverages need to be provided based on length, time frame, and format of the retreat.
Determine with the facility if food service is provided, optional or mandatory.
Determine menus for the retreat. Plan for special dietary needs for some participants, such as vegetarian diet or food allergies.
Arrange snacks and beverages for breaks.
Make a grocery list of items needed. Buy or solicit donations of items.
Make arrangements for food preparation, if necessary. Recruit cooks or develop a schedule to have participants work on meals.

ABILITIES NEEDED:
Knowledge of menu planning.
Ability to coordinate and/or cook for larger groups of people.
Knowledge of good shopping sites.
Ability to work with team.

Following are the beginnings of several other job descriptions that can be used as starting points for developing your own:

Retreat Team Member Job Description*
Facilitate small group process in retreat.
Provide for icebreakers and community builders.
Function as a presenter in leading various sessions.
Retreat design.
Provide recreational components of retreat.
(*See Appendix G for a complete list of competencies for this position)

Spiritual Director/Prayer/Worship Leader (not necessarily ordained)
Provides for the sacramental life of the retreat community (i.e. Reconciliation, Eucharist).
Leads planning and facilitation of worship experiences.
Arranges for clergy.
Develops or provides spiritual direction of the team.
Provides spiritual counseling for individual participants.

Music/Song Leader(s)
Leads singing and music during different times of retreat.
Provides musical leadership during worship and prayer times.
Provides for community building experiences through music and song.
Assists in planning worship and prayer.

General Support/Office
Assist Retreat Team Leader in gathering materials and other needed articles for the retreat.
Assist Retreat Team Leader in various logistical jobs as needed.
Assist Retreat Team Leader in registration and other office procedures.
Building Your Team

Once you have determined what roles there are to fill, recruiting, screening, selecting, and training people becomes much easier. Remember, the “any warm body will do” approach can bring to your team people who are ineffective, who push their own agendas, or who are uncomfortable around teenagers. You can avoid these problems by recruiting people suited to particular roles and tasks. Here’s how:

1. Gather Names of Potential Volunteers

When developing your list of potential volunteers, first determine what general characteristics you are looking for in a retreat team volunteer. Some possibilities include: enjoyment of teenagers, a personal faith life, openness, a sense of humor, an understanding of team. Keep this list of desired characteristics in mind when putting together your pool.

Develop a pool of potential volunteers: those who are known quantities and those with unknown potential. Take each role and determine several names of people who would be suited to it. These are your known quantities. In addition, develop a list of people who are interested and available and determine where their abilities lie. These are your unknown potentials. Some places to look are:

In a parish
- time and talent surveys
- past youth ministry volunteers
- recommendations of parish staff or veteran youth ministry volunteers
- young adults or recently confirmed youth who can serve as peer ministers
- public school teachers who are members of the parish
- people who say “Give me a call if you could use some help”
- people who have done the task you are looking for in another organization or event (e.g. asking the person who runs the parish spaghetti dinner to help with food on the retreat)
- local college campus ministries
- local high school campus ministry (youth and adults)
- youth ministry participants
- scouts
- high school religious education participants

In a school
- past volunteers (students or faculty)
- new faculty
- recommendations from faculty for students
- administration
- guidance counselors
- youth/youth ministers from feeder parishes
- coaches
- students
- alumni
- local college campus ministry

2. Screen Potential Volunteers

Screening is an important but often overlooked aspect of volunteer management. Not all those who are recruited will turn out to be suited to the ministry. Sadly, it is sometimes the case that people volunteer to put themselves in a position to abuse others. Therefore, we screen volunteers both to protect our young people from harm, and to protect ourselves from lawsuits.
We also screen volunteers to determine their gifts and talents, and how they may best be utilized. You can do so by finding out about a person’s past experiences; previous volunteer roles and occupation; time availability; interests; other commitments, etc. Screening allows you to place volunteers appropriately, whether they are brand new to the ministry, or experienced in youth ministry and retreats. It can be done in an informal way. Sitting down and talking with the person can give you most of the information you need, provided you ask the right questions. Here are five things you should find out when you screen volunteers:

**Motivation:** why do they want to help?
**Past experience:** what have they done before that could help?
**Current level of ability:** what training will they need in order to be confident in their role?
**Availability:** what are their other commitments? available time?
**Suitability:** do they have a criminal record or any other condition which would mitigate against their contact with youth?

Remember that screening volunteers is not optional. It’s a necessary and important component of building effective retreat teams; furthermore, it is the only way to ensure that our young people will be safe from harm. Important: all adults who work in significant roles with youth in the Diocese of Amarillo must attend a training session on the Amarillo Diocese Safe Environment Policy. (See Appendix H).

3. **Invite People to Join the Team**

Invitations may be made by phone calls, personal letters, personal visits, or any of these in combination. You may wish to call people to set up a meeting. You may wish to send a letter with detailed information and follow up with a phone call. Personal and direct contact is most effective. People will be more likely to say yes if they know exactly what they are being asked to do and how much time it will take; if they have time to think about their answer; and if they are asked to do something that they like to do or would like to learn.

**Preparing Team Members for Their Roles**

After screening, you should have a fairly clear idea of what individuals will need in order to be adequately prepared for their roles. Some may require complete orientation and training; others may need selective training; some experienced youthworkers may require very little. Generally, there are three reasons why people seek training or additional formation:

**Confidence:** Everyone wants to feel confident in performing the role for which they’ve volunteered. Training builds confidence.

**Credibility:** Members of a retreat team should be credible to each other, the participants, parents and other members of the community. Training provides a way to let others know that you’ve done what it takes to be good at what you have volunteered to do.

**Competence:** Retreats are ministerial and catechetical programs. Anyone in a ministerial or catechetical leadership role must have the proper training to ensure that all will be in accord with our faith tradition and appropriate pastoral care. Beyond catechetical preparation, team members may require an array of pastoral ministry skills in the areas of facilitation, listening, prayer, community building, etc. (See descriptions of competencies in Appendix G)
Methods of Orientation, Training and Formation

Five common methods of preparing volunteers are:

**Orientation:** An initial introduction to the retreat, the expectations of the team and the expectations of the participants.

**Apprenticeship:** A person who is new to a task works with an experienced person. Some tasks may be delegated to the apprentice. Experienced team members model skills and share information.

**Observation:** A person is invited to visit a retreat to observe the experience in general, or to observe a specific role. Observation gives the person a chance to see exactly what he or she would be doing.

**Skill Practice:** Opportunities are provided for a person to practice and receive feedback on talks, community building activities, small group facilitation, etc.

**Workshops:** If a person needs broader and more concentrated preparation, workshops can be offered by the parish or school; also people can be directed to other workshops offered by the diocese, academic institutions or helping agencies.

Establishing Team Meetings

Retreat teams use meetings to do team-building; to understand the purpose, objectives and design of a retreat; to build retreat skills; and sometimes to develop the retreat design. Team meetings should have specific objectives and an agenda to ensure that progress is made and time is not wasted. Not all members need to be at all meetings; however, there should be at least one meeting where all members are present. The number and length of meetings will be determined by the work the team needs to accomplish. Factors to consider when establishing your team meetings are:

- Will the team be responsible for designing the retreat?
- How much training is needed?
- How well do the various members of the team know each other?

Team meeting agendas should include:

- Prayer/faith sharing
- Community building
- Overview of the retreat and its goals
- Retreat design (if team is developing a new model or adapting an old one)
- Establishing team norms for meetings, communication, collaboration, conflict management, etc.
- Understanding the role of each team member
- Training on issues such as: discipline, small group facilitation, pastoral care, emergency procedures, adolescent faith development/adolescent development, Diocese of Amarillo Safe Environment Policy
- Opportunity to hear and critique the various presentations

Depending on the experience of the team and the length of the meetings, this could require six or more meetings. Each team’s needs will vary greatly, but here is a sample to get you started:
Sample Retreat Team Meeting Agendas

1st Meeting: Meet, Greet and Get Organized
  Prayer/sharing
  Community building
  Identify roles team members are interested in
  Overview of the retreat/purpose and objectives
  Brainstorm ideas for retreat design to be passed on to design group

2nd Meeting: Build Community and Train
  Prayer/sharing
  Community building
  Training: team norms/expectations/small group facilitation/discipline
  Present final model of the retreat
  Assign responsibilities

3rd Meeting: Build Community and Train
  Prayer/sharing
  Community building
  Training: Safety Environment Policy/adolescent development/emergency procedures

4th Meeting: Review the Presentations
  Prayer/sharing
  Review and critique the various presentations

5th Meeting: Final Details and Small Group
  Prayer/sharing
  "Walk through” the retreat
  Review questions and dynamics for small group experiences

6th Meeting: Post-Retreat Evaluation
  Gathering the team after the event is important, especially for reviewing the design if the retreat will be repeated. Other reasons to meet include:
  Celebration and thanksgiving
  Team evaluation
  Evaluation of purpose and objectives
  Reviewing participants’ evaluations
STEP FOUR. DEVELOPING YOUR RETREAT DESIGN

A retreat is more than just its theme or sessions. Retreat teams should be aware that gathering, travel, arrival, departure and return also are part of the retreat experience and need to be included in the planning process. Team attitude, hospitality, food and snack options, the retreat setting, prayer experiences, the approach to discipline and a variety of other issues all contribute to the total retreat.

Retreat design requires a trained and experienced retreat coordinator. The retreat design step can be accomplished in one of two ways: (1) the retreat team develops the retreat design as part of their meetings (this would have the effect of increasing the number of meetings); or (2) the retreat team can delegate the design task to a sub-group after brainstorming ideas. The sub-group develops the design apart from the team, then submits it to the broader team at a subsequent team meeting for fine-tuning.

When developing the retreat design we should be less concerned with giving participants issues and ideas to consider and more concerned with assisting the participants to pray, play, share and reflect in a variety of ways.

Review the Retreat Purpose and Objectives

Whether you are designing the retreat individually or as a team, the first step is to review the purpose(s) and objectives. Changes in the seasons; emerging needs and situations; and developments in the group of potential participants all may cause you to refocus your stated objectives.

Assess the "Givens"

Usually some of the factors affecting the design of a retreat have already been determined. These may include the limitations of a certain facility or room, the pre-advertised time length, the number of personnel available to you, established times for meals or even the season of year the retreat has been scheduled. All of these factors help to shape the design. Our task is to assess these “givens” so that they can be considered when deciding upon the retreat design.

Sometimes you may not know in advance all the factors necessary to make the key decisions of retreat design. For example, seasonal changes may require certain activities to move indoors -- or outdoors, as the case may be. A good retreat design has options built in to accommodate unforeseen developments.

Check the Sources

The next task is to review retreat resource books and other sources for existing designs which may be effective in achieving the stated objectives. There’s no sense in re-inventing the wheel if a great design is already available or can be adapted for your circumstances. This “cookbook” approach can save a good deal of time. However, do consider copyright laws. Be sure that any material that you use is rightfully available to you and that copies of participant materials are permissible. (See Appendix J for a list of resources.)

Determine the Retreat Format

The retreat format is the pattern of time for activities and process. The format will be determined by your purpose(s), objectives and the “givens.” Several sample formats are included here. These can be used as templates and modified for your design.
**Sample Retreat Formats**
The following sample formats may be adapted as necessary. *Important note: Team meetings are an integral part of each retreat. Teams usually meet immediately prior to the retreat experience for prayer and last minute preparations as well as periodically during the retreat for the purposes of debriefing the experiences and coordinating upcoming responsibilities.*

**Sample One-Day Retreat  6 hours**

**A.M.**
9:00  Arrival and Welcome
9:15  Community building activities
      Opening Prayer
10:00  Session #1
10:45  Break
11:00  Small group session

**P.M.**
12:00  Lunch and recreation
1:00  Session #2
3:00  Closing Prayer
      Departure

**Optional:** On Sunday this program could begin or end with the parish liturgy.

**Sample One-Day Retreat  10 hours**

**A.M.**
9:00  Arrival and Welcome
      Opening Prayer
9:15  Community building activities
10:00  Session #1

**P.M.**
12:00  Lunch and recreation
1:00  Session #2
3:00  Break (snacks and games)
3:45  Session #3
5:45  Dinner
6:30  Wrap-up and Closing prayer service
7:00  Departure

**Optional:** On Saturday or Sunday, this program could begin or end with the parish liturgy, depending on the parish schedule.
Sample Lock-In Retreat  All night

P.M.
7:00  Arrival and get settled
7:30  Welcome and Introductions
         Opening prayer
8:00  Community building activities
8:45  Break
9:00  Session #1
10:30  Food/games/recreation/videos
12:30  Session #2

A.M.
2:00  Quiet time
4:00  Wake-up games
5:00  Session #3
6:30  Breakfast and clean-up
7:30  Closing prayer or liturgy
8:30  Departure

Sample Overnight Retreat

Evening

7:00  Arrive and unpack
7:30  Welcome/Introductions/Prayer
       Community building activities
8:45  Break
9:00  Session #1
10:30  Break
10:45  Evening prayer
11:00  Snacks/games/dance
12:00  Lights out

Morning

7:45  Wake up/showers
8:45  Breakfast
9:30  Morning prayer
10:00  Session #2

Afternoon

12:00  Lunch and recreation
1:30  Session #3
3:30  Break: snacks and games
4:00  Session #4
6:00  Dinner
6:45  Wrap-up
       Closing prayer or liturgy
8:00  Departure
Sample Two-Day Retreat

A.M.
9:30  Arrival, getting settled
10:00 Welcome, introductions, prayer
10:15 Community building
11:15 Session #1

P.M.
12:45 Lunch and recreation
2:45 Session #2
4:30 Large group dynamic/music
5:30 Dinner
6:30 Session #3
8:15 Reconciliation service
9:30 Video and Snacks
11:30 Evening prayer
12:00 Bedtime

Day Two

A.M.
8:00 Wake-up and showers
9:00 Breakfast
9:45 Morning prayer
10:15 Morning energizers
10:45 Session #4

P.M.
12:15 Lunch and recreation
1:45 Session #5
2:30 Wrap-up/pack-up
3:30 Closing prayer service or liturgy
Sample Weekend Retreat

Friday
P.M.
7:00 Arrival and unpack
7:30 Welcome/Introductions/Prayer
7:45 Community building activities
8:45 Break
9:00 Session #1
10:30 Break
10:45 Evening prayer
11:00 Snacks/games
12:00 Bedtime

Saturday
A.M.
7:45 Wake-up/Shower
8:45 Breakfast
9:30 Morning Prayer
10:00 Morning Energizers
10:30 Session #2

P.M.
12:30 Lunch and recreation
2:30 Session #3
4:00 Break
4:15 Music and singing
4:45 Session #4
6:15 Dinner and recreation
7:45 Session #5
8:45 Reconciliation service
10:30 Skits or dance or games/snacks
12:00 Bedtime

Sunday
A.M.
7:45 Wake-up/showers
8:45 Breakfast
9:30 Morning prayer
10:00 Morning energizers
10:30 Session #6

P.M.
12:00 Lunch/pack-up
1:30 Session #7
Prepare for liturgy
3:00 Liturgy
4:00 Departure
Brainstorm Activities to Fit the Format

The next task is to brainstorm activities, simulations, prayer experiences, talks, small groups, etc., that may accomplish your objectives. These may be gathered from books and resources or may be creatively developed by team members. Remember that there are usually many ways to achieve the same objective, so be sure to pay attention to the particular needs of this group and adapt accordingly.

Caution: Avoid the pressure to do an activity simply because “it’s way cool.” Don’t even consider it unless it fits the objectives you have named. The same is true of AV material. Don’t show a video or play a taped song without fully integrating it into your design. Of course, videos brought for recreation time are different. Be mindful of copyright laws, as well as rating and content which may be inappropriate for a retreat setting.

Design Principles: How To Develop and Sequence Retreat Sessions

After brainstorming comes the design step that requires the most creativity -- and careful planning. An effective retreat is not a roughly assembled amalgamation of different pieces. Skilled retreat planners apply design principles to sequence the brainstormed ingredients in a way that makes good experiential and catechetical sense. Each retreat session needs to be carefully crafted, utilizing tested design principles. Likewise, the main sessions of a retreat should be properly sequenced into a retreat model so that all the pieces work together and build upon one another.

Some Design Considerations

Retreat designers should take the following into consideration as they put together retreat sessions. (A comprehensive listing of design principles is included in Appendix A.)

Sequencing: Retreat models and their individual sessions should generally reflect the same movements present in Christian worship: gather, listen, respond, send forth. The gathering step usually includes icebreakers, warm-ups, introductions, and community-building exercises. The listening step takes place in many different ways through a given retreat: talks, scripture dramatizations, simulation activities, small group sharing and discussion, arts and crafts activities, etc. The response step can take place in a variety of ways as well: in prayer exercises, rituals and worship services; in activities that facilitate self-expression; in small group discussions and sharing sessions, etc. The sending forth step focuses on applying the new insights gained on the retreat to one's normal life. (For more on sequencing, see the section below on Thomas Groome's "Shared Christian Praxis" Methodology).

Timing: Experienced retreat planners know that different time periods during a retreat day are better -- or ill-suited -- for certain retreat activities. Mornings are usually high energy times. Energy usually slumps after lunch. Evenings are generally choice times for quiet reflection, deeper conversation or profound prayer. Retreats have beginnings, middles and ends: beginnings are good for establishing expectations, setting the theme, and building community; middles are good for getting to the heart of a theme or topic; ends should focus on celebration, closure and next steps.

Variety: Use activities that engage the whole person. People learn best by doing. Retreats should have a variety of elements that appeal to the head and the heart -- and all the senses! Junior high youth need much more variety and hands-on activity than do older youth.
Breaks, Stretches, Movement, Sleep: A retreat should respect the physical needs of participants. Recreation, bathroom, snack and stretch breaks should be scheduled in -- and honored! They are just as important as the sessions to maintain a healthy balance of focused activity, recreation and rest. On multi-day, overnight retreats, care must be taken to ensure that the young people get adequate sleep. Scheduled activities should conclude at a reasonable hour, generally no later than 11:00 p.m., allowing adequate time at the end of an evening for young people to "decompress" from potentially intense evening sessions.

Thomas Groome's "Shared Christian Praxis" Methodology

Assuming a set of brainstormed retreat ingredients (e.g. activities, talks, prayer forms, dramatizations, audio-visuals, etc.), the question remains: how to put the ingredients together so that each session builds toward accomplishing the retreat's purpose(s) and objectives?

Youth retreats over the past fifty or more years have approached this task in different ways. A typical session of an early (pre-1960's) youth retreat consisted of a rather lengthy (up to an hour or more) talk -- sometimes called a conference -- to impart knowledge about spiritual or religious topics; followed by private reflection. A typical retreat model consisted of a number of these talks and reflection periods, along with worship services, reconciliation and a Mass.

In the 1960's, Cursillo retreats were brought to America from Spain. Soon after, youth Cursillos were designed. The sessions of a Cursillo-based retreat generally have a personal witness talk on a given theme, followed by a "table group" discussion or activity, or both. Christian Awakening, Kairos, and TEC retreats are examples of retreat models based on the Cursillo.

In 1981, Thomas Groome's Christian Religious Education revolutionized the process of religious education and retreats. In his approach, or methodology, the starting point isn't the presentation of a particular topic; rather, it is the life experience of the young person. Most well-designed contemporary youth retreats utilize some variation of Groome's "Shared Praxis" approach:

**MOVEMENT ONE – EXPERIENCING LIFE**

Young people are invited to name and reflect on their life experience as it relates to a particular topic or theme. They are given an opportunity to express what they already know, feel, understand, believe about the topic -- and how they do or don't live it. In this step, young people are also assisted in wrestling with the meaning of their life experience: its consequences and implications. Whereas the first step focuses on the "What?" of their experiences, this step focuses on the "Why?" questions.

**MOVEMENT TWO - MESSAGE**

In the second movement, young people are offered the story of the faith community: Scriptures, church teaching, the faith-life of Christian people present or past. The goal is to engage the young people in an active process of exploring the dimensions of our faith that are relevant to the topic or theme.
MOVEMENT THREE - DISCOVERY

The third movement brings together in dialogue the individual's story and experience with that of the faith community. The Christian story may confront or challenge; likewise it may console and affirm. This is a dynamic interchange in which there are no clearly predictable outcomes, because there will be as many responses to our faith story as there are young people. It is critical at this point to allow young people the freedom to engage in the interchange; telling them what they should do, think or believe is counter-productive. With this freedom young people can be guided to see the why of the Christian story, and to appropriate the meaning of the story into their lives. In this step we try to help participants find their own story in THE STORY, to identify with the Christian story and to further integrate it into their lives.

MOVEMENT FOUR - RESPONSE

This is the point of decision, of applying what has been explored and learned in the preceding steps. The fourth movement invites young people into making a lived faith response. A typical session will motivate some young people to action; some will need more time to reflect; others will be unaffected. At this point it is critical to invite a decision to live more faithfully as a Christian while at the same time respecting the right of young people to choose their own response, even if it is not the one that is hoped for.

These four movements provide retreat planners with a way of thinking about how the various ingredients of a retreat should fit together. They can be used not only to plan an individual session, but also to develop an entire retreat model.

Using “Shared Praxis” to Plan a Retreat Session

The following is a tried-and-true approach to designing retreat sessions:

1. **Review:** the purpose and objectives of the retreat and your brainstormed retreat activities.

2. **Prioritize:** identify those activities and methods that will best meet your objectives.

3. **Draft a Design:** Rough out specific plan for each session that puts your retreat activities and methods into a sequence based on Groome’s five steps.

4. **Evaluate:** Use the design considerations above and the five steps of the "Shared Praxis" model to evaluate your design. Pay special attention to the time boundaries of your session: Does the design fit into your time frame? Will it accomplish what it sets out to accomplish?

5. **Fine-tune:** Develop your design further (this step may involve going back to the drawing board, finding new ideas, adapting activities to suit, etc.).

6. **Evaluate:** Evaluate your design relative to your purpose and objectives. Important: if the design doesn't work, it may be necessary to return to the initial list of brainstormed ideas, or research new ideas that will better accomplish your purpose and objectives.

7. **Write a Script:** Once you're satisfied that the design is sound, return to the beginning and script each session, filling in the details.
Following is an example of a detailed script from an actual retreat:

**Sample Retreat Session Script**

The following session is part of a two-day retreat model for high school juniors and seniors. The session focuses on sin, forgiveness and God's love. The session is scheduled for the evening of the first day. Movements of the design considerations and "Shared Praxis" methodology are noted in brackets for the purposes of this example.

8:45 Re-convene the group after a break. A team member gathers the group, settles and focuses them with the "rain forest" activity (participants are led in simulating the sounds of a rain storm with their hands). [Gathering ]

9:00 Talk on sin and forgiveness. A team member gives a 10-12 minute talk focusing on personal experience(s) of broken relationships and connecting those with our relationship to God. [Listening - Naming my life experience.]

9:15 Guided Reflection. A team member leads the group in a guided meditation on sin and forgiveness. [Listening - Reflecting on life experience.]

9:30 Dramatic Presentation of Jesus' interaction with sinners (e.g. Zaccheus, adulterous woman, woman at the well). A group of team members presents a dramatized scripture story. [Listening - Sharing the christian story and vision]

9:45 Personal Reflection & Optional Sharing. Participants may take quiet time for journaling or share with their prayer partner their reactions to the story, guided by reflection questions that connect the story with their life experience. Participants are given refrigerated stones and quote from Ezekiel ("I will change your heart of stone to a heart of flesh") to assist in their reflection. [Listening - Dialogue]

10:15 Opportunity for Sacrament of Reconciliation. [Response - Decision-making and making applications]

10:45 Closing prayer with ritual. "Cold stony hearts" ritual: participants bring their stones forward, drop them in water bowl (representing baptismal water), receive water blessing from team member. [Response & Sending Forth - Decision-making and making applications]

11:15 Conclude & make announcements. Set up snacks and refreshments for social time.
Prepare a Retreat Outline Script

As the retreat format takes shape a convenient way to organize the design is to create an Outline Script for the entire retreat. The script fills in the schedule with who, what, when and how information and clearly shows the unfolding retreat process. Here’s an example:

**Sample One-Day Retreat Outline Script**

*Journey Time: A Day for Those New to High School*

**Purpose:** To assist first year high school students from the parish in reflecting on their relationship with God as they meet new friends in school.

**Objectives:** Explore fears, concerns, hopes, and challenges of being a freshman. Reflect on presence of God in the midst of new situations.

**10:00 a.m.** **Arrival, Welcome, Opening Prayer**
Team will greet participants at door of church hall and take them to “homeroom.” Each homeroom will say a short prayer for the day and then move to community building.

10:15 **Community building activity(ies)**
Icebreakers will be Named Bingo with partners responsible for introducing each other to the large group.

10:45 **Topic #1: What I Really Learn in High School**
This session will help participants reflect on the official and unofficial curriculum by exploring the categories of teachers, administration, hallways, cafeteria, clubs and sports, and “cliques”. Presentation, small group work and then skits to illustrate.

12:30 p.m. **Lunch and games**

1:30 **Topic #2: Jesus Never Was a Freshman But If He Was...**
This session will help participants examine the relationships that they are forming at school from a values perspective. Testimony from a current senior, small group discussion, personal reflection tool. (Team is developing this.)

3:30 **Closing Prayer, Followed by Social**
Closing prayer will use a current song, scripture from Luke and blessing prayer. Social time will introduce parish member who works as a school counselor and is willing to meet with students at school as needed.

4:00 **Departure**
Consider Pre- and Post- Retreat Activities

Retreats are a part of a comprehensive youth ministry effort in the parish or school community. They do not take place in isolation. Therefore, it is essential to consider the times before and after the retreat as integral to the experience and to incorporate activities that would assist the goals of the retreat during these periods of time. Support for the participants following a retreat experience is not optional. This is a time when the youth need support and encouragement to live out the experiences and commitments from the retreat. Caring and committed adults must be available for this. It is also essential that the impact on the family be taken into consideration. Here are some ideas:

**Creative Reminders.** Letters or notes to retreat participants can introduce them to the retreat focus as well as provide travel and schedule information.

**Pre-Retreat Parent Sessions.** Gather parents as they drop their teens off. Provide coffee or refreshments and focus on their needs. Include prayer for participants.

**Post-Retreat Parent Sessions.** Provide helpful insights into the retreat experience and share how parents and families can support their teen as he/she returns to the family.

**Retreat Commissioning.** Involve the pastor/campus minister in blessing the participants before departure. Other community prayer options might also be effective.

**Bus Time.** If it is an overnight retreat or at another site, consider using the bus time for some icebreakers to build community and detract from the boredom of the ride.

**Publicity Design.** Involve potential participants in designing posters or other publicity for the event as a way of introducing the retreat purpose to them.

**Letters of Remembrance.** Letters or notes after the retreat can remind participants of key events or be used to send pictures and/or address lists of those who attended.

**Mass or Prayer Service.** Celebrate the experience in prayer several weeks later. Invite parents to attend and involve teens in the preparation and testimony.

**Catechetical Sessions.** Use catechetical sessions or events afterwards to reinforce content or key insights of the retreat.

**Small Faith Communities.** Consider developing small faith communities for your youth. This can be a great way to assist them in continuing their journey of faith.

**Connection Events.** Use the motivation and energy gained on a retreat to launch new evangelization or social ministry efforts. Tap the potential.
Create a Retreat Time Line

The final task is to establish a time line for the retreat preparation and set it in motion. Keep in mind that some preparation steps might be done for more than one retreat in your annual plan. Make sure dates are realistic for people’s schedules, but don’t leave everything until the last minute. Here is an example of a long-range time line for an overnight retreat.

**SAMPLE RETREAT TIME LINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Tour facility if you are unfamiliar with its features; Book facility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>Contract with Retreat Coordinator. (if hiring outside assistance).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Months</td>
<td>Contact potential team members; Begin long-range publicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Months</td>
<td>Finalize team members. Hold first team meeting; Begin short-term publicity; Publicize on community calendar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Months</td>
<td>Send forms and permission slips. Hold team meetings for logistics, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Week</td>
<td>Complete paperwork; Tend to details and gather supplies; Review transportation plans; Review emergency plans; Check security plan, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEP FIVE. PREPARING FOR PRAYER & WORSHIP

Preparing for Prayer and Worship

A significant part of any retreat is the opportunity for prayer and worship. The building of community through other types of sharing and interaction can lead to very positive prayer experiences for youth. Participants pray and worship with peers who assist them in making the connection to their relationship with God. Prayer and worship on retreats isn’t necessarily more creative. It is often more powerful because the young people are more receptive.

Preparing for prayer and worship has both short-range and long-range aspects. For example, some prayer services which are part of the retreat “content” may need to be prepared well in advance. Other prayer or liturgical experiences might be prepared with participants during the retreat itself. Such opportunities are very effective in building a sense of ownership for the prayer and a heightened sense of being the assembly that gathers to worship. Several articles and worksheets are included in this chapter to assist you in your preparations. The remainder of this section includes resources to assist you in preparing prayer and worship in retreat settings.

The Art of Preparing Prayer and Worship

“Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it.”
--Music in Catholic Worship, #6

Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration... Can you remember a prayer service, Mass or liturgy which really affected you in a deeply spiritual way? The kind of moment that helped to define your faith? What was special about it? Can you name the elements which contributed to making that experience different from many others in your life?

Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy (faith)... You can probably also remember other prayer services or Masses which did just the opposite. These moments were frustrating, disappointing or enraging. They left you feeling empty and perhaps even doubting your faith. What were the elements which made that experience such a difficult memory?

Good celebrations foster and nourish faith... The most significant element of prayer is God. Good prayer celebrations leave room for God to speak to us! They assume that God’s grace is at work in human lives--that’s what we mean when we say we believe in the Incarnation. God is always active in human events and how we pay attention to God’s presence is an act of prayer.

Principle One: Pay Attention to the Context of Prayer

All prayer events take place in a context of human experience. That context includes the people involved, the location, the occasion, the time, local and world events, as well as personal feelings and circumstances. The human context of a prayer shapes the event and how people respond. The difference in contexts is why the same planned prayer service will be different every time it is used. Paying attention to the mix of those elements, that context, is the first principle in the art of preparing prayer. Just as a good artist knows the effect of the medium which he/she is using, so too, a liturgical artist is aware of how the context will shape the prayer experience.
There are elements of the context over which you have less control. For example, teens who have just experienced the accidental death of a classmate will be in a much different mood for prayer than if they were gathering for prayer during finals week or right before a vacation. Teens attending a Mass with other family members will feel different than if they are with a group of peers. A youth who has just had a fight with a best friend or parent will approach the time for prayer differently than the teen who just “aced” a test.

There are other elements of the context over which you may have choice, but are still quite variable. For example, praying in the morning will provide a context of different psychological energy than that of praying in the evening. However, anyone who has planned prayer for the morning after an all night lock-in knows it’s not quite the same experience as the morning prayer which opens a retreat. Choosing to hold a prayer service outdoors may add a very creative touch to the experience -- except if the grass is wet with dew or the mosquitoes are ravenous! Some things you can only learn through experience. The art of preparing prayer involves allowing for a diversity of attitudes and situations to be present when we gather to pray. The preparation needs to provide a setting for all those experiences to be touched by God’s love and presence.

**Principle Two: Prepare, Then Plan**

Since there are many elements which shape a prayer experience beyond its context, and because those elements are always different, our experience of prayer is always different. We can’t know or predict all the elements which will affect a prayer we are planning -- which is why planning may be the wrong word to use. It’s probably more accurate to say we are preparing prayer, which is a process that includes assessing the elements we are given and accounting for other variables which are part of the prayer context.

Preparing prayer and worship experiences is an art form because the persons who are preparing prayer have choices in mixing the right set of elements together, but also allow for and expect the spontaneity of the moment to create the experience. Like any artist, the prayer preparer takes basic elements (i.e. words, music, actions and time) and shapes them into a pattern of relationship. The final element is the people gathered which creates the dynamic of reaction and involvement. Most importantly, the preparer allows for and expects that God’s grace will also shape and create the experience.

Does this mean that prayer can’t be planned? Not at all! But good prayer experiences don’t just happen. They’re the result of paying attention to the context and to each other and then setting solid plans into place based on that awareness. Prepare, then plan.

**Principle Three: Know the Requirements of Liturgical Prayer**

All liturgies are prayer, but not all group prayers are liturgical. Liturgies involve ritual symbols and symbolic actions and are part of the regular celebrations that define faith communities. The Mass (Eucharistic liturgy) and other sacraments are forms of liturgical prayer. They have set rubrics (directions), patterns, prayers, readings and other elements which are required for their celebration and therefore, become part of the “context”. Persons who regularly prepare liturgies need additional training and formation in liturgical principles and practice. Preparing liturgies requires attention to the norms and guidelines established for their celebration.

Preparing liturgies for youth retreats can be problematic for persons not experienced in liturgical norms. The bottom line in this: Know Thy Stuff. If you are unfamiliar with liturgical preparation, seek assistance from someone who is competently trained. **No** liturgy is better than poor liturgy.
Guidelines for Preparing Prayer

Here are a few basic steps to help you focus on the way to prepare non-Eucharistic liturgies and worship. Preparation doesn’t always happen in exactly this sequence, but the individual steps need to occur. You may have to adapt them to fit your local circumstance.

1. Gather Resources

The person responsible for preparing prayer needs to make sure that the necessary planning resources are available. Sometimes this is simply a matter of meeting to prepare in the place where all these things are naturally kept. Other times, this means gathering the resources and bringing them to the place where planning will take place. Lectionary, books of poetry or reflection, CD’s/tapes, instruments, hymnals or song collections, planning sheets, pens, etc. are some of the items needed.

2. Form a Team

It is sometimes easier to prepare prayer by yourself, but the resulting preparations won’t be as inclusive as a team approach. A team effort allows more than one person’s point of view, style of prayer, and awareness of elements to shape the prayer. Another positive aspect of a team approach is that more persons will feel a sense of investment in the prayer.

Choose A Planning Leader. The Planning Leader’s role is to lead the group through the next steps of preparing the prayer. If it’s not clear who the planning leader is, then the group should choose one of its members to take this responsibility. (This does not have to be the person who will be “up front” as presider during the prayer time.) Even though there is a Planning Leader, everyone involved in preparing the prayer should take responsibility for keeping notes of the overall plan and their own tasks.

Choosing a Presider. The Presider is the “up front” leader during prayer time. At a Mass, this person is a priest. In other types of prayer, any competent member of the community can serve in this role. The presider is the person who visibly leads the prayer, directs the action, and sometimes prays on behalf of the group. Have the group choose someone to serve in this role.

3. List the “Givens”

There are always certain elements for prayer which are given -- things that you must work with and cannot change. Make a list of which elements are set and which ones have some flexibility. These elements might include the place or time for prayer; how much time you will have; certain groups or persons who will be present; or the focus of the event itself. To ignore the givens or try to change them through prayer is risky and usually leads to disaster. To state the issue more positively, accepting the givens is a way of understanding that God is present in every moment and, therefore, every moment is an opportunity for prayer.

4. Assess the Context of This Prayer

The first job of your team is to talk about the context of this prayer. Some of these elements are included in the “givens” you named above, but other elements will also shape this opportunity for prayer. Below is a list of questions to ask. Have one member of the group take simple notes so that you can go back and refer to them in later preparation stages.
Who will be present for this prayer? What is their energy level likely to be? How mixed of a group will it be? What predominant reason is there for this group to be together? How well do they know each other? Have they ever been together before?

What is the occasion for this prayer? Are there other local or world events which have occurred in the recent past or are about to happen which will influence the mood or thinking of those gathered? What does this group need to say to each other? To God?

Where will the prayer be held? What are the physical limitations of the space? What makes it a good place to pray? Is the light and comfort level good for prayer? How will this space become a place where the group can become more aware of themselves and their relationships with God?

When will the prayer be held? What season of the liturgical year or secular calendar is being celebrated? What will the group be doing right before or after this prayer? Is this prayer part of a larger event? If the prayer is set to happen some time in the future, are there other events which might affect the outcome?

5. Share the Story and Make Connections to Real Life

It is within the above described context that we hear the Word of God. Sometimes that Word comes to us in the scriptures. Sometimes we have to listen to each other to understand how God is active in our world. Jesus told stories. In order to pray well, we need to listen to the scripture stories as well as contemporary stories of how God continues to be active in our lives.

Scriptures. What passages from the scriptures come to mind as you assess the context of the prayer? Is there a particular story or passage which relates to this gathered group?

Current “Stories”. What are the contemporary stories which help us to understand how God loves us? What are the personal faith stories which need to be told?

6. Decide Upon A Focus for Your Prayer Preparation

Prayer helps us to realize that every moment is an opportunity to become more aware of how God is present in our lives. Your team needs to discuss how this prayer moment can incorporate the ordinary and real events of daily life into prayer. Summarize those ideas into several words or a short phrase that can be used to focus the rest of your planning and preparation.

7. Brainstorm and Choose Prayer Ingredients

The focus statement gives you a good idea of what the prayer needs to accomplish. Now the team needs to suggest specific ingredients—religious songs, contemporary songs, poems, composed prayers, actions, or gestures. Don’t be too concerned about a theme! If you’ve paid attention to the context, the right ideas will emerge naturally. More importantly, you must focus on the function of the various elements instead of whether they precisely match a theme. Below is a list of ingredients to consider:

Words and Readings: Consider the following: readings or prayers assigned in the sacramentary or Lectionary for that particular day; scriptural passages that reflect on the ideas you raised; poems or personal reflections; quotes or readings from other writers; composed prayers for the whole group or the presider to pray; moments for spontaneous prayer or intercessions; times of silence; and composed or spontaneous litanies.
**Music and Song:** Consider songs for the whole group to sing and music or songs for reflection/listening during other parts of the prayer time. Choose from music written for prayer and liturgy, or current songs which are appropriate for this prayer time.

**Actions and Gestures:** Consider actions, movement or gestures which will be part of prayer time. This can be as simple as the Sign of the Cross, or gathering in a circle and joining hands, or as artistic as dance or mime. The way we sit, stand, kneel, and move is part of the prayer. How will the whole group be involved? How will our bodies (not just our minds and mouths) pray?

**Environment and Set-up:** Consider the physical space where the prayer will be held. Think about how pieces of art, pottery, pictures, incense, decorations, light, seating, plants and other items might help those gathered to pray. Determine how the praying community will be greeted as they enter the worship space.

8. **Review the Assembly’s Role**

Before you finalize your plans, review the ways that the whole group, not just the leaders, will be involved in the prayer. How will the people gathered be able to pray through words, singing or actions? Remember that your team is not responsible for the prayer--only the preparation. The prayer is the responsibility of everyone gathered so don’t leave them out! Make sure your preparations allow for people to pray together, not be prayed at! Most importantly, make sure to leave room for God to speak to you, so that it can be your prayer as well.

9. **Organize and Prepare the Movements of Prayer**

Now you’re ready to organize your choices into a pattern for prayer. A regular format helps people to become more comfortable with prayer and to pray with more confidence. It’s hard to get fully involved in prayer if you don’t know what’s coming next. A recommended format for prayer is: **GATHER, LISTEN, RESPOND, SEND FORTH.**

**GATHER.** The first part of prayer needs to help the community to gather and become aware of their relationship to God and each other. As the group comes together to pray, what actions, gestures, music, proclamations, litanies or other preparations will help this to occur?

**LISTEN.** The next movement of the prayer gives those now gathered a chance to hear scriptures or current stories which allow us to reflect on how God is active in our lives. Readings, drama, videos, personal stories, witness reflections, music, psalms, gestures, litanies and silence are some elements which might be included.

**RESPOND.** The third movement of prayer reminds us that it’s not enough to just hear the Word of God, we must become it. How will we respond to our awareness of God’s unconditional love? Spontaneous and composed prayers, intercessory prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, psalms, music, actions or gestures are options.

**SEND FORTH.** The final movement of prayer sends us forth with a renewed sense of our mission to live the Gospel everyday. Prayer helps us to focus on the big picture but also the simple ways that each of us needs to be a disciple to those around us. Spontaneous and composed prayers, music, actions, blessings, commissioning, and exchanging a sign of peace are some of the ways this can occur.

Once you have your prayer organized, the team can begin to prepare the specifics, set up, and set a time to evaluate. A **Planning Worksheet** is included in this section to assist you.
10. Make Final Preparations and Assign Responsibilities

Some additional preparation would include:

- Creating a **Worship Aid**—a program with songs and prayers for the assembly. (See end of this section for copyright information.)
- Writing out a **Prayer Script**.
- Walking through the sequence with everyone involved.
- Setting up the physical environment for the prayer.
- Practicing readings, music cues, dramatic presentations, etc.
- Getting ready to greet those who will pray.

11. Evaluate the Prayer Experience

Evaluation is the last important step because it helps you to know how to be better prepared the next time. Before you finish your planning meeting, decide upon a time when you will gather to evaluate this prayer service. Prayer evaluation should always ask the question, **“Did our preparations help the people to pray?”** Describe evidence of how your preparations were successful. Determine what you learned which might help in the future. Avoid listing the things that went wrong or not as planned. Sometimes different elements don’t go as well as planned, but nevertheless assist prayer.
PRAYER PREPARATION WORKSHEET

Occasion/Season/Feast: ________________________________________________

Date/Day/Time: ________________________________________________

Planning Leader: ________________________________________________

Presider: ________________________________________________

Other “Givens” to Note: ________________________________________________

• DISCUSS THE CONTEXT OF THE PRAYER

Who: ________________________________________________

What: ________________________________________________

Where: ________________________________________________

When: ________________________________________________

• SHARE THE STORY: Notes and ideas for Scriptures and current stories

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

• BRAINSTORM ELEMENTS AND IDEAS FOR PRAYER

Words/Readings: ________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Music & Songs: ________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Actions/Gestures: ________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Environment/Set-Up: ________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
PRAYER PREPARATION WORKSHEET

GATHER. The first part of prayer needs to help the community gather and become aware of their relationship to God and each other. As the group comes together to pray what actions, gestures, music, singing, proclamations, litanies or other preparations will help this to occur?

LISTEN. The next movement of the prayer gives those now gathered a chance to hear the scriptures or current stories which allow us to reflect on how God is active in our lives. Readings, drama, videos, personal stories, witness reflections, music, songs, psalms, gestures, litanies and silence are some elements which might be included.

RESPOND. The third movement of prayer reminds us that it’s not enough to just hear the word of God, we must keep it. How will we respond to our awareness of how God continues to love us unconditionally? Spontaneous and composed prayers, intercessory prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, psalms, music, actions or gestures are options.

SEND FORTH. The final movement of prayer sends us forth with a renewed sense of our mission to live the Gospel each and everyday. Prayer helps us to focus on the big picture but also the simple ways that each of us needs to be a disciple to those around us. Spontaneous and composed prayers, music, actions and gestures, blessings, commissionings, exchanging a sign of peace are some of the ways this can occur.
PREPARING FOR EUCHARISTIC LITURGY (MASS)

Here are a few basic steps to help you focus on preparing Eucharistic liturgies. Preparation doesn’t always happen in exactly this sequence, but the individual steps need to occur. You may have to adapt them to fit your local circumstances.

1. Gather Resources

The person responsible for preparing liturgy needs to make sure that the necessary planning resources are in place. Gather any resources such as the Lectionary (Book of Readings), the Sacramentary (Book of Prayers and Rituals), Bibles, hymnals and other music resources, CD’s/tapes and CD/tape player, instruments, planning sheets, pens, etc. It is also a good idea to begin to gather other necessities for the environment such as vessels, candles, altar cloths, etc.

2. Form A Liturgy Preparation Team

Liturgies are almost always prepared by a team of persons because the process involves multiple elements. It is good to have more than one person’s point of view, style of prayer, and awareness of elements involved in shaping the liturgy. A team approach to preparing for liturgy tends to create a greater investment in the liturgy.

Choose A Planning Leader. The Planning Leader’s role is to lead the group through the next steps of the preparation process. If it’s not clear who the planning leader is, then the group should choose one of its members to take this responsibility. This person will function like a director prior to and during the Eucharist. It is best if the Planning Leader is not the priest, since the role of presider is a separate responsibility (see below). Even though there is a Planning Leader, everyone involved in preparing the liturgy should take responsibility for keeping notes of the overall plan and their own tasks.

Involve the Priest/Presider. The Presider is the “up front” leader during liturgy. At a Eucharistic Liturgy, this person is a priest. If possible, the priest/presider should be involved in the whole preparation process. However, most of the time this isn’t possible, especially when the priest has been invited to preside with a special group for a particular occasion (i.e. Sunday Mass when away on retreat, camp out, etc.) It is the Planning Leader’s responsibility to review plans with the presider if the preparation team has had to meet separately. Planning is not complete until the presider has given input and agreement to preparation plans made. That is why it’s always better when the presider has been involved from the beginning so that individual preferences can be addressed.

3. List the “Givens”

There are always certain elements for liturgy which are “given”—things that you must work with and cannot change. Make a list of which elements are pre-determined. These might include the place or time for liturgy, certain groups or persons who will be present, or an event which precedes or follows it. To ignore the givens is risky. Accepting the givens is a way of understanding that God is present in every moment of life and, therefore, in every liturgy.
4. Assess the Context of This Liturgy

The next job of your team is to talk about the context of this liturgy. Below is a list of questions to ask. Have one member of the group take simple notes so that you can go back and refer to them in later preparation stages.

Who will be present for this liturgy? What is their energy level likely to be? How diverse is the group? What predominant reason is there for this group to be together? How well do they know each other? Have they ever been together before?

What is the occasion for this liturgy? Are there other local or world events which have occurred in the recent past or are about to happen which will influence the mood or thinking of those gathered? What does this group need to say to each other? To God?

Where will the liturgy be held? What are the physical limitations of the space? What makes it a good place to pray? Is the light and comfort level good for liturgy? How will this space become a place where the group can become more aware of themselves and their relationships with God?

When will the liturgy be held? What season of the liturgical year or secular calendar is being celebrated? What will the group be doing right before or after this liturgy? Is this liturgy part of a larger event? If the liturgy is set to happen some time in the future, are there other events which might affect the outcome?

5. Reflect On the Scriptures and Make Real Life Connections

After reviewing the context for this liturgy, read and reflect on the readings assigned for the day. Check homily sources for additional background information on the scriptural passages. Discuss examples of how these readings apply to current events and situations in work, home, school, and community. Make notes of key points or ideas. (These can be given to the homilist as well.) Special note: Always use the assigned readings unless the occasion or nature of the group strongly suggests otherwise. If you need to substitute, check the votive and ritual Masses in the back of the Lectionary for suggestions.

6. Decide Upon A Focus For Your Liturgy Preparation

Several key ideas will begin to emerge as you discuss the scriptures. Summarize those ideas into several words or a short phrase that can be used to focus the rest of your planning and preparation. Remember, there is only one theme for every Mass--the Paschal Mystery. It is always the same, but the focus of our preparation will change to respond to the context and readings for the day.

7. Plan For The Elements of Liturgy

If the preparation team is small, work through all sections together. If the team is large, divide into the following three work groups. Use the Liturgy Preparation Worksheet which is included at the end of this section.
WORDS AND READINGS TASK GROUP

- Determine how the readings will be proclaimed and who will lector.
- Review the Sacramentary prayers and make any necessary suggestions.
- Compose or plan for the intercessory prayers.
- Make homily suggestions with respect to the praying community.
- Plan or prepare for special blessings or commissions.

MUSIC AND SONG TASK GROUP

- Choose a singable set of Eucharistic acclamations with which the group is familiar.
- Choose a psalm response to sing.
- Select songs for the gathering and sending forth, paying special attention to the function of those liturgical moments.
- Select other music or songs to accompany ritual actions (sprinkling rite, preparation of the altar and gifts, breaking of bread, communion procession, and blessings).
- Consider the songs to be played or sung as a call to worship.
- Provide worship aids or songsheets for the assembly. Secure necessary copyrights (see end of this section for information).

ENVIRONMENT AND MINISTERS TASK GROUP

- Prepare or arrange the physical space where the liturgy will be held.
- Prepare the altar and ambo with appropriate cloths, candles, and Lectionary.
- Prepare bread, water and wine, communion vessels, purificators, Sacramentary, and check with the presider for the vestments needed.
- Make a plan for how the gifts will be presented and the altar table prepared.
- Make a plan for how communion will be distributed and assign Eucharistic ministers.
- Decorate the liturgical space with appropriate art, flowers, plants, cloths or cultural artifacts.
- Make a plan for greeting the assembly and distributing songbooks, or worship aids.

8. Review the Assembly’s Role

Before you finalize your plans, review the ways that the whole assembly, not just the leaders, will be involved in the liturgy. How will the people gathered be able to pray through words, songs or actions? Remember that your team is not responsible for the liturgy--only the preparation. The liturgy is the responsibility of everyone gathered, so don’t leave them out! Make sure your preparations allow for people to pray together, not be prayed at! Most importantly, make sure to leave room for God to speak to you, so that it can be your prayer as well.

9. Review Plan and Meet with Presider

If the team has been working in separate groups, the Liturgy Preparation Teams needs to walk through the total plan together.

Complete the Liturgy Preparation Worksheet and review responsibilities.
Meet with the Presider and review the liturgy plan. Copy worksheet if necessary.
10. Make Final Preparations

Some additional preparations would include:

- Creating a **Worship Aid**--a program with songs and prayers for the assembly. See [end of this section for copyright information](#).
- Writing out a **Liturgy Script**.
- Walking through the sequence with everyone involved.
- Setting up the physical environment for the liturgy.
- Practicing readings, music cues, dramatic presentations, etc.
- Getting ready to greet those who will pray.

11. Evaluate the Liturgy

Planning for evaluation is the last step of preparing liturgy because it helps you to know how to be better prepared the next time. Before you finish your planning meeting, decide upon a time when you will gather to evaluate this liturgy. Liturgy evaluation should always ask the question “**Did our preparations help the people to pray?**” When evaluating do not list things that went wrong or not as planned. Sometimes different elements don’t go as well as planned, but the focus of liturgy was still achieved. Instead, describe evidence of how your preparations were successful. Determine what you learned which might help in future preparations.
EUCHEAPSTIC LITURGY PREPARATION WORKSHEET

Occasion/Season/Feast: 
Date/Day/Time: 
Planning Leader: 
Presider: 
Other “Givens” to Note: 

DISCUSS THE CONTEXT OF THE LITURGY

Who: 

What: 

Where: 

When: 

REFLECT ON THE SCRIPTURES

Read the Gospel first, then the First Reading, Psalm and Second Reading (if Sunday or feast day). Note: In the Lectionary, there is a connection between the First Reading and the Gospel. Reflect on the historical context, literary styles, and then make connections to current events, issues and the faith community’s response. Then create a short statement which will focus the rest of your preparation.

Focus for Preparation:
EUCARISTIC LITURGY PREPARATION WORKSHEET

GATHER
Preparation Time for the Assembly: _________________________________
Call to Worship/Greeting: _______________________________________
Opening Song (or reversed with Greeting): ___________________________
Penitential/Sprinkling Rite: _______________________________________
Music during this Rite (opt.): _____________________________________
Glory to God (Song of Praise): ____________________________________
Opening Prayer: _________________________________________________

LISTEN
First Reading: ___________________________________________________
Psalm Response: _________________________________________________
Second Reading: _________________________________________________
Gospel Acclamation: _____________________________________________
Gospel: _________________________________________________________
Homily/Reflection: ______________________________________________
Creed (Sundays and Feasts): _______________________________________
Prayer Inteccessions: _____________________________________________
Music for Intercessions (opt.): _____________________________________

RESPOND
Preparation of Gifts/Table: ________________________________________
Music during Preparation: _________________________________________
Preface Text: ____________________________________________________
Eucharistic Prayer: _______________________________________________
Preface Acclam. (Holy, Holy): _____________________________________
Memorial Acclamation: ___________________________________________
Amen/Doxology: _________________________________________________
Lord’s Prayer: ___________________________________________________
Sign of Peace: ___________________________________________________
Lamb of God: ___________________________________________________
Communion Distribution Plan: _____________________________________
Communion Songs: _______________________________________________
Prayer after Communion: _________________________________________

SEND FORTH
Final Blessings/Commissions: _____________________________________
Dismissal: _______________________________________________________
Closing Song/s: __________________________________________________
Copyright Information

If you are reproducing music to include in a program or worship aid for a retreat or prayer service, it is important to obtain copyright permission from the publisher. It is illegal to reproduce printed music without permission from the publisher. Check with your music director/campus minister to see if your parish/church or school already has a license which will allow you to reprint music. If not, most liturgical publishers will grant permission for a small fee. Several liturgical publishers are listed below. Please respect the artists who compose music for worship and depend on royalties and commissions for their livelihoods.

**MUSIC PUBLISHERS**

**G. I. A. PUBLICATIONS, INC.**
7404 S. Mason Ave.
Chicago, IL 60638
1-800-442-1358
708-496-3800
708-496-3828 Fax

**OREGON CATHOLIC PRESS (OCP)** includes New Dawn Music, Epocti/NALR formerly of Phoenix, AZ
5536 N.E. Hassalo
Portland, OR 97213
1-800-LITURGY
(1-800-548-8749)

**WORLD LIBRARY PUBLICATIONS, INC.**
3815 N. Willow Road
P.O. Box 2701
Schiller Park, IL 60176
1-800-621-5197
708-678-0621
708-678-9300
STEP SIX. INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY:
FAMILIES, PARISH AND SCHOOL

Youth ministry seeks to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community (Renewing the Vision)

Youth ministry should not happen in isolation. It should bring youth more fully into the parish or school community, not distance them from it. As a part of comprehensive youth ministry, retreats should not happen in isolation, either. All ministries in the community should be working together to spread the Gospel message. All departments in the school have a stake in the faith formation of the students.

Importance of Involving Families, Parish and School Communities

A Family Perspective: All the research indicates that parents and families are the principle influence on the healthy development of young people. Creating an artificial community that is out of touch with the family can prove to be counter-productive to the young person’s family relationships. On the other hand, working together with parents and family for the betterment of the young person establishes a healthy partnership between all parties. Youth retreats should assist family life, not detract from it.

Informed and Involved Parents: Not only is it necessary to inform parents about activities in which their teens are participating, it is also important to involve them in the retreat process. Parents are considered the primary religious educators of their children. By involving parents, we help them in their role and they help us in ours. Parents who understand the value of the retreat will encourage and support their teen’s participation. It helps to have parents on your side.

Increase Visibility: Involving the community gives the retreat and your ministry greater visibility. People know that the retreat is happening and what it is all about. People know that ministry to youth is happening, and they feel more confident that the next generation is being formed in the faith. They can share that information with others creating even greater visibility.

Gain Support: When others are aware of the goals and the importance of the retreat, they can offer their support in a variety of ways. This support can be a teacher not scheduling a test for the day after a retreat or offering to become a part of the retreat team, etc. Support is more likely to be forthcoming when the purpose of the retreat is known and understood.

Avoid Scheduling Conflicts: You don’t want to schedule a weekend retreat for prom weekend or plan to use the church hall for a day of reflection the same time the Altar Society have always held their Christmas bazaar (even if you did schedule the space first.) Some of this information may be available in written form, but there is a wealth of information that people have in their heads that isn’t on paper. By informing and involving the community, others may be willing to work with you in avoiding conflicts.

Ideas for Involving Parents, Family Members and Sponsors

Inform parents about all aspects of the retreat: purpose, time, place, theme, how it fits into the overall program, etc.
Ask parents’ support in developing a positive attitude in youth who will be participating, especially for required retreats.
Ask parents, sponsors, and family members to write “love” letters to the participants. These letters
could tell teens how special they are, how much they are loved, what gifts they have, what makes their parents proud. Keep the letters as a surprise and then distribute them to the youth on the retreat at an appropriate time. Be careful not to overuse this exercise with the same group. Also be certain that all participants receive letters and that they are positive in content. Encourage parents to talk about the retreat experience with the participants after the retreat is over. Give parents specific ideas for follow up with their son or daughter who participated. Ask parents to participate in good-bye or welcome back rituals.

**Ideas for Involving the Pastor and Staff**

Make parish staff members aware of the retreat (theme, schedule, goals) so they can serve as ambassadors to the rest of the community.
Ask staff members to write a letter of support to the participants to be shared at the retreat.
Ask the pastor to preside at liturgy, ask the musicians to play, etc.
Ask other staff members to contribute their skills and expertise.
Ask staff members to be involved in activities that might be fun, creative, or energizing (e.g. ask the pastor to cook his famous chili for a meal, or come out for an afternoon just to watch and listen)

**Ideas for Involving the Parish Community**

Announce the retreat through the bulletin, Mass announcements, etc.
Ask for prayers during the retreat; this can range from a general request or asking specific people to pray, to arranging prayer partners for all the participants.
Include the retreat in the parish prayers of the faithful.
Have the participants join the parish in a regularly scheduled Mass and/or worship service to end the retreat. Make the community aware of the presence of the participants and have them welcomed back.
Ask committee or council members to write a letter of support to the group.
Have a representative of the community give a brief send off to the group.
Have council or committee members greet the participants when they return to the parish.
Include highlights about the retreat in the bulletin or newsletter. If possible include quotes from the youth about the experience. Display photographs in the vestibule or hall.

**Ideas for Involving the School Community**

Inform staff and students about the retreat well in advance, including those who won’t be directly involved. Post a list of retreatants to secure input from the staff about a student’s participation relative to academic, disciplinary, or psychological reasons.
Check schedules to avoid conflicts; inform others of your retreat dates and ask them to avoid scheduling major events on those days.
Ask teachers and coaches to consider those who will be on retreat when assigning homework, planning special classroom activities, or scheduling practices.
Work with teachers to incorporate the retreat material within their course curriculum.
Have youth share their retreat experience in class.
Prior to the retreat have previous participants talk to those who have not participated. (e.g. If the sophomore sexuality retreat is mandatory, have juniors talk to the sophomores.)
Include participants in school prayers/liturgies.
Ask faculty and staff members to be a part of the retreat team.
Have send off or welcome back gatherings.
Include highlights about the retreat in the bulletin or newsletter. If possible include quotes from the youth about the experience. Display photographs in a prominent location.
STEP SEVEN. MAKING PRACTICAL PREPARATIONS

Preparing for a retreat involves more than planning with the team, contracting a facility, and calling the bus company. Preparations involve thinking through the various aspects of a retreat and planning ahead so that from start to finish things go as smoothly as possible. The Boy Scout motto holds true for retreats: Be Prepared!

Preparing Participants

Retreat participants need to know what to expect of the experience (in a general way) and what is expected of them. Providing this information to teens before the retreat event demonstrates your respect for them as individuals and allows them to make a personal choice to attend.

  Explain to youth who have never participated what a retreat is.
  Send a letter of invitation or flyer to all potential participants that includes the focus/purpose of the retreat; a list of what to bring and what not to bring; and information about the time to depart/return or begin/end. You could also include positive comments from youth who have attended previous retreats.
  Send a **Code of Behavior** to participants listing possible consequences for inappropriate behaviors. (For example, youth need to know that they will be sent home for alcohol/drug use, or that parents will be asked to pay for property damage, or other consequences have been determined by policy.)

Preparing Parents

Parents have the right, the responsibility and the desire to know what their teens are participating in before granting their permission. It is mandatory to have the parents’ written consent for any teen to attend a retreat. Not only is this a sound retreat philosophy, but involving parents in this basic way will also increase parental support of the youth ministry.

  Inform parents about what a retreat is and why it is important for their teen to participate. Give them an overview of the purpose and the objectives of this particular retreat. Help them to see how this event fits into the comprehensive youth ministry program in the parish or school.
  Inform parents about the behavior expectations for the participants, including possible consequences. Parents need to know that their teen’s inappropriate behavior may lead to dismissal from the retreat.
  Send parents the appropriate forms (permission, medical, and hold harmless statements) to read and sign.
  Make sure that parents receive the same information that the participants receive. This can be accomplished by sending copies of what was sent to teens or by sending a letter summarizing the information. This letter may also request the support and prayers of the parents.
Preparing a Budget

Preparing the budget well in advance provides you with a realistic picture of expenses and enables you to identify an accurate per person cost. Budgets require a realistic projection of income and expenses, balancing the two. Estimate as realistically as possible all expenses and income.

1. List Sources of Income
   - anticipated participant fees
   - grants/gifts
   - youth ministry or school budget
   - fundraisers

2. List Expenses
   - transportation
   - stipend for retreat team leader or retreat coordinator (if applicable), clergy, guest presenters
   - facility rental
   - food and snacks
   - supplies
   - AV rental
   - gifts and acknowledgments
   - administrative costs such as postage, printing, phone, paper
   - team training and other team expenses
   - scholarships for youth who cannot afford the fees

3. Determine the Retreat Fee

Once you add up all income and expenses you can determine the actual participant fee. If income is less than expenses, explore ways to cut costs (carpool instead of taking a bus, ask people to donate snacks) or raise income (holding a fundraiser, soliciting donations). If income is greater than expenses, you may choose to reduce fees or use the money to benefit the retreat (e.g. better supplies, increased stipends, T-shirts for the participants, bus instead of carpool).

Preparing Publicity

Long-Range Publicity

The long range publicity plan raises general awareness of the retreat; helps youth, parents and staff understand how retreats fit into the overall plan for youth ministry; and gives youth the opportunity to adjust their family and work schedules for the retreat dates. Here are a few simple suggestions to try:

- Put retreat dates on the parish or school calendar
- Include retreat dates on yearly schedules
- Include retreat information in school or parish newsletters, annual bulletins, etc.
- Provide periodic reminders (verbal or written) if the date is announced long before the retreat. (For example, if a retreat is announced in September, but won’t occur until March, you will need to remind youth again in December or January about the date.)
Short-Term Publicity

The short-term publicity plan is more intensive and designed to get youth to actually sign up for the retreat. Short-term publicity is focused on helping teens to arrange their schedules and get their money and forms together. It needs to be sent or posted several months in advance but soon enough to require immediate action. Techniques include:

- Church bulletin announcements
- Weekend Mass announcements
- School PA announcements
- Posters
- Special flyers
- Newsletters
- School newspaper
- Direct phone calls to potential participants
- Bulletin boards at church or school
- E-mail
- Postcards, Reminder letters

Preparing for Adolescent Behavior

Preparation for adolescent behavior needs to be directed toward teens and adults. You can be prepared for most situations if you take into consideration typical adolescent behaviors and how they apply to the retreat setting. There are six steps to consider:

**Send a Code of Behavior to Participants and Parents**

Send a Code of Behavior identifying clear expectations to all participants and parents prior to the retreat. The code should include consequences for behaviors such as use of alcohol/drugs, vandalism, fighting, etc. that could be major disruptions to the retreat. Teens should understand—*before* they come on the retreat—that they will be sent home or will not be allowed to participate if they cause such a disruption. Also, parents should not be caught off guard if they receive a phone call insisting that they retrieve their child.

**Review Expectations with the Facility**

Prior to, or as you arrive at the facility, meet with facility staff to review/clarify expectations about behavior, access to facilities, schedules, etc. Facilities usually have their own rules about smoking areas, off limits areas, clean up responsibilities, designated quiet times or areas, meal times, etc. Knowing these well and meeting with facility staff can go a long way to ensuring that the retreat will be a positive experience.

**Review the Code of Behavior On-Site**

Review the code of behavior with the participants and team soon after they arrive at the facility. Include any rules of the facility at this time. In this way you can avoid the “I didn’t know” excuses such as “I didn’t know we couldn’t go into the woods” or “I didn’t know girls couldn’t go to the boys dorm.” A staff member of the facility may wish to welcome the group and review facility expectations with your group. Make sure that the team understands the expectations and are willing to enforce them. The team should understand the role they play in *preventing* discipline problems by being with the youth and stopping unacceptable behavior. Team members may even help establish the code of behavior. The code can be creatively presented to the participants.
Establish Emergency and Discipline Procedures with the Team

Clarify the team’s plan for handling problem behaviors or emergency situations. Also clarify which persons on the team are responsible for which situations. Team members should know which problems they are expected to respond to directly and which problems or situations should be directed to someone else. For example, team members should respond directly to minor problems like talking during presentations, inappropriate language, excessive noise, etc. On the other hand, serious infractions such as use of controlled substances, physical fighting, etc. should be directed to the retreat team leader. Review the established consequences for certain behaviors. Planning for these types of situations will prevent poor decisions.

Take a Positive Approach

All this planning for difficulties may seem overly negative. The reason for establishing rules is so that everyone can have a positive experience—including you. There is nothing wrong with sharing that desire with teens. In fact, it demonstrates your vulnerability and usually receives a reasonable response. Youth need to hear—even if they won’t agree—the reasons behind certain rules or restrictions. Otherwise they may take issue with certain rules and develop a negative attitude which could affect their own and others retreat experience. Wording the expectations in a positive rather than a negative way is also helpful.

Retreat Be-Attitudes

Blessed are those who are in their own bed at the lights out hour.

Blessed are those who do not leave the retreat facility during the retreat.

Blessed are those who are punctual for they shall meet their maker on time.

Blessed are those who refrain from foreign substances for they shall enjoy the whole weekend.

Blessed are the peacemakers for they are the friends of all.

Blessed are those who report any injuries for they shall be healed quickly.

Happy those who nurture their neighbor’s self-esteem for they shall find support.

Happy those who participate fully in the retreat for their rewards are endless.

Blessed those who follow these Be-Attitudes for they shall find happiness on this retreat.

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Preparing for Tough Situations

Youth retreats can create situations which call for a compassionate pastoral response to real or potential infractions of the rules. For example, if a participant broke a minor restriction (not drugs, alcohol, firearms, sexual activity) and he/she is required to participate, would you hold to the letter of the law, or would you be more pastoral and make allowances? Each situation is different and you can only expect to use your best judgment in handling each circumstance. Here are some other considerations. **Difficult situations will arise - count on it!** Our responses can establish precedents for future responses. A single exception can easily become the new rule.

**Carefully consider all sides to each situation.** Look at it from the point of view of the youth involved as well as your own. Explore what issues are at the heart of the matter. Parents and youth are not always forthcoming with all the details. They may come on strong assuming that you will not compromise. Some teens may be pushing your limits to see what they can get away with, while others may have a real need for an exception. Consider the good of the retreat community, the good of the individuals, as well as the setting of precedents involved when making a decision.

**Explore the alternatives.** Offer options whenever possible, e.g. if the teen cannot make the designated retreat, check with other parishes and let the teen know what other retreats they could go on.

**Make an informed, prayerful decision.** It can be helpful to consult with fellow team members before deciding. After the decision, be prepared to explain your point of view.

Preparing for Emergencies

Advance preparation can keep emergency situations from turning into panic situations. Our primary concern is to ensure the safety and health of all participants. Even accidents can be learning experiences for young people as they feel the caring presence of the community in a difficult moment. Here are some things to prepare in advance:

- Read through the medical forms and note any special medical information (e.g. diabetic, asthmatic, allergies, and special medications). Share this information with team members as appropriate, especially the small group leaders of individuals noted.
- Know the emergency phone numbers for the area of the retreat facility. Know how to get an outside line. Know where the phone is located and how to use it.
- Know where the hospital is located and the quickest way there.
- Designate who will be transporting youth to emergency rooms if necessary.
- Ask in advance if the facility has a first-aid kit. Know where it is located. Bring your own if there isn’t one available.
- Have exit plans in case of fire. Know where fire extinguishers are kept. Have shelter plans in case of a tornado.
- Bring a battery-operated radio for weather reports.

The last steps of preparing for a retreat involve attending to registration details, and organizing materials and supplies. There is nothing worse than pulling out session plans and realizing that you have forgotten key materials.
Four Helpful Hints

1. **Develop Your Own Set of Retreat Checklists**

Experienced retreat leaders have simple checklists that they update to make sure that essential materials are included when they prepare to lead a retreat. Take the lists which are included in Appendix D and personalize them for your use.

2. **Create and Maintain A Set of “Retreat Kits”**

Another way to stay organized is to store basic materials in boxes/containers. (The big Rubbermaid storage containers work well.) Create one kit with all medical supplies, another with Mass/Prayer supplies, and another with basic Retreat Session supplies. Don’t forget to keep a list with the contents so that you can replenish the supplies quickly.

3. **Organize by Sessions of the Retreat Schedule**

Develop lists of necessary materials by walking through the schedule. Even if you have ready-made kits, it’s important to check each session for materials needed. You may have added a new activity or dropped an old one which calls for different supplies.

4. **Name a Designated Detail Person**

Some people are just naturally good at keeping track of details. Consider naming an older teen or an adult volunteer as a designated detail person whose job is to maintain your retreat kits or to review lists and supplies before an event. The tension of attending to last minute details makes us all prone to forget things. Having someone in charge of details can make the experience less tense and more meaningful for you as well.
STEP EIGHT. EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Evaluation is an integral step of the retreat, though it is often overlooked in the midst of concluding sessions, packing and traveling home, or post-retreat fatigue! Evaluation provides evidence that the retreat’s purpose and objectives have been achieved and suggest necessary changes. Evaluation allows the retreat team leader, team, and participants to reflect on insights and personal growth which occurred during or as a result of the retreat.

Evaluation

Participant Evaluation

Written and oral evaluations by retreat participants are a necessary source of retreat design. Though many answers from youth tend to be predictable (e.g. “Not enough free time”, “Better food”, etc.), it is important to ask the questions for several reasons. First, evaluation leads participants to reflect on the experience itself and, therefore, becomes part of the learning process. Secondly, consistent critical comments regarding a particular session, activity or issue usually indicate the need for revision or adaptation. Isolated negative comments should be acknowledged, but a pattern of negative comments on some aspect of the retreat should be investigated and reviewed.

Written feedback from participants is essential. It offers everyone a chance to reflect on questions in a personal and confidential manner. Evaluative discussions can be beneficial, allowing youth to overhear each other’s insights, personal highlights or recommendations. A sample “Retreat Participant Evaluation Form” is included in this section.

Retreat Team Evaluation

Members of a retreat team should gather for evaluation after the retreat has concluded. This allows for some personal reflection time in which individuals can bring thoughts, ideas, and learnings back to the group. Team members evaluate the experience not only as observers of the retreat content and design, but also as participants in the unfolding retreat process.

Written feedback from team members is helpful in providing a record of team reactions and observations. Team members also need the opportunity to overhear each other’s insights, highlights and recommendations. A sample “Retreat Team Member Evaluation” form is included in this section.

Evaluation by the Retreat Team Leader

The retreat leader needs to assess the retreat’s effectiveness in meeting its purpose(s) and objectives. If the retreat designers set a clear purpose, then the evaluation tries to determine if the retreat accomplished what was intended. Through evaluation you may discover that the retreat design was effective in accomplishing unintended purposes. Evaluation also allows you to assess the effectiveness of specific sessions and retreat activities. If the retreat design is to be repeated, evaluation allows you to modify your design. Sometimes an activity is good but needs to be used at a different point in the schedule. Other times a session may be appropriate for the design but simply didn’t work with a particular group.
Follow-Up

Create a Report for Committees and Boards. Evaluation of a retreat provides an opportunity to review the effectiveness of youth retreats in developing the faith of adolescents. Direct comments and quotes from participants and team can make a very powerful presentation. If the parish or school has partially or fully funded the retreat, a final report can help to repeat or increase future funding.

Identify Peer Leaders. Evaluation of a retreat experience can help identify potential peer leaders who have emerged during retreat sessions. During informal sharing and breaks on the retreat, as well as during session times, natural peer leaders tend to surface. Make a point of affirming these young people and then follow up with invitations for them to become involved in other ministry opportunities.

Acknowledge and Thank Team and Staff. Evaluation is also a good time to acknowledge the efforts of the team. Most retreats depend on volunteer efforts and it is important to publicly note their gifts of time and talent. This acknowledgment also helps young people to realize the support which the members of the parish or school community have given to them. Acknowledging contributions of time and talent is a way of naming the importance of community life—especially as youth have just experienced it.

Develop Follow-up Experiences. The retreat does not end when the participants leave the retreat. It is essential that follow-up activities are designed to continue to support and nurture the youth and the families. See page 32 for post-retreat ideas.
SAMPLE RETREAT TEAM MEMBER EVALUATION

Thank you for sharing your time and talents on this retreat. We would appreciate your evaluation of this retreat experience. Your comments will help us when we plan future retreats.

1. In what ways were the purposes and objectives of this retreat met? Not met? (Be specific)

2. In terms of the purposes and objectives of this retreat, identify the three most successful areas of the retreat experience. Identify the three things you would have changed and why.

3. What was helpful to you in the planning process and training for this retreat?
   What would you have done differently?

4. In your area of responsibility as a presenter, small group leader, or chaperon, how did you feel about your performance in that role? Do you have any suggestions for improvement in these areas?

5. In what ways did the team interact well with the participants?
   In what ways could the team have improved in interacting with participants?

6. What did you learn about yourself and your relationship with God/Jesus on this retreat?

7. Please rate the presenters/facilitators and their topics. 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)
   If you rate a topic 3 or lower, please comment.

   Title/Presenter: Comments:  What would you change?

   Friday Night:
   Saturday Morning:
   Saturday Afternoon:
   Saturday Evening:
   Sunday Morning:
   Sunday Afternoon:

8. What do you think the retreatants gained from this experience?

Please use the reverse side for further comments.
SAMPLE RETREAT PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

We would appreciate your honest thoughts and comments about your retreat experience. Thank you for taking the time to do this evaluation. It will help us when we plan retreats in the future.

1. What was most rewarding on this retreat?

2. What would you have changed?

3. What did you learn?

4. Please evaluate the following areas of the retreat you found rewarding and briefly state why.
   Use a scale of 1-5 where 1=poor and 5=excellent

   ___ Games and icebreakers
   ___ Prayer times
   ___ Topic Presentations
   ___ Small Groups _________ name of small group leader
   ___ Celebration of Reconciliation
   ___ Celebration of the Eucharist
   ___ Recreation and free time
   ___ Meals
   ___ Sleep Time
   ___ Facility

Please rate the talks on the retreat. 1 - (poor) to 5 - (excellent)
If you rate a topic 3 or lower, please comment. Comments:

Friday Night Session  1 2 3 4 5
Saturday Morning Session  1 2 3 4 5
Saturday Afternoon Session  1 2 3 4 5
Saturday Evening Session  1 2 3 4 5
Sunday Morning Session)  1 2 3 4 5

Please use the reverse side for further comments.
APPENDIX A. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Introduction

The following principles flow from Sacred Scriptures, our Catholic tradition, the documents of Vatican II, sound psychology and education theory, and have been clarified in the crucible of literally thousands of youth retreats. Originally crafted in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, they have been revised and updated for the Diocese of Amarillo. Each principle is followed by a set of reflection questions designed to further elaborate the principle. The list is intended to serve as a set of guiding principles in the planning and evaluation of youth retreats of all styles and formats. They are comprehensive, thus no single retreat will embrace all of these principles. Rather, they are intended to establish a set of foundational principles to broadly orient, train and guide retreat providers in the Diocese of Amarillo.

Theological Principles

1. *Retreats should give witness to a God who loves, a saving and forgiving God who has loved each one of us into being, and who calls us all by name.*
   a. What efforts are made to welcome youth at the beginning of the retreat and to provide an atmosphere of hospitality throughout the retreat experience?
   b. Are there opportunities for personal reflection, peer listening or counseling, which might lead to healing psychological or interpersonal conflicts the participants may be experiencing?
   c. Is there an opportunity for sacramental reconciliation?
   d. How does the retreat call teens to that "sacred time apart" witnessed to in the scriptures and to experience the call to conversion through self-reflection or personal witness?
   e. How are the unique gifts and talents of each young person affirmed during the retreat?
   f. What efforts are made to evangelize and reach out to those teens who may be marginally involved in the practice of their faith?

2. *Retreats should allow teens to experience the sacramental presence of God, a God both fully human and fully divine.*
   a. What activities help the participants reflect on how God is present in the ordinary events of their lives--school, family, work, social life, neighborhood, nation and world?
   b. What efforts assist youth in understanding the Paschal Mystery--the dying and rising in human events?
   c. How is God revealed through creativity--through art, music and dance?
   d. What elements of the retreat present the human body as sacred and as a revelation of Christ's continuing presence throughout all of creation?

3. *Retreats should assist youth in developing a personal relationship with God in three Persons.*
   a. What efforts are made to present a variety of images of God and to offer young people opportunities to reflect on their images of God?
   b. Are human relationships discussed and presented as models for revealing God's presence in our lives?
   c. Is God presented as one who truly desires to be in relationship with each one of us?
   d. What activities assist youth in developing a healthy self-concept--as persons who reveal God to each other?
   e. In sessions and prayer, is God addressed in three persons--Father (Creator, Mother), Son (Redeemer, Savior), Spirit (Sanctifier, Breath)?
4. **Retreats should give youth an experience of Church as community of believers.**
   a. In what ways does the retreat mix people, welcome strangers, break down stereotypes?
   b. What activities help participants to observe, celebrate and respect cultural differences and
      giftedness?
   c. Is sensitivity to personal and communal needs respected (e.g. lights out, quiet in sleeping areas,
      noise in the morning.)?
   d. How are conflict and tension managed and addressed?
   e. What approach is taken to decision-making, consensus, democratic, authoritarian?

5. **Retreats should give youth an experience of Church as a witness to an unbroken tradition; a community which proclaims the Good News in word and deed.**
   a. How is scripture incorporated into all aspects of the retreat design?
   b. Is the approach to Scriptures age-appropriate and sensitive to all cultures, including youth
      culture?
   c. What activities help participants to relate scripture to current events in their lives, families,
      community and world?
   d. Is the use of Scripture informed by the best of Catholic biblical scholarship? Does the retreat
      avoid literalist or fundamentalist approaches to the Scriptures?
   e. How are the "communion of saints" and current persons who live the Good News in word and
      deed presented as models of Christian living?

6. **Retreats should give youth an experience of Church as believers called to discipleship in Christ.**
   a. How does the retreat help youth assess, affirm, redirect or focus on attitudes and behaviors
      which live out their baptismal call to discipleship?
   b. What activities challenge participants to consider the needs of the global community?
   c. How does the retreat show or give examples of the practical, everyday ways that Christians act?
   d. How are the struggles and success stories of Christian living witnessed?
   e. What efforts are made to distinguish between charity and justice so that participants understand
      the broad meaning of "service?"
   f. What activities and sessions assist participants in developing a sense of vocation?

7. **The doctrinal content of youth retreats should be theologically consistent with the official teaching of the Catholic Church, the documents of Vatican II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.**
   a. In what manner does the retreat reveal the basic traits of Catholicism, especially its communal,
      sacramental and incarnational dimensions?
   b. Does the retreat explain or develop an awareness of the critical role of conscience in the
      formation of faith and values?
   c. What activities assist the participants in the formation of conscience?
   d. How do the retreat activities develop decision-making skills in youth?
   e. Are efforts made to explain official church teaching--especially on controversial topics?
   f. Are there opportunities for participants to raise questions and engage in dialogue about the
      teachings of the Church?

8. **Prayer, in its liturgical, communal, and private forms, is an essential aspect of the retreat experience opening participants to ongoing conversion and deepening of faith and spirituality.**
   a. Does the retreat design allow participants to experience a variety of prayer styles and forms?
   b. Does the retreat help youth understand prayer as integral to their relationship with God?
   c. What activities witness to the value and purpose of prayer and the efficacy of praying?
   d. Is prayer presented as part of the faith journey, the ongoing call to commitment?
   e. Is the purpose of prayer revealed as beyond the stating of needs?
   f. Are creativity and variety apparent in the experience of prayer throughout the retreat?
9. **Retreats for youth should provide enlivening liturgical experiences which are celebrated in accord with liturgical norms and which are pastorally sensitive to the occasion and faith expression of teens.**
   a. Does the retreat allow opportunities for participants to prepare for the liturgical ministries?
   b. Are aspects of youth culture incorporated into the liturgical experiences?
   c. How are participants assisted in understanding the nature of ritual?
   d. Is there an opportunity for a basic catechesis on the Mass (Eucharistic liturgy)?
   e. Is there a variety of liturgical experiences including Mass, Reconciliation, Liturgy of the Hours?

**Development and Design Principles**

10. **Retreats should dialogue with the life experience of participants, providing them the opportunity to integrate their experience within that of the faith community, thereby ensuring and enhancing the integrity of their faith.**
   a. Have retreat planners used a tested methodology to design the overall retreat and individual sessions (e.g. Groome’s Shared Praxis Methodology)?
   b. What efforts have been made to assess the current needs—emotional, social, moral, developmental -- of the group?
   c. Will participants have an opportunity to reflect on their current needs prior to the retreat? (i.e. through discussion, survey, questionnaire or brainstorming)?
   d. Looking ahead, is sufficient time allotted at the retreat for participants to reflect on how the retreat's themes or activities can be integrated into their day-to-day lives?
   e. Do ice-breakers and other community-building activities foster a sense of belonging and trust? confidentiality? Honesty?
   f. Will the retreat help participants become connected to the larger faith community?

11. **Retreat environments should be characterized by acceptance, growth and freedom. Retreats must avoid emotional manipulation.**
   a. Do we recognize the uniqueness of participants in their cultural, ethnic, communal, family and personal differences?
   b. Does the retreat convey acceptance to the participants for where they are on their faith journey?
   c. Does it enable/encourage participants to discover where they are on their faith journey?
   d. Have provisions been made so that deep emotional expressions or accounts of traumatic experiences (e.g. sexual or physical abuse, suicide attempts, etc.) will receive proper support or referral services?
   e. Is discretion used by team members in the sharing of personal stories and experiences (i.e. working on a retreat team is not a substitute support group or therapy session)?
   f. Are activities with the potential to elicit strong emotional responses balanced with a variety of other kinds of activities?
   g. Is there respect for participants' privacy in the sharing of personal experiences of emotions?
   h. Are ground rules established for discussing and sharing, such as the option to "pass"?
   i. Is there respect for diversity of learning styles?
   j. Is there respect given to participants’ differing degrees or stages of interpersonal communication skills? (For example, are the attention-getter, very-shy, developmentally-disabled, socially-inept or chronically-disruptive youths made to feel accepted?)
   k. Have efforts been made to avoid activities or questions which evoke predictable emotional responses so as to intentionally manipulate participants? (i.e. Are the activities and questions open to natural emotional response or are they designed to create a particular emotional response?)
   l. Is the retreat process “open to the spirit” or is it inflexibly managed?
12. **Retreat experiences should lead youth to growth, enhanced health and wholeness.**
   a. Will there be opportunities for peers and adults to minister to each other such as in sharing dyads or adult-youth interactions?
   b. Has sufficient time been built-in to the schedule for participants to reflect individually or with a person of choice on the meaning/impact of the experience (e.g. journaling, reflectionaires, small group prayer time, individual time, etc.)?
   c. Are verbal affirmations given for being on time, sharing appropriately, being cooperative, being attentive, going to bed and sleeping, etc.?
   d. Is it communicated that all feelings are okay when shared appropriately and respected?
   e. Are active listening skills encouraged and demonstrated?
   f. Is there a resource list of persons or opportunities to follow-up on decisions made or awarenesses reached during the retreat (e.g. career counseling services, vocation choices, service opportunities, psychological counseling, etc.)?
   g. Are there activities or opportunities which encourage or facilitate sharing affirmation among the team and participants?

13. **Adolescents should be given the opportunity to participate in diverse experiences leading to greater self-identity, expression and esteem.**
   a. Do we provide a variety of activities that are age and culturally appropriate?
   b. Do we respect the need for a variety of learning styles which are age and culturally appropriate?
   c. Are there opportunities for participants to name and express their special gifts and talents?
   d. Are there activities which provide freedom of expression and opportunity to explore self-identity?
   e. Have activities and audio-visuals been screened so as to avoid negative or limited stereotypes which detract from self-identity and self-expression?

14. **The retreat experience should provide youth with an opportunity to develop the skills needed to live responsibly in the retreat community with others.**
   a. mutual respect
   b. active listening
   c. living within guidelines and rules
   d. negotiating needs
   e. appreciating time and schedule, especially the need for sufficient rest
   f. balancing communal and personal needs
   g. accepting the uniqueness of others
   h. respecting the environment, facility, property, etc.
   i. being aware of other groups sharing the facility
   j. acknowledging differences in adult and youth needs and expectations
   k. being honest and courteous

15. **The psychological well-being of participants is safeguarded by maintaining a good balance of recreation, reflection, structured activity, rest and diet.**
   a. Is the general schedule made available to participants and directors/team? (Do participants know when sessions, meals, breaks and free time are going to occur?)
   b. Is there adequate time spent indoors and outdoors?
   c. Is appropriate use made of all facilities available?
   d. Are various kinds of recreation available: individual/group, competitive/non-competitive?
   e. Is the frequency of meals sufficient? Is food available at other times?
   f. Are nutritious snacks available?
   g. Are there alternatives to meat in the diet?
   h. Are special dietary needs solicited and accounted for?
   i. Is state law regarding the use of tobacco products by minors stated and reasonable upheld?
   j. Are negative behaviors confronted–challenged on an individual basis?
k. Do the retreat guidelines clearly reflect expectations and the consequences for avoiding them?

16. **Retreat experiences are only one aspect of a continuing personal formation process, therefore, parish/school-based preparation and follow-up activities after the retreat are essential elements of retreat design.**
   a. Are creative projects produced on the retreat (e.g. banners, posters, portraits, etc.) incorporated into the ongoing formation program and environment?
   b. Are there ongoing opportunities to further develop the specific theme or goal of the retreat?
   c. Are there opportunities to re-experience the sense of community created at the retreat among participants?
   d. Are the team members available for follow-up conversations regarding issues, plans and decisions made at the retreat? (E.g. if two or three youth are very motivated to action, etc. would there be an adult to follow through with them?)
   e. Are efforts made to connect the community formed on retreat with the larger school or parish community?
   f. What provisions are made to follow up on referrals made during the retreat?

17. **Retreat designs should respect the needs of families (in all forms).**
   a. What efforts have been made to involve families and parents in the total retreat process?
   b. Are provisions made for financial assistance to participants whose families may not be able to afford the cost of the retreat?
   c. Are activities and processes sensitive to the diversity of family structures (i.e. single-parent, blended, divorced, unemployed parent, etc.)?
   d. Have potential family issues been anticipated with proper resources and referral options?
   e. Are reasonable alternatives available when family scheduling conflicts arise?
   f. Are retreat directors, team members available to answer questions/concerns of parents and other family members?
   g. Is relevant information on family situations made known to the team members?

18. **Retreat activities, presentations and processes should be developmentally appropriate.**
   a. How have previous experiences helped to shape the design of this retreat?
   b. How does this retreat relate to the overall scope and sequence of the catechetical program?
   c. What efforts have been made to assess the developmental needs within this retreat group?
   d. If the retreat design is already established, what efforts have been made to adapt its content and process to the needs of this particular group?
   e. Are sufficient optional activities planned?
   f. Is there provision for team meetings to assess the effectiveness of content and process while the retreat is still in progress?

19. **Retreat designs should allow participants reasonable freedom and autonomy to make decisions about or evaluate their experiences.**
   a. Do participants have the right to abstain from a particular activity given good reason?
   b. Are there opportunities for participants to give verbal or written evaluative feedback, and is it received openly?
   c. Does the evaluation process allow the option for anonymity?
   d. Are participants’ suggestions respected and considered?
20. **Retreat designs should have clearly stated themes, purposes and objectives.**
   a. How does each of the retreat activities contribute to accomplishing the stated purpose and objectives?
   b. Is the theme of the retreat clearly stated and appropriate for this particular group?

21. **Retreat processes should begin with the life experience of youth, joining their personal story to that of Christ and the Christian community.**
   a. Does the retreat help participants to reflect on how their peer groups (e.g. friends, classmates, co-workers) are also members of the Christian community?
   b. Do talks and presentations include relevant personal faith sharing experience?
   c. Is adequate time and space provided for participants to reflect on and share their own life experience?
   d. Do adult and peer team members easily share their own life experience and faith stories?
   e. Are retreat activities, skits, songs, prayers, liturgy, music, etc. relevant to the life experience of the participants?
   f. Is the image of Jesus portrayed and presented as one who could share our life experiences (i.e. Jesus as truly human)?
   g. Is the message of Jesus presented as having concrete relevance for youth living in today's world, culture and environment?

22. **Retreat designs and components should respect the developmental journey of participants in the areas of:**
   a. psychological growth
   b. moral growth
   c. faith growth
   d. intellectual growth
   e. social growth

23. **The content of youth retreats should reflect appropriate faith themes as recommended in Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry (USCCB, 1997)**
   a. Does the retreat design respect the differences of younger and older adolescents?
   b. Are appropriate faith themes for younger adolescents from *Renewing the Vision* incorporated into the retreat:

   **The Profession of Faith**

   *Catholic Beliefs*—understanding the Creed and the core beliefs of the Catholic faith.
   *Holy Trinity*—introduction to God's unique self-revelation as three in one and some implications for living Christian faith and spiritual life.
   *Jesus Christ*—exploring the meaning of the Incarnation, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, and the call to discipleship.
   *Church*—understanding the origins of the Church in Jesus Christ and understanding and experiencing the history of the Church and its mission.

   **The Sacraments of Faith**

   *Sacraments*—understanding the role of the sacraments in the Christian life and experiencing the Church's celebration of the sacraments.
   *The Church*—understanding the reason for and beauty of the Church; identifying the necessity of the Church for our salvation.
Church Year—understanding the meaning of the liturgical seasons of the Church year and the scriptural teachings presented through the Lectionary.

The Life of Faith

Life in the Spirit—understanding how the Spirit dwells in our midst in a new way since Pentecost and understanding that God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
The Dignity of the Human Person—recognizing the divine image present in every human person.
Morality and Living a Virtuous Life—incorporating Catholic moral principles and virtues into one's life and moral decision making.
Personal Growth—discerning the Spirit at work in their lives and incorporating the Catholic vision of life into personal identity.
Relationships—developing and maintaining relationships based on Catholic values and the meaning of Christian community.
Sexuality—understanding the Church's teaching on sexual morality, understanding the Church's positive view of sexuality as a gift from God, and understanding the importance of valuing chastity and sexual restraint.
Social Justice and Service—understanding the importance of respecting the rights and responsibilities of the human person, appreciating our call to be stewards of creation, and discovering and living Jesus' call to a life of loving service.
Grace as Gift—recognizing God's indwelling spirit in our lives and responding to this gift, which justifies and sanctifies us through God's law.
Lifestyles and Vocation—discerning how to live the Christian vocation in the world, in the workplace, and in marriage, single life, ministerial priesthood, permanent diaconate, or consecrated life.

Prayer in the Life of Faith

Christian Prayer—understanding and experiencing the many forms of prayer in the Church— especially prayer through the church year—and the importance of the "Our Father" in Christian prayer.
Are appropriate faith themes for older adolescents from Renewing the Vision incorporated into the retreat

The Profession of Faith

Jesus Christ—discovering the meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and what this means for living in Christ's spirit today.
The Mystery of the Trinity—understanding and experiencing the triune God.
Revelation—understanding the revelation of sacred scripture and sacred tradition.
Old Testament—developing the knowledge and tools to read the Old Testament and to understand its meaning and challenge for us today.
The Gospels—developing the knowledge and tools to read the Gospels and understand their meaning and challenge for us today.
Paul and His Letters—developing the knowledge and tools to read Paul's letters and to understand their meaning and challenge for us today.
Faith and Identity—exploring Catholic beliefs and what it means to live as a Catholic today.
The Sacraments of Faith

Sacraments of Initiation, Healing, and at the Service of Communion—understanding the sacraments and how they are both personal and ecclesial, evoking a response from each of us. Worship—developing an understanding and skills for participating in the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist.

The Life of Faith

Catholic Morality—applying Catholic moral teachings to contemporary life situations as one encounters the many complexities in our world.
Conscience, Virtue, and Sin—understanding and uncovering the desire to turn toward God and to do good and to act in accordance with God's grace, understanding the meaning and impact of sin, and learning to make decisions in accordance with one's rightly formed conscience.
Justice and Peace—understanding that the Catholic faith calls people to work for justice, to pursue peace, and to defend human dignity, and developing skills to act for justice, peace, and human dignity.
Lifestyles and Vocation—discerning how to live the Christian vocation in the world, in the workplace, and in marriage, single life, ministerial priesthood, permanent diaconate, or consecrated life.

Prayer in the Life of Faith

Christian Prayer—understanding and experiencing the variety of Christian prayer traditions and discovering and responding to the Spirit's personal invitation to develop a personal prayer life.

d. Is the retreat designed to foster in youth a communal identity as Catholic Christians, and to help them develop their own personal faith identity?
e. Do retreat activities present the faith convictions and values of the Catholic Christian tradition and invite adolescents to adopt and own these values and convictions?
f. Is a shared Christian praxis model used to present specific faith themes or topics?

24. Retreat designs should reflect a balance of content, prayer, community building and the sharing of personal faith experiences.
a. Is there balance and integration between the various retreat components?
b. Is prayer integrated into the total flow and movement of the retreat?
c. Are there opportunities for community-building spaced throughout the retreat, or only as participants arrive?
d. Are the amounts and focus of content, prayer, community building and personal sharing appropriate for this particular group's needs?

25. Retreat designs should include a variety of interactive processes including total group activities, small group sharing, games, non-verbal exercises, personal reflection times, and others.
a. Has the retreat team been adequately prepared to lead the activities?
b. Do the retreat activities appropriately challenge the participants to risk and build trust through their experience?
c. Do team members also participate in all activities and interactions?

26. Personal witness, storytelling and faith sharing experiences should be regularly included in youth retreat designs.
a. Is there opportunity for proper preparation and rehearsal of witness talks and other presentations?
b. Is undue emotional manipulation avoided in personal testimonies or witness talks?
c. Do the people selected to do faith sharing or witness talks model Christian behavior?

27. *The five movements of shared Christian praxis and the four movements of the pastoral circle--insertion, analysis, theological reflection, and action--are recommended for retreat design.*
   a. Is the retreat team knowledgeable about the principles and methods of shared Christian praxis and the pastoral circle?
   b. Does the retreat design challenge participants to further involvement after the retreat?
   c. Are there follow-up opportunities for the participants to continue their action and awareness?
   d. Does the retreat prepare participants to return to the day-to-day reality of their life experience?

28. *Opportunities for peer ministry and peer listening should be included in youth retreat designs.*
   a. Does the implementation of retreats reflect ministry to, with, by, and for youth?
   b. How have youth members of the retreat team been prepared for their role as peer listeners?
   c. Is there sufficient flexibility in the retreat schedule to allow for peer ministry and listening to occur formally and informally?

29. *Retreats should provide for a suitable physical environment.*
   a. Are space, light, sound and temperature of the facility appropriate for the activities planned?
   b. Have alternative activities been planned to account for unexpected changes?
   c. Are the facilities appropriate for younger and/or older adolescents?

30. *Retreats should be sensitive to the psychological needs of the participants.*
   a. What efforts have been made to identify current events, issues or situations which may affect the attitudes and behaviors of participants (e.g. a recent suicide at the local high school, a traumatic event in the community, upcoming exams, social or sports events)?
   b. What efforts have been made to identify personal or family issues and concerns which may affect the attitudes and behaviors of participants (e.g. letters to parents, participant reflections, personal interviews, etc.)?

**Ministerial Principles**

31. *Participants should be involved in the planning, implementation and follow-up, as appropriate.*
   a. Is the content of the retreat developed from the needs of the participants, rather than the Director?
   b. Are there activities and/or processes that youth take an active role in?
   c. Is there sufficient interaction between leaders and participants?
   d. Are there processes where participants must discover their own answers as opposed to having answers given to them?
   e. Are the participants encouraged to be a part of all aspects of the retreat? When appropriate, are participants part of the planning?

32. *Retreat team members should be mature, discerning and flexible.*
   a. Are retreat team members capable of adjusting the retreat program to respond to emerging needs or the "tug" of the Spirit?
   b. Are retreat team members pursuing the legitimate goals of a retreat, guided by sound principles - or operating out of inappropriate personal expectations or a hidden agenda? Participants?
   c. Are retreat team members listening and reflecting throughout the experience? Are there opportunities for team members to share their reflections on the movement of the Spirit in the retreat?
   d. Is prayer that seeks the guidance of the Spirit part retreat design, preparation, implementation?
33. **Retreat team members must know the limits of their role as "listeners" and be prepared to make referrals as necessary.**
   a. Do retreat team members know their limits? Are they equipped and trained to handle situations that are likely to emerge on retreats?
   b. Do retreat team members understand the boundaries of their role, particularly in regard to issues that demand professional intervention, such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, substance abuse, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts? Are there plans in place for handling these situations? Is there a reference list of hotlines/agencies/counselors available for referrals?
   c. Are team members trained in active listening techniques? Do they have the necessary referral skills?
   d. Are there clear guidelines for retreat team members to assist them in determining when they are out of their depth and how to get help?
   e. Have the retreat team members been thoroughly oriented to the Diocese of Amarillo Safe Environment Policy

34. **Retreat team members respect confidentiality, as appropriate and ethical.**
   a. Do retreat team members understand what legally must be reported to authorities?
   b. Do retreat team members understand what morally and ethically should be reported?
   c. Are the youth aware that some things must be or may be reported?
   d. Do the retreat team members understand, affirm and protect participants' right to privacy? Is there an understanding that information shared in confidence must be kept confidential, including other retreat team members?
   e. Do the director and team members use discretion in revealing information even if they were not asked to keep it confidential?

35. **Developmental disabilities and other issues that may affect participation should be understood and treated with sensitivity and respect.**
   a. Do team members have access to and have they read the medical forms of participants, particularly those participants in their small group?
   b. Have members of the team been informed of any issues that do not appear on the forms?

36. **To ensure integrity, retreat team members should practice what is preached.**
   a. Does the approach reflect Gospel values?
   b. Does the behavior of the adult and youth team members conform to the guidelines of the retreat community that have been set for the participants?
   c. Are discipline issues handled in a way that is sensitive to the individual, but respects the needs of the group?
   d. Are the team leader and team members giving witness to their faith and the faith of the Church?

37. **Retreat team members should pray together and minister to each other.**
   a. Is there time for the team to pray together in the retreat schedule?
   b. Are team members encouraged to reflect and pray individually throughout the retreat?
   c. Are team members being ministered to (by each other) in the same way that the participants are?
   d. Have the team members had time to form as a team, to pray together, to learn about each other before the retreat?
APPENDIX B. SAMPLE RETREATS

OVERNIGHT CONFIRMATION RETREAT

“We Are One in Christ”

PURPOSE: To provide opportunities for spiritual enrichment and reflection on the connection between Christ, Confirmation and the faith community.

OBJECTIVES:
1. Participants will get to know other participants more completely.
2. Participants will better understand their role as members of the faith community.
3. Participants will consider ways in which Jesus Christ unifies us in community.

Saturday

9:00 AM Arrival of participants

9:15 AM Icebreakers
Focus: To establish group identity and provide an opportunity to familiarize names.

Example 1: Have the group sit in a circle and ask each person to introduce him/herself, including information such as school, favorite music, TV show, class, etc.

Example 2: Have each person think of an adjective that describes him/her and starts with the same sound as his/her name (e.g. “Joyful Jenny” or “Kind Chris”). With either option, after every five to ten people, go back and review the names of those who already stated their names.

9:45 AM Witness Talk 1
Focus: Set the atmosphere for the retreat

Example: A recently confirmed young adult could give this talk. It should include the following points: why we are here; what is a retreat; the need to be open to the experience; the importance of participating; the effect the retreat can have, including the fun, sharing and closeness that can result. The person should recall his/her own experience, and relate these themes from personal experience.

10:00 AM Opening Prayer
Focus: To highlight the spiritual aspects of the retreat and to pray for guidance throughout the experience.

Suggested themes: journey, searching, openness.

10:15 AM Break
10:30 AM  **Small Group Community Builder**  
Focus: To get to know the members of the small group.

*Example 1:* Have everyone in the group provide information such as: name, age, school, number in family, hobbies, and what he/she would be doing if not at the retreat.

*Example 2:* Use sentence starters such as “If I could go anywhere in the world I would...”, “If I won a million dollars I would...”, “If I could ask God one question I would ask...”

10:45 AM  **Small group activity**  
Focus: To have the members of the small group share something about themselves so that they can get to know one another.

11:40 AM  **Affirmation set-up**  
Focus: To provide an opportunity for participants to affirm one another throughout the retreat.

*Example:* Affirmation Mail Bags  
Explain to the participants that throughout the retreat we would like to affirm the positive aspects we see in each person. One way to accomplish this is through little notes of affirmation written to other people on the retreat. Each person, including team members, should be given a “lunch bag” to make into their mailbox. Everyone should write their name on the bag. (Use the name adjectives from Icebreaker One if appropriate.) Each person should then decorate the bag and /or if a Polaroid camera is available, a photo of each person could be put on the bag. This will be their “mailbag” for these notes throughout the weekend. **No one should read any of their notes until a special time at the end of the retreat.**

12:00 PM  **Lunch**

1:00 PM  **Team meeting**

1:15 PM  **Small group activity**  
Focus: To explore who Jesus is.

*Example:* Each small group will be asked to read selected scripture passages and discuss what the passage reveals about Jesus. Small groups will share their conclusions with the large groups.

2:00 PM  **Break**

2:15 PM  **Witness talk 2**  
Focus: To present the story of one person’s experience in coming to know Jesus and how that relationship has affected his/her life.

*Example:* The person should include how he/she sees Jesus and how that has changed his/her behavior. This can be a dramatic change or a slow change in day to day living. The person may also wish to share how Jesus has been present in good and bad times.

2:30 PM  **Individual reflection**
Focus: To allow the participants to reflect on what they have learned about Jesus and their personal relationship to him.

Example 1: Have the participants journal on what their relationship to Jesus was like as a child (who was he, how did they pray, etc.) And what it is like now. Ask them to reflect on how their relationship with Jesus impacts on their everyday life. Some of these reflections can be shared with their small group if participants feel comfortable.

Example 2: Have the participants depict in some symbolic way their current relationship with Jesus. Art supplies such as paper, markers, magazines, scissors, clay, etc. should be provided. Individuals should explain their creation to their small group.

3:30 PM Break

4:00 PM Exercise about community
Focus: To provide an experience of working together as a community in order to learn about being community.

Example: Provide each small group with the pieces to a puzzle. (These should be large in size.) The group should have all the pieces they need to complete the puzzle, except for one, and they should have an extra piece that will complete another group’s puzzle. Allow them to work without telling them about the extra and missing pieces. Observe the interactions. When all have completed their puzzles or the group is extremely frustrated, process the experience in light of being a community.

5:00 PM Imagination prayer
Focus: This prayer should help the participants to reflect on God by asking them to imagine themselves in a situation where they encounter God or Christ. Atmosphere and timing are critical to the success of this prayer form. Dim the lights or close the shades before beginning this prayer. You may also choose to have some soothing instrumental music playing quietly in the background. Begin by having the participants get in a comfortable relaxed position. Lead the group through a series of relaxation exercises. Then move into the prayer. Several books have examples, or you could write your own. Be sure to pause at the appropriate places. When the prayer is over, invite them to slowly return to the present reality of the room. Following the prayer, have individuals spend time in quiet reflection or journaling. Specific reflection questions could be developed based on the prayer used.

5:45 PM Dinner

6:45 PM Team meeting

7:00 PM Witness talk 3
Focus: To help the participants see the need and prepare for Reconciliation.

Example: Points to be included in this talk are: the need for change and forgiveness, some common failings such as not seeing Jesus present in others or not being part of the community (relate to earlier processes), how one person can effect the community (positively or negatively), and a personal positive
experience of reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing.

7:30 PM  Reconciliation service
9:15 AM  Break with snacks
10:15 PM Letters from parents
Focus: To feel the expression of human love as a glimpse of God’s love. Prior
to the retreat, ask parents to write to the youth. (See sample parent letter
for details.) During the retreat use a story, or song, to talk about how
important it is that we let people know we love them. Explain that their
parents were asked to write a letter to let them know how they feel about
them and they will now receive their letter. Ask them to keep in mind as
they read it that it may have been hard for their parents to put these
things into words. For some of them, they will read things that they have
never heard before, while some of them will be reminded of things their
parents have already expressed. Assure them they will have plenty of
time to read their letter, and ask that they respect each other’s privacy.
(Of course, people can share things if they choose.) Encourage them to
write back to their parents in response to what they have just read. Keep
the atmosphere respectful and quiet while people are reading and writing.
Have the adults be alert for anyone who may be having difficulty
accepting what was written. Expect some happy tears.

11:30 PM  Night prayer
Suggested theme: Keep the prayer “light” since most of the evening is
emotionally heavy. Seeing God as a parent or a soothing, lullaby reflection on
God’s love.

11:45 PM  Go to rooms
12:15 AM  Lights out/go to sleep

Sunday
8:15 AM  Team meeting
8:30 AM  Breakfast
9:00 AM  Wake-up activity
Focus: To get participants moving at the start of the day

Example: Lap Sit
Have participants stand close together in a circle with their hands on the
shoulders of the person in front of them. On the count of three have them sit
slowly so each person is resting on the knees of the person behind them. Once
they have mastered this, they can try to walk together.

9:15 AM  Morning prayer
Focus: To begin the day in prayer.

Suggested themes: greeting the day, seeing God around us, seeing the Lord’s
presence in a different way or seeing a different aspect of the Lord’s presence.
9:30 AM  Affirmation exercise
Focus: Affirmation of each person’s gifts.

Example: Have each person retrieve their mailbag. Give individuals a chance to
read their mail. Have them gather in small groups. Each person in the small
group will have a chance to be on the affirmation “hot seat.” The person on the
spot will listen to everyone else in the small group affirm him/her. Remind those
giving affirmations to speak directly to the person. The person on the “hot seat”
cannot deny or downplay anything that is said. He/she can only smile and say
thank you.

10:15 AM  Clean-up

10:30 AM  Return for liturgy with family and parish
EIGHTH GRADE SEXUALITY RETREAT
St. Aloysius Gonzaga
One -day Model

Purpose: To help youth discover why they sometimes feel insecure about their appearance, relationships and to help them understand and appreciate the way God has created them.

Objectives: 1. Participants will understand that a positive self-image and self-worth is the key to healthy relationships.
2. Participants will learn what changes to expect as they move through puberty.
3. Participants will be given the opportunity to ask questions and raise issues around the topic of sexuality in a safe, non-threatening environment.

9.00 Welcome and overview
Icebreakers:
Anatomy shuffle
Stand in the square

9:30 Self-image and self-worth: The key to relationships
Small group: Body outline/build a friend (relate characteristics to body parts)
Large group: Share “friends” body outline
Coat of arms: Done individually but within the confines of the small group

10:30 Nuts and bolts...
Pass the body
“Body pains” - comfortableness with own body
Vocabulary
Stories of youth/adolescent awakening
Girls and boys separate into groups. Each sex is asked to list changes or happenings during puberty of opposite sex-- physical & emotional. After this is done, exchange papers and “critique” in large group.
Panel of “sexperts” answers kids anonymously submitted questions about sex

11:45 Lunch

12:45 The difference between sex and sexuality?
Who/what influences me? - small group discussion
Inventory sheet

1:15 Movie: The Great Chastity Experiment
Discussion

2:00 Wrap up and personal inventory
Prayer: Guided imagery and quiet time for reflection
Index card: write one line prayer
Scripture: Romans...
“Lean on Me” slide show

2:45 Departure
ST. IGNATIUS CONFIRMATION RETREAT
School Day Model

**Purpose:** To provide an opportunity for reflection on their faith, and an opportunity for spiritual growth prior to Confirmation.

**Objectives:**
1. Participants will identify those people in their lives that are models of who Jesus is for them.
2. Participants will explore what it means to belong to a Christian community, and what responsibilities members of that community have to its’ members and society.
3. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect upon their own relationship with God/Jesus as they approach the Sacrament of Confirmation.

8:30 Team arrival

9:15 Participant arrival

9:30 Team introductions, rules, details, icebreaker(s), wagon wheel

10:00 I. Self-Image
   Name banners in small groups
   Chocolate chip cookie exercise
   Team sharing on self-image and self knowledge

10:30 Quiet Time

10:45 Small Discussion of quiet time questions

10:55 Break

11:00 II. People who were Jesus for you:
   Team sharing on significant people in our lives
   “Stars in the night” exercise
   Characteristics of Jesus in Scripture
   - woman at well
   - adulterous woman
   - a healing story
   - rich young man
   - Zaccheus
   - other?

12:00 Lunch

1:00 III. Being Jesus for others: Being Church
   styrofoam cup church structure; Wilbur’s story or David’s story
   team sharing on what church is for them, who God is, and what Confirmation meant
   small groups: What they’ve done, what they can do as Confirmed Christians

2:00 Break

2:10 Quiet Time: This is it folks... are you ready to take the plunge? Team preparation for body part skit

2:20 Prayer: Time for commitment or recommitment
Retreat Sample Resources

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
Website: http://www.crs.org/

Center for Ministry Development (CMD)
Website: https://www.cmdnet.org/

Covenant Teen
Website: http://www.covenantteen.com/

Life Teen
Website: http://lifeteen.com/

Saint Mary’s Press
Website: http://www.smp.org/
APPENDIX C. SAMPLE RETREAT ACTIVITIES

This appendix is designed to point you in the direction of appropriate resources and activities to assist you in your retreat design. These are only a sampling of what is on our shelves. We are not recommending any one book over another. It is important that you read over each activity and make sure that it fits with the goals you hope to accomplish. All of the resources mentioned here are available at the Office of Youth Ministry.

Icebreakers, Games and Bond Building Activities

From *Building Community in Youth Groups*, Group Books, 1985

- Blind Alphabet
- Blind Line Up
- Knots
- Lap Sit
- Servant's Lunch
- Trust Fall


- Energizers and Tension Reducers
- Feedback and Disclosure
- Games and Brainteasers
- Getting Acquainted
- Openers and Warm-ups

From *Have-A-Blast Games*, Group, 1991

- Competition
- Peelin' Bananas
- Biblical Spin-a-fortune
- Elf Defense
- Hula Hoop Hysteria

- Recreation
- Blob Tag
- Name Shuffle
- Water Balloon Juggling
- Zany Olympics

- Diversions
- Collision
- Holy Water Charades
- Jump Rope Mania
- Tag Team Sumo

From *Play It Again*, Zondervan Press, 1993

- Dot to Dot
- Human Crossword
- Time Bomb Icebreaker
- Shuffle the Deck
- Mix'Em Up
Opening Up & Deeper Sharing Ideas

From Building Community in Youth Groups, Group Books, 1985
Opening Up ideas:                      Deeper Sharing ideas:
Faith Collage                          All Aboard
Family Tree                           Family Feud
Individual Collages                   The Ideal Life
Memory Lane                           The Outsiders
Rainbow of Feeling                    United We Stand, Divided We Fall
Who's Your Neighbor                   The Wall

Gift Find
Where Do I Stand?
Parent-Child Freeze
Statues
It Feels Like a Gift

Hello God, Where Are You?
Colorado or New York?
Friendship Notes
Images of the Church
Letters to Jesus

Affirmation Ideas

From Building Community in Youth Groups, Group Books, 1985
Affirmation Collage
Eulogy
Family Affirmation
Group Hug
Telegrams
Warm Fuzzies

Hunting for Compliments

From The Catholic Youth Retreat Book, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1984
Letter from the Lord
TV Characters
Awards Assembly
Epitaphs
Sign Mine
Care Power
Activities for Prayer and Worship

From *Creative Worship in Youth Ministry*, Group, 1985
Activities for Call to Worship
Activities for Prayers of Invocation
Activities for Prayers of Confession and Pardon
Activities for Prayers of Intercession
Activities for Prayers of Petition
Activities for Prayers of Thanksgiving
Activities for Commissioning

From *Pathways to Praying with Teens*, St. Mary's Press, 1993
Scriptural Prayer
Fun Ways to Pray Aloud
Drama, Dance and Mime
Old Favorites with a New Twist
High Tech Prayer
Prayer in Different Settings
Music: Messages in the Melodies

From *Prayers with Pizzazz for Junior High Teens*, St. Mary's Press, 1996
Self-reflection
Storytelling: Parables and Prayer
Global and Community Issues
Love and Relationships
Sin and Forgiveness
Mass Media and Prayer

Service Activities

From *Beyond Leaf Raking: Learning to Serve/Serving to Learn*, Abingdon Press, 1993
Serve in a soup kitchen
Plant trees or shrubs
Build bird feeders to give to the elderly
Bake homemade bread and deliver to the homebound
Start a clown troupe to perform in children's homes and nursing homes
Develop a drama on race relations
Teach arts or crafts to young children
Make care packages for teen mothers

Loafing Around
Sock Giveaway
Thanksgiving Bingo Scavenger Hunt
Truck Troops
Activities for Outdoor Retreats

From *Resources for Outdoor Retreats*, St. Mary's Press, 1994
Nature Scavenger Hunt
Treasure Hunt
Your Journey Companion
Yarn Affirmation
Prayer Pouch
Night Hike
History As Told By a Tree
God's Presence in Nature
The Creek
River Rocks
Sun
Wind

Bubbles and Creation
Finding God in Creation
Nature Charades
Nature-Object Meditation
APPENDIX D. SAMPLE LETTERS AND FORMS

Sample Participant Letter

Our Lady of Perpetual Motion  
930 Side Street  
Ourtown, OH 54321  
(513) 555-1961

(Date)

Dear Julie,

As you are about to begin high school, you are probably both excited and nervous. There are many things that you are looking forward to and some things that you are wondering about. Ever wish you could get the inside scoop on high school?

Well, you can. You are invited to attend a special Day of Reflection for those who are new to high school. This day will explore the ups and downs of being a freshman, help you discover where God fits into the picture, and give you some resources that you might need. High school seniors will be there to share what they have learned.

The Day of Reflection will take place on September 15, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Church Meeting Room. Cost for the day will be $5 and includes lunch.

We really hope you will be able to be there for this special day. If you plan to join us, have your parents sign the enclosed permission slip and return it with your five dollars to the Youth Ministry Office by September 10. Please invite your friends if they haven’t received this invitation, have them get in touch for more information and a permission form.

Hope to see you there!

Peace,

James Madison  
Youth Minister

enclosure: permission form
Sample Parent Letter

St. Parousia Youth Ministry
626 S. Oklahoma Street
Your Town, OH 55555
(513) 555-0480

(Date)

Dear Parents,

As you know, your son/daughter will be participating in a Confirmation retreat on March 10-12. Retreats are special times to get away and get in touch with God. The focus of this retreat will be deepening the faith of your son/daughter, and an examination of the role the Holy Spirit has in his/her life. The retreat will be directed by Joe Slawinski and Julie Meyer from our parish who have been trained as retreat directors. Other adults and peer leaders will be assisting in various ways.

LOCATION/TRAVEL: The retreat will be held at Camp Hiawatha 20 miles west of Waukesha. Transportation will be by bus. We will leave the Church parking lot at 6:30 p.m. on Friday and return Sunday for the 12:00 p.m. Mass. Please join us for Mass.

FORMS: You will find a Parent Permission/Medical Form enclosed. Please complete the form as accurately as possible and sign it. Please have the form to the parish office by March 3. No youth will be permitted to participate without a signed parent-permission/medical form.

COST: The cost of the retreat is $75, and should be paid when you return the permission slip/medical form. If you have difficulty paying the fee, please contact me so arrangements can be made. No one will be denied because of an inability to pay.

CODE OF CONDUCT: Your son/daughter received a letter with detailed retreat information, including what to bring and what not to bring and expectations for behavior. A copy of the Code of Behavior is included with this letter. Please be aware that if your teen is disruptive to the retreat, you will asked to come and retrieve him/her.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION: In case of emergency, the camp phone numbers are: Camp Office, 555-1214 and Camp Director’s Home, 555-7788.

Sincerely,

Judy Johns-Smith
Youth Minister
Sample Follow-Up Letter for Participants

St. Parousia Parish
626 S. Oklahoma
Cincinnati, OH 55555
(513) 555-1234

(Date)

Dear Jason,

I was really glad that you were able to participate in the Confirmation Retreat last weekend. I know life can be busy. Thank you for taking the time to be there. I have heard several positive comments about the retreat, and I hope the experience was good for you.

Since Confirmation is just around the corner, I am sending a Youth Update that further explores the role of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament. I thought this might be of interest to those who attended the retreat. I would also again encourage you to share the resource material that you received at the retreat with your parents. It might be a good way to get a discussion started.

Thanks again for participating! I look forward to seeing you at Confirmation!

Sincerely,

Judy Johns-Smith
Youth Minister

closure: Youth Update
Sample Follow-Up Parent Letter

St. Parousia
626 S. Oklahoma St.
Cincinnati, OH 55555
(513) 555-1234

(Date)

Dear Parents,

Thank you for allowing your son/daughter to participate in last weekend’s Confirmation Retreat. I appreciate your support of our program. The participants’ evaluations indicate that it was a positive experience for most of those who participated. I want to share with you a few of the comments from the evaluations.

“I had a lot more fun than I thought I would. It really gave me something to think about, too.”

“I used to have a lot of questions about the Church and Confirmation. This retreat really helped me understand more about the Sacrament.”

“After this retreat, I feel ready to be confirmed.”

Of course, one overnight retreat cannot cover everything or completely shape the values of your teen. I encourage you to talk to your son or daughter about issues of faith and spirituality. To help you in this dialogue, your teenager received some resource material on the retreat that he/she was encouraged to share with you. Although it may not seem like it sometimes, teenagers are still influenced by what their parents say. (If your son/daughter has not given you the resource material yet, ask them to share it with you.)

If I can be of any further help to you, don’t hesitate to call. I am looking forward to sharing your son/daughter’s Confirmation celebration with you.

Sincerely,

Judy Johns-Smith
Youth Minister
Sample Checklists

**Checklist of Administrative Forms and Materials**

- Medical/Insurance Forms for All Youth and Adults
- Permission and Release Forms
- Session Handouts and Materials
- Participant Books or Journals
- Evaluation Forms
- Directions to the Facility
- Checks/Payments for Facility, Director, Musicians, Clergy, etc.
- Prayer and Liturgy Preparation Forms
- Videos, CD’s, Tapes Needed for Sessions

**Checklist of Basic Retreat Supplies**

- Paper (various sizes)
- Construction paper
- Poster board
- Pens, Pencils
- Music tapes, CD’s
- Slides
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Three-Hole Punch
- Flashlights
- Paper clips
- Nametags
- Index Cards
- Kleenex
- Markers
- Envelopes
- Masking Tape
- Regular Tape
- Glue
- Change Box
- Post-It Notes (Various Sizes)

**Checklist of Equipment**

- Easel/Newsprint
- Sports Equipment
- CD Player/Speakers
- Overhead Projector
- Extension Cord, Adapters
- First Aid Kit
- Games, Cards, Board Games
- Screen
- VCR/DVD Player, TV Monitor
- LCD, Notebook Computer
Checklist of Liturgy and Prayer Supplies

**General Prayer Supplies**
- Bibles
- Candles
- Matches or Lighter
- Prayer Books
- Music Books or Worship Aids
- Decorative Cloths
- Other Items for Decoration
- Liturgical, Contemporary, Reflective Music
- Music Stands

**Eucharistic Liturgy Supplies**
- Bread or Hosts
- Wine
- Baskets and Vessels
- Purificators
- Lectionary
- Sacramentary
- Vestments
- Order of Worship/Script
- Liturgical Music

Checklist: Food, Snacks and Utensils

- Menus, Food Lists
- Recipes
- Measuring Cups and Spoons
- Mixing Bowls
- Cutting Boards and Knives
- Can Opener
- Food from Lists and Menus
- Snacks for Participants and Team
- Soda, Coffee, Teas, Juices, Waters
- Condiments
- Dish Tub, Dish Drainer
- Dish Cloths, Towels
- Cleaning Supplies
- Serving Utensils
- Plates
- Bowls
- Cups (hot and cold)
- Glasses
- Silverware
- Napkins
- Containers for Leftovers
- Plastic Wrap
- Foil
- Dish Detergent
- Pots and Pans
- Cooking Utensils
- Serving Dishes (bowls, platters, etc.)
- Hot Pads and Trivets
APPENDIX E. RETREAT FACILITY GUIDE & RETREAT TEAMS

Important Note

We recommend that you verify this information with the particular facility, since it is not unusual for a facility to change its prices or policies with little or no notice.

In issuing this guide, we do not endorse any particular facility or retreat team. If you have additional information on the places listed or wish to suggest other facilities, please call the Office of Youth Ministry, 806-383-2243 ext. 118.

This guide contains information on facilities across the Diocese. If you would like to discuss the benefits and disadvantages of a particular facility—from the point of view of planning a youth retreat—call that facility.

We strongly recommend that you personally visit a retreat facility before signing a contract. Only you can decide if that facility will meet the unique needs of your group and your program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retreat Center</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone #</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center</td>
<td>2100 N Spring St, Amarillo, TX 79107</td>
<td>(806) 383-1811</td>
<td><a href="http://bdrc.org/">http://bdrc.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceta Canyon</td>
<td>37201 FM1721, Happy, TX 79042</td>
<td>(806) 488-2268</td>
<td><a href="https://cetacanyon.org/">https://cetacanyon.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Falls Ranch</td>
<td>3699 Co Rd 4, Wayside, TX 79094</td>
<td>(806) 764-3466</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hiddenfallsranch.com/">http://www.hiddenfallsranch.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Plains Retreat Center</td>
<td>18511 City Lake Rd, Canyon, TX 79105</td>
<td>(806) 499-3429</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hpretreatcenter.org/">http://www.hpretreatcenter.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talon Point</td>
<td>5145 Farm to Market 722, Channing, TX 79018</td>
<td>(806) 935-5598</td>
<td><a href="http://www.talonpoint.org/Pages/default.aspx">http://www.talonpoint.org/Pages/default.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“The Diocese of Amarillo is encouraging all four deaneries to host two retreats for its youth, or one per cluster, each school year,”

“Each deanery is welcome to invite one of four groups to assist with the retreat, or put a group together from within their own parish. The Diocesan Youth Office continues to assist parishes that would like to host a cluster retreat with $550 in seed money, promotion and general assistance to the host parish.”

Retreat available at this time:

**National Evangelization Team (NET)**
**Address:** 110 Crusader Ave
West Saint Paul, MN 55118
**Phone:** 651.450.6833
**Web site:** [http://www.netusa.org](http://www.netusa.org)

**REACH Youth Ministry**
**Contact:** Doug Took
**Address:** PO Box 1714
Helena, MT 59624
**Phone:** Ph. (406) 461-8983
e-mail: doug@reachym.org
web site: [http://reachym.org](http://reachym.org)

**Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ**
**Contact:** Sr. Joan
**Address:** P.O. Box 64
Prayer Town, TX 79010
**Phone:** 806-534-2312 ext. 121
e-mail: dljcministries@gmail.com
web site: [www.dljc.org](http://www.dljc.org)

**Covenant Teen**
**Contact:** Roxana Garcia
**Phone:** (806) 223-5614
e-mail: rggarcia87@gmail.com
web site: [www.covenantteen.com](http://www.covenantteen.com)
APPENDIX F. CONTRACTING WITH A RETREAT TEAM LEADER

Selecting and Contracting a Retreat Team Leader

It may be necessary or recommended to hire a retreat team leader from outside the parish or school to lead a retreat. Retreat leadership normally involves a significant role in team-building and other team preparations. It may also involve a significant role in retreat design.

Why have an “outside” person lead the retreat? There are several circumstances in which a retreat program coordinator may choose to enlist the help of an “outsider” to design a retreat, prepare a team and/or lead a given retreat:

- The parish or school does not have the expertise “in house” to design or lead a given retreat.
- A parish or school may not have the personnel resources to cover a full calendar of retreats.
- A youth minister or campus minister may want a less prominent role on a retreat, for variety’s sake.
- Having another person lead a retreat may allow a youth minister or campus minister to concentrate on the coordination of details or to provide a greater number or variety of retreats.
- It may be helpful for a retreat to be led by an “outsider”—someone with whom the group is less familiar. The dynamic of a new person with new ideas may enrich the overall retreat experience.

A hired retreat team leader should work with the retreat team. Most contemporary youth retreats are led by teams of youth and adults. It is recommended that the hired person work closely with team members and the retreat coordinator in advance of the retreat, to ensure effective communication and collaboration prior to and on the retreat.

Finding Retreat Team Leaders

Finding persons qualified to lead youth retreats is not always an easy task. The best solution is to develop and mentor persons within your parish or school who are competent and experienced in leading retreats. This can be a slow process. Where might you search in the meantime?

- Check with local retreat centers
- Inquire at local meetings of youth ministers
- Call the Office of Youth Ministry
- Call local orders of religious men or women
- Contact area Catholic colleges or high schools
- Seek referrals from other retreat directors
- Work out an exchange with another youth minister (i.e. “I’ll direct your retreat if you direct mine.”)

Checklist for Screening and Contracting Retreat Team Leaders

It is very important to determine whether the potential retreat team leader is compatible with the purpose(s) of your retreat and the style of ministry that people are familiar with. Do not simply take the recommendation of others. If possible, take the time to visit with this person in their own ministry setting and see how they interact with youth. You are responsible for determining the working relationship with your group. The first step in this process is to take some time to clarify what you expect from a retreat team leader:
Your Expectations of a Retreat Team Leader:

Listed below are suggested questions for screening a potential retreat team leader:

Spirituality of the Retreat Team Leader
(See also Appendix A. Ministerial Principles and Appendix G. Retreat Team Competencies)

Describe how your personal spirituality is reflected in your retreat leadership. How do you present other styles of spirituality within a retreat experience? Name some styles of prayer which you find personally enriching. Name the styles of prayer you regularly incorporate into your ministry with youth. What/who is your faith community? How are they supportive of your ministry?

Methods of the Retreat Team Leader

Tell me about some of the retreat groups with which you have worked. Describe how your methodology or style was effective in leading them. Tell me about any current formational activities in which you engaged. How are these reflected in the formational activities you direct for youth? What aspects of the Catholic tradition do you treasure? How do you share these with youth? What are the aspects of the Catholic tradition with which you struggle? How do you handle these when working with teens? Retreat plans don’t always go smoothly. How have you learned from previous difficulties or failures? Tell me about your approach to discipline and conflict management as a retreat team leader. Name some approaches/methods to retreat activities that you would never use. Why?

Retreat Practicalities

What are your expectations of the retreat team? What are your expectations about physical arrangements, materials and supplies, and other particulars of the retreat? Let’s talk about your role in the time line for planning this retreat and meeting with the rest of the retreat team. Given what we have just discussed, what would you consider a reasonable compensation?
Considerations in Determining a Stipend for a Retreat Team Leader

When negotiating a fair stipend consider:

- Prior education and training
- Experience
- Length of the retreat
- Number of necessary pre- and post-retreat meetings
- Whether, or how much retreat design is called for
- Transportation and other expenses

For assistance in determining a fair stipend, contact a professional staff person of the Office of Youth Ministry.

Why Use a Contract?

It is recommended that parishes and schools use a contract when hiring a retreat team leader. By specifically stipulating the terms of the agreement in contract form, both the sponsoring institution and the retreat team leader benefit from establishing clear expectations and a legally binding agreement. A sample contract follows:
Sample Retreat Team Leader Contract

The following agreement is entered into in good faith between __________________________, heretofore titled “Retreat Team Leader” and __________________________, heretofore titled “Representative of Sponsoring Institution.” The Retreat Team Leader agrees to provide the services described below in service to the Sponsoring Institution:

(describe below responsibilities in detail, including number and dates of team meetings, the date(s) of the retreat and any other specific arrangements)

In return for these services, the Sponsoring Institution agrees to remunerate the Retreat Team Leader in the amount of $__________. Additional expenses, including transportation and miscellaneous, incurred in the process of fulfilling this contract, up to but no more than the amount of $__________, will be reimbursed by the Sponsoring Institution within thirty days of the date of the conclusion of the retreat.

Cancellation of this contract will only take place by mutual agreement of the Retreat Team Leader and the Sponsoring Institution. If, for some reason, the Sponsoring Institution must cancel the retreat, the Retreat Team Leader will be reimbursed any expenses incurred up to the point of cancellation. If the Retreat Team Leader is unable to fulfill the obligations specified above, this contract shall be declared null and void.

Signed,

__________________________________________  ______________________________________
Representative of Sponsoring Institution               Retreat Team Leader

__________________________________________  ______________________________________
Date                                                  Date
APPENDIX G. RETREAT TEAM COMPETENCIES

Introduction

Why are competent retreat teams important? Consider these scenarios:

A young woman on a high school retreat tells a team member about the history of sexual abuse in her family. The team member allows herself to be sworn to secrecy.

Late on the second evening of a multi-day retreat, a team member gives a talk about a traumatic personal experience that had been a devastating family secret. The talk provokes a very strong emotional response from the youth. Many are crying; some are apparently uncomfortable and embarrassed; all are exhausted.

Too few organized activities were planned for the junior high lock-in. It's 2:30 a.m. and the team is out of ideas. The fifty-seven junior high students are running amuck through the halls of the parish elementary school.

A chaperon has taken it upon himself to “set kids right.” He does this by criticizing the young people for their bizarre clothing, loud music and variously pierced body parts -- suggesting that these “are not Christ-like.”

A team member is found after hours in the "opposite sex" sleeping quarters. He says he is there to “counsel” the attractive young woman who happens to inhabit the room.

After a lengthy small group sharing session, one team member reports at the team meeting: "My small group was great! There wasn't a single person who didn't cry!" Another team member's group went differently: "It felt like I was in there for a week. Nobody would talk, no matter what I did or said."

All of these scenarios, stories from actual retreats, illustrate a very important principle: effective retreats require trained planners, leaders and chaperons. (Hint: if you don't know why all of the scenarios above are seriously problematic, then you need training!)

The tasks of retreat coordination, design and leadership require specialized knowledge, skills and attitudes -- retreat competencies. Effective retreats call for a range of organizational, ministerial and catechetical competencies. The first step toward providing training and formation for retreat providers is identifying those competencies demanded by the various tasks and roles that team members will be filling. Once the necessary competencies are identified, then training and formation can be provided or sought from an outside source.
Competencies for Retreat Coordinators

Those who carry the responsibility for developing, coordinating and supervising retreat programs should be trained and competent in all five of the major competency areas described in the National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers (NALM, NCCL, NFCYM, 2003); including:

- **Personal and Spiritual Maturity**: includes formation in prayer and personal spirituality; spiritual maturity formed in theological reflection, based on Gospel values, and nurtured in private, communal and liturgical prayer.

- **Lay Ecclesial Ministry Identity**: includes understanding of the call to formal and public ministry as rooted in baptism; affirmed, recognized and nurtured by the Church; commitment to the mission of the church, and understanding of the role of the minister in the church.

- **Catholic Theology**: theological education includes Basic Doctrine, Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, Ecclesiology, Sacraments, Morality, Ecclesiology, Christology.

- **Pastoral Praxis**: capable of pastoral activity that promotes evangelization, faith formation, community, and pastoral care with sensitivity to diverse situations. Understands adolescent culture and development; goals, principles and processes of Catholic youth ministry; components of youth ministry; youth ministry from the family and multi-cultural perspectives; youth ministry resources.

- **Professional Practice**: capable of effective leadership, administration and service, in a spirit of collaboration.

[Note: The Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry's Certificate Program for Professional Youth Ministry Leaders offers a systematic approach to comprehensive training in these five areas.]

Competencies for Retreat Team Members

Following are competency models for some typical retreat roles. These are generic samples and need to be adapted to fit particular retreats. These competency models are provided to assist those who develop and coordinate retreat programs in order to ensure adequate training and formation for their retreat teams. It is incumbent on those responsible for the development and leadership of youth retreats to seek out or to provide this training. Conversely, it is irresponsible and potentially negligent for youth retreats to be conducted by those who are not adequately trained and formed for this specialized ministry.
Sample Competency Model A  
Role: Retreat Team Leader

Knowledge
Understanding of the Amarillo Diocese Safe Environment Training
Understanding of retreat purposes, theology and methodology
Understanding of theology and Church teaching sufficient to guide the team, answer questions correctly, advise retreatants, etc.
Understanding of ethical and legal/liability issues relevant to retreats
Understanding of principles of effective youth retreats (e.g., theological, design, ministerial)
How to respond appropriately to critical adolescent pastoral care issues should they arise (e.g. suicidal crisis, physical injury, etc.)
Diocesan Safe Environment Policy
Competencies of all other retreat roles

Skills
Listening skills
Debriefing skills
Small-group facilitation skills
Public speaking (e.g. for retreat talks, activities, announcements)
Ability to make an effective referral (e.g. forming a judgment regarding the severity of the situation, the immediate pastoral need, etc.)
Ability to effectively lead team meetings
Ability to effectively discipline
Ability to project leadership and effectively lead large groups of youth in retreat activities
Problem-solving and conflict management
Ability to adapt a retreat if warranted by participant needs, schedule, changes, etc.

Attitudes
Personal faith and prayer life
Integrity -- “walks the talk”
Flexibility
Sense of humor
Open, accepting, non-judgmental
Values collaboration and team ministry
Respects delegations
Supportive and affirming
Sample Competency Model B
Role: Team Member / Adult

Knowledge
Adolescent culture and development
Retreat purpose, objectives, methodology and methods
Small-group dynamics (incl. how to lead small group discussions and sharing sessions; appropriate v. inappropriate self-disclosure; etc.)
How to respond appropriately to critical adolescent pastoral care issues should they arise (e.g. suicidal crisis, physical injury, etc.)
Relevant issues of legality and liability
Diocesan Safe Environment Policy

Skills
Active/redemptive listening
Small group facilitation (e.g. ability to effectively lead discussions and interpersonal sharing, maintaining appropriate depth of self-disclosure)
Leadership of prayer and worship
Ability to give an effective retreat talk
Ability to make an effective referral (e.g. forming a judgment regarding the severity of the situation, the immediate pastoral need, etc.)
Ability to maintain appropriate discipline, guidelines and boundaries
Ability to respond as appropriate to the provisions of the Safe Environment Policy

Attitudes
Personal faith and prayer life
Integrity -- “walks the talk”
Flexibility
Sense of humor
Open, accepting, non-judgmental
Values collaboration and team ministry
Supportive and affirming
Sample Competency Model C  
Role: Team Member / Youth

Note: Although many of the competencies are the same for youth and adult team members, allowances must be made for differences in age and maturity. In delegating roles and tasks to young people, care must be taken to give young people responsibilities that correspond to their current abilities. Young people can serve effectively as peer ministers if they are provided with the necessary training, support and adult supervision.

Knowledge
Retreat purpose, objectives and methods
Small-group dynamics (incl. how to lead small group discussions and sharing sessions; appropriate v. inappropriate self-disclosure; etc.)
Large-group dynamics (incl. how to lead icebreakers, simulation activities, prayer and worship, etc.)
How to respond appropriately to critical adolescent pastoral care issues should they arise (e.g. suicidal crisis, physical injury, etc.)
Relevant issues of legality and liability

Skills
Active/redemptive listening
Small group facilitation (e.g. ability to effectively lead discussions and interpersonal sharing, maintaining appropriate depth of self-disclosure)
Leadership of prayer and worship
Ability to give an effective retreat talk
Ability to intervene appropriately in a crisis, with adult assistance
Ability to support adults in maintaining appropriate discipline, guidelines and boundaries

Attitudes
Personal faith and prayer life
Integrity -- “walks the talk”
Flexibility
Sense of humor
Open, accepting, non-judgmental
Values collaboration and team ministry
Supportive and affirming
## Sample Competency Model D
### Role: Adult Chaperon

**Knowledge**
- Basic understanding of adolescent culture and development
- Understanding of retreat rules, guidelines, expectations
- Understanding of extent and limits of chaperon authority
- How to respond appropriately to critical adolescent pastoral care issues should they arise (e.g. suicidal crisis, physical injury, etc.)
- Relevant issues of legality and liability
- Diocesan Safe Environment Policy

**Skills**
- Ability to intervene appropriately and effectively in a crisis, make a referral
- Ability to maintain appropriate discipline, guidelines and boundaries
- Ability to respond as appropriate to the provisions of the Safe Environment Policy

**Attitudes**
- Flexibility
- Sense of humor
- Open, accepting, non-judgmental
- Supportive and affirming
- Values collaboration and team ministry
To Priests, Deacons, Religious and all the Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Amarillo:

Everyone, especially our children, have the right to be safe, secure, and protected from harm, whether sexually, physically, spiritually and/or emotionally, in any and all environments – home, school, neighborhood, community, and for the purposes of this policy – most particularly, in our religious institutions.

As the Bishop of the Diocese of Amarillo, I am committed to “Protect the vulnerable and guard the integrity of ministerial relationships”. I further declare: “Sexual misconduct by clergy, church personnel, church leaders and volunteers is contrary to the Christian morals, doctrine, and canon law. It is never acceptable!”

The Diocese of Amarillo will comply fully, with the requirements as promulgated by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops under the: “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” which is made part hereto.

Diocesan policies are designed in the implementation of the Safe Environment Program in all the parishes, schools, agencies and programs in the Diocese of Amarillo.

Our mission is to create a safe environment for all minors who are entrusted to our Church by:
1. Screening of Church Personnel and supervising all Church ministers, employees and volunteers who work with minors as part of their ministry.
2. Providing appropriate Safe Environment Training in preventing and recognizing child sexual abuse. The safe environment training program approved for all priests, deacons, religious, employees, teachers, and volunteers is “Praesidium: Called to Protect”.
3. Holding all those who work with minors to Christ-centered and professional codes of conduct.
4. Providing age based, safe environment training for minors in the recognition of what constitutes appropriate and moral behavior to children/young people by the program “Right Relationships” which is to be used in all Catholic parishes in the Diocese of Amarillo.
5. Reporting such sexually inappropriate and/or criminal conduct to appropriate Civil and Church authorities.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

+Patrick J. Zurek
Most Reverend Patrick J. Zurek
Bishop of Amarillo

DIOCESAN PASTORAL CENTER
P.O. Box 5644 ~ Amarillo, TX 79117-5644 ~ Voice: 806-383-2243 ~ Toll Free: 800-658-6643 ~ pzurek@dioama.org

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Note: For more information regarding the Amarillo Diocese Safe Environment Policy, visit [http://www.amarillodiocese.org/](http://www.amarillodiocese.org/) or call (806) 383-2243
APPENDIX I. POLICIES & RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES

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Official Disclaimer

This appendix has been written to provide information and guidance to retreat providers of the Diocese of Amarillo. As such, it is not a legal document; rather, it is a resource to assist adult leaders in forming sound practice and judgments in the various aspects of their retreat ministry. The section entitled Diocesan Policy: Guidelines for Youth Activities along with the Amarillo Diocese Safe Environment Policy in Appendix H, have the force of policy and must be complied with by adult leaders ministering under the auspices of the Catholic Church in this diocese. The remainder is recommended guidelines.

If you are holding your retreat outside of the Diocese of Amarillo, you need to check with that diocese to assure that you are in compliance with the host diocese. When in doubt, follow the stricter policy.

By following these provisions and the spirit in which they are written, adult retreat providers may demonstrate their good faith and their intention to minister ethically and responsibly, and within the bounds of the law.

Introduction

Adult leaders involved in retreat ministry have always been aware of their responsibility for the safety of the youth involved in their programs. The increased risk of litigation in recent years has served to make youth ministry leaders increasingly attentive to issues of safety. The term "risk management" is often used to describe efforts to minimize possible injuries to those who are in our care or on Church property. While we can never entirely eliminate the possibility of injuries, we must take all appropriate steps to reduce their occurrence for the benefit of individuals in our parish or school communities.

Our primary concern is for the safety of the youth and adults involved in our retreat ministry programs. This concern takes many forms, for instance: clear communication of information to both adults and youth on the nature of anticipated activities and any associated risks; adequate adult supervision, including any necessary training; proper maintenance of facilities so as to reduce the possibility of accidental injury.

The law considers us responsible for the safety of those in our programs under two legal theories. Under the principle of “tort liability” the participants in our programs are considered "invitees" to whom we owe certain duties. If we fail in those duties due to negligence or improper conduct we can be liable for the consequences. Issues we need to consider under this legal theory are:

- clear communication of activity details with parents and legal guardians;
- clear communication of behavioral expectations of participants and the consequences for misbehavior;
- safe transportation;
- the possibility of mistreatment or abuse of youth while in our programs.

Under the principle of "premises liability" we are considered responsible for the safety of anyone who comes onto property that we are in possession or control of. If someone is injured while on our premises due to the unsafe condition of the property you can be held liable. Issues we need to consider under premises liability are:

- the proper installation and maintenance of buildings and equipment - - the proper maintenance of the grounds, driveways, parking lots, sidewalks and steps;
- emergency safety equipment and procedures such as exit lights, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and fire and tornado drills.

These considerations, along with other frequently-asked legal questions (e.g. copyright law), are explored in this appendix. All retreat providers in the Diocese of Amarillo should review and be familiar with the contents of this section, so as to ensure the safety of participating youth and adults and to protect themselves, their sponsoring institutions and the Diocese of Amarillo from litigation. The contents of pg. I-4, Guidelines for Youth Activities and the Amarillo Diocese Safe Environment Policy are the official policies of the Diocese.

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of Amarillo and require compliance on the part of diocesan youth workers. The remainder are recommended guidelines. If your retreat experience is outside of the Diocese of Amarillo, you must check with that Diocese to assure that you are also in compliance with their child protection policies.

Reading through these guidelines may be very overwhelming at first. You may find yourself saying, "I didn't get into ministry to do this." But planning for the safety of our youth is in itself an act of caring. Many experienced retreat leaders have found over the course of planning several retreats that these practices become second nature. You may find yourself referring to this section often as you start planning activities, but will need to refer to it less often as you gain experience.

At all times, the Amarillo Diocese Safe Environment Policy must be followed. For questions about the provisions of the Safe Environment Policy, please call the Diocese of Amarillo at (806) 383-2243.
Diocesan Policy: Guidelines for Youth Activities

Guidelines for Youth Activities

Parental rights, good administration and youth protection dictate that the appropriate sharing of information and granting of permissions be involved when youth participate in activities, including those of the parish, parish school and non-parish-based schools.

The Diocese of Amarillo has developed a sample form to satisfy these needs (pp. I-5, I-6). While this particular form is not mandated for use in the parishes, schools and institutions of the Diocese, it is recommended.

Whether the particular recommended form is used or not, the following written documentation is required in some form, whether a child is registering for an ongoing program or for a single activity.

1. Name of student
2. Name of parish/school
3. Name of adult in charge
4. Date of activity or regular time for program
5. Location of activity
6. Telephone number where youth can be reached in case of a family emergency
7. Starting time or date, ending time or date
8. General description of program or activities which are involved
9. Method of transportation (if any)
10. Cost (if any)

In addition to providing this information to the parents, the form must provide a place for the parent to give permission for the child to participate in the program or activity and to receive emergency medical care (including pertinent medical information), if the activity will take the youth some distance from home. In addition there must be a release of the Diocese, Bishop, parishes, parish schools and institutions from liability in the event of accident or injury to the youth utilizing the following language: I, the lawful parent or guardian of (the “child”), give permission for my child to participate in the activity described on the Activity Information Form and release from all liability and indemnify the Bishop of Amarillo (“the Bishop”), both individually and as trustee for the Diocese of Amarillo and all parishes, schools and institutions within the Diocese, and their officers, agents, representatives, volunteers, and employees from any and all liability, claims, judgments, cost or expenses, including attorney fees, arising out of any injury or illness incurred by my child while participating in or traveling to or from the activity. A parent or legal guardian must provide for the above by written signature and date and also supply a telephone number where the parent can be reached in case of an emergency involving the child.

The permission forms are to be maintained throughout the duration of the activity. They are to be carried by a designated adult on trips off church/school/institution premises.

(Policy established June, 1996)
Diocese of Amarillo
PERMISSION, RELEASE AND MEDICAL POWER OF ATTORNEY (rev. 6-2006)

1. I, the lawful parent or guardian of ______________________________(the “child”), give permission for my child to participate in the activity described on the Activity Information form and release from all liability and indemnify the Bishop of Amarillo (“the Bishop”), both individually and as trustee for the Diocese of Amarillo and all parishes, schools and institutions within the Diocese, and their officers, agents, representatives, volunteers, and employees from any and all liability, claims, judgments, cost or expenses, including attorney fees, arising out of any injury or illness incurred by my child while participating in or traveling to or from the activity.

2. I agree to instruct my child to cooperate with the Bishop or his agents in charge of the activity.

3a. I appoint the Bishop or his agents who are acting as leaders of the activity as my attorney in fact to act for me in my name and my behalf, in any way that I would act if I were personally present, with respect to the following matters if any injury, illness or medical emergency occurs during the activity or related travel:

   (i) To give any and all consents and authorizations to any physicians, dentist, hospital or other persons or institutions pertaining to any emergency medications, medical or dental treatments, diagnostic or surgical procedures or any other emergency actions as our attorney shall deem necessary or appropriate for the best interest of the child.

   (ii) I understand that the agents of the Bishop will make a reasonable attempt to contact me as soon as possible in the event of a medical emergency involving my child.

3b. This power of attorney shall lapse automatically upon completion of the activity and related travel.

4. I agree that the Bishop or his agents may use my child’s portrait or photograph for promotional purposes, website and office functions.

I have carefully read this statement, and my signature acknowledges that I fully understand the content and meaning.

Signature of Parent or Guardian ____________________________________________ Date ___________

Address _____________________________________________ City ____________________ Zip ________

Place of Employment __________________________________________________________

Address _____________________________________________ City ____________________ Zip ________

Phone: (w) __________________________ (h) __________________________ (other) __________________________

Emergency Contact ____________________________________________________________

Phone: (w) __________________________ (h) __________________________

*******************************************************************************

Medical Information — Completed by Parent or Guardian — Please Print

Child’s Name _____________________________________________________________ Birth date ___ / ___ / ______

Child’s Soc. Sec. #* _____________________________

Allergies _______________________________________________________________

Medications _____________________________________________________________

Chronic Conditions (e.g. epilepsy, diabetes, depression) ______________________________

Medical Insurance Co. _____________________________ Policy No. _____________________________

Member’s Name __________________________________ Phone: (h) _____________________________ (w) _____________________________

Member’s Birth date ___ / ___ / ______ Member’s Soc. Sec. #* _____________________________

Family Doctor __________________________________ Phone _____________________________

* Social Security number is optional. Please note that some hospitals WILL NOT treat without it.

(See Activity Information form)
**ACTIVITY INFORMATION**

This sheet is to be completed by Church Agency - Please Print

(As a convenience to parent(s) or guardian(s), a duplicate copy of this information may be attached so as to be retained by them; also any additional information may be attached to further inform them of specific scheduling details, additional activity information, etc.)

A. **On-Going Program**

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<td>Telephone No.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Information</td>
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___ Check here if any additional information is attached. (Note: any additional activity information (e.g. schedule, list of specific activities, etc.) may be attached to further inform parents(s) or guardian(s).

B. **One-Time Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church Agency</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Telephone No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting Date and Time</td>
<td>Meeting Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ending Date and Time</td>
<td>Meeting Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities Involved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Transportation (if any)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Leader</td>
<td>Telephone No.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Information</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

___ Check here if any additional information is attached. (Note: any additional activity information (e.g. schedule, list of specific activities, etc.) may be attached to further inform parents(s) or guardian(s).
Medical Injuries & Emergencies

Every retreat supply list should include a well-stocked first aid kit. Be sure that one or more members of the team are familiar with the first aid kit and able to provide basic first aid, including CPR. Adult leaders should be aware that they are not permitted to provide any oral medication to a youth participant. Medications authorized by parent(s)/guardian(s) (see medical information on Release Form) may be self-administered. Aspirin should never be given to children because of the danger of Reyes Syndrome. Prescription medication is not to be dispensed without the written consent and direction of parents.

For a more serious injury or complaint of discomfort the Retreat Leader is to be notified immediately. The parent/guardian should be notified immediately and the youth should be placed under the care of the parent or guardian. If there is any question regarding the seriousness of the injury or discomfort, parent(s)/guardian(s) should be contacted and the youth should be taken immediately to an emergency medical care facility (with the medical information/release form).

In any of the above cases, the incident should be documented. In addition, it should be reported to the pastor, administrator or principal as soon as is practical. If the area where the incident occurred could cause injury to others, it should be closed until it can be repaired.

Documentation

In the event of any serious or emergency intervention with youth, the adult leader who made the intervention should “document” it (make a written record of the incident) in the event that questions are raised afterwards. Documentation should include:

- a complete description of the incident: what happened, where, when and who was involved;
- a description of the steps taken to deal with the incident;
- any other important information that influenced the adult leader’s course of action.

Incidents should be documented in a timely way (within 24 hours) and the documentation should be retained by the adult leader and provided to supervisors (e.g. pastor, principal).

Adult Supervision

Any activity involving youth requires adequate and appropriate adult supervision. We have been entrusted with the children of families in our parishes, schools and institutions and we must take care not to violate that trust.

Behavioral Guidelines

We should have clear and consistent behavioral guidelines that specify the expected behavior of both adults and youth at retreats. These guidelines should be written and publicized in the promotional material for the retreat. They should be orally reviewed with the participants at the beginning of the retreat.

The behavioral guidelines should minimally contain the following expectations:

All youth and adults are expected to fully participate in all activities unless otherwise excused.

The use or possession of alcohol, drugs or tobacco is not permitted by adults or minors.
Proper respect is expected regarding the other participants, the adult leaders and the physical facility.

This includes no physical, sexual or verbal harassment; no possession of weapons of any kind; and no intentional defacing or destruction of physical property.

All participants are expected to build community with the entire group. There should be no exclusive coupling during an activity. This means no kissing or other intimate sexual activity.

Anyone found violating these guidelines may be immediately dismissed from the retreat and may be prohibited from attending future retreats. In case of dismissal, the individual’s parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted to take him/her home.

There may also be a need to include guidelines specific to your retreat or facility. For example there may be guidelines regarding curfews, off limits areas, etc.

The consequences for violation of the behavioral guidelines should be clearly stated. These should be fairly and consistently enforced. Ultimately, a violation of guidelines, especially those involving an illegal or immoral activity, should be reported to parents. Parents should also be clearly informed in advance that they may be called upon to pick up a son or daughter if he or she is found to be in violation of a guideline, regardless of the distance involved or the time of day/night.

**Adult Leadership & Training**

Adults involved in retreat ministry need to demonstrate by example the values that reflect Gospel love and compassion. The adult leader should be a person of maturity possessing a sensitivity to adolescents. The adult leader is expected to demonstrate a consistent behavior which respects his/her own dignity as well as the dignity of the youth. Respect for people, for physical property and for the law are integral to the adult leader. Any adult wishing to be involved in retreat ministry who demonstrates less than a responsible leadership style should not be involved.

Beyond these very important attitudes and behaviors, adults in leadership roles require sufficient training consonant with their responsibilities. For instance, adults called upon to lead self-disclosure activities on retreats should be trained in the techniques and ethics of responsible small group leadership (see section below, “Ensuring the Psychological & Emotional Safety of Retreatants”). Similarly, adults leading so-called “challenge activities” (e.g. ropes courses, obstacle courses, etc.) need specialized training so as to effectively lead such activities and to prevent accidental injury.

In retreat ministry, it is essential that adults:

- behave in a manner appropriate for the retreat;
- never touch youth in an immodest fashion;
- refrain from any sexual, sexist, racist comments;
- refrain from obscene language;
- follow the same behavioral guidelines set for the youth (including refraining from alcohol, drugs and tobacco);
- be adequately trained for their roles and tasks.

The Retreat Leader is responsible for the selection, training and supervision of the other adults on the retreat team. The Retreat Leader should invite other adults onto the team only when the above attitudes and behaviors have been demonstrated.
The Retreat Leader is to clearly formulate the responsibilities for the adults. The specific roles need to be understood. The Retreat Leader should be quick to point out to any adult a breach of the expected behaviors and responsibilities. Any adult in serious violation should not be permitted to continue as an adult leader.

For proper supervision, a ratio of one adult, over 21 years of age, for every ten youth at an activity or program is generally recommended. Consideration should be given to the number of boys and girls participating as it relates to the number of chaperones. Good judgment and diocesan policy require that there always be at least two adults available for both on-site and off-site activities.

At least two adults must be present for any activity for children sponsored by a parish or institution of the Diocese.

a. Moreover, the number of adults is to be in proportion to the age and number of the participants and the duration and difficulty of the activity.

b. Whenever possible, one of the adults should be a parent of a participant.

c. Exceptions for Policy C.3 are only allowed for the Sacrament of Penance, regular day-school, or religion classes conducted on the grounds of the parish or institution, and if for unanticipated reasons, only one adult can actually be present for an activity which is not overnight.

d. For the purposes of this policy C.3, “adult” excludes 18 and 19 year olds not yet graduated from high school.

e. Policy C.3 MUST be adhered to strictly for any overnight activity; otherwise activity is to be canceled.

The Retreat Leader must be at least 21 years of age. Young adults who are 19 or 20 may act as additional leaders, if they have demonstrated the appropriate maturity and objectivity. Due to their proximity in age to the participants it is not recommended that they be considered as official chaperones. It is recommended that a medical information form with emergency phone numbers for each adult leader should be in the possession of the Retreat Leader.

When speaking with a young person one-to-one, adult leaders should do so in a way that keeps them public and visible. By talking in a large public area adult leaders can be protected from the perception and possible accusations of impropriety or sexual misconduct. When engaging in these conversations, Policy C.1 must be followed:

Except when civil law explicitly permits certain persons (e.g. licensed social workers) to counsel children without parental consent, a child may receive scheduled, individual instruction or counseling from a cleric, employee or regular volunteer only with the written consent of the child’s parent or guardian.

Taking Attendance

Since youth may drive themselves to the retreat site there is always the possibility that they may leave home but never arrive at the retreat. Parents may think that they are in attendance when actually they are somewhere else. Therefore, adult leaders should keep accurate records of attendance and periodically check to ensure that all are accounted for throughout the retreat. Small group facilitators should always be sure their entire group is present at the various activities. In the event a participant is missing, the Retreat Leader will initiate a thorough search. If the search is unsuccessful, the participant’s parent(s)/guardian(s) must be contacted and notified. The Retreat Leader may wish to delegate the task of taking periodic head counts in order to remain free for other things.

Transportation

Leaving the parish or school property carries an added risk because of the need for transportation. For that reason it requires very careful attention. Transportation arrangements should never be made at the last minute or as an afterthought.
The first question is whether or not to provide transportation. If the retreat is within a ten- or twenty-minute drive it may be best to let the young people and their families arrange their own transportation, freeing the retreat providers from both the hassle and liability. It is important to carefully state on the retreat publicity whether or not transportation will be provided.

Whenever possible, bus transportation should be used for large groups. Vehicles designed to carry more than fifteen passengers are regarded as bus transportation. Diocesan policy prohibits the use of 15-passenger vans. Every bus must have a valid Ohio state inspection sticker and every bus driver must be state certified. The use of private passenger vehicles for large groups is discouraged.

Those with disqualifying factors should not be permitted to drive, i.e., poor driving record, alcohol or drug use, etc. Only those who have been screened for these disqualifying factors should be designated as drivers responsible for transporting young people to and from events under the auspices of the church. Under no circumstances should teenagers who have not graduated from high school be designated drivers. Obviously, a current valid driver’s license and automobile insurance are required. Each driver should receive a copy of the approved itinerary, including directions and a summary of their responsibilities. The driver and all youth must wear their seat belts. There may be only as many passengers in a vehicle as there are seat belts. Vehicles used for transporting youth must be in safe condition (i.e. tires, brakes, lights and safety features operational and in good condition).

**Insurance**

The Diocese of Amarillo maintains a Self Insurance Program that provides liability coverage for the Bishop and his agents. This liability coverage applies to all activities of the Bishop and his agents while they are engaged in activities that support the ministry of the Diocese of Amarillo. This liability coverage does not extend to anyone else. The members of a group participating in the retreat experience are not covered by the Diocese of Amarillo for any liability that accrues to them because of their behavior – accidental or deliberate. There is no insurance on the life and/or health of anyone participating in the retreat experience.

**Negligence**

The critical issue in determining liability in the legal system is the concept of negligence. Negligence is the “failure to exercise the care toward others which a reasonable or prudent person would do in the circumstances, or taking action which such a reasonable person would not.” (Law.com Dictionary) In the simplest terms, have I used common sense and prudence in my actions? Examples of potential negligence would be lack of proper supervision, etc.

**Arrival & Dismissal**

A clear policy stating arrival and dismissal times should be formulated and communicated to the youth and parents. Normally, fifteen minutes prior to any program and fifteen to thirty minutes after a program provide ample arrival and departure time.

Youth or groups of youth should never be left on the premises alone after a retreat. At least two adult leaders must remain until all the youth have left the premises.

At times it may be necessary for a youth to leave early during a retreat, requiring a note or telephone call from the parent(s)/guardian(s) requesting early dismissal. No participant is to be dismissed to the care of another adult for early dismissal without the expressed permission of the participants’ parent(s)/guardian(s).
Site Selection

Proper planning requires an eye toward safety considerations as well as cost and availability. Important considerations include:

- the buildings, equipment, and grounds are hazard-free and properly maintained;
- emergency medical facilities and local law enforcement agencies are within reasonable driving distance.

If a site you are considering does not meet the above criteria, it should not be used.

Facilities and Grounds

The adult leaders should be aware of potential hazards regarding equipment, facilities and grounds. While this is primarily the responsibility of the retreat site maintenance staff, the constant vigilance of everyone using the site for activities will help prevent all potential safety hazards. Outside stairs and walkways during the winter are of particular concern.

Special Activities

Outdoor Activities

Retreats frequently involve youth in outdoor activities, which offer youth opportunities to form healthy friendships, experience Christian community and experience the beauty of God’s creation in nature. Recreational opportunities are designed for youth enjoyment and should include all participants.

If the retreat includes camping, hiking or some other outdoor activity, the ratio of youth to adults should increase appropriately to compensate for the greater need for supervision and the potential for physical injury.

At least two adults must be present for any activity for children sponsored by a parish or institution of the Diocese.

a. Moreover, the number of adults is to be in proportion to the age and number of the participants and the duration and difficulty of the activity.

b. Whenever possible, one of the adults should be a parent of a participant.

c. Exceptions are only allowed for the Sacrament of Penance, regular day-school, or religion classes conducted on the grounds of the parish or institution, and if for unanticipated reasons, only one adult can actually be present for an activity which is not overnight.

d. For the purposes of this policy, “adult” excludes 18 and 19 year olds not yet graduated from high school.

e. This policy MUST be adhered to strictly for any overnight activity; otherwise activity is to be canceled.

Several of the adult leaders should be experienced in the type of outdoor activity you are offering so as to provide the necessary training and supervision to insure safety. Properly maintained equipment is to be used during outdoor activities. All equipment should be inspected prior to any outdoor activity and materials repaired and replaced when needed.

Water Activities

Water activities require special precautions. Swimming is to occur only where allowed by law. All local safety rules are to be followed. The following safety precautions must be followed:

Qualified supervision - at least two adults 21 or older.
Provide a lookout - someone on shore who can count heads.
Whenever possible, a certified lifeguard
Safe-swim area – make sure that the pool, river, or lake is free of debris and hazards
Utilize a buddy system - 2 (at most 3) to a group, each watching the other and staying close
Maintain strict discipline - orderly compliance with the rules.

If boats, canoes, or any type of water vessel are used, all youth must wear a certified life preserver. When canoeing, an adult need not be present in each canoe but every canoe with youth should be in sight of an adult. In larger watercraft, an adult should be present to supervise in each vessel.

**Physical Challenge Activities**

There are some retreat activities that provide a high degree of physical challenge for the participants involved. Some examples are rope courses, obstacle courses, white water rafting, rock climbing, caving and rappelling. These types of activities may variously be used to build group cohesiveness and trust and help form a positive self-image for the individual participants.

Since these activities are more physically challenging, they involve greater risk of personal injury. Things you must consider are:

- the use of proper safety equipment;
- the safety record of the supervising organization;
- the training of those directing and/or supervising the activity;
- the match between the difficulty of the activity and the skill ability of the participants;
- the presence of trained “spotters” who know how to keep physical activities as safe as possible;
- informing parent(s)/guardian(s) in advance of participation in such activities.

**Ensuring the Psychological & Emotional Safety of Retreatants**

Not only do adult retreat leaders need to attend to physical safety, they also carry the responsibility for guarding the emotional and psychological safety of the retreatants. It may be surprising to learn that the courts have found youth ministers liable for failing to take reasonable precautions for the psychological well-being of youth in their care. Aside from any legal considerations, we have a clear ethical and moral duty to do all in our power to keep retreats, which should be times of growth and grace, from turning into damaging experiences for teens.

Until the late 1960's, most youth retreats emphasized silence, prayer, and the individual's private encounter with God. The human potential movement of the early 1970's introduced youth ministers to encounter group techniques, which stressed the importance of self-disclosure and the free expression of emotion. Youth workers enthusiastically adopted the encounter group philosophy, which seemed to resonate with Vatican II principles of Christian community and a new respect for human experience. It became the norm for youth retreats to include sessions in which teens were asked to share deep feelings openly and to "tell their stories," possibly including personal tales of past or current traumatic events. When facilitated ethically and responsibly, such sharing helps adolescents feel less alone, provides much-needed support, and assists teens in finding God in their daily lives. When facilitated poorly or irresponsibly, such sharing can be psychologically and emotionally damaging.

Important research began appearing by the mid-1970's indicating that this approach has the potential for causing significant psychological "casualties." Hundreds of studies have consistently found a cluster of high-risk group leadership characteristics which are correlated with "emotional fallout." Such risky leadership behaviors are often referred to as “emotionally manipulative” or “emotionally coercive.” These research findings have serious implications both for small-group and large-group activities on retreats. To ensure the well-being of youth entrusted to our care, retreat leaders need to avoid dangerous styles such as these:
The “Nurse Ratchet” (Coercive) Leader: A frightening character in Ken Kesey’s novel One Flew Over the Cuckoo Nest, Nurse Ratchet coerces group members to open up and share their deepest feelings. There is no escape and no freedom to “pass.” Coercive leaders who pressure and pry have a high likelihood of causing injury to participants — especially those leaders whose coercion is veiled in seemingly loving or spiritual behaviors.

The “Talk Show Host”: The leader can foster a group atmosphere that resembles the Jerry Springer Show, Geraldo or Jenny Jones. Members start to play a dangerous game of “Can you top my story...?” Each person competes to tell the most traumatic tale or to provide the most shocking details. Honest self-disclosure is not the same as exhibitionism or “letting it all hang out.” Leaders can help participants decide whether or not to disclose certain personal information in the group, so that they do not feel ashamed or regretful after the retreat that they have shared too much, too deeply or too personally. (Examples include: parental alcoholism or affairs, experimentation with sex or drugs, incest, psychiatric hospitalizations and sexual identity issues.)

The “We Need More Kleenex” Leader: Leaders can convey the message, either explicitly or implicitly, that a group is not a good one without lots of tears. Such leaders carry into their retreat ministry the assumption that everyone must display emotions to “be honest” and that the presence of strong, visible emotions means that a person is “really working on important issues” or has been “powerfully touched by God.” Such assumptions can be judgmental and coercive — and potentially damaging to participants who are by nature more introverted, shy or emotionally reserved. Young people who hail from cultural backgrounds where the open display of feelings is discouraged may also find this approach confusing, exclusive and/or coercive.

The “Excavator”: The ancient Greek fable of Pandora’s Box warns us that once we lift the lid and let the dark things out into the world, it’s very difficult to put the lid back on. Sometimes group leaders see their principal task as “opening kids up” or “breaking down their defenses” during retreats. Unfortunately, young people may leave a retreat with all kinds of raw feelings and issues brought to the surface — with no way to sort them out or get closure. In some cases, adolescents have required psychiatric hospitalization or even committed suicide because they were so emotionally distraught after a youth retreat. Psychological defenses exist for a reason. We have an obligation not to open up more than we can deal with during a retreat, and we are ethically obliged to provide follow-up services for at-risk youth after a retreat is over.

The “One Size Fits All” Leader: Leaders may assume that small groups which allow teens to talk openly and “tell their story” will benefit every youth. Unfortunately, some of our adolescents are going through such crises in their lives that now may be the worst time to make a retreat, particularly if the retreat involves a lot of small group sharing. Leaders have a duty to “pre-screen” participants for a retreat in order to determine whether or not a particular kind of retreat experience is likely to be beneficial. For example, a teen recently hospitalized for depression or a teen who just experienced a traumatic loss may be too psychologically vulnerable for heavy or intense self-disclosure. Each person is unique, and leaders have a duty to carefully weigh the appropriateness of certain approaches or activities for individuals in advance of a retreat. Your best assessment tools are the Medical Information form and your existing relationship with the participant and his/her family.

Self-disclosure, “opening-up” and sharing activities can serve an important role in a well-designed retreat. Adolescents can learn powerfully through such activities that God can be found in relationships and daily human experiences. However, retreat leaders — especially leaders of large- and small-group sharing or self-disclosure activities — must receive sufficient training so as to ensure that all retreat activities are sensitive to the many individual needs of participants, and that an atmosphere of freedom, respect and care is maintained throughout the retreat. We believe that our gracious God already desires to touch the hearts of our young people and that the Spirit can always find a way to do so — without any need on our part to resort to emotional manipulation or pressure. To assist leaders in avoiding the pitfalls described above, following are some basic psychological and emotional safety precautions for retreat activities:
Pre-screening & Informed Parental Consent

If there are to be any in-depth sharing activities in small groups on the retreats, youth retreat coordinators should pre-screen the participants. Parents and guardians should be notified in advance that the retreat will involve such activities, so that they can give informed consent for their child's participation. If their child has seen a counselor, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may want to consult with the therapist about the wisdom of their teen participating in the retreat at this time. This recommendation to the parent can be made in a follow-up letter to parents upon receipt of the initial application to participate.

Adult leaders should keep in mind that a percentage of teens on the retreat may have had either prior traumatic experiences or psychological difficulties. (For example, 5% or more of the general population experience Major Depression, 20-30% of females are sexually abused by age 18, and 2% of the population suffers from panic attacks.) Depending on where teenagers are in the process of healing and recovery, it may not be prudent for them to participate in certain kinds of retreat activities.

Facilitator Training

Whether self-disclosure activities are led by adults or youth, adequate training is called for. This training must take place prior to the start of the retreat. Group facilitators need to know:
- helpful techniques for focusing and re-directing the sharing; the difference between appropriate and inappropriate content; how to deal with a group that is pressuring participants to share; how to deal with a group that has become overly emotional; how to identify and work with individuals who need to be referred to a health-care professional; the boundaries of ethical and responsible small group leadership.

There are three arenas of self-disclosure: The superficial self which consists of those things that are completely non-threatening in nature; the deeply personal self which are those areas of self-disclosure reserved for family, clergy and counselors (family dysfunctions, physical or sexual abuse, drug/alcohol abuse, etc.); and the personal self which goes deeper than the superficial but is the place where we share our faith and deeper relationships. Youth retreats must never seek to go beyond this personal level of sharing. Nor should group facilitators allow any deeper sharing during the retreat experience. Small groups, with the potential for intense emotions, complicated group dynamics, painful and difficult content, and/or the possibility of the need for follow-up or a referral, should be led by trained adults, or perhaps co-led by an adult and a youth. Even with training, youth generally do not have the experience and maturity to respond adequately to these kinds of situations.

Establishing a Climate of Freedom, Not Coercion

Small-group facilitators should set a clear norm that personal self-disclosure is always voluntary. The small-group leader has an obligation to act assertively to ensure that there is no peer coercion to open up, disclose secrets, or express a certain intensity of emotion. Psychological defenses exist for a reason. Confrontational strategies designed to "tear down defenses" are the techniques most often associated with subsequent emotional problems in group participants.

Establishing Emotional, Cognitive & Behavioral Balance

Youth retreat coordinators have a responsibility to include both feeling and thinking elements in each retreat. It is wonderful to help adolescents feel affirmed, to bond with one another, to cry together over shared experiences, and to be exhilarated by the new sense of community. It is equally important to help adolescents to reflect on these experiences, to make sense of them in the context of our Catholic tradition, and to translate feelings and insights into action. It might be useful to view retreats as moments where conversion can occur -- and true conversion is an ongoing process that includes emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions. The success of a retreat cannot and should not be measured by the emotional intensity of the experience, but rather by the extent by which it helps teens to grow in their love of God and neighbor.
Protecting Teens from Themselves

Sometimes teens become caught up in the emotional atmosphere of an experience. On overnight retreats and programs which last several days, young people may sleep little and grow physically exhausted. They may lose some of their normal inhibitions and begin disclosing personal experiences, feelings, or family secrets they would usually not discuss. In fact, after the retreat is over, they may experience shame and regret about letting others learn intimate details about them. Examples of this could include: sexual abuse, past suicide attempts, psychiatric hospitalization, gay/lesbian identity, sexual experimentation, drug use, parental alcoholism, and eating disorders.

Adult leaders can demonstrate sensitivity by affirming the adolescent personally and providing support, while at the same time gently redirecting the self-disclosure and helping the teen to find settings (e.g. counseling) where there is enough time and professional expertise to deal with such experiences.

Retreat Leaders need to ensure that young people get enough sleep and nourishment to maintain healthy discretion and emotional equilibrium. Adult leaders and/or retreat programs that either explicitly or implicitly intend to break down participants’ defenses through sleep deprivation, inadequate nourishment and/or interpersonal pressure are unethical, irresponsible and potentially dangerous.

Post-retreat Follow-up

Retreat planners who schedule self-disclosure activities on a retreat have a responsibility to provide follow-up services and referrals to youth who may have experienced emotional distress as a result of the retreat. It is unethical, irresponsible and potentially dangerous to “open kids up,” but then leave them to deal with their feelings alone afterwards. The retreat coordinators should identify, before the close of a retreat, any participants who seem to need further assistance. Sometimes this will mean calling a teen’s parent(s)/guardian(s) and sharing whatever concerns the coordinators have. In some cases, the adult leaders will want to recommend a consultation with a mental health professional. This is imperative if the adult coordinators believe that a teenager may be suicidal. Obviously it is much easier to ensure adequate follow-up if there are already good relationships built with parents and if there are structures (such as support groups) already established in the parish or school community. Adult coordinators should prepare in advance by forming relationships with community mental health providers and becoming knowledgeable about local resources.

Managing Crises & Making Referrals

Adult leaders need to be aware of the limits of their roles. They are not counselors, but frequently find themselves playing the role of caring listener or spiritual guide. Topics of conversation normally include the typical struggles of adolescent growth. However, an adult leader may well be confronted with very serious, even life-threatening issues requiring immediate professional attention. For this reason, adult leaders should be able to identify the warning signs of those serious maladies that typically afflict young people and respond appropriately. Some typical critical youth issues include: suicide, major depression, substance abuse, sexual abuse/rape, risk-taking behaviors and eating disorders.

If they emerge during a retreat, such issues will need to be reported to the parent or guardian and they may choose to refer the child to a licensed, professional therapist. It sometimes isn’t clear how serious a problem exists, or what the proper response should be. Issues of confidentiality can further complicate the situation. If unsure of the proper course of action, adult leaders should first consult with the Retreat Leader. Other resources may be consulted (pastor, guidance counselor, parents, etc.) in order to determine the appropriate intervention. It is strongly recommended that the Retreat Leader develop a network of counseling resources in advance so as to be able to quickly formulate a response and contact the necessary individuals and/or agencies at short notice. In general, confidentiality should be honored except when life-threatening situations demand decisive and immediate action.
All emergencies and referrals should be documented, with copies to those who are ultimately responsible for the retreat (e.g. pastor, principal). This will provide an accurate report of how you handled the situation if a question should ever arise.

[Please see Appendix H: The Amarillo Diocese Safe Environment Policy for additional important information related to this topic. Special thanks go to Kevin Prendergast, Director, M.A. Program in Pastoral Counseling, Athenaeum of Ohio for his contributions to this section of the manual.]

Copyright Law

Copyright law is probably one of the least understood legal areas of ministry. Violation is not only illegal but also immoral in the sense that offenders are stealing from composers, artists, authors and publishers who depend on the sale of their material for a living. Following are some areas to be aware of concerning possible copyright violation.

Video Tapes/DVD’s

Video cassettes/DVD’s that are purchased or rented are usually labeled “For Home Use Only” and have no performance right, that is permission to show to public groups. They cannot be shown on Church property (the Church is a public place), only in private homes. Most video cassettes/DVD’s available from Christian publishers come with performance rights. For performance right information for “home use” Video cassettes/DVD’s, check your local video rental store or call the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation, 1-800-338-3870.

Likewise, it is illegal to copy any videocassette/DVD without the permission of the author or publisher. It is also illegal to record any television broadcast for public showing without permission.

Music

In using music you need permission from the publisher to do any of the following:
- copy lyrics from a song sheet, even on a one-time basis;
- make transparencies or slides of music and lyrics;
- compile song books or make song sheets from original music;
- make copies of recordings of church services, concerts, or programs that include copyrighted music;
- make and distribute a CD containing the songs used on the retreat;
- print lyrics even on a one-time basis;
- duplicate cassettes or CD’s when the purpose is to avoid purchasing more.

You may find that your parish, school or institution already has copyright permission for a great deal of liturgical music. Check with your pastor, principal, music minister, campus minister or institution leader to find out what copyrights may have already been purchased. You can get permission to use other copyrighted music or lyrics by calling or writing the publisher. They will probably charge you a small fee for the use.

Printed Material & “Fair Use”

In general, copyrighted material may not be duplicated without permission (including articles, worksheets, cartoons, artwork, charts, etc.). Many resource books now come with permission to copy worksheets, clip-art, scripts, prayer services, etc.

The Copyright Act of 1976 does give recognition to the "fair use" doctrine by providing that the "fair use" of a work is not an infringement of copyright where it is for purposes of criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching
(including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship or research. How the "fair use" doctrine would apply to religious education programs or youth groups has not yet been tested in the courts. In determining whether the use of a work in a particular case is "fair use" a court would consider the following factors:

The purpose and character of the use. The use must not be commercial in nature. Non-profit educational purposes with certain qualifications constitute "fair use." Teachers may make a single copy of a book chapter, short story, essay, or poem, or a drawing, cartoon or picture for the purpose of scholarly research, use in teaching or preparation for a class. Multiple copies for classroom use, not to exceed one per pupil, are permissible, providing each bears a copyright notice and meets the rest of the "fair use" criteria.

The nature of the copyrighted work. Users of copyrighted material have greater license to use works that are more a collection of facts than those works that are of a creative or imaginative nature.

The amount of the work used. The use of an entire work or of excessive amounts of a work (in other words, wholesale copying) can never be fair use, even in cases where there was no intent to infringe.

Effect of use on potential market. Any use of the work that reduces the demand for that work or that tends to diminish or prejudice the potential sale or profits, is not a fair use.

If there is some doubt as to whether the "fair use" doctrine applies, the ethical course of action is to secure official permission or not use the material in question.
APPENDIX J. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

GENERAL RETREAT RESOURCES


Carotta, Mike. *Junior High: Growing Selves, Emerging Faith*. Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985. *This is a unique, student tested program that focuses on the typical experiences of teens and the relevance of the Gospel message in their daily lives.*

Center for Youth Ministry Development. *YouthWorks*. Naugatuck: 1995. *A compendium of youth ministry resources which has a section devoted to retreat planning and ideas.*


Doolittle, Robert. *Homemade Youth Retreats*. Winona: St. Mary’s Press, 1992. *Enables you to create your own custom made retreats. If your taking the time to build a retreat model, this book will be helpful.*


Hakowski, Maryann. *Vine & Branches 1, 2, and 3*. Winona: St. Mary’s Press, 1985-94. *Fully designed retreats as well as many practical suggestions on format, formation and fun.*
Johnson, Jeff. *Good News for Youth: Hearing the Good News*. New Rochelle: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1990. *Jeff was the leading speaker and author on youth evangelization before his untimely death. Great resources for storytelling techniques and ideas.*

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*These volumes contain activities from the retreats that take place at the Tyme Out Youth Center in Pewaukee. They are adaptable for a variety of settings.*


*This book gives you a planning method to design a prayer service or a retreat. Adaptable for parish, schools, and other settings.*


*This Access Guide has several chapters which apply to the development of retreats including one on spiritual direction in retreat formats.*

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*These volumes are filled with great ideas for activities and designs. They compile a variety of styles in the Group tradition of non-denominational Christian youth ministry resources.*


*A great resource that focuses primarily on evangelization of youth. It leads youth and adults through 6 sessions (core themes) based on what it means to be a follower of Jesus.*

**CONFIRMATION RETREAT DESIGNS**


*This manual provides a complete program for Confirmation preparation including a retreat design with sample letters and forms.*


*This program is used in more parishes in the Archdiocese than any other single program. It is a complete confirmation preparation process including a retreat design.*


PRAYER RESOURCES


All of the prayers in these two books were written by teens.


COMMUNITY BUILDING AND GAMES

A good selection of active games.

These volumes contain many alternative and non-competitive activities that are suitable in retreat settings and great for brainstorming with the youth retreat design team.

A resource with 52 volumes speaks for itself. There are plenty of possibilities in these books which can be used as is or adapted to retreat settings.


Hundreds of indoor and outdoor community building games for different size groups and settings.


Rydberg, Dennis. *Building Community In Youth Group*. Loveland, CO.: Group, 1985. Practical models (BOAST MODEL) for transforming your group into a close, caring family.
________. *Youth Group Trust Builders*. Loveland, CO. : Group, 1993. Seventy -one activities to develop friendships, share feelings without fear, affirm one another, and grow in faith and maturity.