

**Sample**  
**All Parish Youth Workers**  
**Rules, Expectations, Best Practices –**  
**please keep one copy and return one copy to the Spiritual Father**

*Practices we encourage:*

- ✓ First and foremost we are here to provide a positive experience for the Youth Group participants in whatever way that we can. Youth Workers are expected to spend time getting to know the participants, offer help and promote a positive Orthodox family environment of which the staff is a part. The well-being and safety of the participants should be foremost in all decisions.
- ✓ Be Christ at all times and in All ways!
- ✓ Pray for the youth in your charge.
- ✓ Excitement for the work, a positive attitude, and new ideas encouraged!
- ✓ Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity.
- ✓ Involve young people in the decisions that affect them.
- ✓ Always work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations. If you must speak to a youth one-on-one, ensure that it is in an area where you may be observed. Classroom doors should be left open unless a window is provided in the door.
- ✓ At least two adults should be present during all youth activities. Proper youth to adult ratios should be maintained.
- ✓ Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with young people (e.g. not sharing tents, shower facilities or changing in front of youth).
- ✓ When organizing activities/events for children and young people, or their attendance at activities/events, ensure the relevant information/documentation is collected (consent forms, contact details for next of kin, information relating to specific needs).
- ✓ Use a reporting form to keep a clear note of any incidents or concerns.
- ✓ If physical contact is necessary (e.g. in an emergency), tell the young person clearly what you are doing and why, seek their permission and give choices where possible. If possible have another worker present.
- ✓ Every activity, event or session should be risk assessed to maintain the safety of young people.
- ✓ When working with a mixed gender group attempt to have staff/volunteers of both genders to manage all activities.
- ✓ Create a climate of respect. Rules should be centered on love and respect for self, others and the Church. Through fostering mutual respect between all who participate in your group, fewer problems will arise.
- ✓ Set rules (centered on respect, love and living in the image of Christ) with the youth/teenagers. Phrase them in a positive way whenever possible. Post and review them at the meetings.
- ✓ Before major outings, outline expectations. Review them with the group. If it is an overnight trip, you may want to have young people and their parents sign the form after reviewing.
- ✓ Remember this is a ministry for young people. They should have some control and ownership. If they feel like they have no control in the planning of activities and other decision making, they will let you know, sometimes in the form of defiance.
- ✓ Avoid power struggles at all costs. No one ever wins. ♠ Refrain from making threatening statements that you cannot or do not intend on keeping.
- ✓ Be consistent. Don't look the other way when there is a problem. Addressing issues immediately even if it seems small will prevent future problems. Remember to follow up on these issues too.
- ✓ Communicate with youth through proper channels such as official youth ministry Facebook

***Practice to be avoided:***

- Workers/volunteers should not give lifts in their car to individual children or young people or travel alone with young people. Where not doing this would compromise the Health and Safety Policy (e.g. leaving a young person alone at a venue) you should attempt to phone the parent/guardian of the young person to confirm what you will be doing. You should also ask the young person to sit in the back seat.
- Workers/volunteers should not take young people to their home or that of another worker/volunteer when not a part of an official youth gathering with additional youth workers present.
- Workers/volunteers should avoid situations where they are alone with young people. Where a private meeting with a lone child/young person is unavoidable it should be held in an open place in view of others or in a room visible to those outside and where a colleague has agreed to visually monitor the meeting.
- “Friending” youth on Facebook or other forms of social media through your personal accounts.
  - group, Instagram or email accounts.
  - ✓ Bring ideas and creativity to the meetings.
  - ✓ Enthusiasm, love and caring are encouraged!

***Unacceptable practice:***

- Unacceptable practice:
- Invading the privacy of children and young people when they are toileting or showering, changing or dressing.
- Inappropriate physical or sexually provocative games.
- Sharing sleeping accommodation with an individual child or young person.
- Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person even in fun.
- Inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form.
- Scape-goating or ridiculing a child or young person.
- Allowing inappropriate, foul, sexualized or discriminatory language to remain unchallenged.
- Any form of physical punishment.
- Illegal use of drugs.
- Use of alcohol during an event.
- Bullying of any form, including name calling or constant criticism.
- ‘Picking on’ a young person because of their family background, manner of dress or physical characteristic.
- Racism or sectarianism of any form.
- Favoritism and exclusion – all young people should be equally supported and encouraged.

- ☒ Abusive language or gestures.
  
- ☒ Advisors and Chaperones should abstain from partaking in alcoholic beverages during youth events.
- ☒ Advisors and Chaperones should abstain from the use of non-prescription – illegal drugs.
- ☒ Smoking is prohibited in front of the youth.
- ☒ Physical intimacy between advisors/chaperones and participants is strictly prohibited.
- ☒ An advisor/chaperone's behavior should befit an Orthodox Christian. If it does not they may be addressed by the Spiritual Father or Youth Minister.
- ☒ Advisor/Chaperone's dress should be modest and reflecting the image of an Orthodox Christian role model.
- ☒ You should refrain from gossiping or criticizing the Hierarchs, clergy, parishioners or fellow youth workers in front of the youth or with one another. If you believe something is wrong or not working, please bring it to the attention of the Spiritual Father or Youth Minister, or discuss the problem at the Youth Ministry Team Meeting.
- ☒ Under no circumstances is an advisor/chaperone (male or female) allowed to physically injure or threaten a youth or adult participant. If there is a serious problem with a particular individual or group report it immediately to the Youth Minister and the problem will be dealt with.

A positive attitude, sense of humor, patience, self-control, honesty, humility, openness, forgiveness and trust are all gifts that we can utilize to give our youth, their families, our fellow youth workers and our parish the best program possible. Keep these virtues at the forefront continually to help you in your ministry.

We are all coming together as volunteers with Christ in our hearts to do His work for the betterment of our youth and His church. Please keep this in mind when working with one another and our youth. The more we deal lovingly with one another the closer we become to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are being given a great opportunity to encourage and minister to our children. Please keep this in mind at all times. Your actions and attitude can make a huge difference in how our youth view their church, spiritual fathers and their faith. Please treat these young children and teenagers as if they were your own younger brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews or children.

I have read, understood, and agreed to abide by these guideline presented here:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_