



Diocese of Buffalo
Guidelines for Youth Ministry
During the Coronavirus Pandemic

*“I wish simply to emphasize that youth ministry involves
two main courses of action.
One is outreach, the way we attract new young people
to an experience of the Lord.
The other is growth, the way we help
those who have already had that experience to mature in it.”
Pope Francis ~Christ is Alive, no. 209*

Our young people need our outreach during this difficult time more than ever. For many of them their milestone years have been significantly changed due to the pandemic restrictions. Pastoral care with sensitivity must be our first and guiding principle.

Parishes are accountable for providing for the health, safety and well-being of participants. Now that we have the New York State Department of Education and Health Guidelines for Reopening Schools we prepared these guidelines to assist you as you continue to minister to, with and among young people.

Please note if you are using a shared building with a Catholic School, then you must follow the same protocols and procedures as the Catholic School.

Prior to Engaging in Youth Ministry Activities/Events

Health and Safety

- Sanitize high-touch surfaces before and after sessions (e.g., door handles, tables, chairs).
- Disinfect tables and chairs before and after each session.
- Clean and sanitize restrooms regularly based on frequency of use.
- Cover any/all water fountains as they are not allowed as per New York State Education Department Guidelines. Only water bottle fountains may be used.
- Avoid use of items (e.g. rugs, mats) that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.
- Have hand sanitizer available at the entrance to your gathering space and inside any spaces you will use.
- Create a sign-in log to record the names of every participant and volunteer present. This is for contact tracing. At this time these logs are to be kept on file indefinitely.
- Have one or more forehead scan/touchless thermometers to check volunteers' and participants' temperatures.

- Establish a designated quarantine room where an individual who has a temperature over 100 degrees or exhibits Covid symptoms will wait with a staff member (who will wear proper protective equipment) to be picked up by their family.
- Find out your county's Health Department's procedures to follow if a participant, employee, volunteer, or a member of their respective families tests positive for COVID-19 or has had contact with someone who has tested positive.

Facility Safety

- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air by opening windows and doors.
- Advise all employees and volunteers to avoid unnecessary travel domestically and internationally. The New York State quarantine restrictions at the time of travel will apply to all employees and volunteers.
- Make sure you have enough personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, face shields, etc.) and cleansers, hand soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectants and disinfectant wipes to meet cleaning/sanitizing/disinfecting requirements.
- Obtain a copy of your parish's New York State Business Reopening Safety Plan so you know the procedures and the cleaning supplies your parish is using.

During Youth Ministry Activities/Events

Health and Safety

- All employees should follow their parish's protocols for temperature and symptom check before beginning their work day.
- Employees, volunteers and participants are to wear masks. The following protocols for masks during Youth Ministry Activities/Events have been developed in accordance with New York State Education and Health Department Guidelines.

Masks or cloth face-coverings do not need to be worn when:

- At least six (6) feet of social distance is able to be maintained.
- In-person gatherings when held in an open, well-ventilated space with appropriate social distancing among participants.
- Employees are in their normal workspace while observing social distancing, or working alone within a workspace.

Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements will be made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors.

- Additional disposable paper masks for adults and children should be available for anyone who needs one.
- Keep hand sanitizer accessible to use before passing out papers, items, etc.
- Remind participants to wash their hands frequently.
- All volunteers must be screened with a temperature check and Covid symptom questions before allowing them entry to Youth Ministry Activities/Events. Participants must have a temperature check before entry. Anyone with a temperature of 100 degrees or above is not allowed to enter. If they do not have immediate transportation, then they must be taken to the designated quarantine room to await pick up. This is in accordance with New York State Department of Education Guidelines pages 20-21.

Physical Distancing

- Maintain six feet of physical distance between non-household participants.
- Avoid physical contact with one another. This includes but is not limited to: hand shaking, hugging, fist bumps, high fives, or any games/activities where physical contact is required.
- Establish room capacity. 20 square feet per person is required as per New York State Department of Education Guidelines page 49.
- If possible, utilize larger classrooms or parish hall to allow for adequate social distancing.
- Designate how many people are allowed in a bathroom at a time.
- If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each person instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing of food and utensils.
- If possible, participants are to bring their own supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible or limit use of supplies and equipment by one person at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
- Many youth ministry activities can be done outdoors weather permitting. Whenever possible do activities outside where there is the lowest chance of contacting or spreading the virus.

After Youth Ministry Activities/Events

- Sanitize high-touch surfaces before and after sessions (e.g., door handles, tables, chairs).
- Disinfect tables and chairs before and after each session.