

Crisis Management Tips For Youth Ministry

There are many different types of crisis that a Youth Minister can face in working with teens. The purpose of this section is to help Youth Ministers develop a set of guidelines they will follow when they are faced with a situation that places a teen or teens in crisis or danger.

For this purpose we will address several categories:

- ❖ Personal Crisis involving one Teen
 - Abuse
 - Addiction
 - Depression
 - Pregnancy
- ❖ Disappearance or Abduction of teen (during Youth Ministry activity)
- ❖ Accident
 - Car or bus wreck
 - Injury or serious illness
- ❖ Large scale disaster or potential for disaster
 - Natural Disaster
 - Hurricane
 - Tornado
 - Blizzard
 - Flood
 - Terrorism
 - Terrorist attack
 - Hostage situation
 - Bomb Threat

Advance Planning makes for Effective Response

Church Property Events:

- Know the number for local police/ sheriff (if other than 911)
- Know the number for the local fire department (if other than 911)
- Know the number for Emergency medical service, paramedic, EMT for emergency transport.
- Know where your local hospital is.
- Know the floor plan and address of where you are.
- Have access to emergency contacts through parish registration forms.
- Have an accurate count of teens and adults present at all times.
- Have a designated meeting spot outside the building in the event the building must be cleared.

- Fill out report documenting situation and actions taken and turn into church office within 48 hours while details are fresh in you mind. (Always let your pastor know of the situation)

Off Church Property

- Always have an emergency cell phone
- Have signed permission slips with current emergency numbers.
- Have an emergency contact at the parish who coordinates with parish staff, families and Archdiocese if necessary in the event of a crisis
- Leave a copy of permission slips in a file at the church that your emergency coordinator can access
- Travel together as a group
- Know the number for the local fire department (if other than 911)
- Know the number for Emergency medical service, paramedic, EMT for emergency transport.
- Know where the local hospital is.
- Know the number for local police/ sheriff (if other than 911)
- Know the floor plan and address of where you are.
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General common sense guideline to follow in seeking emergency assistance.

One must remain calm, alert, and flexible. Most security/ emergency dispatchers are trained to ask what they need to know in order to send help, but callers need to be prepared to help them. Be ready to give the following information when asked, and if not, volunteer it to the dispatcher.

- Identify self and exact location
- State nature of injury or situation
- Tell dispatcher exactly where and how to reach the victim or situation
- Stay on phone until told to disconnect
- Designate someone to meet the security or emergency personnel
- In the event of injury or illness with a minor, locate a chaperone to travel with the minor and coordinate emergency care.
- Contact parents and church staff of the situation as soon as situation allows
- Fill out report documenting situation and actions taken and turn into church office within 48 hours while details are fresh in you mind.

Personal Crisis Situations

This is where a teen comes to you and shares with you about a personal crisis they are having in their life. First it is important to note that not all situations that teens see as a crisis are indeed a crisis. For this we will define crisis as a circumstance, action or event that will place that teen or someone else in physical, sexual or emotional danger or harm.

- Pray with the teen asking for the Holy Spirit to guide your discussions
- Use basic listening skills to access the situation
 - Be present to the teen
 - Make eye contact
 - Use appropriate body language to engage the conversation
 - Use appropriate verbal tones
 - Repeat back what you believe you have heard
- Know who and when to call for help
 - Notify pastor of your conversation and concern for the youth
 - Communicate with parents the situation (unless they are the abusers)
 - Meet face to face if possible
 - Have professional referrals for counseling, etc. available
 - Be familiar with state mandated regulations for reporting abuse and contact appropriate agency. (let agency do its job of investigating)
 - Contact Archdiocesan Youth Ministry or Child Protection Office if you have any doubts as to whether something needs reported
 - If situation involves clergy, lay employee or volunteer of the church, complete safe environment reporting paperwork and contact Archbishop's office immediately. (See Archdiocesan policy for details)
- Support teen and their family through prayer, follow up discussions and open communication to allow for God's healing and reconciliation.

In the event a youth under your care presents a threat to do harm to themselves or others and you can not reach their parent or guardian immediately (nor do you feel you can keep that youth safe until you do) your best option would be to take that child to the local hospital for observation and care until the parents are reached.

Disappearance or Abduction of Teen (during Youth Ministry activity)

- Always know the where about of youth that are under your supervision
- In the event you know (someone has witnessed) a youth taken from the property without permission
 - Secure all other youth in a safe location
 - Contact the parents of the abducted youth
 - Contact the police and give all information you have about the youth abduction
 - Contact your pastor
 - Notify Archdiocese Office of Communication (Pat Chivers cell # 678 48-6865) to handle media related issues

- In the event a youth does not make a check in or fails to be where they are suppose to be:
 - Count heads a second time and secure all youth in a location where they are safe and away from the danger (keep several adults with this group)
 - Organize adult group to go out and look for the youth, dividing up to cover the area where the youth was last seen. (Use radio, or cell phones to communicate among those searching)
 - If youth is not found within reasonable time (no more than 4 hours or less if night)
 - Contact Parents of missing youth
 - Contact your Pastor
 - Call local police for search assistance
 - Notify Archdiocese Office of Communication (Pat Chivers cell # 678 480-6865) to handle media related issues
- In all cases relating to the disappearance of a youth, make sure that remaining youth are safe, necessary people are notified and the Archdiocesan Communication Office is called to handle media related issues. At no time should a Youth Minister speak with the press or give any statements without the consent of the Office of Communications.

Accident or Serious Illness

- In the event of an accident or a participant becomes seriously ill, your first responsibility is to make sure the youth is as comfortable as possible and that medical attention is called. Do not move an accident victim as further injury can occur, but secure the area around them.
- Move all youth that are not injured or ill to a safe location and leave adult supervision with them. With car or bus accidents; even youth who appear not to be hurt could be, so make sure once seriously injured are looked at that all others are checked as well.
- Call the parish coordinator you have left back at the church and relate the situation to them. This person can make necessary calls so that your attention can be on taking care of the youth. (Remember you should leave a list of emergency names and numbers back at the parish when you are leaving church property. This is easily done by copying the field trip or permission slip form.
 - Contact parents
 - Contact pastor
 - Contact Archdiocesan Communication Office if it is a serious accident and youth or adults are being transported to hospital
- In the event of an accident, once the situation is under control and medical attention is available for the injured, designate an adult to call parents with youth that are not injured.
- Anytime there is a accident resulting in injuries to youth, call the Archdiocesan Communication Office to handle media related issues. At no time should a Youth Minister speak with the press or give any statements without the consent of the Office of Communications.

Large Scale Disasters – Natural or Terrorism

- If on church property
 - Make sure all youth and adults are accounted for
 - Have an adult pull emergency contact information for all present
 - Call local police or fire department for assistance
 - Make sure all who are injured are as comfortable as possible without moving them, call for medical transport
 - Get all that are not injured into an area of safety and designate an adult to supervise them.
 - Contact Pastor if he is not present
 - Contact parents
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