

Policy Statement Regarding Adults Working with Youth

This policy is adopted by the Lower Susquehanna Synod Council to insure the health, safety and welfare of all participants in any synod-sponsored youth event

Definitions

Youth:

Youth are participants ages 18 years or younger. If the participant is still attending high school at the time of the event, and is over 18, they are still considered a youth for the purposes of this policy.

Adult Youth Leaders:

Adults or Adult Youth Leaders are persons age 18 and older, who are out of high school, serving in roles of responsibility for youth at a synod youth event.

Synod Youth Event:

Any event planned and implemented in cooperation with this synod's Office for Faith Formation and Youth Ministry.

General

- All adult youth leaders will practice strong Christian witness by honoring our Lutheran understanding of the covenantal vows of marriage, with regards to sexual conduct and living arrangements. In this regard, adult leaders shall not engage in any type of sexual or inappropriate conduct with youth participants, regardless of whether the conduct is consensual.
- All adults designated by congregations as adult youth leaders at a synod event should have completed and on file with their congregation the following documentation:
 - a) Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/Clearances/Pages/Criminal-Background-Check.aspx>
 - b) Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/Clearances/Pages/PA-Child-Abuse-History-Clearance.aspx>
 - c) FBI Criminal History Background Check
 - Pennsylvania residents less than 10 years:
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/Clearances/Pages/FBI-Fingerprinting.aspx>
 - Pennsylvania residents 10+ years:
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/Clearances/Pages/default.aspx>
- This information is confidential and should not be shared with others in the congregation. These documents must be updated every five years, according to state law. This synod's Office for Faith Formation and Youth Ministry may request copies of these clearances for any adult youth leader serving as an advisor at a synod youth event. The same confidentiality must then be maintained.
- Congregations should provide one adult to every seven youth participating in overnight synod youth events. Whenever possible, congregations should provide both male and female advisors for synod youth events.
- Advisors should be certain that any one-on-one contact with a youth attending the event occurs in proximity to the rest of the group or another adult. If a youth wants to meet privately with an adult advisor, the adult supervisor should meet with the youth in public view of other adults, or in a room with a window or a door with a window, and only after alerting another adult advisor of their meeting and the meeting's approximate timing.
- Any youth attending a synod event shall not use illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products. In a similar manner, adults are also strictly prohibited from using illegal drugs and alcohol and should exhibit proper care and restraint when using tobacco

products during synod youth events.

- Adult leaders will maintain proper supervision of their youth at all times at synod youth events.
- No participants at a synod youth event may bring a weapon, firearm, or fireworks to any synod youth event.
- Youth participants shall not use cell phones at synod youth events during public gatherings, unless authorized to do so by event staff or by their congregation's adult advisor. Participants may be asked to turn over their cell phones to congregation adult advisors or cabin counselors for the duration of the event to keep phone secure. All who must have access to cell phones shall keep their phones on silent, whenever possible, and only check messages during breaks.
- Adults may not strike or physically discipline any youth participant, unless safety is threatened.
- Adults may not verbally harass or threaten any youth participant.
- Adults shall refrain from using sexual innuendo in the presence of youth or their peers. The Lower Susquehanna Synod will not tolerate any sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual abuse and/or assault to occur at any synod sponsored youth event. Such conduct may lead to dismissal from the event and/or further disciplinary action.

Housing

- Youth and adults should not share the same room. If housing limitations require youths and adults to share a room, a single adult must never be housed with a single youth, with the exception of a parent and their same-gender child/youth.
- With the exception of married couples, male and female youth will not be assigned to the same room. When assigning rooming to youth who self-identify as gender-fluid, rooming assignments will be made on a case-by-case basis. If the event accommodations include a large open sleeping space, the areas for males and females shall be clearly defined.
- Registrants must agree not to leave the event location (camp, hotel, convention center) without the consent of a member of the event Planning Team. If a youth is picked up before the end of the event, the adult removing the youth must sign-out the youth.

Medical

- A person certified in First Aid & CPR must be present at all one day synod events.
- A person having medical emergency certification, such as an EMT or nurse, should be present at all overnight events.
- A well-equipped and fully stocked First Aid kit must be available at all functions.
- Before administering any over the counter medication to a youth attending an event, the event staff member must secure permission from the youth's parent or guardian to administer the medication.
- A medical release form must be completed and signed by a parent or legal guardian in order for any youth to participate in a synod youth event. All youth must provide the group number and/or policy number for any medical insurance plan which covers the youth, plus a list of any medications being taken by the youth and the current dosages. All youth with dietary restrictions must inform the event staff of those limitations on the release form.
- This synod's Office for Faith Formation and Youth Ministry will supply such medical release forms for synod-sponsored events and will collect and maintain these records throughout the event.

Registration

- Event names, locations, and dates will appear on all printed registration material.
- Completed registration forms must include a designated emergency contact person and the name of the adult leader(s) appointed from the congregation, who are responsible for the youth.

- All participants, including youth, adult youth leaders and event staff, must sign and agree to abide by the event covenant for that event.

Transporting Youth

- Any person driving youth to an event must be 18 years of age or older, unless all passengers are authorized to do so by a parent or legal guardian.
- All drivers for the event should have a copy of their driver's license available.
- All drivers must have proof of vehicle insurance for the vehicle they are driving.
- Seat belts must be worn by all passengers in vehicles equipped with seat belts.
- Any person driving youth to a synod event must obey all state traffic laws.
- An adult should not travel in a vehicle with a lone youth.
- The driver of each vehicle used to transport youth during a synod or ELCA event, such as the ELCA Youth Gathering, must carry medical forms for all passengers.

Attire

- All participants at a synod sponsored youth event are expected to dress in a manner consistent with the event and appropriate to (for) an intentional Christian community.

REPORTING VIOLATIONS

Each synod youth event must have an Event Disciplinary Committee consisting of at least three individuals, this synod's Director for Faith Formation and Youth Ministry, the event director, and the event chaplain. This committee may include the event director(s), and/or other youth and adult youth leaders, designated in advance by the event Planning Team.

Participants should bring any alleged violations to the attention of an adult on the committee. At this time, the Event Disciplinary Committee will meet to review the allegations. The committee will invite the party bringing the allegations, any alleged victims, and the accused individual(s) to speak with the committee regarding the allegations. The committee will meet with each party in separate interviews.

Discipline should be reflective of the infraction, and may include, but may not be limited to, removal from the event or dismissal from participation at future synod youth events.

If the allegations involve a member of the Event Disciplinary Committee, the individual raising the allegations should bring concerns to another adult member of the committee for review.

If the allegations involve an ordained minister (pastor or deacon) and include allegations of sexual impropriety, procedures for reporting and investigating the alleged violations are the guidelines set forth in the "Statement of Policy and Protocol Regarding Sexual Misconduct by Rostered Ministers".

If the allegations involve the synod's Director for Faith Formation and Youth Ministry, the committee should bring the allegations directly to the bishop of the synod.

Adopted by the Lower Susquehanna Synod Council

SC04.11.70.

November 13, 2004

Amended by the Lower Susquehanna Synod Council

SC23.11.71.

November 18, 2023