

# SAFETY POLICIES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY EVENTS OF THE NEW JERSEY SYNOD, ELCA

*Adopted by the New Jersey Synod Council February 2012*

## 1. Adult Leaders

- a. Congregational adult leaders at synodical youth ministry events must be 21 years of age or older.
- b. A young adult is someone post-high school and 18 - 20 years of age.
- c. Congregations are strongly encouraged to only send adults to such events who have been a member of their congregation for at least 6 months.
- d. A ratio of one congregational adult leader per seven youth must be maintained at overnight events. A ratio of no more than one-to-five is recommended.
- e. Congregational adult leaders must ensure proper supervision of their youth during a synodical youth ministry event.
- f. Adults should avoid being alone with a youth in a one-on-one situation if at all possible. Doors will be left fully open if this is unavoidable. Speaking with a youth one-on-one should be done in public settings where they are in sight of other people.
- g. Any possession or use of illicit drugs or alcohol is prohibited.
- h. Use of tobacco products by adults must follow all state laws. Its use is strongly discouraged at synodical youth events.

## 2. Background Reports

- a. Any adult or young adults attending as a registered participant at a synodical overnight event must complete a national criminal/child abuse clearance check (report) through the New Jersey Synod's account with First Advantage. See *Background Checks FAQs-NJ Synod Youth Ministry Safety Policy Supporting Document* (referred to hereafter as *Background Checks FAQs*) for details on how to do this.
- b. This report must be completed prior to the event. In the case of a last-minute adult/young adult leadership change or addition, every effort will be made to allow them to complete a report at the start of each overnight event.
- c. All information received is confidential and will not be shared with others in their congregation or the synod.
- d. Criminal/child abuse clearance checks must be redone every four years or whenever membership changes to a new congregation.
- e. In case an adult or young adult attending as a registered participant does not have a Social Security Number (which is needed for a national criminal/child abuse clearance check) a request for an alternative procedure shall be made of the Synod well in advance of the event, and granted at the Synod's discretion.

## 3. Transportation

- a. Any drivers transporting youth during any synodical event must be 21 years or older.
- b. All drivers must provide to the Synod a photocopy of their valid driver's license, certifying their qualification to operate that class of vehicle.
- c. Proof of vehicle insurance must be provided.
- d. Seat belts must be worn by everyone in the vehicle.
- e. All state traffic laws and other laws pertaining to the transportation of youth must be obeyed. (e.g. age of those eligible to ride in the front of the car, use of booster seats)
- f. Each vehicle must carry medical forms for all passengers.

#### 4. Medical

- a. When specified by the synod, a medical release form must be completed for each participant of a synodical youth event.
- b. Medication brought to an event is to be in its original container, label intact with clear administration directions.
- c. A person certified in First Aid and CPR must be present at every synodical youth ministry event.
- d. A well-equipped First Aid Kit must be available and maintained at events. Adult leaders are to be made aware of where the First Aid Kit is to be found at the event.

#### 5. General Safety Concerns

- a. Any kind of illicit drugs, alcohol or tobacco use by youth at a synodical event is prohibited.
- b. Weapons, firearms, laser pointers or fireworks at synodical youth event are prohibited.
- c. Physical discipline, verbal harassment and threats toward youth, emotional and sexual abuse of any kind is strictly prohibited.
- d. All sexual contact and inappropriate touching between adults/young adults and minors is strictly prohibited.
- e. Allegation of any inappropriate contact, discipline, harassment, threat or abuse should be reported immediately to the Event Coordinator and/or the Synod Youth Ministry Specialist. A written Allegation Report will then be made and followed up on in an appropriate manner.
- f. A written Accident Report will be made following any physical accident. All such Reports will be followed up on in an appropriate manner.

#### Notes

*Sexual Abuse* is defined as follows: includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; unwelcome sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person. Any sexual contact between adults/young adults and minors is considered sexual abuse.

*Child Emotional Abuse* is defined as follows: Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law.