



□ POLICY

■ GUIDELINE

YOUTH MINISTRY PROGRAMS

THEMES OF A COMPREHENSIVE VISION FOR YOUTH MINISTRY (From *Renewing the Vision*)

Developmentally Appropriate

Human development and growth in faith is a lifelong journey. Renewing the Vision builds upon the growth nurtured in childhood and provides a foundation for continuing growth in young adulthood. Effective ministry with adolescents provides developmentally appropriate experiences, programs, activities, strategies, resources, content, and processes to address the unique developmental and social needs of young and older adolescents both as individuals and as members of families. This approach responds to adolescents' unique needs, focuses ministry efforts, and establishes realistic expectations for growth during adolescence.

Family Friendly

Ministry with adolescents recognizes that the family has the primary responsibility for the faith formation of young people and that the parish and Catholic school share in it. The home is a primary context for sharing, celebrating, and living the Catholic faith, and we are partners with parents in developing the faith life of their adolescent children. The Church can contribute significantly toward strong, life-shaping families for young people. The changes in family life, such as the increasing diversity in family structure, the pressures of family time and commitments, and the changing economic situation, challenge us to respond to family needs and to develop a variety of approaches, programs, activities, and strategies to reach out to families.

Intergenerational

Ministry with adolescents recognizes the importance of the intergenerational faith community in sharing faith and promoting healthy growth in adolescents. Meaningful involvement in parish life and the development of intergenerational relationships provide young people with rich resources to learn the story of the Catholic faith experientially and to develop a sense of belonging to the Church. Ministry with adolescents can incorporate young people into the intergenerational opportunities already available in the parish community, identify and develop leadership opportunities in the parish for young people, and create intergenerational support networks and mentoring relationships. Age-specific programs can be transformed into intergenerational programming and new intergenerational programs that incorporate young people can be developed.



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Multicultural

Adolescents today are growing up in a culturally diverse society. The perceived image of the United States has shifted from a melting pot to a multihued tapestry. The strength and beauty of the tapestry lie in the diverse colors and textures of its component threads—the values and traditions claimed by the different racial and ethnic groups that constitute the people of the United States. Ministry with adolescents is multicultural when it focuses on a specialized ministry to youth of particular racial and ethnic cultures and promotes multicultural awareness among all youth. First, ministry with adolescents recognizes, values, and responds to the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and experiences that exist among adolescents and develops culturally responsive and inclusive programming to address these needs. Second, all ministry with adolescents needs to incorporate ethnic traditions, values, and rituals into ministerial programming; teach about the variety of ethnic cultures in the Catholic Church; provide opportunities for crosscultural experiences; and foster acceptance and respect for cultural diversity.

Community-wide Collaboration

The Church's concern for the civic community includes advocacy on behalf of young people when public issues that affect their lives need to be addressed. Ministry with adolescents involves creating healthier civic communities for all young people. This involves networking with leaders in congregations of diverse faith traditions, public schools, youth-serving agencies, and community organizations to nurture a shared commitment to promoting healthy adolescent development and a healthy community; to develop mutual respect and understanding; to share resources; and to plan community-wide efforts and programs. Building these relationships can open doors for sharing resources and co-sponsoring training, programs, and advocacy efforts.

Leadership

Ministry with adolescents mobilizes all of the resources of the faith community in a comprehensive and integrated approach: Part of the vision of youth ministry is to present to youth the richness of the person of Christ, which perhaps exceeds the ability of one person to capture, but which might be effected by the collective ministry of the many persons who make up the Church. This approach involves a wide diversity of adult and youth leaders in a variety of roles necessary for comprehensive ministry. Ministry coordinators have a central role in facilitating the people, programming, and resources of the faith community on behalf of a comprehensive ministry effort with adolescents. Coordination is stewardship—overseeing the resources of the community so that they are used wisely in ministry with adolescents.



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Flexible and Adaptable Programming

Ministry with adolescents creates flexible and adaptable program structures that address the changing needs and life situations of today's young people and their families within a particular community. The comprehensive approach incorporates the following elements in developing ministry programming for adolescents:

- a diversity of program settings
- age-specific programs for young and older adolescents
- family-centered programs for the entire family, for parents, for foster parents, for grandparents raising children, adolescents
- intergenerational parish programs
- community-wide programs
- a balanced mix of programs, activities, and strategies that address the eight components of comprehensive ministry
- a variety of approaches to reach all adolescents and their families, including parish, school, and community-wide programs
- small-group programs and small ecclesial community experiences
- mentoring programs and activities, independent or self-directed programs
- a variety of scheduling options and program settings to respond to the reality of the busy lives and commitments of adolescents and their families
- use of current technology to facilitate communication in program development and implementation.