**Catholic Diocese of Youngstown**

**Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry**

**YOUTH MINISTRY CONSIDERATIONS**

**DURING A PANDEMIC**

Presented for your consideration are these ideas and reflection questions for various ways of ministering with young people during this time of heightened health concerns during a pandemic.

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Phil. 4:6)*

**STARTING POINTS:**

* + What is your goal/objective (for the program, ministry or project)?
  + What is the safest way to achieve this goal/objective can be accomplished?
  + What do must be provided for the safest way to achieve the goal/objective?
  + What information must be provided to teens and their parents to be clear about the program, and what permissions will we need from parents for the teens to participate?
  + What do your team members, catechists and volunteers need to be effective and feel supported as they work towards the goal/objective?
  + What do your pastor/administrator/parish leader and team members think of your responses to the above. What additional insights might they share?

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**MODELS TO CONSIDER:**

**“HOME-SCHOOLING”**

Send home books, mail prepared packets, or post lessons and activities online for families to work on together at their own pace.

Will you host a parent meeting (virtually or gathered with distance) to review the materials?

How will the parish check in with families to see if they have what they need or if more assistance is desired?

**VIRTUAL SESSIONS**

**Synchronous** – Virtual meetings, classes, prayer, emotional check-ins, socialization, etc. that are held at a set time for participants to engage in “live” with others.

* + - Seek out the best virtual platform for you and your participants. (Possible ones include: Zoom, WebEx, Facebook Live, YouTube Live, Google Meet, FreeConferenceCall.com, etc.)
    - Ensure all participants have access, or work with them to provide access as possible.
    - Look for creative ways to ensure every participant is engaged (give thumbs up/thumbs down, online poll, use whiteboard, comment in chat box, show-and-tell, etc.).
    - Avoid embarrassing any participant.
    - Ensure all materials are age-appropriate.
    - At least two Diocesan Child Protection Policy Compliant adults on every session (one may wish to serve as moderator for technology troubleshooting, observing the chat box, monitoring who is participating, etc.)
    - If utilizing small group breakouts – have adult facilitators and note-takers.
    - Record sessions and save to a parish device.

**Asynchronous** – post recordings, readings, reflections, narrated PowerPoint presentations, podcasts, social media memes, etc. that participants can view at any time.

* + - Seek out the best virtual platform for you and your participants.
    - Ensure all participants have access, or work with them to provide access as possible.
    - Provide some reflection questions or point out sections of which participants should make note.
    - Ensure all materials are age-appropriate.

**Hybrid** – “Flipped classroom” – participants watch recordings or read selections any time within

perimeters (such as a week) then host a live session for prayer and discussion.

Respond to all suggestions and reflections for synchronous and asynchronous formats.

**INDOOR GATHERINGS**

**Cleaning and hygiene**

How often will surfaces (especially high-touch) be disinfected?

Are hand-washing stations and/or hand sanitizers readily available?

Are safety signs posted to remind participants of protocols?

Talk with parish maintenance regarding proper ventilation.

**Entrance protocols**

Designated entrance and exit – cleaned door knobs/bars regularly

Post directional signs

Consider staggering arrival and departure times to minimize traffic.

**Restrooms**

Limit number of participants in the facilities at a time.

How often will surfaces be disinfected? (Including handles, knobs, faucets, etc.)

**Food/drink**

Pre-packaged preferred if provided, or participants bring their own.

**Materials and supplies**

Participants should not be sharing materials, so will they bring their own, receive

individual materials marked with their name, or deeply clean any item that must be

shared after each use?

**On-going registration check-ins**

Does any participant

… have a fever?

… report having been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 in the

past 2-3 weeks?

…have any symptoms of COVID-19?

Anyone experiencing symptoms should stay home/be sent home.

Leaders should be trained in symptom- detection.

**Physical Distancing**

Are participants spaced out to meet or exceed current health guidelines?

Can participants be facing the same direction (not face-to-face)?

Are masks mandatory or strongly suggested for all who are able to wear them,

especially when moving away from the socially distanced seating?

Are shared spaces marked to help participants keep distance when moving between

activities (i.e. hallway direction designations, limited numbers of participants

within each room, etc.)?

Prolonged exposure increases risk, so can the session be completed in less than 90

minutes?

Discourage participants from congregating after the event ends.

**Process for reverting back to quarantine, if necessary**

How will participants and parents be notified?

Will programming move to a virtual setting or cease?

**Process for notifying families if a participant later tests positive for COVID-19**

How will participants and parents be notified?

What is the process for reporting to your county health department?

**OUTDOOR GATHERINGS**

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**Cleaning and hygiene**

How often will surfaces (especially high-touch)

be disinfected?

Are hand-washing stations and/or hand sanitizers

readily available?

Are safety signs posted to remind participants of

protocols?

**Restrooms**

Limit number of participants in the facilities at a time.

How often will surfaces be disinfected? (Including handles, knobs, faucets, etc.)

Post clear signage about protocols and cleaning.

**Food/drink** Pre-packaged preferred if provided, or participants bring their own.

**Materials and supplies**

Participants should not be sharing materials, so will they bring their own, receive

individual materials marked with their name, or deeply clean any item that must be

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How are these spaces marked?

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especially when moving away from the socially-distanced seating?

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**SMALL GROUP GATHERINGS** (Small Christian Communities with Youth)

Who is the “point person” for each group?

Will the groups meet indoors or outdoors? (Follow appropriate protocols above)

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**For Further Reflection**

**Budget Considerations:**

* Providing cleaning supplies
* Providing hand sanitizer
* Providing masks for those who need them
* Providing individual program materials/supplies
* Ordering or purchasing pre-packaged food and beverage

**Get Creative!**

* Invite new adults, especially young adults in their 20s and 30s, to assist with virtual sessions as Moderators. If they are already familiar with the platform you will use (or a quick learner), Moderators can attend to virtual waiting rooms, chat rooms, questions, assigning breakouts, and technology trouble-shooting. This will free-up your catechist, team member, or volunteer to focus on content and interaction. This will expand your team and give more adults opportunities to serve!
* Walk through various Catholic prayer styles…. Teach about the origins and meanings behind prayer styles then lead a session in the prayer style (or invite teen leaders to lead the prayer!)
* Work with parishioners on recording short videos witnessing to their faith or responding to specific questions, then use these for your sessions. How nice will it be for your teens/families to see familiar faces in some sessions, and it invites parishioners to evangelize!
* Also consider the various gifts of your teens and parishioners and brainstorm ways they can integrate the gifts such as recording How To Videos (cooking, arts and crafts, traditional prayers in different languages, etc.)
* Plan in 1-2 month chunks of programming; think mini-courses for catechesis, or monthly themes.
* Continue to engage parents and families as well as planning for direct programming for teens.
* Utilize the plethora of virtual material already posted; look at the USCCB websites, Catholic Relief Services Education Center, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, The Center for Ministry Development, LifeTeen, St. Mary’s Press, textbook publishers, V-Cat videos, do specific searches on YouTube. Always watch a video/review material before posting, especially with youth.

**Keep in Mind:**

* Policies, guidelines, and best practices from other diocesan offices such as Safe Environments, Worship, Religious Education, etc. must be maintained.
* Mandates, Orders, and guidelines from the Ohio Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), governmental agencies and your county health department.
* Pastoral care and sensitivity are key!

**Helpful Links:**

Ohio Coronavirus Website:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/>

ODH Printable Signs:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/responsible-restart-ohio/Posters-and-Signs/Posters-and-Signs>

CDC Printable Signs:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc>

Diocesan Safe Environments

<https://doy.org/safe-environment/>

Diocesan Office of Religious Education

<https://doy.org/ministries-2/religious-education/>

Diocesan Office of Worship Directives and Guidelines

<https://doy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Directives-and-Guidelines-for-the-Resumption-of-Public-Mass.pdf>

Diocesan Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry page with coronavirus relates resources:  
 a.) Pastoral Care, including in time of Pandemic:

<https://youngstownoyyam.weebly.com/helping-young-people-during-grief-or-tragedy.html>

b.) YM During a Pandemic Guidelines, resources, links, and prayers:

<https://youngstownoyyam.weebly.com/ym-during-pandemic.html>

c.) Digital Learning Apps you may wish to use:

<https://youngstownoyyam.weebly.com/uploads/1/1/0/5/11055607/digital_learning_apps_sharedfor2020planning.pdf>

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*While we find ourselves in a serious time which could escalate fear, remember that we are a people of hope and of faith… Thank you for all that you are doing and will do to continue to pass on our Catholic faith while also protecting the health of our members!*

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasinglycalling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father.” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)