

Teen Leader Safe Environment Training Program

REVISED September 4, 2008. Please use this session plan in place of all older session plans.

Session Overview

The urgent issues of child abuse must be addressed with all community members, especially children and teenagers. Young people in ministry leadership roles in the Church need realistic tools that will carry them through difficult situations and empower them to take a positive stand for themselves and one another. In this session the participants will learn how to protect children and youth that they minister to and how to protect themselves. The activities included will build both awareness and confidence.

Outcomes

- The learner will have a basic understanding of how to recognize boundary violations and sexual abuse, know how to respond to someone disclosing boundary violations or abuse and know how to refer to someone to get help.
- The learner will understand their responsibility as a teen leader for the safety of children/youth they minister to.
- The learner will be provided with information and tools to identify and steer away from questionable and potentially dangerous situations including boundary violations, sexual harassment, and cybersex addiction.
- The learner will be provided with some tools to develop a healthy ministry lifestyle and a commitment to be a positive role model.

Facilitation

The facilitator's role is to allow for an open discussion where all participants share (only if they so choose). The facilitator should introduce the purpose of the session and the guidelines for the discussion. It is essential that the facilitator of this session have excellent listening skills.

Note: BE READY TO REFER IF NECESSARY. Be sure that you can access a counselor if a young person has been abused and is ready to talk and you feel that is beyond your ability to handle. Every parish or school should have the name and contact information for a professional counselor that can work with adolescents.

The facilitator must be candid and honest with the participants from the onset. The young people must be told from the start that the facilitator and the other adults present (mostly ministry volunteers who may serve as small group leaders for bigger groups) have a legal and ethical responsibility to report any alleged abuse. The other adults present should be attentive listeners, allowing the young people to voice their feelings, thoughts, questions, and concerns as needed. A ratio of one adult for every four - six young people is suggested. Adults should be sporadically seated as a part of the group, although this is not a forum for them to voice their views, unless asked by the young people. Adults should be honest and respectful at all times, allowing the facilitator to function in his or her role and aiding in that role. Adults should fully understand the importance of listening.

Session at a Glance

- Community Pledge Prayer and Welcome (5 minutes)
- Being Healthy as a Person and a Leader (20 minutes)
- Recognizing the power of my role and Setting Boundaries? (20 minutes)
- Go over **Educational Program for Teen Ministry Leaders** (15 minutes)
- Code of Conduct and Standards of Behavior (40 minutes)
- Cybersex Addiction Checklist (5 minutes)
- Prayer Service: You Know Me (10 minutes)

Total time for session: 115 minutes

Session Content

Preparation ... Gather the following items:

- newsprint or poster board and markers
- pens or pencils, one for each participant
- a Bible
- a recording of reflective instrumental music and the appropriate equipment to play it (optional)
- **HANDOUTS YOU WILL NEED FOR EACH PARTICIPANT**
- copies of Community Pledge Prayer
- copies of **40 Asset Checklist**
- copies of **40 Developmental Assets**
- copies of **Educational Program for Teen Ministry Leaders** (available from the Diocese or print from power point file)
- copies of the **Code of Conduct and Behavior Standards** revised August 2008 (available from the Diocese)
- copies of **How To Respond To A Person Disclosing Abuse**
- copies of **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect** (available from the Diocese)
- copies of **Cybersex Addiction Checklist**
- copies of **Prayer Card**, one for each participant
- copies of **Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form** for youth (available from the Diocese)
- Ask for a volunteer to proclaim the Scripture passage during the closing prayer.

Community Pledge Prayer & Welcome (5 minutes)

1. Open with the Community Pledge Prayer and then welcome the participants and provide a brief overview of the session. Say the following or put into your own words:

The urgent issues of child abuse which includes sexual abuse must be talked about openly and respectfully as our parish, with the support of the Diocese, creates a culture of safety that will protect our young people. We need all ministry leaders including you, our teen leaders, to develop the tools and the commitment that will keep you safe through difficult situations, and enable you to respond effectively when you recognize abuse. This training session is not meant to create fears or anxieties about ministering to others but instead should help you develop the tools and the confidence you need to minister effectively to children or youth in our parish community.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Answer any questions that the teens bring up unless they will be answered later in the program.

40 Developmental Assets (20 minutes)

2. Asset Checklist

If we want to affect children and youth positively, we have to make sure that we are healthy. Invite the teens to take out the **40 Asset Checklist** from Search Institute. Tell them to go through the checklist and check off the assets that they believe they have based on the description. Go through a couple of the assets to make sure they understand them. When they complete the checklist, tell them to count up how many of the assets they believe they have (they get 1 asset for every check they marked). Tell them that the national average for teenagers is 18 assets but that SEARCH Institute (the folks who developed these Assets that they believe identify healthy youth) say that each teenager needs at least 31 assets to be truly healthy. If you score lower than 31 assets, no need to panic. The great thing about the Assets is that they represent things in our life that we have control over and we can seek out the people who can help us build certain assets. Give them an example.

Ask them to share with a partner one asset that they feel is their strongest and one asset that they feel is their weakest.

When they finish the sharing with their partner, invite/challenge them in this way: *When you get home, ask your parent/guardian the questions and see how many of the assets their parent(s)/guardian(s) believe they have.* This could make for some good discussions. Invite them to keep this checklist in a place where they can refer to periodically to see how they are growing and becoming more healthy as a person.

Close this by saying: *Remember that it is the responsibility of every ministry leader to continue to grow as a healthy person, as a role model for others and it is important that we recognize these 40 assets as a means to that end. It is equally important that we recognize our responsibility to build these assets in every child or teenager we come in contact with.*

The Power of My Role as a Minister (20 minutes)

3. The Power of My Role as a Minister

Invite teens into a small group. Give them a piece of newsprint and a marker and ask them to draw a line down the middle of the paper. On one side, write: **The Top 10 Ways You Can Affect Children in a Positive Way** (if the teens are ministry leaders with children) or **The Top 10 Ways You Can Affect Your Peers (Teens) In A Positive Way** (if the teens are ministry leaders with their peers). On the other side of the paper, write: **The Top 7 Ways You Can Affect Children in a Negative Way** (if the teens are ministry leaders with children) or **The Top 7 Ways You Can Affect Your Peers (Teens) In A Negative Way** (if the teens are ministry leaders with their peers). When they are done, invite them to report their findings to the large group. Accept all answers. Summarize this part of the session by saying, "I asked you to come up with 10 positive and 7 negative to illustrate that there are many more ways to positively affect children and youth than to negatively affect them and that is Good News." Ask them to turn to pages 23-24 to look at

some ideas for Affecting Children and Youth positively and negatively in their role as ministry leaders.

Educational Program for Teen Ministry Leaders (15 minutes)

4. Educational Program for Teen Ministry Leaders (5 minutes)

Hand out the **Educational Program for Teen Ministry Leaders** booklet to each participant. Tell them that we have already talked about some of the items in the booklet and we will talk about some additional items that are in the booklet. But that this booklet is a resource for them to go back to throughout their time as a ministry leader. Ask them to **read through pages 1-5** that talk about what this training program is all about and what sexual abuse is.

After everyone has read these pages (or if you have a small group you may want to read out loud) ask if **there are any questions about sexual abuse**. Answer any questions that you can answer. If you cannot answer a question, tell them that you will find the answer and get back to them with an answer. Make sure you have contact information from them so you really can get back to them.

Boundaries (10 minutes)

Invite the teens to turn to page 6 so that you can talk about Setting Appropriate Boundaries. Invite them to read pages 6-14.

Ask the group the following questions...

-As a Leader, when is it most difficult to recognize my boundaries...their boundaries?

All answers are welcomed here. Hopefully, they will get an opportunity to think about their own boundaries and how they respond to others.

-As a Leader, if I violate a person's boundary, how will I know? What do I do? If someone violates my boundary, what do I do?

New Code of Conduct (40 minutes)

New Code of Conduct and Standards of Behavior. Go through the new diocesan Code of Conduct and Behavior Standards and summarize the first section titled, "Professional Ethical Obligations" 1 – 7. (10 minutes)

Use these words or put them into your own words:

1. Ministerial Role

Summary: As a minister we understand that we must work together with everyone involved in ministry –we cannot be the Lone Ranger. We also agree to faithfully represent the teachings of the Church in word and action and finally we agree to continue our education and training to fulfill our ministry role.

2. Inclusion

Summary: We must recognize the dignity of each person and not disrespect anyone in our words or actions.

3. Accountability

Summary: The Catholic Church has a long history of accountability. Just as the bishops are accountable to the Holy Father Pope Benedict, the priests are accountable in their bishop. In our Diocese that is Bishop Vann. Parish employees are accountable to the pastor and every volunteer is accountable to either the pastor or one of the parish employees such as the

DRE or the Youth Ministry leader. As a ministry volunteer working with _____ your supervisor will be _____. This means that you will follow the directives of this person and ask questions when you are unsure of those directives. This also means that you can expect the full support of your supervisor to help you to become the best ministry leader you can be.

4. Confidentiality

Summary: You are expected as a ministry leader to hold a confidence when someone asks that of you except when holding the confidence can bring harm to that person or to others. If someone confides in you for example that they have been thinking about committing suicide, you must report that to your supervisor and/or their parents. Likewise, if someone reports any kind of abuse, you are bound to report that to your supervisor and to CPS Child Protective Services.

5. Conduct

Summary: You agree to maintain appropriate boundaries with those you minister with. You agree that you will not use your ministry position to manipulate others, sexually harass others, or any other abuses of the power that come with your ministry position. You agree to model healthy and positive behaviors.

6. Referrals and Intervention

*Summary: Know the signs of sexual abuse and when and how to refer children or youth for help. Know also how to report abuse. Go over the handouts: **How to Respond To A Person Disclosing Abuse** and **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect** handout and answer any questions the group may have about when and how to respond and report child abuse or neglect.*

7. Parish and Diocesan Policies and Guidelines

Summary: You need to be aware of guidelines set by the parish and the Diocese. Your supervisor will make sure that you know which guidelines and policies to follow in addition to this Code of Conduct and Behavior Standards.

Do you have any questions about these Ethical Obligations that every ministry leader is bound by in the Diocese of Fort Worth which includes our parish/school?

Activity Options to Break Open the Behavior Standards

Option 1:

Behavior Standards through teen minds (15 minutes)

If you have a group of 10 or more persons consider the following option:
If you have a group of at least 10, give each person one of the Behavior Standards and ask them to put that Behavior Standard into their own words and be able to give a real life example of the Behavior that is to be followed or avoided in ministry with children or youth. Give each person only two minutes to prepare and then invite each person beginning with #1 and going through #10 to share their particular behavior standard (in their own words) and then share an example of what it means to follow that behavior or avoid that behavior in ministry with children or youth.

If you have a group of 20, have two people work together and when reporting, one

of them shares the Behavior Standard in their own words and the other shares the example of what it means to follow that behavior or avoid that behavior in ministry with children or youth.

Forced Choices Activity (10 minutes)

After you have finished going through the Behavior Standards, ask the group to move to the middle of the room. You will then read each of the statements under Unacceptable Behavior and ask each person to move to the right if behavior named is easy to refrain from or to the left if the behavior will be difficult to refrain from. You could put a sign that says EASY on one wall and DIFFICULT on the other wall. For many of these, everyone will go to one wall and there will be no need to discuss. For the ones where there are people on each side of the room, ask 2 persons from each side to explain why they think this will be easy to refrain from and 2 persons why this will be difficult to refrain from. Remember...leave the judgments out of this. You want an open atmosphere for discussion. This will also give you an opportunity to clarify the meaning of the particular behavior if it is being misunderstood.

Partner Sharing (5 minutes)

After you finish the FORCED CHOICES ACTIVITY, invite each person to choose a partner and go through WARNING SIGNS and Appropriate and Inappropriate Displays of Affection.

Option 2: For groups of less than 10, ask each person to put #10 next to each of the 10 Behavior Standards that they find easy to understand, a #1 next to those Behavior Standards they find difficult to understand. After the group has finished marking the Behavior Standards with #10 or #1, ask them to tell you the Behavior Standards that you gave #1 to. Then explain that Behavior Standard and be sure to give an example that teenagers can understand. After you have gone through the Behavior Standards that needed some explaining. Ask the group if there are any of the Behavior Standards that they believe will be difficult for them to live by. Don't be too quick to judge their questioning. Teenagers learn best in an open atmosphere where it is OK to challenge. It is best to respond in an open and honest way. Some tension means they are grappling with the issues.

Invite the group then to go through "Unacceptable behaviors" and ask for any clarifying questions they have about any of the items in the checklist. Do the same for the "Warning Signs" and "Appropriate and Inappropriate Displays of Affections".

Option 1 or 2 Close with the following:

*Following the Code of Conduct and Behavior Standards of the Diocese of Fort Worth is not optional. Any infractions could lead to you not being able to serve in the capacity as a ministry leader. If you understand the Code of Conduct and Behavior Standards, please sign and turn in the **Acknowledgement Form**. If you haven't already handed out the Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form, do so now and have them sign the form. Then collect the forms.*

Cybersex Addiction Checklist (5 minutes). Hand this checklist out and invite them to look it over. Go through a couple of the checklist items to make sure they understand them. Ask this question, do you think that it is possible to become addicted to cybersex? After responses, invite them go through the checklist on their own as another tool to help them to look at their personal development.

CLOSE THE SESSION WITH PRAYER

Prayer Service: You Know Me (10 minutes)

1. Invite the volunteer you have selected to come forward to proclaim Jeremiah 29:11-12. Allow a few moments of silence after the reading.

2. Share the following points with the participants:

- Although many things in life may challenge us, God has great things in mind for each of us.
- God knew us even before we were born and desires for us to follow God's lead and be guided by God's love.
- God's plans for each of us involve growing spiritually, seeking goodness, and trusting in God's all-knowing power.
- With God's guidance we can persevere through difficult situations.

3. Distribute a copy of resource 4 and a pen or pencil to each participant. Invite the participants to prayerfully respond to the sentence starters. Remind them that this activity is for personal reflection and that they are not to discuss with others or work in groups during this time. You may wish to play some reflective instrumental music to encourage a quiet atmosphere. Allow 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the needs of the group.

4. Conclude by inviting the participants to pray the closing prayer together:

*Lord, you have created me with specific thoughts, ideas, and characteristics. You know everything about me. You know who I am and who I will become. You have plans for me that are wonderful, plans that I might not even be able to imagine for myself. Help me to trust in your guidance, Lord. Help me to believe that I don't have to do anything by myself. Help me to remember that you are ever present, all-knowing, and completely loving. Grant me the gifts I need to believe in myself. When I feel discouraged, remind me that I am capable. When I feel lonely, bring friends and family to support me. When I am confused, show me the right path to follow. When I doubt the future, enlighten me to trust in your creative plans. I ask all this with a humble heart and with much gratitude.
Amen.*

Measuring Personal Space, with discussion

Time

- 6 minutes to do measuring part of the exercise
 - 9 minutes going over the discussion questions
- Total 15 minutes

Activity

Divide into groups of three trainees (make sure each group is coed if possible). Make sure that friends are not in the same group and make sure that each group has a combination of boys/girls.

Each group will be given a measuring tape or a length of rope at least 6 ft long. Each group member will in turn play all 3 roles:

1. The person who stand stills and says: STOP
2. The person who walks toward the person who is standing still
3. The observer and measurer

Begin by having 2 trainees stand pretty far away from each other but still within calling distance. One trainee walks toward the other trainee who is standing still. The standing still trainee says STOP when he/she feels that their personal space is being invaded and feels uncomfortable by the presence of the walking trainee who has gotten close to her/him.

The third trainee who is observing measures the distance between the 2 trainees' toes after the walking trainee has been told to STOP. Write down the distance on a sheet of paper.

Then switch roles (do this quickly – you only have 6 minutes to go through all three roles.

#1 Name: _____

Partner who walks toward #1: _____

Number of inches: _____

#2 Name: _____

Partner who walks toward #2: _____

Number of inches: _____

#3 Name: _____

Partner who walks toward #3: _____

Number of inches: _____

After each trainee has had a turn doing this, begin the discussion

Discussion questions

What do we notice when people of the opposite sex walked towards each other?

Was the distance greater or smaller when the word STOP was said?

Why do you think that is?

How could you tell when a student's personal space had been invaded?

What behaviors did you notice?

Can you think of some instances when people do not STOP when they are asked to stop?

What are some consequences of not stopping when you are asked to stop?

Use this activity if the group you are working with doesn't seem to understand boundaries very well.

What is a Boundary?

All nations have a boundary line that one must have permission to cross. Boundaries range from the personal to the geo-political. Nations have a boundary line that one must have permission to cross. Laws and rules serve as boundaries that ensure that people do not engage in certain behaviors before they reach a certain age (e.g. drinking alcohol, seeing R-rated movies). Additionally, laws and rules establish a standard threshold for certain privileges (e.g. voting, getting a driver's license, entering into a legal contract). People have boundaries too, and determining other people's boundaries often takes some time to figure out. Personal boundaries aren't fixed, but can differ depending on the situation, so they are harder to figure out than state or legal boundaries. Some people, for instance, don't like when others stand too close to them; other people don't mind. Certain kinds of language (e.g. vulgar or lewd language), especially when directed at someone, can violate a person's personal boundaries.

What are boundaries in your school?

How do other people set boundaries for you?

What boundaries have your parents set for you?.

How do you recognize when you have crossed a boundary? What may happen?

Are boundaries the same for boys? For girls?

What are some behaviors that kids legally cannot do because of their age?

What boundaries do you have for yourself?

How do you respond if your boundaries are crossed?

How do other people know your personal boundaries?

Do you feel you are in control of your boundaries?

I Didn't Do It!!!

Which of the following situations considered “Unacceptable Behaviors” in the diocesan Code of Conduct and Standards of Behavior only apply to middle school youth and which only apply to adults in ministry?

Place an **M** (for middle school only), **A** (for adult only), and **MA** (if it applies to both Middle school youth and adults) on each line before the behavior.

- Speaking graphically about sexual activities (including your own) and/or allowing others to do so (this includes telling sexually suggestive jokes)
- Hosting parish or school events for children or youth in your home without at least one other adult present
- Showing pornographic materials (photos, films, cartoons, stories, and drawings) to others
- Allowing anyone to become sexual with you or with another
- Spanking, shaking, slapping, wrestling, tickling or physically punishing children or youth
- Giving, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol
- Giving, possessing or being under the influence of illegal drugs
- Giving persons tobacco products
- Shaming, degrading, ridiculing, threatening, belittling, or humiliating another person
- Using foul or abusive language
- Showing favoritism
- Going out/Dating a child or young person
- Having physical contact with another that can be misinterpreted
- Wearing provocative or revealing attire
- Being nude in front of others
- Being in bed with children or youth
- Keeping “secrets” about relationships
- Showing affection when no one else is around or in bedrooms, closets, restricted areas and other private rooms
- Staring while others are dressing
- Commenting on others' bodies
- Taking pictures or video/digital recording while others are dressing or showering
- Failing to adhere to uniform or accepted standards of affection