

YOUTH PROGRAMS/FIELD TRIPS

Youth group activities can present a wide range of loss exposures. First, and foremost is the need to have pre-screened adult supervision for all youth group activities and outings. One-on-one contact with a youth and adult and with the youth themselves should be avoided. This is especially important in "at risk" situations (i.e. overnight field trips, non-public areas, etc.).

Field trip permission and release forms and, if applicable, driver screening forms, should be utilized for all off-site functions. All volunteer drivers and chaperone drivers must be at least 25 years of age. In some situations, it may be recommended *not* to have your church responsible for providing transportation to an off-site location. In these cases, it should be the parents responsibility for taking and picking up their child from the activity site/function.

Steps to Safe Youth Activities

Supervision

It is important that there is proper supervision of the young adults. Make sure that the ratio between staff and youth is adequate and that chaperones actually chaperone. Never leave a youth alone whether it is after an event or after the youth meeting. Make sure that all youths are picked up before chaperones or teachers leave the premises. Never place yourself in an indefensible position due to a lack of common sense.

Communication

Make sure that parents are aware of the when, where and how of an activity through written communication. Listen to the concerns of parents. It is also wise to develop policies on how to respond in given situations.

Transportation

Whether the vehicle belongs to the parish, a volunteer, or is rented, make sure there is adequate insurance on the vehicle(s). Do not overload the vehicles. Make sure that there are enough seat belts for every passenger in the vehicle. Do not allow students to drive. All drivers must be 25 years of age or over to transport students to and from activities. Situations do arise where the availability of parish approved drivers for offsite activities is inadequate. Often, the best, and only solution is to have parents/guardians responsible to take and pick up the youth member from the activity site.

Planning

Make sure that all events are planned in detail and that everyone knows their part in the event. Transportation requirements are a very important part of your planning.

Training

Make sure that applications are used to screen both paid and volunteer persons and check references and backgrounds of individuals. Someone, either paid or volunteer, should have some Emergency First Aid training during any activity.

Documentation

Written records should be kept of all activities, including the where, what and when of the activity. Permission slips for all field trips and insurance forms on all vehicles should be kept for future reference. Accident reports should be filed immediately after any incident.

Avoidance

Youth activities should avoid inherently dangerous activities (i.e. hot air ballooning, skiing, inner tubing, white water rafting, boating, skydiving, ropes courses, etc.) to limit the liability exposure. When your common sense creates doubt, contact Catholic Mutual. Never allow drugs or alcohol during youth activities even for adult chaperones and drivers.

In summary, the 10 steps to a safe Youth Activity are as follows:

- 1) Maintain good documentation.
- 2) Screen and train your staff.
- 3) Provide adequate staffing for the activity.
- 4) Be prepared and know how to respond to an emergency.
- 5) Avoid inherently dangerous activities.
- 6) Continuously provide close supervision.
- 7) Do not overcrowd a vehicle.
- 8) Do not allow a student to drive. All drivers must be at least 25 years of age.
- 9) All vehicle occupants must have and use seat belts
- 10) Always use permission slips.

The following pages contain applicable risk management information and field trip forms.

FIELD TRIP RISK MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the enclosed information is to provide sample forms and procedures to minimize the exposures created by participation in field trips.

INDEX OF FORMS

- I. Field Trip (Statement of Policy)
- II. Adult Comprehensive Medical Release & Permission Form
- III. Child Comprehensive Medical Release & Permission Form
- IV. Confidential Safe Environment Employee and Volunteer Questionnaire
- V. Field Trip Transportation Policy
- VI. Field Trip Driver Information Form

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to call the Diocesan Claims/Risk Manager at Catholic Mutual at (866) 833-3090.