

Steubenville on the Bayou

Group Leader Roles, Guidelines & Policies

These policies must be read by the Group Leader prior to attending the Steubenville on the Bayou Conference in Houma, LA.

*The success of the conference experience is dependent upon the adult leaders. Therefore, each Group leader is **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to begin recruiting and meeting with chaperones immediately.*

ARE YOU THE PERSON OF THIS JOB?

We can only imagine Mary's reaction when she was asked to bring Jesus into the world. Needless to say, the cards were "stacked against her." Yet, her YES brought salvation to all of us. We have often wondered how she could have done this but the angel actually answered this question when he said "Hail, full of Grace." Mary was prayerful and trusted God, thus, filled with Grace. We recommend that the Group Leader focus on doing those things that bring Grace into his/her life: frequent confession, daily prayer, attending Mass often and having a spiritual director or accountability person who can give guidance and call you to holiness. The many tasks are important and must be done but things will run more smoothly if you choose to take care of yourself and your own relationship with the Lord first. The story of Martha and Mary is a great model for this. Those of us who have worked with youth are typically the "Martha" in the story. Finding the balance is difficult which is why we need people in our lives who can challenge us.

WHAT IS A GROUP?

The teens attend the conference within a "group." This is usually a Church youth group, a Catholic School group, or something of this nature. Some groups consist of a number of teens who have come together specifically for the purpose of attending the conference; while others are groups that meet on a regular basis.

WHAT IF A TEEN WANTS TO ATTEND BUT CIRCUMSTANCES EXIST THAT COULD PREVENT HIM/HER FROM DOING SO?

Some of these circumstances may be the lack of finances, a shortage of chaperones, and hesitation by the parents. Ideas on fundraising, recruiting chaperones, and giving parents an overview of the conference may be found on the website and within the pages of the Group Leader's manual.

NEVER discourage a teen from attending the conference.

ARE THERE OPTIONS FOR TEENS WHO WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND BUT CANNOT FIND A GROUP TO REGISTER WITH?

There are several options for these teens:

1. A Parent can register as a Group leader and accompany his/her child to the conference. The Conference Coordinator strongly recommends that, if at all possible, the teen attends with a group of people his/her own age. This enables him/her to experience the conference with peers who can support each other during and after the conference.
2. A Parent or Guardian can register as a Group leader and bring up to ten teens with him/her. If this group consists of both male and female participants, the parent/guardian must ensure that there is an adult chaperone at the conference and in the housing site who can take responsibility for them.
3. The teen can contact a group and ask if they have room for him/her and come with that group.
4. The teen, parent, or guardian can contact the conference office and the staff will ensure that he/she has the opportunity to attend by connecting him/her with a participating group.

IS IT NECESSARY TO HAVE A GROUP LEADER?

*Every group, regardless of the size, must have a person who has the role of being the Group Leader as this is the person whom the conference office corresponds with. Therefore, if a parent brings a teen and the two of them come alone, he/she is the Group Leader of that group.

Group Leader: The one person organizing the trip and serving as the contact person. The Group Leader must be an adult, age 21 or older, who is actually attending the conference with the group. All written and oral correspondence takes place between the Group Leader and the Conference Office. It is important for each of the Adult Chaperones and Youth to know the name of the Group Leader since all groups are identified by the Group Name and Group Leader.

Policies, Requirements and Roles of the Group Leader

1. ALL group leaders must be in compliance with the USCCB Charter for the protection of Children and Young People. Please check with your diocesan personnel office with questions regarding this matter. For more information on this, please visit: <http://www.nccbuscc.org>
2. **Age Requirement:** The age of group leader must comply with the rules of your church parish or diocese; the minimum age being 21 (but HIGHLY recommended 24).
3. **Health of Group Leaders:** The conference weekend is very demanding physically. The conference has an intense schedule with long days and short nights, and there is loud music and large crowds. It is recommended that adults with serious health problems not participate as chaperones.
4. **Spirituality of Group Leaders:** Because the conference is very spiritual and chaperones serve as primary facilitators of this experience, group leaders need to be spiritually mature. The words and actions of the group leader should reflect the values of the Catholic Church at all times. Groups leaders should be Catholic. Group Leaders are asked to commit to daily prayer in preparation for the conference and the task of serving as a leader for the teens.
5. **Role & Responsibilities of a Group Leader:** Group Leaders must be totally committed to following all of the conference policies and procedures. The primary role of the group leader is to provide a safe and healthy environment for the youth participants.

Role Details:

- ❖ Recruiting Groups of people to begin to intercede for the teens, the chaperones, and the conference on a daily basis.
 - ❖ Communicating with the Conference Office.
 - ❖ Preparing the teens to attend the conference.
 - ❖ Minister to the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of your group.
 - ❖ Promotion and advertising of the conference
 - ❖ Recruit and train chaperones to journey with the youth prior to and during the conference.
 - ❖ Promote and organize fundraisers for the youth to attend the conference.
 - ❖ Arrange transportation and housing for your group.
 - ❖ Communicate with parents, teens, and chaperones.
 - ❖ Provide teens and chaperones with all necessary information to register online and participate fully in the event. Collect the Liability Forms for all teens and chaperones prior to the conference.
 - ❖ Prepare teens and chaperones spiritually for the conference by setting up small groups and training the chaperones to lead them.
 - ❖ Plan follow-up activities to continue the journey with your youth after the conference weekend.
6. **Providing a Safe Environment:** In order to protect the youth as well as the adult leader, housing sites will be closed during the day. If the need arises that a youth must return to the housing site, conference staff should be contacted and appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that everyone is kept safe. Adults should avoid all situations where they are alone with a youth at any given time.
 7. **Appropriate Dress:** All participants (youth and adults) are expected to dress in fashion that represents modesty and good taste, respecting other participants and our Lord. Clothing must cover all undergarments and midriffs. Clothing that displays profane or offensive messages or images are not allowed. Violators will be asked to change clothing at the discretion of conference staff.
 8. **First Aid:** For any medical or health issue, all participants will be directed to First Aid. This includes migraines, asthma and exhaustion. Youth in need of First Aid must be accompanied by the group leader or chaperone.
 9. **Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco:** All state laws governing alcohol, drugs and tobacco will be strictly enforced. Possession or consumption of alcohol and drugs is not permitted at any time during the conference. All buildings are smoke-free. Outdoor smoking is allowed only in designated areas.

10. **Insubordination:** All youth and adult chaperones are expected to follow the direction of security and conference staff. Any instances of lack of cooperation or insubordination will be subjected to appropriate discipline and/or fines. Disciplinary action will be directed primarily through interaction with the Group Leader.
11. **Reporting of Incidence:** If you witness any youth or chaperone violating any policy in regard to Child Protection or the Partnership for Youth's guidelines and policies, you are required to report it immediately to a member of the conference staff.

NEW DIRECTIVE FOR GROUPS OF FIFTY OR MORE:

All Groups are strongly advised to have one assistant Group leader for every 50 teens. This person would:

1. Not have the role of chaperone but would oversee a *group* of fifty participants and their five chaperones;
2. Assist the Group leader in gathering the paperwork, setting up the small groups, training small group leaders, and ministering to the chaperones and teens within the group assigned to them.

Example (using Assistant Group Leaders):

150 in a teen participants (75 male & 75 female)

- Requires:
 - 1 Group Leader, either gender
 - 2 assistant group leaders, preferably 1 Male and 1 Female
 - 15 Chaperones (half Male, half Female)
- Breaking into Small Groups (A small group should consist of 9-10 teens, no more than 10)
 - 15 Small Groups
 - Each group leader is responsible for training 5 chaperones and overseeing 5 small groups
- Meeting and processing with the small group leaders/chaperones can be done by the group leader and assistant group leaders. This will allow much more to be covered and addressed during the weekend.

Guidelines for Group Leaders

Simple guidelines for you to follow that will assist us in providing a safe environment for ALL participants at our youth conference. Thanks again for your service and know that you are in our prayers.

1. **Do** prepare spiritually prior to the conference and encourage all of your group's chaperones to do the same.
 - A few suggestions are to:
 - ❖ Obtain a personal Spiritual Director.
 - ❖ Increase time spent in Prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, and Daily Mass
 - ❖ Read Scripture, study the Catechism, and become familiar with the spiritual elements of the conference.
2. **Do** form relationships with the teens and foster those relationships throughout the year.
3. **Do** become familiar with the Participant Modesty Policy and Expectations so that you can help the youth in your group to make good choices and prepare prior to the conference.
4. **Do** act as a role model reflecting the values of the Catholic Church and the love of Jesus Christ.
5. **Do** speak and act with respect and regard for the value, personhood, and uniqueness of each youth in your group.
6. **Do** maintain clear communication throughout the weekend with your Group Leader especially in regard to the interaction you have with any youth in your care.
7. **Do** immediately report to your group leader any strange, embarrassing, or possibly compromising interactions you have with any youth in your care.
8. **Do** listen carefully to the youth under your care. Be aware of and report to your group leader any conversations that reveal any self-destructive, suicidal or harmful thoughts and behaviors.
9. **Do** use discretion with physical displays of emotion or care. This includes everything from hugging to simply touching someone on his or her arm or shoulder. We communicate more from non-verbal cues than through words. Hugs carry many different connotations for different youth.
10. **Do Not** try to be a buddy or pal to the youth. You are there to help them grow, not to develop a social life around or with them (especially important if you are involved with long-term ministry after the conference).
11. **Do Not** be alone with a youth behind closed doors or any other place where you could possibly be compromised. If you wish to have a one-on-one conversation with a teen, stay in a public place.
12. **Do Not** use suggestive jokes, stories or language with youth. What they hear from their peers and laugh off could be devastating if it comes from your mouth.
13. **Do Not** threaten, humiliate, or degrade a teen as a form of discipline.
14. **Do Not** discipline with physical contact.
15. **Do Not** let your youth roam free without supervision.
16. **Do Not** share inappropriate information about yourself with your youth.

17. **Do Not** allow your teens to engage in sexually suggestive, vulgar or abusive speech.

Can the Group Leader also serve as a Chaperone?

The Group Leader can serve as a chaperone if necessary but it is strongly advised that groups with ten or more have both a Group leader and the necessary chaperones.

Scenarios to consider:

Example 1:

- 21 teen participants (6 Male & 15 Female)
- Requires 3 Adults
 - 1 Group Leader, preferably female
 - 1 Male Chaperone
 - 1 Female Chaperone
 - A fourth adult, female, would be allowed if the group leader is male

Example 2:

- 7 teen participants (5 Male & 2 Female)
- Requires minimum 2 adults, preferably 3
 - 1 Group Leader
 - 1 Male Chaperone
 - 1 Female Chaperone
 - One of the chaperones can also serve as the Group Leader, if necessary

Example 3:

- 50 teen participants (40 Male & 10 Female)
- Requires 6 adults:
 - 1 Group Leader, either gender, preferably female
 - 4 Male Chaperones
 - 1 Female Chaperone

What Happens if I am unable to find a male chaperone for the boys in the group? (or vice versa)

If you have exhausted your resources and a chaperone of a certain gender is unable to be secured, we offer to solutions:

1. Contact another Group Leader whom you know (perhaps your Prayer Partner or someone from your diocese) whom you can partner with. Ask them to have their male (or female) chaperones look after your male teens during the sessions where it is necessary.
2. Contact the Conference Office so that we may pair you with another group that could perhaps offer the assistance of their "extra" chaperones for your participants of that gender.

P.O. Box 505 ♦ Schriever, LA 70395
985-850-3171 ♦ www.SteubenvilleOnTheBayou.com
steubenvillebayou@hdiocese.org ♦ conferenceinfo@hdiocese.org