

# **Safe Environment Booklet: For YOUTH Assisting Adults in Ministry**

## **Trainer Script**

The following training manuscript, along with the booklet, should be used when training youth to be assistants in ministry programs. Each youth should receive a copy of the booklet. It is encouraged to complete the certificate at the end to verify the training.

### **Introduction**

(Begin by thanking the youth for volunteering to assist with the program at hand.)

Today's program is designed for you, the youth assistant, working within parish/school youth programs. The purpose of the training is to give each of you key safe environment information that will be helpful in working with youth. *(Name the specific role or program in which each will be involved. Please add pertinent information and examples related to your ministry and youth assistants.)*

Today we will cover:

The history of the Safe Environment Program

How the Church Protects Children

Key Circle of Grace Concepts

Definition of Ministry Roles

Expectations of a Youth Assistant

Are there Questions before we begin?

### **PAGE 1**

Read through stressing the appreciation and importance of their position.

### **PAGE 2**

Let's begin in prayer together. (Have the youth join in reading)

### **PAGE 3**

(As you read through this page, remind the youth assistants that they are working with God's creations and to respect each and everyone as a special and important gift from God.)

### **PAGE 4**

Safe Environment has been a significant part of the US Catholic Church since 2002. The Catholic Church has mandated that each diocese include:

- Victim assistance programs.
- Safe environment policies
- Safe environment trainings for adults, children and youth.

The Church believes that it is important for each of God's children to feel safe in all situations. Every person plays a role in making the environment safe; children, adults, clergy, parents, educators.

## **PAGE 5**

As the verse reads...Jesus wants the children to come to him. Children and youth should feel safe within their religious education/youth ministry programs. The diocese has provided several ways to ensure this: (read through the remainder of the page.)

## **PAGE 6**

The Circle of Grace Program was developed to educate and empower children/youth to actively participate in a safe environment. Below are the key concepts that are taught within the program. (Read page) This is a reminder of what has been taught and/or is currently being taught.

## **PAGE 7**

The Circle of Grace Program teaches children/youth to be aware of their own “Circle of Grace” and how to tell adults or youth assistants if something seems wrong. Alert an adult if:

- A child tells you that he/she is feeling “uncomfortable”
- You witness or hear something that makes you or a child uncomfortable
- You experience something uncomfortable in your Circle of Grace

Have a short discussion on what makes you feel “uncomfortable”. This will allow youth to see that “uncomfortable” is different for each person.

## **PAGE 8**

What is your role as a Youth Assistant?

Let’s start by defining the role of an Adult Minister. (Read through this role and allow youth to list specific roles within your program.)

(Read the role of a Youth Assistant. Share with the youth about your programs current specific guidelines and role expectations.)

## **PAGE 9**

Why were you chosen as a Youth Assistant? These are the expectations that our program would like you to meet... (Read expectations) As you can see we would like you to approach this role with maturity and seriousness.

What can you as a Youth Assistant expect of the Adult Leaders

- An outline should be received or covered (this would be a good time to share this with the youth assistants)
- Communicate (this is also a good time to discuss any diocesan permission form that might be required for participation as a youth volunteer)
- Not a supervisor (please stress that they should not be left alone to supervise. There should always be an adult present)

## **PAGE 10**

What an Adult Leader can expect of Youth Assistants (you)...

(Read through the list together and share example of appropriate behaviors. Stress respect and confidentiality. Any concerns/knowledge about safety should be shared with an adult minister within our program. An exception to the rule of confidentiality is if there is a risk of harm to self or others.)

*For example: If someone is saying they would like to hurt themselves or another person, you should share the information with an adult minister immediately. i.e. someone cutting themselves, playing the choking game, bullying, giving or receiving threatening comments on face book, etc...*

## **PAGE 11**

(Read through this page together and explain) Within your role you may experience overlapping roles/relationships. For example:

- Family – you may be a youth assistant for younger brothers/sisters or cousins.
- Friends – you may be a youth assistant for teammates, neighbors, etc...

Make sure that while you are in your Youth Assistant Role that you model the expectations from the prior page (page 10).

(Share the following examples: *Your friends want to stay up all night. As a Youth Assistant Minister you are aware and model that getting a good night's rest is necessary. As a Youth Assistant you refrain from participating in a food fight and do what you can to intervene.*

Have youth share other examples.)

## **PAGE 12**

Remember...*You can help the adult ministers provide a SAFE environment by understanding your role.*

- Safety is always first (Discuss the following bullet points as you find relevant to your program.)
  - always put SAFETY first in working with children.
  - maintain a role relationship – Youth Assistant - while interacting with children not as a sister, brother, friend, teammate, etc.
  - make sure that the appropriate shelter, privacy, food/nutrition, sleep, clothing, supervision, medical care and communication are being provided for children. Each of these will be addressed within each programs policies and guidelines. (This could be a time to refer to your program policies and guidelines.)
  - emphasis on the needs of the children. It is a privilege to work with children not a right. Recognize that your relationship with the children is not “equal” when you are in the role of the Youth Assistant.
- Be aware of any concerns/changes in behaviors (Discuss the following bullet points as you find relevant to your program.)
  - if minors are asked to keep inappropriate secrets or private meetings are held behind closed doors.
  - if an adult is over-involved in a child outside of the program
  - inappropriate touch, praise, compliments, gifts, etc.
  - inappropriate attention given that is not consistent with ministry role
  - if minors are encouraged to break rules
  - adults engage minors in inappropriate behaviors– including both face-to-face or through technology such as email or texting

- Report to an adult if you notice any inappropriate behaviors or changes. Discuss who they could/should report to. Ex. Adult minister, priest, parent, teacher. (Discuss the following bullet points as you find relevant to your program.)
  - be attentive and note any changes in behaviors or attitudes.
  - contact and collaborate with the adult minister daily about any concerns
  - trust your instincts – share your thoughts with Adult Ministers even if you do not have concrete proof
  - Adult Ministers have access to additional resources if additional support is needed
  - Adult Ministers will assist with documenting observations and behaviors.

Program contact information box is included for any additional information/resources that you would like available to your youth assistant.

### **QUESTIONS/PRAYER -**

Take time to answer any questions or concerns that Youth Assistants may have. Again stress the importance of their position as Youth Assistant.

End in Prayer and have the certificate on the back of the booklet signed by all parties.