



# **Safeguarding God's Children: NFCYM Policies for Protecting Young People**

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## Preface

The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, Inc., (NFCYM), is a private, independent District of Columbia nonprofit institutional membership corporation. Its institutional members are Catholic dioceses and other youth-serving organizations. NFCYM's mission is to advocate for a comprehensive approach to youth ministry and the active participation of young people in the Catholic Church (church). As a membership organization, NFCYM does not have control over its members, but rather, suggests that these policies should be aspirational for its institutional membership, and NFCYM strongly encourages its members to adopt similar policies to the ones contained herein. NFCYM acknowledges the leadership of the U.S. Catholic Bishops as articulated in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

NFCYM serves the Catholic youth ministry community by providing leadership, resources, services, and conferences for the education and formation youth ministers and young people. In accomplishing its mission, NFCYM works largely with Catholics, but has occasion to collaborate and engage the services of others of good will. These policies are written from a Catholic perspective on the care and treatment of minors and adults. In cases where non-Catholics or even non-Christians are called into service with NFCYM, NFCYM understands that those individuals and organizations will conduct themselves in a manner that respects NFCYM's Catholic heritage and these policies.

## Introduction

The purpose of *Safeguarding God's Children: NFCYM Policies for Protecting Young People* is to communicate principles for public life and ministry for all who serve in the work of the church with youth in partnership with NFCYM. These policies state clear requirements for relationships between NFCYM personnel and those with whom they work and minister. Where preventive education and screening may fail, strong sanctions for violations of these policies must necessarily follow. While these policies apply to all ministerial and professional relationships, the child molestation crisis within the church calls us to be particularly attentive to minors and to those ministering to minors and their families.

It is NFCYM's expectation that each person who reads these policies will accept personal responsibility for adherence to them. In fact, in NFCYM's own programs, adherence to these policies is required.

Relationships among people are the foundation of Christian ministry and are central to our life as church. The standards defined pay particular attention to those whose ministry calls them to demonstrate their love and compassion for minors within genuine and sincere relationships.

All NFCYM personnel are asked to carefully consider each standard presented before agreeing to adhere to it and continuing in service to NFCYM. Each individual will be asked to acknowledge receipt, understanding and willingness to adhere to these policies.

Following are specific policies for protecting young people as related to the following three areas: personnel management, sexual abuse and misconduct, and youth program and event management.

# **Personnel Management**

## **Preventive Education/Training**

NFCYM understands that preventive education and training are required to protect minors from abuse. NFCYM relies on the following methods to educate and train its personnel and those who may otherwise attend or participate in its programs from time to time.

**NFCYM Staff:** As of January 31, 2005, all staff employed by NFCYM on a full or part time basis shall have completed the on-line youth protection training course<sup>1</sup> provided by the National Capital Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, which is the chapter for the region in which NFCYM is located. NFCYM may choose other programs from time to time. Any person hired by NFCYM after February 1, 2005, as full or part time staff shall complete the BSA on-line training as a condition of hire. Training shall be repeated and proof of completion provided to by January 31 in all odd numbered years thereafter (i.e., 2007, 2009, etc.). In addition, all staff are provided a copy of the NCYC Emergency and Crisis Response Manual, which outlines how NFCYM establishes a safe environment for participants in its national youth event.

**NFCYM Board of Directors:** By January 31, 2005, all members of the NFCYM board of directors who are employed on a full or part time basis by a Catholic member diocese in the United States shall provide the NFCYM executive director proof in the form of a certificate of completion or letter from their bishop, chancellor, vicar general, or moderator of the Curia stating that they have successfully completed the youth protection training program provided by their member diocese. For those members of the NFCYM board of directors who are not employed on a full or part time basis by a U.S. Catholic member diocese or whose dioceses do not provide youth protection training programs, they shall complete the BSA on-line training/certification and provide the NFCYM executive director proof of completion of the BSA training by January 31, 2005. New board members shall provide proof of youth protection training from their diocese or complete the BSA on-line training and provide the NFCYM executive director proof of completion of the BSA training by the end of August in the year their term begins. A new letter or proof of completion of BSA training will be required every odd year thereafter in which a person continues to serve on the NFCYM Board of Directors. In addition, all members of the NFCYM board of directors are provided a copy of the NCYC Emergency and Crisis Response Manual, which outlines how NFCYM establishes a safe environment for participants in its national youth event.

**Independent Contractors and Others working with NFCYM:** Generally, independent contractors are individuals, not companies, hired for a specific project on a contract basis where there is no employment relationship created by the agreement between NFCYM and the individual. The NFCYM executive director in consultation with the supervising staff member will assess the contact, if any, that the person will have directly with young people. If the person will have little or no contact with young people then no training will be required. If the person will have direct and/or prolonged contact with young people, then he/she will be required either to provide a letter from their diocesan bishop, chancellor, vicar general, moderator of the Curia or director of diocesan youth ministry of successful completion of his/her member diocese's youth protection training program, or if the person has not completed youth protection training in his/her member diocese or youth protection training is not provided by his/her member diocese, then NFCYM will require the individual to complete the BSA on-line training. A copy of the letter or proof of completion of the BSA training must be provided before the person may work directly with young people. In addition, all independent contracts and others as defined by NFCYM are provided a copy of the NCYC Emergency and Crisis Response Manual, which outlines how NFCYM establishes a safe environment for participants in its national youth event.

Copies of all letters and proof of completion of BSA training will be kept on file by the executive director at the NFCYM headquarters in Washington, DC.

**Youth Event Group Leaders:** Typically, youth event group leaders ("group leaders") are members of diocesan or diocesan parish staff or volunteers for the diocese or parish. They are not NFCYM staff or volunteers, and NFCYM has no supervision or control of such persons. Because dioceses are required by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*\* to provide their

own youth protection training programs with respect to youth event group leaders and others, NFCYM defers to those programs as implemented in each diocese. NFCYM strongly encourages youth event group leaders to also complete the BSA on-line training. Again, these persons are not NFCYM personnel per se. However, NFCYM asks of its diocesan members that they cause these persons to abide by these policies. In addition, all youth group leaders are biennially referred to the NCYC Emergency and Crisis Response Manual, which is available for viewing and download from the NFCYM's website (<http://www.nfcym.org/ecrm>) and paper copies of which are available upon request. This manual outlines how NFCYM establishes a safe environment for participants in its national youth event.

**Youth:** In order to protect our youth, NFCYM acknowledges that its diocesan members, in addition to fulfilling screening and adult education requirements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*\*, will provide preventive education for the young people with whom they work and minister as indicated in Article 12 of the *Charter*\*. Preventive education of young people themselves as to what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior on the part of peers and adults is the best way to help young people from falling victim to abuse. NFCYM requires that youth participants in its events abide by its Youth Code of Conduct, which outlines appropriate behavior for youth and acceptable behavior of adults in relationship to young people.

NFCYM has a long history of addressing topics of concern to young people at its biennial National Catholic Youth Conferences (NCYC). The NCYC program has in the past dealt with the topics of violence, eating disorders, chastity, dating, and relationships to name a few. NFCYM will continue to identify issues affecting today's youth and to provide initial information and resources for dealing with these topics. NFCYM intends to provide preventive education on child molestation to adults and youth in workshop format at its events for youth and adults.

## Screening

Screening is another crucial tool available in protecting our young people. NFCYM uses differing levels of screening on its personnel depending on their employment status.

**NFCYM Staff:** All NFCYM staff employed full or part time as of January 31, 2005, will have been screened by a reputable screening agency, and screening would include database searches and questionnaires tailored to youth protection concerns. Any person hired by NFCYM after February 1, 2005, as full or part time staff will be screened as a condition of hire. The report of the screening agency will be reviewed by the executive director. The report on the executive director will be reviewed by the chair of the board of directors.

**NFCYM Board of Directors:** All members of the NFCYM board of directors as of January 31, 2005, will be screened by a reputable screening agency, and screening would include database searches and questionnaires tailored to youth protection concerns.. New board members will be screened by the end of August in the year their term begins. The report of the screening agency will be reviewed by the chair of the board of directors. The report on the chair of the board of directors will be reviewed by the executive director.

**Independent Contractors and Others Defined by NFCYM:** Generally, independent contractors are individuals, not companies, hired for a specific project on a contract basis where there is no employment relationship created by the agreement between NFCYM and the individual. The NFCYM executive director in consultation with the supervising staff member will assess the contact, if any, that the person will have directly with young people. If the person will have little or no contact with young people no screening will be required. If the person will have direct and/or prolonged contact with young people then as a condition of hire he/she will be screened by a reputable screening agency, and screening would include database searches and questionnaires tailored to youth protection concerns. The report of the screening agency will be reviewed by the executive director.

**Youth Event Group Leaders:** Typically, youth event group leaders ("group leaders") are staff members of diocese, organization, or diocesan parish. They are not NFCYM personnel per se, and NFCYM has no supervision or control of such persons. Because dioceses are required by the United States Conference of

Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*\* to provide screening with respect to group leaders and others, NFCYM defers to those programs as implemented in each diocese. NFCYM recognizes that the vast majority of youth serving organizations also have their own screening programs and NFCYM defers to those programs. In the rare instance that an organization does not have a screening program for adults, NFCYM will provide the name of its screening agency to the organization and will require the organization to screen any adult with the organization who plans to attend an NFCYM youth event before participation. NFCYM strongly encourages member dioceses and organizations to pursue rigorous screening programs. Again, these persons are not NFCYM personnel per se. However, NFCYM asks of its diocesan and organizational members that they cause these persons to be screened and to abide by these policies.

All screening reports will be kept on file at the NFCYM headquarters offices in Washington, DC. See Disqualifying Offenses for details on report follow up.

NFCYM, regardless of clearance for service by individual member dioceses, enacts the following policies:

No person may serve as NFCYM personnel with minors where common knowledge or screening reveals conviction of any disqualifying offense, been on probation or received deferred adjudication, or served with a domestic violence protective order, or has presently pending any criminal charges or civil cases of any disqualifying offense before a determination of guilt is made, including any person who is presently under deferred adjudication. In addition, no person may serve as NFCYM personnel with minors who admits to, does not contest, is found guilty of a disqualifying offense, not just those involving a minor, or it appears that an alleged claim is substantiated or where an existing settlement agreement regarding any disqualifying offense exists concerning said personnel, whether confidential or otherwise.

## Disqualifying Offenses

NFCYM is called to protect the young church from any and all possible harm. Even in the cases where forgiveness has been sought and reconciliation has occurred there are some offenses so serious that they disqualify an individual from service even after such healing has been found.

Disqualifying offenses include but may not be limited to the following:

1. A felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against the person whether an adult or a minor.
  - a. Offenses against the person include, but are not limited to murder, assault, battery, sexual assault, injury to a child, and abandoning or endangering a child.
  - b. Offenses against the family include, but are not limited to, bigamy, incest, interference with child custody, enticing a child, and harboring a runaway child.
2. A felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against public order.
  - a. Offenses against public order include but are not limited to prostitution, obscenity, sexual performance by a child, possession or promotion of child pornography.
  - b. A felony or misdemeanor violation of any law intended to control the possession or distribution of any substance included as a controlled substance by a governing or law enforcement agency.
3. While a serious offense, driving while intoxicated may not be a disqualifying offense for volunteering but must disqualify someone from driving any NFCYM vehicle or any other vehicle at NFCYM-sponsored activities or events and must disqualify someone from transporting young people to and from an NFCYM event.
4. Civil or criminal cases for damages, or settlement agreements whether confidential or otherwise, for any of the foregoing types of acts or omissions may also be disqualifying offenses for purposes of these policies.

In the case of chaperones, it is the duty of the group leader to assure that chaperones are familiar with disqualifying offenses and that chaperones from their respective diocese or organization are in full compliance with youth protection policies currently in place in their home diocese or organization. Disqualifying offenses supersede any less stringent diocesan or organizational policies or standards. Again, NFCYM cannot control diocesan or organizational personnel, whether staff or volunteers, or invade their privacy to subject them to screening, and each member dioceses and organization shall hold NFCYM harmless from failures of that member dioceses or organization and its chaperones and other diocesan or organizational staff and volunteers to abide by these policies.

## NFCYM Personnel Ethical and Behavioral Standards for the Protection of Youth

Relationships among people are the foundation of Christian ministry and are central to our life as a church. The standards pay particular attention to those whose ministry calls them to work with minors, and to do so in a manner that is genuine and respectful.

All NFCYM personnel are asked to carefully consider each standard presented before agreeing and committing to adhere to these standards. NFCYM personnel will be asked to provide acknowledgement of Receipt of the policies, including their understanding and willingness to obey these policies.

The following ethical and behavioral standards apply to NFCYM personnel, which for the purpose of these policies include:

- NFCYM Staff
- NFCYM Board of Directors
- Independent Contractors and others as defined by NFCYM:
  - Speakers
  - Presenters
  - Performers/Entertainers
  - Program Staff
  - Emcees

Youth Event Group Leaders (hereinafter “group leaders”) are not NFCYM employees or volunteers per se and NFCYM has no supervision or control of such persons. However, NFCYM asks of its diocesan members that they cause these persons to abide by these policies.

### Overview of Guiding Principles

The ethical standards below are based on five principles of integrity NFCYM believes should be found in all effective ministry leaders. Some of these principles may be repeated throughout, because they bear repeating.

**Principle one** is reflective of a basic understanding of self, especially in respect to one’s spiritual vocation.

**Principle two** is reflective of a basic understanding of self, especially in respect to one’s professional competence.

**Principle three** reflects the Lord’s command to love neighbor as self and calls for deep sensitivity and respect for others.

**Principle four** addresses the responsibility for balanced ministerial relationships.

**Principle five** underscores the obligation of diocesan employees and volunteers to be in compliance with their respective diocesan policies, and asks that the dioceses cause these persons to obey these policies.

NFCYM personnel, as people of God, share actively in the ministry of Christ and the church by living lives of Christian witness and by proclaiming the message of the Gospel in word and deed. They share in the mission that God has entrusted to the church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the gifts and talents that they possess. These gifts and talents are shared with all members of the church thus providing for the continual building up of the Kingdom of God.

NFCYM relies on the direction and energies of many to aid in fulfilling its mission. NFCYM personnel are challenged to embrace the seriousness of their respective vocational callings and to serve those who participate in this ministry. All are reminded of the need for continual growth in their spirituality.

## **Guiding Principles and Ethical Standards**

### **1. NFCYM personnel shall exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity reflective of the teachings of the Gospel and will avoid even the appearance of impropriety.**

NFCYM personnel will model a life consistent with the teachings of the Gospel, promoting through their own life the way to love God and to love neighbor as self.

NFCYM personnel will exhibit a deep respect for the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church in the way that they interact in the lives and circumstances of the people they serve.

NFCYM personnel have a responsibility to stay attuned to their own spiritual life, nurturing an ongoing prayer life.

NFCYM personnel are to witness in all relationships the chastity appropriate to their state in life, whether ordained, married, or single.

NFCYM personnel strive to keep physically and emotionally healthy, guarding against substance abuse (e.g. abuse of alcohol and prescriptive drugs, and/or illicit drugs) and nurturing appropriate relationships.

### **2. NFCYM personnel shall at all times conduct themselves in a professional manner including developing and maintaining the level of professional competence commensurate with their ministerial duties.**

NFCYM personnel are responsible to maintain high levels of professional competence in their particular ministry attending seminars and workshops in areas that are relevant to their current ministries.

NFCYM personnel will exhibit a commitment to NFCYM, its mission, and work.

NFCYM personnel who provide pastoral care or counseling will not step beyond their competence in counseling situations. NFCYM personnel will be prepared to refer to other professionals when the need arises.

NFCYM personnel are responsible for stewardship of all resources entrusted to their care and for a clear accounting of such resources.

NFCYM personnel must be knowledgeable about the behaviors that constitute sexual abuse and harassment and the physical and psychological symptoms that indicate the possibility of such abuse and remain ready to prevent such behaviors or report them when they appear.

NFCYM personnel help to maintain a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation, harassment or abuse.

### **3. NFCYM personnel shall witness God's love for every person by sensitivity, reverence, and respect of each individual with and to whom they minister.**

NFCYM personnel will honor the equality of all people, avoiding all forms of discrimination and respecting the dignity of each person by providing service without regard to economic status, age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or physical or mental abilities.

NFCYM personnel will reach out to all people in a spirit of humility, reverence, and respect.



NFCYM personnel are aware that issues of aging, gender, culture, race, religion, sexual orientation, physical and mental disabilities, and language all affect how the message of the Gospel, as exemplified in their ministries, is received and interpreted.

NFCYM personnel will be sensitive to the good of the community as they respond in their ministerial role to diverse forms of spirituality and theology within the community.

**4. NFCYM personnel shall be conscious of the unique power they have in relationships due to the trust they are given and the visibility of their witness and leadership.**

All trust-based relationships depend on each individual's ability to balance principles of self-knowledge and a keen regard for others. In ministerial relationships, this burden always falls on the minister, the individual being sought for service, help, and advice. Nearly all breaches of integrity and morality are ruptures of this trust-based relationship by the minister.

NFCYM personnel will avoid ministerial relationships that could impair professional judgment, create conflicts of interest, or lead to exploiting the relationship.

NFCYM personnel will establish and maintain ministerial relationships characterized by openness, honesty, and integrity avoiding any abuse of ministerial power.

**a. NFCYM personnel shall assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear, appropriate physical and emotional boundaries in all ministerial relationships.**

NFCYM personnel who provide pastoral care, counseling, or spiritual direction must avoid developing inappropriate relationships, particularly with minors.

NFCYM personnel must refrain from any statements that are false, degrading, defaming, invasive, or harmful to another's reputation.

NFCYM personnel are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of minors. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes but is not limited to spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by minors.

For the most part, when working directly with minors, there should always be a minimum of two adults present, more if the number of minors is greater than ten. When private conversations are necessary, they should occur in rooms that provide a safe environment of open access and visibility, never in isolated rooms or other isolated places.

**b. NFCYM personnel shall avoid taking unfair advantage of ministerial relationships.**

NFCYM personnel will avoid exploiting the trust of those who seek their service by not using them to satisfy their needs for attention and pleasure or other inappropriate behavior.

NFCYM personnel will exercise prudent judgment in the giving or receiving of gifts or benefits. NFCYM personnel who, as a result of their NFCYM duties or position, receive gifts or benefits valued at more than \$100 will report such gifts or benefits to their supervisor.

NFCYM personnel will not use or borrow money from minors and/or ministerial accounts for personal use or personal use of a minor.

**c. NFCYM personnel shall not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect any person or otherwise engage in inappropriate contact.**

NFCYM personnel will not exploit persons for sexual purposes.

In ministerial and professional relationships, NFCYM personnel will not initiate or participate in sexual behavior and must refuse it even when the other may appear to invite or consent to it.

Physical contact with minors should occur only when completely non-sexual and never in private or in environments that are not easily observable by others.

Appropriate affection between NFCYM personnel and minors is important for a child's development and a positive part of church life and ministry. The following are examples of appropriate forms of affection for NFCYM personnel to exhibit in most NFCYM-sponsored and affiliated programs:

- Side hugs
- Shoulder to shoulder or "temple" hugs
- Handshakes
- "High-fives" and hand slapping
- Verbal praise for a job well-done (not regarding physical attributes)
- Touching hands, faces (usually in context of a blessing), shoulders, and arms of minors
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with younger minors
- Sitting beside younger minors
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with younger minors
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate (for example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian communities)

Some forms of physical affection that may initiate or appear to initiate inappropriate conduct and relationships must be avoided. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following are examples of behaviors that are inappropriate and are *not* to be used by NFCYM personnel:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children on the lap who are capable of sitting on their own
- Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas
- Showing affection in isolated areas of a facility such as bedrooms, restrooms, bathrooms, closets, staff-only areas, or other private rooms
- Being in or on a bed with a minor
- Touching knees or legs of minors
- Wrestling with minors
- Tickling minors
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by minor to adult
- Any type of massage given by adult to minor
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Compliments or put downs that relate to physique or body development
- Taking a minor to an isolated area

NFCYM personnel will not humiliate, ridicule, or degrade minors entrusted to their care.

NFCYM personnel's conduct will exhibit zero tolerance for inappropriate or abusive behavior of any kind.

- d. NFCYM personnel have a duty to report their own ethical and professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.**

NFCYM personnel are to be aware of and clearly understand these ethical and professional standards of behavior as developed by NFCYM and determine if their behaviors comply.

NFCYM personnel strive to hold one another accountable to these ethical standards.

NFCYM personnel must be aware of the laws of their respective states regarding child abuse and neglect and reporting requirements.

NFCYM personnel must comply with applicable reporting laws or other requirements of state and local laws.

In addition to compliance in reporting laws in their respective states, NFCYM personnel must also immediately report any allegations of child abuse or misconduct to the NFCYM executive director. If the incident involves the NFCYM executive director or if the NFCYM executive director is unavailable, an oral report of the incident shall be made immediately to the chair of the NFCYM board of directors.

5. **NFCYM personnel serving as employees or volunteers of their diocese or organization will be obligated as such to comply with their respective policies with regards to the protection of minors, and dioceses and organizations are to cause these personnel to obey the NFCYM policies as well.**

In addition to compliance with their policies, it is incumbent upon diocesan employees and volunteers to contact the appropriate office within their diocese for a copy of the policies regarding the protection of minors.

NFCYM depends upon youth event group leaders to assure that any adult chaperone present for an NFCYM-sponsored youth event is a leader in good standing with regards to the youth protection policies in place within the diocese or organization represented.

NFCYM will require youth event group leaders to indicate that adults accompanying youth to NFCYM events are in compliance with respective diocesan or organizational standards and norms, and hopes that the member dioceses and organizations will also encourage these persons to take the BSA on-line training/certification described hereinabove.

# **Sexual Abuse and Misconduct**

## **Obligation to Report Suspected Abuse of a Minor**

By law, any person who has actual knowledge of or who has *reasonable cause to suspect an incident of abuse of a minor* has occurred shall comply with any applicable reporting or other requirements of state and local laws. NFCYM policy is to remind any person attempting to report to NFCYM any incidence of suspected abuse that any person who has actual knowledge of or who has *reasonable cause to suspect an incident of abuse of a minor* has occurred shall call Child Protective Services. It is entirely possible that a report to NFCYM may cause a reasonable person to have reasonable cause to suspect and incident of abuse of a minor, which may in turn place a reporting obligation on the NFCYM personnel.

If NFCYM feels that information reported to it gives reasonable cause to suspect abuse of a minor and causes NFCYM to be required to report to a governmental agency, NFCYM will so report. NFCYM must err in favor of over-reporting, rather than under-reporting. The law with regard to the reporting of abuse makes it mandatory that concerns over a child's health and safety are paramount, and from time to time, an accusation may ultimately turn out to be false, but it is not up to NFCYM to put itself in place of governmental agencies and determine the verity of accusations. NFCYM must report as the law requires.

To report suspected abuse in the Washington, DC, metro area, Child Protective Services can be reached at the following numbers published at the time these policies are promulgated, or by calling 911 in emergency:

District of Columbia	(202) 671-7233
Commonwealth of Virginia	(800) 552-7096
State of Maryland (by county)	
Montgomery	(240) 777-3535
Prince George's	(301) 909-2200
Frederick	(301) 694-2442
Calvert	(410) 286-2135
Charles	(301) 392-6701
St. Mary's	(240) 895-7170

When NFCYM sponsors a youth event outside the Washington, DC, metro area, it will attempt to provide NFCYM personnel the name and telephone number of the local Child Protective Services reporting agency.

Generally, any person who, pursuant to the law, reports abuse or neglect or testifies in a child abuse hearing resulting from such a report is immune from any criminal or civil liability as a result of such action. Any person who knowingly fails to report suspected abuse or neglect pursuant to the law may be subject to criminal prosecution. Severity of the criminal sanctions in addition to possible civil liability varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

## **Investigation of Report to Child Protective Services**

NFCYM understands that appropriate government agencies must respond to and investigate reports of abuse of a minor to Child Protective Services. NFCYM will at all times fully cooperate with such governmental agencies, and in no way attempt to interfere in or obstruct such governmental agencies.

## **NFCYM Internal Handling of Reports of Incidents Involving a Minor**

Separate and apart from that any governmental investigation process, NFCYM may take certain personnel actions as NFCYM must err on the side of caution and reports involving such matters as conviction of a disqualifying offense, settlement of a matter involving a disqualifying offense or other related matters may not necessarily involve the governmental investigation process described above.

As a supplement to reporting to governmental agency or action by such governmental agency, NFCYM will

1. Inform the reporting person of the legal reporting requirements above.

2. Make an informal report immediately to the NFCYM executive director, who may ask for a written account of the incident from the reporting person. If the incident involves the NFCYM executive director or the NFCYM executive director is unavailable, an informal report shall be made immediately to the NFCYM board of directors' chairperson.
3. Have the NFCYM executive director or board of directors' chairperson prepare a written report within 10 days. The report is placed in a confidential file and/or is shared with the NFCYM attorney, board of directors, and insurers, as needed.
4. Refer any media inquiries regarding an incident of sexual misconduct by NFCYM personnel or vendors to the executive director or designated spokesperson.

In the case where NFCYM receives a report about any incident involving a minor which may be a violation of these policies by staff, board, contractors or NFCYM volunteers (of which there are very few) from a third party, NFCYM will

1. Inform the reporting person of the general legal reporting requirements for incidents involving minors, and
2. Make a reasonable attempt to promptly verify that such an allegation, settlement agreement, or civil or criminal complaint exists.

NFCYM will not respond to and will not investigate reports about its staff, board, or volunteers that are made anonymously, where the identity of the person reporting cannot be reasonably verified. However, NFCYM will remind the individual of general legal reporting requirements for incidents involving minors.

If any report of an incident involving a minor involves an employee or volunteer of a diocese or parish, then in addition to being advised of the legal reporting requirements, the reporting person will be asked to directly contact the chancellor of the diocese where the incident occurred and NFCYM will also contact that chancellor. NFCYM has no ability to investigate diocesan employees or volunteers, and will strongly urge reporting persons to report these matters as the law requires and to the appropriate diocese.

## **Outcome of Investigations**

If the information reported gives reasonable cause to suspect abuse of a minor, NFCYM will immediately relieve the individual of responsibilities to NFCYM pending the outcome of any investigation. If the individual is an employee of NFCYM, he/she shall be placed on administrative leave, such leave to be with or without pay or benefits as the NFCYM board or executive director may decide.

Any NFCYM personnel who admits to, does not contest, is found guilty of a disqualifying offense, not just those involving a minor, or it appears that an alleged claim is substantiated or where an existing settlement agreement comes to light, concerning said personnel, whether confidential or otherwise, shall be immediately terminated and barred from further activity with NFCYM.

If, after any governmental investigation is completed, it is determined that the alleged claims are false, or if the complaint is withdrawn, or it appears that there is a lack of evidence to support the claim, the individual may resume their duties with NFCYM without prejudice unless later civil or criminal action against the individual mandates a different course of action.

## **NFCYM Handling of Violations Not Involving a Minor**

Alleged violations of these policies not involving minors do not involve the reporting requirements so crucial to matters involving minors. Aside from those reporting requirements, NFCYM will proceed to investigate these allegations in a manner similar to that described above, with the same procedures and sanctions.

## NFCYM Adult Code of Conduct

As part of these policies for protecting young people, NFCYM adopts an Adult Code of Conduct. NFCYM will incorporate the following Code of Conduct into all NFCYM-sponsored programs and events in which adults and youth participate. It may be preceded or followed by additional language.

Young people are the most important gifts God entrusts to us. As an adult participant in an NFCYM-sponsored youth event or program, I promise to strictly follow these policies and the following standards as a condition of my providing services to either to my diocese/organization and/or NFCYM.

### **I will:**

Conduct myself in a manner that exhibits the highest Christian ethical standards and avoids even the appearance of impropriety, and therefore I will:

- 1) Report suspected abuse of any minor to the appropriate authorities.
- 2) Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of minors.
- 3) Develop and maintain the level of skill required to be competent.
- 4) Be knowledgeable of and adhere to all applicable aspects of *Safeguarding God's Children: NFCYM Policies for Protecting Young People*. (<http://www.nfcym.org/youthprotection>)
- 5) Complete training in youth protection in my diocese or, if not available in my diocese, through the Boy Scouts of America's on-line training/certification program.
- 6) Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- 7) Honor the equality of all people, avoiding all forms of discrimination and respecting the dignity of each person without regard to economic status, age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or physical or mental abilities.
- 8) Use positive reinforcement and communication rather than criticism, unhealthy competition, or comparison.
- 9) Become thoroughly familiar with the objectives and guidelines of the program in which I am participating and strive to achieve these objectives and communicate them appropriately.
- 10) Be aware of and adhere to emergency plans and evacuation routes appropriate to the program in which I am participating.
- 11) Be responsible and/or accountable for stewardship of all resources entrusted to my care.
- 12) Uphold the authority of those responsible for the program or activity in which I am participating and assist them in every way to encourage learning and to conduct fair and impartial events.
- 13) Avoid situations where I am alone with minors, always following the two adult rule.
- 14) Avoid any form of excessive familiarity, inappropriate language, or any situation and conduct that exploits or could give the appearance of exploiting another.
- 15) Follow practices that consistently exhibit no tolerance for any form of abusive behavior.
- 16) Follow practices that demonstrate appropriate relationships between all NFCYM personnel and minors that are important for a child's development and a positive part of ministry.

### **I will not:**

- 1) Use physical affection to initiate inappropriate contact with minors.
- 2) Touch a minor in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- 3) Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of minors.
- 4) Purchase tobacco products for or distribute tobacco products to minors.
- 5) Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol while supervising minors or while participating in an NFCYM youth event.
- 6) Purchase alcohol for or distribute alcohol to anyone under the age of 21 years.
- 7) Use, purchase, possess, distribute, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- 8) Purchase, download, possess, or distribute pornography.
- 9) Pose any known health risk to minors (i.e., no fevers or other contagious situations).
- 10) Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, demean, nor degrade minors or others nor tolerate such behavior in the environment for which I am responsible.
- 11) Use physical discipline in any way for behavior management of minors. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This includes but is not limited to spanking, slapping, pinching, shaking, hitting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behavior of a minor.

12) Use profanity in any form in the presence of minors.

I have read *Safeguarding God's Children: NFCYM Policies for Protecting Young People* ([www.nfcym.org/youthprotection](http://www.nfcym.org/youthprotection)), understand its meaning, and agree to conduct myself in accordance with its terms.

I hereby represent that I am not currently being investigated for, nor have I ever been convicted of a disqualifying offense as defined in *Safeguarding God's Children: NFCYM Policies for Protecting Young People*; I have never been terminated from employment or a volunteer position for reasons related to allegations of physical or sexual abuse by me; nor have I sought or received any medical, physical, or psychological treatment for reasons involving physical or sexual abuse by me.

I understand that should my response to any of the statements above change, I am obligated to inform my diocese/organization/NFCYM immediately. Moreover, I understand that should I admit to, plead no contest to, or be found guilty of an incident of sexual misconduct or other disqualifying offense, or if it appears that an alleged claim is substantiated; my services with NFCYM-sponsored youth events shall be immediately terminated. Further, I understand that my failure to agree to and abide by the Adult Code of Conduct will bar me from participation in any NFCYM-sponsored youth event.

## **NFCYM Personnel Sanctions for Non-Compliance**

Failure of NFCYM personnel to agree to and abide by the Adult Code of Conduct or violation of any of these policies may result in any or all of the following sanctions:

- Suspension of NFCYM personnel from duties or termination
- Refusal on the part of NFCYM to offer employment
- Removal from the Board of Directors
- Cancellation of contract as a speaker/presenter/performer/entertainer/emcee or other program staff
- Request that the member diocese refuse to allow the individual to serve as a group leader at any NFCYM event

## **Youth Participant Behavior Standards and Preventive Education**

NFCYM calls upon youth attending its events to help make these events safe and positive for all by adhering to these youth participant behavior standards. These behavioral standards are based on the principal expectations our church has articulated in *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. Each young person is called to: personal and spiritual growth, responsible participation in the church, and discipleship in Jesus Christ.

**Principle one** calls young people to healthy and appropriate interaction with peers and adults.

**Principle two** calls upon young people to fully participate in all NFCYM events and related activities for which they are registered. Added to this principle are specifics on behavior that is appropriate and behavior that is inappropriate.

**Principle three** invites young people to witness in word and deed their discipleship in Jesus Christ.

### ***Principle One: Personal and Spiritual Growth***

1. Youth participants will model behavior that maintains a safe environment for themselves, peers, and adult participants.
2. Youth participants will strive to keep physically and emotionally healthy, guarding against substance use and abuse.
3. Youth participants will strive to witness in all relationships the chastity appropriate to their state in life.
4. Youth participants have a responsibility to stay attuned to their own spiritual life, nurturing an on-going prayer life.

### ***Principle Two: Responsible Participation***

1. Youth participants help promote an environment that is both safe and friendly.
2. Youth participants will attend all scheduled activities, arriving promptly, and staying for the entire event.
3. Youth participants have a responsibility to respect other persons and/or property.
4. Appropriate affection between adults and minors is important for development and a positive part of church life and ministry. The following are examples of appropriate forms of behavior for adults to exhibit in most NFCYM-sponsored and affiliated programs.
  - Side hugs
  - Shoulder to shoulder or “temple” hugs
  - Handshakes
  - “High-fives” and hand slapping
  - Verbal praise for a job well-done (not regarding physical attributes)
  - Touching hands, faces (usually in context of a blessing), shoulders, and arms of minors
  - Arms around shoulders
  - Holding hands while walking with younger minors
  - Sitting beside younger minors
  - Kneeling or bending down for hugs with younger minors
  - Holding hands during prayer
  - Pats on the head when culturally appropriate (For example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian communities)
5. Some forms of physical affection may initiate or appear to initiate inappropriate conduct and relationships and must be avoided. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following are examples of behaviors that are inappropriate and are ***not*** to be used by adults in most NFCYM-sponsored and affiliated programs.
  - Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
  - Kisses on the mouth
  - Holding children on the lap who are capable of sitting on their own
  - Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas
  - Showing affection in isolated areas of a facility such as bedrooms, restrooms, bathrooms, closets, staff-only areas, or other private rooms
  - Being in or on a bed with a minor
  - Touching knees or legs of minors
  - Wrestling with minors
  - Tickling minors
  - Piggyback rides
  - Any type of massage given by minor to adult
  - Any type of massage given by adult to minor
  - Any form of unwanted affection
  - Compliments or put downs that relate to physique or body development

### ***Principle Three: Discipleship in Jesus Christ***

1. Youth participants model a life consistent with the teachings of the Gospel, promoting through their own lives the way to love God and neighbor as self.
2. Youth participants will be sensitive to the good of the community.
3. Youth participants will reach out to all people in a spirit of humility, reverence, and respect.

**If a problem of any kind occurs during an NFCYM-sponsored youth event, young people will immediately go to a trusted adult to discuss the matter.**

## **Youth Participant Code of Conduct**

NFCYM will incorporate the following Youth Code of Conduct into all NFCYM-sponsored programs and events in which young people participate. It may be preceded or followed by additional language.



Youth participants will:

- Project an image of Christian consideration, sensitivity, and respect to everyone and to the property around them through language, dress, and behavior
- Refrain from inappropriate touching and verbal harassment
- Respect other persons and/or property
- Refrain from actions that could result in injury and/or damage to property
- Adhere to stated curfew
- Wear appropriate credentials in order to gain and maintain access to NFCYM events and activities
- Keep their personal belongings with them at all times
- Attend all scheduled activities, arriving promptly, and staying for the entire event
- Be aware of noise levels in lobbies, hallways, and sleeping areas, especially later in the evenings
- Maintain the spirit of the event
- Report problems of any kind to a trusted adult

Youth participants will not:

- Possess weapons of any kind
- Purchase, possess, consume, or distribute alcohol
- Purchase, possess, consume, or distribute illegal drugs
- Engage in any form of sexual activity or peer sexual harassment
- Purchase, download, possess, or distribute pornography
- Visit or gather in hotel rooms with the opposite gender

Youth participants will be aware of what are and *are not* appropriate behaviors in terms of relationships between adults and youth, and with their peers:

The following behaviors are generally considered appropriate at an NFCYM event:

- Side hugs
- Shoulder to shoulder or “temple” hugs
- Handshakes
- “High-fives” and hand slapping
- Verbal praise for a job well-done (not regarding physical attributes)
- Touching hands, faces (usually in context of a blessing), shoulders, and arms of minors
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with younger minors
- Sitting beside younger minors
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with younger minors
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate

The following behaviors are generally considered inappropriate at an NFCYM event:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children on the lap who are capable of sitting on their own
- Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas
- Showing affection in isolated areas of a facility such as bedrooms, restrooms, bathrooms, closets, staff-only areas, or other private rooms
- Being in or on a bed with an adult
- Touching knees or legs of minors
- Wrestling with minors
- Tickling minors
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by minor to adult or another minor
- Any type of massage given by adult to minor

- Any form of unwanted affection or peer sexual harassment
- Compliments or put downs that relate to physique or body development
- Going to an isolated area away from the group, or being taken to an isolated area by an adult or peer

**If a problem of any kind occurs during an NFCYM-sponsored youth event, young people will immediately go to a trusted adult to discuss the matter.**

Youth and parents understand that failure to agree to and abide by the Youth Code of Conduct will bar youth from participation in any NFCYM-sponsored youth event.

## **Youth Participant Sanctions for Non-Compliance**

For the most part NFCYM never has direct responsibility for chaperoning the conduct of youth participants in its programming and events. NFCYM relies on group leaders from participants' home dioceses or other chaperones to ensure that every young person attending an NFCYM-sponsored event is aware of the Youth Code of Conduct and the sanctions for non-compliance. Group leaders, chaperones, and/or parents bear the responsibility for sharing this information with youth participants. Their failure to do so does not excuse any inappropriate behavior on the part of youth participants nor does it affect NFCYM's ability to levy sanctions. Youth participants are held to the Youth Code of Conduct regardless.

If a young person violates the Youth Code of Conduct, any or all of the following sanctions may be implemented:

- Reporting of misconduct to local authorities, if the violation in any way violates local ordinances or laws.
- Dismissal of the youth from the NFCYM event or program by requesting that the group leader remove the youth from the event (whereby it would become the responsibility of the group leader/chaperone/parent to ensure timely, accompanied, and safe transportation home).

## **Non-NFCYM Personnel**

As with any organization, NFCYM must on occasion rely on the expertise of outside companies to assist in providing services. These companies are not considered NFCYM personnel; they are, for the sake of these policies, called Vendors. Generally, Vendors are companies, organizations, or others hired where there is no employment relationship created by the agreement between NFCYM and the Vendor. NFCYM understands that like dioceses, Vendors are separate organizations with their own policies and procedures and NFCYM cannot compel their staffs to abide by NFCYM policies.

When entering into relationship with a Vendor, the NFCYM executive director in consultation with the supervising staff member will assess the contact, if any, that the Vendor will have directly with young people. If the Vendor will have little or no contact with young people, no additional action will be required. If it is determined that the Vendor will have direct and/or prolonged contact with young people, NFCYM will request a copy of the Vendor's sexual harassment or similar policies. NFCYM will review the Vendor's policies to determine if they address:

- Professional and ethical conduct, including personal responsibility to assure an environment safe from all forms of abuse, intimidation, and harassment.
- Procedures for reporting concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior to their supervisors and/or local authorities.

In the event that a Vendor does not have an articulated policy, or that the policy fails to adequately address the principles outlined above, NFCYM may incorporate all or part of the NFCYM Vendor Code of Conduct into its agreement with the Vendor.

## **NFCYM Vendor Code of Conduct**

As part of these policies for protecting young people, NFCYM adopts the following Vendor Code of Conduct to be included, in whole or in part, in agreements with Vendors whose own policies do not meet NFCYM standards named above and who will have direct and/or prolonged contact with young people. Additional language may precede or follow.

In connection with any work for NFCYM, Vendor personnel will:

- Exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity.
- Conduct themselves in a professional manner, free from all forms of physical, psychological, sexual, and emotional intimidation, harassment, and abuse.
- Avoid taking unfair advantage of any relationship for their own benefit.
- Share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with their supervisors.
- Report to local authorities any suspected abuse or neglect of a minor.
- Accept their personal responsibility to protect minors and adults from all forms of abuse.
- Limit their contact with NFCYM event participants to that which is appropriate to their role within that event.

## **Youth Program and Event Management**

As an organization of faith-filled people, NFCYM values and honors every individual as created in the image and likeness of God. In its works and ministries NFCYM, therefore, provides a safe environment for minors and their adult chaperones. Honesty, trust, and mutual respect frame an environment where healthy and responsible relationships prevail, boundaries are clear, and behavioral standards are mutually embraced. NFCYM is committed to providing for the safety and protection of young people through a selfless sharing of gifts and talents.

### **NFCYM's Role in Creating a Safe Environment**

As the sponsor of youth events NFCYM takes responsibility for the logistical planning and communication required to provide a safe environment. NFCYM provides group leaders information on *Charter*\* compliance, youth protection, emergency and crisis response, chaperones, consent forms, and on-site communication.

#### **Compliance with the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*\***

Each delegation will offer assurance that all adults attending an NFCYM-sponsored youth event have been screened for service with young people as required by the youth protection policies as implemented by their respective diocese or organization. Dioceses or organizations that are unable or unwilling to provide such assurances are prohibited from participation in NFCYM-sponsored youth events.

#### **Youth Protection Policy**

NFCYM provides copies of its youth protection policy, *Safeguarding God's Children: NFCYM Policies for Protecting Young People* to its diocesan and organizational members and other interested parties via its public website, [www.nfcym.org](http://www.nfcym.org).

#### **Emergency and Crisis Response**

In 2001, the NFCYM board of directors approved the *National Catholic Youth Conference Emergency and Crisis Response Manual*. This manual contains critical information on planning for NFCYM's main youth event, the National Catholic Youth Conference ("NCYC"), including how to select host cities and facilities, how to respond to emergency and crisis situations, and suggestions for plans dioceses and organizations should have in place *before* departing for the event site. In particular, the *NCYC Emergency and Crisis Response Manual* requires that NFCYM staff meet with representatives from the main event facilities, contracted medical and security companies, local emergency response agencies, local law enforcement, the host diocese, and the lead production company to review procedures and responsibilities for responding to emergency and crisis situations. Copies of this manual have been provided to its diocesan members and additional copies are regularly offered and provided.

The information in the *NCYC Emergency and Crisis Response Manual* is adapted to other NFCYM-sponsored youth gatherings as needed.

#### **Chaperones**

NFCYM requires that youth attending NFCYM events are chaperoned by adults over the age of 21 years. At a minimum, the initial one (1) to ten (10) youth should be chaperoned by no less than two (2) adults. For each additional six (6) youth, there must be at least one (1) additional adult. Chaperones should be in proportion to the gender breakdown of the youth participants attending the event. Group leaders should give reasonable consideration to the number of chaperones required for events with larger numbers of participants.

#### **Security**

NFCYM takes seriously the safety and security of all NFCYM event participants. NFCYM hires, as needed, licensed (as required by state or local law) and bonded companies to provide additional uniformed personnel to assist with crowd control, door monitoring, badge checking, and other general safety procedures. NFCYM requires that all participants wear event credentials (name badges) during all event programming. Those without proper credentials are refused entrance into event facilities. (Replacement credentials are issued with proper identification and payment of a replacement fee (to be determined) per occurrence.) In addition, all bags are

subject to search. Unattended bags or packages are handled by security personnel and may be removed or destroyed.

### **Medical Assistance**

Depending on the size of the gathering and facility requirements, NFCYM hires professional, trained, and licensed medical personnel to staff first aid stations in the main event facilities during all programming hours. Locations and hours of each station are listed in the program booklets provided on-site.

## **Group Leaders' Role in Creating a Safe Environment**

Group leaders play a particular role in creating a safe environment for youth at NFCYM-sponsored youth events. In light of the publication by the USSCB of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People\** in 2002, every diocese in the United States is compelled to:

- Establish “clear and well-publicized diocesan/eparchial standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other church personnel in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people” (Article 6);
- Establish “safe environment programs (that will) cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children” (Article 12); and to
- “Evaluate the background of all diocesan/eparchial and parish personnel who have regular and recurring contact with minors” (Article 13).

Each diocese in the United States implements the aforementioned mandates in different ways but each is audited by the Office for the Protection of Children of the USSCB to ensure compliance. Organizations, while not technically bound by the *Charter\** nor subject to annual audits, are ethically bound to have policies in place for protecting young people from harm. Therefore the **first responsibility** of each group leader is to assure compliance with diocesan or organizational youth protection policies and procedures. Except in the case of disqualifying offenses, the policies created by the NFCYM are not meant to supersede diocesan or organizational policies, only to enhance them.

The **second responsibility** of each group leader is to act as the link between NFCYM and their delegation chaperones and youth participants. It is incumbent upon them to follow NFCYM policies regarding *Charter\** compliance, youth protection, emergency and crisis response, supervision of conduct, chaperones, consent forms, and on-site communication.

### **Compliance with the USSCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People\***

Each delegation will offer assurance that all adults attending an NFCYM-sponsored youth event have been screened for service with young people as required by the youth protection policies as implemented by their respective diocese or organization.

*Sample text: All clerical and lay personnel of our diocese/organization have satisfied the requirements of our policy under the USSCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, including background investigations.*

Dioceses and organizations that are unable or unwilling to provide such assurances are prohibited from participation in NFCYM-sponsored youth events.

### **NFCYM Youth Protection Policy**

Since the NFCYM depends on the group leader as the primary point of contact for communication with adult and youth participants it is the responsibility of group leaders to ensure that the adults with their delegations are familiar with *Safeguarding God's Children: NFCYM Policies for Protecting Young People* and are able to indicate so by agreeing to abide by the Adult Code of Conduct on the required NFCYM consent forms. The

group leader should collect and retain copies of the signed consent forms and be ready to supply such if necessary.

### **Chaperones**

NFCYM requires that youth attending NFCYM events are chaperoned by adults over the age of 21 years. At a minimum, the initial one (1) to ten (10) youth should be chaperoned by no less than two (2) adults. For each additional six (6) youth, there must be at least one (1) additional adult. Chaperones should be in proportion to the gender breakdown of the youth participants attending the event. Group leaders should give reasonable consideration to the number of chaperones required for events with larger numbers of participants.

### **Consent Forms**

NFCYM requires that all participants in its youth events complete an *NFCYM/NCYC Liability Waiver and Permission Form* (“consent form”), which is reviewed biennially by NFCYM. Group leaders must provide a completed consent form for each participant who attends an NFCYM event where youth are present. Group leaders are requested to retain a copy of each consent form and carry those copies with them while in attendance at the NFCYM event.

### **Emergency Planning**

NFCYM relies on its delegation group leaders to plan appropriately for emergency and crisis situations, to familiarize themselves with NFCYM plans and policies, to forward appropriate safety information to participants, and generally to prepare and inform their delegates of what to do in emergency or crisis situations. Suggestions for emergency and crisis planning are provided in NFCYM’s *National Catholic Youth Conference Emergency and Crisis Response Manual*. Copies have been provided to NFCYM diocesan members and are always available upon request from NFCYM.

### **On-Site Communications**

NFCYM requests that group leaders carry either a mobile phone or pager during NFCYM youth events and to provide NFCYM with these contact numbers. NFCYM only contacts group leaders in case of emergency, however, encourages group leaders to provide these numbers directly to their chaperones and participants so they may be reached directly should the need arise.

During the National Catholic Youth Conference NFCYM hosts daily briefings and provides delegation mail boxes in the main Event Office to assist in communications.

### **Supervision of Conduct**

NFCYM knows that group leaders often deal directly with infractions to diocesan and NFCYM codes of conduct, illnesses and accidents, and those who have been victims of minor crimes, such as pick pocketing, without involving or notifying NFCYM staff. This is entirely appropriate and NFCYM supports group leaders in their efforts in these matters. NFCYM expects group leaders to do the following:

1. Be thoroughly familiar with pertinent diocesan or organizational policies, the NFCYM Codes of Conduct, and, if attending NCYC, the NCYC Emergency and Crisis Response Manual.
2. Screen the background of all adult participants according to diocesan/organizational policies.
3. Coordinate the supervision of adult and youth participants at all times.
4. Moderate adult participants as they directly supervise youth participants.
5. Educate and ensure that all participants understand the NFCYM Codes of Conduct, and pertinent diocesan or organizational policies and sections of the NCYC Emergency and Crisis Response Manual, as well as general safety regulations and procedures.
6. Collect the appropriate signed consent forms from each delegation participant (both youth and adult).
7. Supervise the safety of their group members which includes:
  - a. Notifying the NFCYM staff of any serious behavior problems, injuries, or illnesses of conference participants
  - b. Knowing the emergency and crisis response procedures
  - c. Having a delegation emergency and crisis response plan
  - d. Knowing the location of first aid stations

- e. Having a delegation first aid kit available

## **Adults' Role in Creating a Safe Environment**

Adults can help NFCYM and their respective delegations create a safe environment for young people by:

- Establishing boundaries appropriate to the ministerial relationship
- Maintaining appropriate boundaries with regard to sleeping rooms and providing by their witness appropriate conduct in such settings
- Being aware of emergency exits and evacuation routes from buildings/facilities in which they are meeting or staying
- Knowing their job and being prepared to do that job
- Being properly trained to respond to emergency situations
- Knowing and abiding by the standards set forth in *Safeguarding God's Children: NFCYM Policies for Protecting Young People*
- Reading and abiding by the Adult Code of Conduct
- Communicating and enforcing the Youth Code of Conduct
- Helping young people understand their role in creating and maintaining a safe environment
- Understanding the gravity of inappropriate behavior and the need to immediately report inappropriate behavior they observe
- Taking swift action and providing support when problems occur
- Knowing and abiding by their diocesan or organizational policy regarding the protection of young people
- Earning the respect of parents and other adults in their role as a leader in ministry
- Respecting the individuality and celebrating the gifts and talents of each young person
- Being a positive role model at all times
- Encouraging everyone to share the responsibility for creating and maintaining a safe environment
- Remaining free of unwarranted suspicion

## **Young People's Role in Creating a Safe Environment**

Young people can help NFCYM and their delegations create a safe environment by:

- Reading and abiding by the Youth Code of Conduct
- Encouraging and holding peers accountable to the Youth Code of Conduct
- Reporting problems or suspicious behavior of any kind immediately to an adult

## **Benefits of a Safe Environment**

When a safe environment exists, young people can have confidence that

- They are loved because they are children of God.
- They are fully accepted just as they are.
- They can trust the adults who guide them.
- They know where to go for help.
- No one will get angry if they raise a concern.
- NFCYM event space is safe and secure.
- Their well-being is the first priority.
- They are responsible for their actions and, therefore, must think before they act.
- They are held accountable for their actions.
- Adults will be honest with them.
- They will have fun.
- They are better off because they are involved.
- They can embrace an environment free of anything that can harm them.

## **Conclusion**

As the people of God, united with one another in the living Gospel, NFCYM embraces these policies as a means of shared requirements, expectations, and understanding of appropriate professional and personal relationships in the ministry context. It is part of NFCYM's mission to truly protect and nurture young people. It is hoped that these policies will further that mission. Any person having questions at any time regarding these policies should please contact NFCYM's executive director.

As with all NFCYM policies, NFCYM reserves the right at any time to amend or terminate the practices and policies contained in *Safeguarding God's Children: NFCYM Policies for Protecting Young People*.

\* The text of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* can be found on the website of U.S. Catholic bishops – <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/charter.htm>

<sup>i</sup> At the time of release of these policies, any person may go to <http://www.boyscouts-ncac.org> to do the BSA on-line training/certification by clicking on "Training" in the horizontal tool bar near the top, then clicking on "Youth Protection" in the menu that drops down on the right, and then going through the training and certification.