

Youth Ministry Manual

The key to a successful Youth Ministry program is finding an effective – yet safe – way to connect with kids today. Youth Ministers are charged with the profound responsibility of engaging young people within the Catholic Church, while keeping those who participate safe from harm. Everyone is responsible for safety, but the young person themselves and their parents must also play a role. The following guidelines and best practices have been developed to assist you in your role as a Youth Ministry. Please feel free to contact your Risk Management Representative if you have any further questions.

Thank you for all your efforts in keeping youth safety at the forefront of your ministry.

Activity Selection

Youth ministers are always looking for fun and engaging activities to keep young people involved and to promote active participation in the ministry program. When planning any activity, advance preparation is key. Take time to consider any potential risks involved and what steps need to be taken to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants. Before scheduling any event, especially events outside the norm, be sure to contact the (Arch)Diocese for guidance and approval if you aren't too sure if it is deemed safe for adolescents

An idea that seems beneficial to you or your team may be perceived differently by parents, the parish, or the (Arch)Diocese. Before moving forward, consider asking yourself, "Is this activity truly essential to the success of our ministry?" Prudent decision-making ensures a strong and impactful mission. Make it a common occurrence to regularly run ideas and plans by church leadership, other seasoned staff, and people outside of who you work with daily.

Additional questions that should be asked when deciding on an activity include:

- *What type of supervision would be needed for this particular activity?*
- *Will all participants be able to financially afford the costs of this activity?*
- *Will transportation need to be provided for the participants to the activity site?*
- *Is this activity necessary to ensure the ministry is successful?*
- *Will all youths within the program be physically able to participate in the activity?*
- *Would this activity be viewed as too risky by parents or the parish/(Arch)Diocese?*

Examples of activities that may be determined as too risky include (but are not limited to):

- High Ropes Courses
- White Water Rafting
- Rock Climbing/Rappelling
- Paintball
- Water Skiing
- Any off-road activity such as (dirt bikes, jet skis, snowmobile or ATV's)

Transportation

When considering any aspect of transportation to and from a Youth Ministry event, the definitive authority is your (Arch) Diocesan Transportation Policy. You should review the policy periodically and refer to it any time a question arises about transportation. Any individual responsible for organizing the transportation for youth ministry events should be required to complete *Church Transportation: Is it Necessary and Ministry-Based?* This course is available on CMG Connect. Please reference the attached instructions to access this course as well as many of our other online trainings. **(Exhibit A)**

In general, it is best to limit any church-provided transportation as much as possible. Thus, whenever possible, it's best to have participants meet at the location.

If that is not practical, the next best option is to hire a contracted carrier or utilize appropriate public transportation (i.e. airlines, transit bus, etc.) If public transportation is used, no further information is required. However, if transportation is provided through a contracted carrier, signed contracts should be executed with appropriate hold harmless/indemnity language protecting the parish and the (Arch)Diocese. Also, contracted carriers should provide proof of insurance with minimum limits of liability of \$2,000,000 CSL (Combined Single Limit) for in-state travel and \$5,000,000 CSL for travel involving multiple states.

If the preceding options will not work, the final option would be utilization of employee or volunteer drivers. Any employee/volunteer driver should be a minimum of 21 years of age and not have any impairment which could prohibit safely driving the vehicle. If the employee/volunteer will be responsible for transporting other individuals, the recommended minimum age is 25.

Employees or volunteers using their own vehicle must maintain minimum liability coverage on their vehicle of \$100,000/\$300,000. They should be informed in advance that their insurance would be primary if an accident occurred. Please reference guidelines for determining Unacceptable Drivers. **(Exhibit B)**

We recommend that all drivers be required to take the Defensive Driving curriculum available on CMG Connect. Please reference the attached instructions to access this course. **(Exhibit A)**

Volunteer drivers must also complete the Driver Acknowledgement Form. **(Exhibit C)** This important form reviews safe driving practices all drivers should follow.

As a reminder, the use of 11-15 passenger vans for any ministry-based transportation is not allowed. Please reference the attached document for more details. **(Exhibit D)**

Supervision

All Youth Ministry activities should be chaperoned by adults 21 years of age or older. At a minimum, activities with ten or few participants need to be chaperoned by no less than two adults. For each additional 1-6 youth, an additional adult needs to be added. For activities deemed to be riskier in nature, consideration should be given to making the adult/youth ratio even more stringent.

When determining the appropriate number of chaperones for a youth event, the age of the participants should be a key factor. Younger children typically require more supervision, so the younger the group, the more stringent the adult-to-child ratio should be.

All adult chaperones must complete (Arch)Diocesan Safe Environment requirements.

When chaperoning events within a secured facility, adults should designate places and times where youth participants can locate group leaders throughout the day.

Chaperones should view the Youth Ministry Curriculum on CMG Connect. Please reference the attached instructions to access this course. **(Exhibit A)**

Chaperones are expected to attend all required meetings for a particular Youth Ministry activity so they are familiar and comfortable with the activity they will be overseeing, as well as the tasks for which they will be responsible during the activity. Please reference Chaperone Guidelines – Behavior Standards. **(Exhibit E)**

Adult chaperones are required to complete the Adult Liability Waiver. **(Exhibit F)**

Details

Contact information should be obtained by parents/legal guardians of each young person prior to allowing them to participate in any Youth Ministry activity or meeting. This would include address, phone number(s) and email address.

A Youth Ministry Registration form should be completed by all parents/guardians prior to any activity which includes a Parent/Guardian Consent Form and Liability Waiver. **(Exhibit G)**

All forms should be readily accessible to the Youth Minister and appropriate chaperones. Consider having a digital and physical copy of everything in an orderly manner.

When planning an off-site activity, there may be occasions in which the facility owner asks you to sign a written agreement or contract on behalf of the entire group. This agreement or contract should be reviewed by the Chancery office prior to signing to ensure it does not contain any unfavorable language that could impact the (Arch)Diocesan insurance program. Once (Arch)Diocesan approval has been granted, the youth minister should make an advance visit to the site as a means of foreseeing any potential risks that may be involved.

It's essential to know how to respond if a youth participant or adult chaperone is injured, as well as what to do in the event of an emergency. Being prepared can make all the difference in responding quickly and effectively.

- First aid supplies should be easily accessible at all times—both on-site and off-site during events or trips.
- An AED (Automated External Defibrillator) should be readily available when possible. All chaperones and staff should be aware of its location and have training of how to use it in case of a cardiac emergency.
- A phone or other reliable method to contact emergency responders must also be available at all locations.

Chaperones should be aware of who to contact at the parish in the event of an emergency or injury. This may include the event manager, parents or guardians, and other designated parish staff. If an incident occurs, the Accident Investigation Report Form (**Exhibit H**) should be completed.

Be prepared to cancel or postpone any outdoor activity in the event of inclement weather, such as lightning, strong winds, heavy rain, or extreme temperatures. Safety must always come first—when in doubt, move the activity indoors or reschedule.

Keep Parents in the Know

The Youth Ministry registration form should include all details of the activity including the destination, dates, timeframe, means of transportation, names of chaperones, etc. Keep in mind, any “element of surprise” is often what makes a favorable case for a parent who decides to sue the parish if their child was injured during an activity. Many Youth Ministry events may necessitate a pre-planning meeting with parents. This will assure their involvement and clear understanding of the activities taking place.

It is important to involve parents/guardians as much as possible. This includes before, during and after any activity.

Get the Word Out

An effective way to communicate with young people is to use the same technologies they utilize to communicate with each other. At one time, email was the communication of choice among youth. Today, most young people favor new technologies and social networking sites over traditional email accounts. Technologies will continue to evolve and youth ministers will need to be vigilant about keeping up with the changes.

The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry states there are three essential values that must be maintained when communicating with youth members.

Prudence – Encourages forethought and weighs the merit of the technology and its attending policies in light of pastoral effectiveness and potential risks.

Reasonable – Policies and certain technologies may be deemed reasonable if the use is practical, sound, and considered a normal practice or standard.

Transparent – Requires that all we do is open to the scrutiny of others and that the use of technology and subsequent policies be clear, intelligible, and observable.

Keeping this in mind, communication from Youth Ministers through texting, email, GroupMe, social networking sites, other apps, etc. must be appropriate and consistently represent the views/teaching of the Catholic Church. This communication should be constantly monitored.

All communication from a Youth Minister should be open and transparent. Nothing should be communicated that should not be seen by others. Remember, there is no such thing as a private email or instant message.

It is best not to communicate directly with one individual through electronic communication, but sent to all youth within the program. Texting, emailing or chatting with youth through social networking sites should never be done privately with an individual youth. Parents should be copied in on all correspondence that a Youth Minister sends to their child.

Social networking sites established for Youth Ministry must be constantly monitored to ensure any inappropriate material is immediately removed. At least two adults should have administration access to the account site.

Code of Conduct

Much like chaperones, youth participants must also know appropriate rules and proper behavior during any Youth Ministry activity. A Code of Conduct acknowledgement form should be signed by both youth and their parent/guardian. A sample Code of Conduct is provided.

(Exhibit I)

End-User Instructions

Step 1: Accessing CMG Connect

Go to <https://CMGConnect.org/> and select your organization's name from the drop-down field. Click **Go to Organization** to be brought to the correct landing page. (Sample shown below).

To create a new account, complete the three sections under the Register for a New Account area. This includes basic account information, personal, and affiliation. Complete ALL required boxes.

CONNECT
Find your Organization Below
Select an Organization
Go to Organization

Existing Accounts:
Do you have an account? If so, you don't need to sign up for a new one. Click the "Sign In" button in the upper right hand corner of this window. Otherwise, register for a new account below.
Sign In

Register for a New Account:
Account Personal Affiliation
Enter your first, middle, and last name as they appear on your driver's license or official identification. Do not use initials, etc.
First Name: []
Last Name: []
Username: []
Password: []
Address 1: []
Address 2: []
City: [] State: [] Zipcode: []
Phone: []
Date of birth: []
Previous: []

Account Personal Affiliation
Select the Primary Parish/School at which you Volunteer or Work. (Search or scroll down to find your parish).
Please select: []
Please Select a Role:
Choose a Role:
Participate as a/an:
Clergy/Religious
Driver
Employee
Volunteer
Previous: [] Register: []

Please select the category that best describes how you participate at your location. Selecting the correct box(es) during this step will allow the platform to assign the correct training modules to your dashboard.

If you are unsure of which category to select for your profile, please contact your local parish/school administrator.

Account Login
Username: []
Password: []
☐ Remember me
Sign In
Forgot Username? Forgot Password?
Please note:
If you have not created an account in the system, you may actually already have an account in the system that was imported by your diocesan data environment official.

If you have done training in the past, you may already have an account. Please login with your previous username and password by clicking the "Sign In" button at the top right of the page.

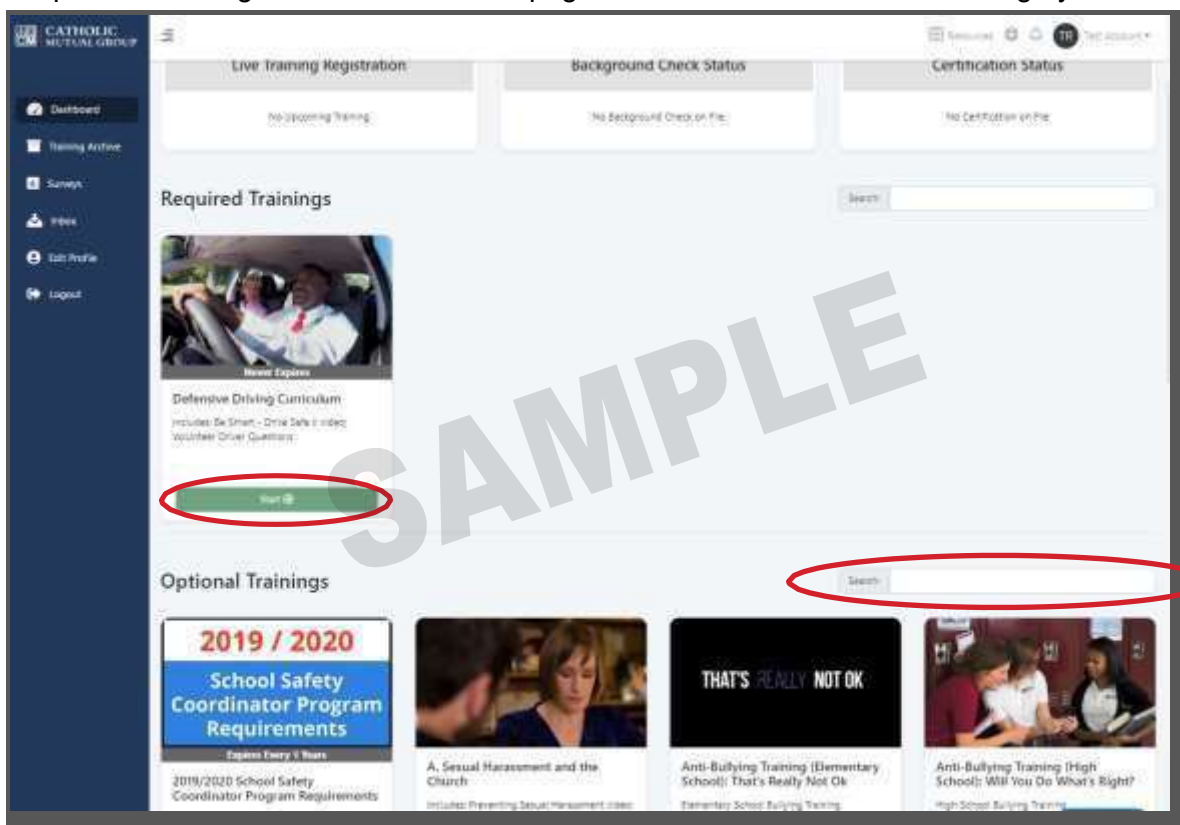
If you cannot remember your username and password and have an email address in the system, please click **Forgot Password**. Please contact cmgconnect@catholicmutual.org or click [Support](#) if you need assistance accessing your account.

Step 2: Locate and Open Trainings

Once you have completed the registration process, you will see the training curriculums. Click **Start** to begin.

Note: Available curriculums will vary based on your organization customization as well as the participation category you selected when registering for your account.

To view other Optional Trainings, scroll down on the page and/or search for desired training by title.



Step 3 (Optional): Print Certificate

When you have reached the end of the training, click on your dashboard and find your completed training. Click **Print Certificate** to view and download your completion certificate.



<https://CMGConnect.org>

UNACCEPTABLE DRIVERS

We are establishing minimum standards nationally for defining an unacceptable driver. These standards are based upon the accident/violation history of the driver for the prior three years. The accident/violation history used in applying these standards will include those shown on the driver's MVR, supplemented by the application, our own claims history for the risk, and any information the prior carrier may furnish us.

Violations need to be reviewed in conjunction with the driving responsibilities of the person. Consistency should be applied when making decisions. A driver may be unacceptable if the driver's accident/violation history in the last three years:

1. Includes one or more of the following serious violations:
 - Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs
 - Hit and run
 - Failure to report an accident
 - Negligent homicide arising out of the use of a motor vehicle
 - Operating during a period of suspension or revocation
 - Using a motor vehicle for the commission of a felony
 - Operating a motor vehicle without owner's authority (grand theft)
 - Permitting an unlicensed person to drive
 - Reckless driving
 - Speed contest
2. Consists of any combination of accidents and moving violations which total three.

All accidents must be included in the above determination, both "at fault" and "not at fault" accidents. While the latter may not have been caused by the driver, there is usually no way to make these distinctions from MVR information.

Except in states that forbid "non-employment" citations and accidents, all moving violations must be included in the above determination, whether the offense was committed with a commercial or a personal vehicle. A driver's personal driving habits and attitudes will almost universally be the same while driving a commercial vehicle.

DRIVER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I am aware I am not to operate any electronic devices while driving. _____

I will only use a cell phone when safely parked or during an emergency. _____

All passengers will be required to wear a seatbelt at all times.

Daily maximum miles will not exceed 500 miles per vehicle. _____

Maximum miles driven without at least a 30 minute break will not exceed 250 miles. _____

I have phone numbers of individuals to call in the event of an emergency or contact when needed. _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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Use of 11(including driver) or more Passenger Vans is Prohibited!

11 (including driver) or more passenger vans should either be replaced with a school bus or a Multifunction School Activity Bus (MFSAB). A MFSAB is a vehicle which complies with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) applicable to school buses for crash survivability and mirrors.

If a MFSAB is used for the transportation of children, these vehicles must meet FMVSS 111; FMVSS 220; FMVSS 221; and FMVSS 222 (see below). When acquiring a bus or shuttle to transport adults, the four FMVSS should also be followed.

FMVSS 111 – *Fulfills the safety requirement for the rear-view and cross-view visibility.*

FMVSS 220 – *Establishes requirements for the school bus body structure in rollover accidents.*

FMVSS 221 – *Regulates the strength of body panel joints in school buses.*

FMVSS 222 – *Establishes occupant protection requirements for school bus passenger seating and barriers.*

Removal of seats from a vehicle designed to transport 11 (including driver) or more passengers to make the vehicle a 10 or less passenger vehicle is not allowed.

Mini-vans may be used to transport children or adults. A mini-van is **defined** as a passenger vehicle designed to transport no more than 8 total occupants.

While the use of 11 (including driver) or more passenger vans is prohibited to transport people, the vehicles can be used for cargo hauling **only** if all but the two front seats are removed.

Important Note: Buses and Shuttle Buses capable of transporting 16 plus passengers should also comply with the above FMVSS.

If you have questions on whether or not your vehicle would be in compliance, please contact the Risk Management Department at 1-800-228-6108.

CatholicMutual...CARES

CHAPERONE GUIDELINES/BEHAVIOR STANDARDS

Chaperones should be at least 21 years of age or 25 for activities involving an overnight stay. It is fine to have “helpers” ages 18-21; however, we recommend that these individuals be supervised by an adult chaperone. Each chaperone will be assigned a group of students for which they are responsible.

Regular daily responsibilities will include:

1. Make sure students are present on the bus or other means of transportation every time transportation is used.
2. Make sure the students are in their room at curfew.
3. Make sure students are awake on time.
4. Make sure students understand daily itinerary.
5. Observe students for suspicious behavior that might involve breaking the rules.
6. Be on guard for students being loud, obnoxious, and/or rude. Do not tolerate this behavior.
7. Assist in medical emergencies and contact person in charge immediately.
8. Inquire within assigned group about any individual medical abnormalities.
9. No students or chaperones should leave the group for unauthorized excursions.
10. You may search students' rooms at any time with or without the students' permission.
11. Check luggage before the trip.
12. Check hotel rooms for any damage or things left behind.
13. Make sure students are properly dressed at all times.

Behavior standards include:

1. “Buddy systems” should be used by chaperones; thus, it is very important to ensure 2 adults are present at all times (1 “adult” and 1 individual 18-21 is fine also).
2. One-to-one contact with a student should always occur in a public place.
3. Any verbal or nonverbal sexual behavior with any student is inappropriate.
4. Do not touch a student against his/her will.
5. Do not touch a student on any portion of their body that would be covered by a bathing suit.

6. Sexual gestures or overtures a student makes to a staff member should be reported to the appropriate personnel.
7. Do not appear in front of a student when not appropriately clothed.
8. Do not change clothes in the same room or in view of a student.
9. Driving alone with a student should be avoided at all times.
10. If necessary to drive alone with a student: Do not sit close to one another in the car; do not come into physical contact with each other; do not stop the car to talk, or if you must stop the car, turn on the inside light of the car.
11. Do not strike or touch a student as a means of discipline.
12. Do not use derogatory language when addressing a student.
13. Be alert for suspicious or unusual behavior.
14. All suspicions of child or sexual abuse need to be reported to appropriate personnel.
15. No student should be taken on any type of trip or excursion without the written consent of the custodial parent.
16. No student should be allowed to visit you in your quarters.
17. No student should be denied food, water or shelter.

(Revised 02/2021)

Adult Liability Waiver

Each adult participant, including group leaders and chaperones, must sign this form.

Release of Liability

I, _____, agree on behalf of myself, my
(Full Name)
Heirs, assigns, executors, and personal representatives, to hold harmless and defend,
_____, its officers, the Arch/Diocese of
(Parish/School)
_____, its directors, agents, employees, or
representatives associated with the activity from any and all liability claims, loss or
damage arising from or in connection with my participation in the activity.

Signature

Date

Print Name

FIELD TRIP

Participant's name: _____

Date of birth: _____ Sex: _____

Parent/Guardian's name: _____

Home address: _____

Home phone: _____ Business phone: _____

I, _____ grant permission for my child, _____

Parent or guardian's name

Child's name

to participate in this parish/school event that requires transportation to a location away from the parish/school site. This activity will take place under the guidance and direction of parish/ school employees and/or volunteers from _____.

Name of parish/school

A brief description of the activity follows:

Type of event: _____

Date of event: _____

Destination of event: _____

Individual in charge: _____

Estimated time of departure and return: _____

Mode of transportation to and from event: _____

As parent and/or legal guardian, I remain legally responsible for any personal actions taken by the above named minor ("participant").

I agree on behalf of myself, my child named herein, or our heirs, successors, and assigns, to hold harmless and defend _____, its officers, directors,

Name of Parish/School

employees and agents, and the Arch/Diocese of _____,

its employees and agents, chaperones, or representatives associated with the event, from any claim arising from or in connection with my child attending the event or in connection with any illness or injury (including death) or cost of medical treatment in connection therewith, and I agree to compensate the parish/school, its officers, directors and agents, and the Arch/Diocese of _____,

its employees and agents and chaperones, or representative associated with the event for reasonable attorney's fees and expenses which may incur in any action brought against them as a result of such injury or damage, unless such claim arises from the negligence of the parish/school or the Arch/Diocese of _____.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

MEDICAL MATTERS: I hereby warrant that to the best of my knowledge, my child is in good health and I assume all responsibility for the health of my child. (Of the following statements pertaining to medical matters, sign only those that are applicable.)

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT: In the event of an emergency, I hereby give permission to transport my child to a hospital for emergency medical or surgical treatment. I wish to be advised prior to any further treatment by the hospital or doctor. In the event of an emergency, if you are unable to reach me at the above numbers, contact:

Name & relationship _____

Phone: _____ Alt Phone: _____

Family doctor: _____ Phone: _____

Family Health Plan Carrier: _____ Policy #: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

OTHER MEDICAL TREATMENT: In the event it comes to the attention of the parish/school, its officers, directors and agents, and the Arch/Diocese of _____, chaperones, or representatives associated with the activity, that my child becomes ill with symptoms such as headache, vomiting, sore throat, fever, diarrhea, I want to be called as soon as it is reasonably possible.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

MEDICATIONS: My child is taking medication at present. My child will bring all such medications necessary and such medications will be well-labeled. Names of medications and concise directions for seeing that the child takes such medications, including dosage and frequency of dosage, are as follows:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

No medication of any type, whether prescription or non-prescription, may be administered to my child unless the situation is life-threatening and emergency treatment is required.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I hereby grant permission for non-prescription medication (i.e. non-aspirin products such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, throat lozenges, cough syrup) to be given to my child, if deemed appropriate.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

SPECIFIC MEDICAL INFORMATION: The parish/school will take reasonable care to see that the following information will be held in confidence.

Allergic reactions (medications, foods, plants, insects, etc.): _____

Immunizations: Date of last tetanus/diphtheria immunization: _____

Does child have a medically prescribed diet? _____

Does child have any physical limitations? _____

Is child subject to chronic homesickness, emotional reactions to new situations, sleepwalking, bedwetting, fainting? _____

Has child recently been exposed to contagious disease or conditions, such as mumps, measles, chicken pox, etc.? If so, list date and disease or condition: _____

You should be aware of these special medical conditions of my child: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

I. Identification of the Accident:

Name of Injured: _____ Date of Accident: _____

Time of Accident: _____ Location of Accident: _____

II. Nature of Injury:

Exact part of body affected and type of injury: _____

Description of HOW and WHY accident occurred:

Names of witnesses: _____

III. Accident Prevention Information:

Equipment, tool, or item causing injury: _____

Was accident caused by failure to use or observe safety practices, policies, or regulations?

IV. Corrective Action:

What corrective action can be done to prevent a recurrence of this accident/injury?

Comments/Recommendations (by Safety Committee, Safety Director, or Supervisor):

Person (s) responsible for corrective action: _____

Safety Director/Manager Review: _____

Signed

Date

CODE OF CONDUCT

The following are a few rules all participants are expected to follow while participating and representing

(Name of Parish/School)

In this event sponsored by _____

(Name of Parish/School)

On _____

(Date of Event)

Please read and sign.

I, _____, will:

(Printed Name of Youth Participant)

- Treat all other persons with respect and not cause any intentional harm (physically, emotionally, or spiritually) to any person in any way.
- Respect the property of others, including all program facilities and property.
- Follow all appropriate instructions of all personnel aiding in this event, including, but not limited to, chaperones, support staff, transportation personnel and administration.
- Be on time for all check-in and departure times.
- Not have in my possession any tobacco, alcohol or any controlled illegal substance.

I agree that if any of these terms are violated, the Parish/School can send the participant home at the participant/guardian's expense.

(Youth Participant Signature)

(Date)

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)

Please return to: _____

No later than: _____

The Parish/School sponsoring this activity is responsible for receiving an Authorized form for each participant under the age of 18.