

1/21/2021

TO Faith Formation/Youth Leaders

Dear Faith Formation and Youth Ministry Leaders,

We know that this has been a challenging year, and hope that as the vaccines find their way into the arms of our community, the COVID crisis will begin to settle and dissipate. Still, this is not a time for us to relax our vigilance and attentiveness in regard to our care for our young people.

Universally, diocesan entities (churches, schools, other facilities/gatherings) have been admirably and effectively following CDC guidelines, including six feet of physical distance, mask-wearing, and sanitization of facilities. **These remain crucial to the success of our ministry.**

Additionally, as regards Faith Formation and Youth Ministry, we offer the following guidelines as possible enhancements/options at the discretion of the pastor/parish administrator, in consultation with other parish leaders:

- Parishes that wish to facilitate in-person gatherings may do so, in strict adherence to any local, county, or state health department guidance.
(e.g. if your area says that you may gather with 10 or less, the number 10 must be strictly counted to include youth, volunteers, teachers, anyone who is present; not a “10 youth” plus... approach.)
- Faith Formation/youth gatherings should be limited to one hour or less.
- Faith Formation/youth programs that share a building with a Catholic school should be in constant communication and dialogue with the pastor/principal/other leadership about the ever-changing demands of the pandemic to present a unified (not uniform) approach.
- Options for virtual learning/experiences should be presented to any family for any reason (apprehension about in-person meetings, underlying health of a relative, temporary change due to health).
- Parishes may wish to remain all-virtual if in-person meetings are too demanding on personnel and other resources.

Of course, Faith Formation catechists, youth ministry staff and volunteers should always practice good hygiene and self-care and monitor symptoms and exposure.

As a reminder, please be sure that all programs (virtual and in-person) comply with all safe environment requirements.

Please continue to pray in solidarity for those who continue to suffer from the virus itself and all the residual effects it is having on our families and parishes.