

YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH A POTENTIAL ADULT ASSISTANT

When you make contact with a potential Adult Assistant, invite them to meet up for a meal or coffee with the worker and /or experienced Adult Assistant, and if possible a student leader too. Being an Adult Assistant is an important responsibility, and a new Assistant should never start without first meeting to discuss what this involves and to fulfil child protection requirements.

The first meeting is a chance to find out whether a potential Adult Assistant is suitable for YCS and vice versa. Give them a copy of AYCS Adult and Chaplain Pack and go through it with them to make sure they understand the role and what would be expected from them. In particular, look at these sections:

- Introduction to YCS
- YCS Principles
- The Three Truths
- The Review of Life
- The Role of an Adult Assistant
- Examples of past actions

If the Adult Assistant is joining an existing group, share with them any relevant information about that group. If the Adult Assistant is interested in forming a new group, discuss how they can go about this, in particular using the YCS program Never Underestimate the Students (NUTS).

Give Adult Assistants an opportunity to ask any questions they may have. Also ask the Adult Assistant why they want to get involved, and what kind of commitment they could make, as this may give you some clues as to whether they will be suitable. At your first meeting you may also need to take action to screen potential adult assistance in accordance with the child protection policy that applies to you.

WHAT SORT OF PERSON DOES A PARTICULAR GROUP NEED?

Each person has skills and talents that allow them to do things others can't. For students and Assistants to gain the most from YCS, it's important that the various skills of Adult Assistants are being used to their full potential.

Consider the needs of a particular group. If it is a parish group, it may be good for the Adult Assistant to be a parishioner. If it is a project or campaign group, can you find an Adult Assistant with skills that would help support students in these actions? If it is a school group, is there someone in the school community who would be suitable?

Remember that it sometimes works best if an Adult Assistant comes from the same community as the group itself, because it makes easier for the adult to understand where the students are coming from, to communicate with them between meetings, to invite other students from the community and to give advice about the parish or school where the students might be trying to take action. This is not essential but it often helps!

We should also be aware of gender. There are many great Adult Assistants who support and relate well to students from both sexes. However, being a solo female Assistant for an all male group, or vice versa, can be challenging. Sometimes sensitive topics (for example sexuality) come up during the Review of Life, and this can be uncomfortable for Assistant and students of different genders. Boys and girls may also communicate differently, and it is good for them to have role models from their own gender. In an ideal situation, where there are two Adult Assistant there would be one man and one woman. An all boy group should try to have at least one male adult, and likewise a group of girls should aim for at least one woman Assistant.



MODULE 7

BUILDING ADULT SUPPORT TEAMS

AIM

To assist dioceses to establish new Adult Support Teams or to review the effectiveness of their current structure.

INTRODUCTION: GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Distribute Effective Adult Support Teams on page – and ask the group to read the case study. Ask:
 - What are the strengths of this model?
 - Are there any weaknesses?

SEE

2. What structures currently exists for adults in your diocese?
3. How does this structure or the lack of structure affect YCS?
4. What are the areas for improvement?

JUDGE

5. Read the section on the handout that refers to Starting an Adult Support Team. Do you think that this structure is possible in your diocese?
6. Read the following passage from scripture:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:4-13 7)
7. Ask: What does this passage say to you about establishing an Adult Support Team?
8. Teamwork is a vital part of life in the body of Christ. God's work involves many different individuals with a variety of gifts, talents and abilities. Establishing an Adult Support is very important to help work together to express the fullness of Christ working in the YCS.

ACT

8. What is your long term goal for structures for Adult Assistants in the diocese?
9. What actions need to occur for this to happen?
10. Plan your actions, considering the following:
 - Who will do it?
 - When will it be done? Set a timeframe
 - How will it be done?
 - Who else can you involve?

PRAYER

Invite everyone to reflect silently on what was discussed today and on our YCS Groups. Encourage people to offer their own prayers and intentions before saying YCS Prayer together (page 30).

EFFECTIVE ADULT SUPPORT TEAMS

A CASE STUDY

In Melbourne Adult Assistants meet regularly at a gathering organised by an experienced chaplain and a former worker for YCS. These gatherings happen every 2 months and are open to all the adults who support YCS in Melbourne Archdiocese. This includes current Adult Assistants to local groups, former YCS leaders and workers and adults who are interested in getting involved.

Each meeting takes place over a meal. It includes a formation session that an experienced adult runs to help Assistants deepen their own understanding of YCS, and then an update and review of how things are going in the groups.

Having a coordinated approach to adult support has made a big difference to Melbourne YCS. When the gatherings began, for a while it looked like a meeting of Adult Assistants without any groups, but putting time into forming and strengthening this team turned out to be really worthwhile in the long-run. It has provided a forum for new ideas about how to move YCS forward. It was out of these meetings that adults came up with the idea of applying to the Archdiocesan Church for funding for a YCS worker, an initiative that has helped the movement to grow a lot. It has also provided valuable support to the young national and diocesan workers that have worked in Melbourne for YCS.

SUGGESTED MODEL FOR AN ADULT SUPPORT TEAM

An Adult Support Team (AST) is a group of Adults who work to support the YCS in the diocese and consist of a combination of local group Adult Assistants and other Adults.

The AST aims to:

1. Be a support network for the adults (both Adult Assistants and Chaplains) in local groups.
2. Provide formation opportunities for these adults.
3. Assist with medium-long term co-ordination tasks if a student Co-ordination Team is not set up and encourage a student Coordination team to take place.
4. Once a student Coordination Team is established the Diocesan Adult Assistant needs to attend meetings and be a link to the Adult Support Team.

In setting up the team it is important to identify adults who could fill the positions necessary for the running of this team – ie Chairperson, Treasurer, Diocesan Adult Assistant. This team can be a good opportunity to involve past members in if they are available, particularly those that have particular skills, but who may not be available for a local group.

A representative from the Diocesan Catholic Youth Ministry agency and the Catholic Education Office of the diocese should be invited to sit on the team. They may not want to play an active role (although if they do this is good) however it is positive to have them there during meetings to ensure that the direction of YCS in the diocese is cohesively planned in the context of the general diocesan direction. In some diocese it may be appropriate to ask a Bishop to also be part of the team.

As a guide the team should meet every 6 weeks. In starting the team YCS and the diocese will need to identify and invite people to fill the key roles on the team. They will need to meet to work out how to get the team started, some suggestions include:

- Identifying possible members.
- Providing a team role description and invitation to potential members.
- Holding an information night.
- Then they can begin meeting as a team.

Each team meeting should include:

- A chance for discussion of how things are going in local groups, particularly to support each others struggles, and to celebrate their successes.
- Looking at a particular element of YCS formation that will assist the adults in their roles.
- Planning for the YCS in the diocese – this could be anything from how to support an upcoming event, through to how to secure funding for a paid worker.

In some rural and regional diocese it may be necessary to have two or more regionally based Adult Support Teams. These teams meet individually every 6 weeks and then gather together once a term. Some other initiatives that could possibly be built into an AST structure, depending on the diocesan situation are:

- Holding an overnight retreat for the team once a term or once a semester. This would help develop relationships and
- Having an “Events Team” connected to the AST. This would help the Diocese when planning camps, gatherings, stalls, etc

In between meetings you can encourage contact between Adult Assistants via email, phone calls, etc. Student and worker groups have been using monthly “contact days”. These allow regular contact to be maintained without much pressure.

Adult Assistants may also want the chance to meet in a social or casual way without it being a formal meeting. This will give them the chance to simply relax and get to know other people from YCS. Be sure this is in balance with how many meetings you are holding, for example, consider holding two meetings and a casual gathering each term.

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In some rural and regional diocese it may be necessary to have two or more regionally based Adult Support Teams. For example in Canberra/Goulburn Archdiocese there is a 'Coastal AST' and a 'Central and Western AST'. These teams meet individually every 6 weeks and then gather together once a term. Some other initiatives that could possibly be built into an AST structure, depending on the diocesan situation are:

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YCS PRAYER

Dear Jesus,

Please fill us with your spirit of love.

Help us to SEE the world as you do,

To JUDGE with your heart, and to ACT with

The strength and courage you have shown us

As we work to transform our world

Amen



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