



Standards & Guidelines for professionals

INTRODUCTION

A team was established in March of 2008 to begin work on the first goal of the Network's new vision. That team has created a tremendous framework for our standards and guidelines. This first phase focuses on expected competencies. The Network is committed to offering quality trainings and to encouraging a high standard of excellence for professional youth and family ministry leaders. In determining what trainings to offer, it became apparent that a list of standards was needed. By developing a guide of what we believe to be key competencies, it is the hope of the Network to begin to offer or highlight these trainings for its members. Having a set of standards allows us to rank order the free trainings we will be offering online to Network members. Our hope is that by developing the standards and guidelines of the Network, we will make available those courses and trainings necessary for completion of Goal #1. Setting standards and guidelines invokes professionalism. These guidelines are not meant to deter anyone from entering, remaining in or considering youth and family ministry. Exactly the opposite is true. Our focus here is on a full-time paid position, however, our goal is to offer these courses online for everyone, part-time, full-time, volunteer, interested bystander – to participate and grow. Other professions set significant benchmarks for their professions. That does not mean that in order to be a good accountant you have to be a CPA, however, if you choose to follow the professional guidelines set forth to be a Certified Public Accountant, that designation follows. We are not at the point of such a certification but I use that as an example. We may at some point in the future come up with standards and guidelines for volunteers, etc.

THE COMPETENCIES:

It is our expectation that an adult who works with youth would be able to demonstrate competency in the following areas:

- I. Theological Thought and Reflection

- II. Youth and Family Proficiencies

- III. Administrative Efficiencies

- IV. Strategic Planning

- V. Professional Growth Component

- V. Degree (applicable to those who are professionals in youth and family ministry)

I. THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT AND REFLECTION

Competency can be demonstrated by either:

An understanding of these four areas:

- Biblical studies (both Old and New Testaments)
- Lutheran theology and confessional writing
- Lutheran church history (in particular in our North American context)
- systematic theology

Or

- Being rostered in the ELCA as an associate in ministry, a pastor, a deaconess or a diaconal minister

II. YOUTH AND FAMILY PROFICIENCIES

All of these areas are vital to effective youth and family ministries. However, we believe that competency should be able to be demonstrated in at least 6 of these 12 categories, with progress being made towards competency in the other areas:

1. Human and faith development of children and youth, family systems
2. Christian education ministry
3. Retreat/outdoor ministry development
4. Inter-generational ministry
5. Gifts assessment
6. Marking faith and life transitions
7. Youth leadership development
8. Spiritual and faith practices including worship, Bible study and prayer
9. Campus Ministry
10. Pastoral care including counseling, and conflict resolution
11. Mission/servant events and cross cultural training
12. Congregational awareness of youth and family ministries

III. ADMINISTRATIVE PROFICIENCIES

We believe that it is vital for adults working with youth to be able to demonstrate competency in both these categories:

1. Safe Haven Management

- Initiating best practices that keep young people, your staff your volunteers and you safe.
- Developing and implementing policies and programs that are legally sound for your state.
- Sustaining screening, training, policy development, and supervision.
- Excellent, appropriate, and available referrals for professional help for youth and families.

2. Administration

- Crisis Management: Working with youth and families in crisis.
- Volunteer recruitment, training and evaluation
- Finances: fundraising and budgeting

IV. STRATEGIC PLANNING

Being able to develop a congregational environment where youth can flourish requires planning. We believe that strategic planning is an intrinsic part of effective youth and family ministry. Skills in the following areas are crucial.

- Developing a vision
- Casting a vision
- Developing desired outcomes
- Communication skills including print, media, internet, etc.
- Team Leadership
- Evaluation

V. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH COMPONENT

Personal and professional growth is vital to the development of the individual in ministry. We believe that this growth happens within the framework of personal renewal, continuing education, and networking and support. We believe that these things are critical to personal and professional growth.

- Maintaining annual membership in the ELCA Youth Ministry Network.
- Participating in at least one ELCA YM Network Extravaganza or other ELCA Network event every three years.
- Participating in at least 20 contact hours of quality continuing education annually.
- Coaching or mentoring relationships
- Networking with other Y&F ministry professionals
- Participation in local, synodical, regional, and churchwide continuing education and networking events.

V. DEGREE (applicable to those who are professionals in youth and family ministry)

The ELCA Youth Ministry Network encourages formal education. Individuals who feel called to youth and family ministry professionally should have received a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree in a field appropriate to the designated field of specialization is required..

DEVELOPMENT OF A WAIVER SYSTEM

We recognize that congregational youth and family ministry is not a “one size fits all” vocation. Individuals will come to this ministry with a variety of gifts, experiences and skills. Knowing this, we recognize that as our standards and guidelines develop, and as a system is put into place to recognize those who have met the Network’s standards and guidelines, a system of waivers for providing flexibility will need to be established. The goal of setting a high standard of excellence is intended not to close doors for people, but rather is to guide people into becoming the best possible youth ministers as possible, in the name of Jesus Christ.

NEXT STEPS

Phase II of initiating this goal will involve:

- Receiving feedback on this proposal and editing these standards
- Discussion around creating a system for communicating these standards across the church
- Discerning a system for tracking these standards and guidelines for individuals
- Establishing ways to demonstrate and measure competencies.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES TEAM:

Tammy Jones West, AIM; Team Leader

Eric Griggs

Jo Mueller, AIM

Chris Turner

Beth Smallbeck

Julie Miller

Rev. Scott Searl

Rev. Rick Schowalter