

2022 Recommendations for Staff Positions Related to Youth Ministry: Supporting Longevity of Lay and Clergy Serving Adolescent Life Stages

The Foundation

Youth and their families deserve excellence in youth ministry through the congregations and communities of The United Methodist Church at every level that we serve, including the local church, districts, conferences, jurisdictions, and general board and agencies. We desire that youth come to be committed, maturing disciples of Jesus Christ through the youth ministry opportunities the church organizes. We celebrate that our churches are engaged in youth ministry, being faithful to God's call. We thank you for that which you already do to love and shepherd the youth whom God places in your life and ministry. We also call you to intentionally reflect upon youth ministry as an integral part of the whole church and how you can positively affect youth ministry within your sphere of influence.

We understand adolescence as a critical developmental period in a young person's life. Since its identification as a life stage in 1904 (credit to G. Stanley Hall), the definition and age range of adolescence has continued to expand. This expansion is based upon physiological, cultural, and technological developments over the last century-plus. In addition to a period of time when a person's physical body matures into adulthood, adolescence is a time for an individual to address questions of identity, belonging, and purpose ([Growing Young, 2016, Chapter 3, by Mulder, Powell, Griffin](#)). Adolescence is a pivotal time for exploring spirituality. A majority of teens share the same faith as their parents, and research studies over the course of the past twenty years remain consistent in their findings. The substantial majority of people who accept Jesus Christ as their savior or who actively choose the Christian faith do so before reaching their eighteenth birthday. This decision can lead to a lifetime of discipleship and increases the likelihood that individuals will stay connected to a faith community as they age, yet many children leave their faith community and the church behind when they reach the young-adult years. **The call of churches to be in significant ministry with young people is clear and vital. The church must take youth ministry seriously and serve diligently in this mission field.**

Long-term impact youth ministry is built on a foundation of meaningful relationships. The effectiveness of relational models of ministry have been well-documented. These models lend themselves well to the creation of intentional discipleship opportunities, where youth ministry staff persons and other mentors build relationships with youth that point to Jesus Christ. Youth need caring adults who will journey with them and guide them in following Jesus. For relational ministry to be most effective, longevity in relationship is critical. Thus, a youth ministry staff person's (or volunteer organizer's) length of tenure is critical to effective youth ministry, adding to the stability of any intentional discipleship system set forth by church leadership.

We lament the too-frequent turnover of youth ministry staff in the churches as well misinformation and assumptions that often accompany this calling. Very little verifiable data is compiled to accurately reflect the average length of tenure for a youth-ministry staff person. Eighteen months is a commonly cited average, with other estimates ranging between nine months to three years. In reality, a mixture of longer-term and well-seasoned veterans serve alongside newer youth ministry staff in nearly every community. This makes generalizations about tenure difficult to accurately gauge using the language of averages, especially given the dynamic mixture of full-time, part-time, bivocational, and volunteer leaders in charge of youth ministries. Youth ministry is a calling, just like calls to other areas of ministry that help organize the life of the church. While youth and their families are resilient, they are also

susceptible to the harm done by the short-term or poorly established relationships with youth ministry staff that occur when those staff or volunteer positions feel like revolving doors. Youth and their families also experience less than fulfilling church experiences when the scope of ministry with youth is not clearly defined within a church's intergenerational ministry structure.

The Call to Action

Several factors contribute to a less than desirable tenure for youth ministry staff and volunteers. Youth ministry staff persons most often cite these factors: inadequate salary/benefits, unrealistic job expectations, being overworked, high stress, poor pastor-staff relations, low status, burn-out, a lack of training, and a lack of support. From 2020 into 2021, the factors have been magnified by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, organizations besides churches have been experiencing the recently tagged "Great Resignation." Churches are competing with other businesses for passionate and effective employees. Employers are competing for workers because there are far more open job slots than there are applicants, and workers are smart enough to recognize that. This dynamic makes it imperative for churches to critically review the paid staff positions that they offer, making the position itself, the working culture, and the compensation and benefits packages attractive.

One of our collective observations is that youth ministry staff and volunteers who are treated as staff are not commonly offered compensation that provides a living wage. Additionally, while often at, or near, living-wage levels, compensation packages are affected by experience, education level, race, gender, and geography. We encourage churches to offer compensation and benefits that adequately allow youth ministry leaders to live in and be part of the community that they are serving. Failing to provide compensation that allows youth ministers to live in the community in which they serve creates an unnecessary boundary to ministry rooted in relationship.

We encourage churches to provide means for supporting and training youth ministry staff and volunteers. We encourage churches to create opportunities for ministry team training, where pastors and volunteers serving leadership roles can learn together and build their mission and vision of ministry cohesively.

From our collective experiences, we offer the following recommendations for a church staffing (hiring, maintaining, and terminating) a youth ministry position. We also offer suggestions for how youth ministry staff can build relationships with advocates for their ministry.

Screening and Hiring

Screening Process

- Each church should have a screening process for potential youth ministry staff persons and volunteers serving staff roles. The screening process should include, among other things, a criminal background check and child maltreatment check for the person to be hired. See *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth* by Joy Thornburg Melton (Discipleship Resources, 2008), <https://bookstore.upperroom.org/Products/DR543/safe-sanctuaries.aspx>. This screening process should be in harmony with the abuse-prevention and risk-reduction policies in place at the local church as outlined in this article, "Safe Sanctuaries: A Comprehensive Abuse Prevention Policy Development Guide,"

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/safe-sanctuaries-a-comprehensive-abuse-prevention-policy-development-guide>.

- Youth ministry staff should have knowledge of and training in safe practices concerning children and youth. If this is a gap discovered in the hiring process, a plan should be created to train the potential staff person as soon as possible. A church should be mindful of boundaries and guidelines when hiring any staff person, especially if considering a current congregation member and/or a person related to a current staff person.
- Many conferences have relationships with partners or online platforms like [Ministry Safe](#), [Safe Gatherings](#), or [Trak-1 \(PeopleFacts\)](#) to simplify background checks and training to meet the guidelines and framework set in Safe Sanctuaries policies. Each church should connect with its annual conference to see what partnerships are already in place to support efforts to identify candidates with clear background checks.
- A church should connect with annual conference level leadership during the search process. Connectional staff may have resources to help a church accurately determine its need for staffing, prepare a church to set a new youth ministry staff person up for success, and know of potential candidates already within the conference. A church should also inform the annual conference leader once it has made a hire. Doing so will help engage the new staff person in the connectional system for resource and support. A working relationship with district and conference leadership can also maintain the overall health of youth ministry in the connection as churches network to elevate worthy candidates into paid positions and new opportunities. Likewise, if there are candidates who have had difficult times at other churches in the area, this allows church leadership the chance to be aware of previous experiences.

Interviews

- The length of the interview process should match the commitment level of the position. Full-time, paid youth ministry positions can expect a more rigorous application and interview process than part-time or volunteer positions.
- Churches are encouraged to screen applications and interview only those applicants whose skills and experience match the needs that the church has identified. Churches should make their hiring requirements realistic in terms of training and experience levels. In general, for a full-time youth ministry position, a church can reasonably expect a successful candidate to have a bachelor's degree and experience with between six months to two years in different ministry, volunteer, or leadership areas. The church may also ask for certifications to be preferred or attained upon hiring (such as a Certification in Youth Ministry). Churches can determine how to use a combination of education and experience in crafting their requirements. Keep in mind that many effective youth ministry leaders have non-traditional education backgrounds or experiences. Also, be aware that if a position requires advanced training (master's degree, certifications, etc.) or extensive experience (upwards of three to five years) that the salary and benefits should reflect those advanced requests. Also be aware of

“required” versus “preferred” language when describing qualifications.

- Churches are encouraged to engage multiple levels of leadership in interviews, making sure to include a committed parent and a committed youth serving in a leadership position in the process.
- Applicants are encouraged to read job postings and position descriptions and consider themselves as a match before they begin the application and interview process. Applicants should come to the interview prepared with questions to ask the interview team, including but not limited to questions like:
 - What about this church makes you excited about ministry here? Why are you a part of this community?
 - Why is this position open? What support and training opportunities will I have in my first six months?
 - Are there any concerns with my resume or qualifications? Is there anything that you would like to discuss from the materials I submitted before this interview?
 - Can you describe what you expect a typical day's/week's/month's schedule to look like for this position?
 - What are some of your favorite things about this church and its people?
 - What does “success” in youth ministry look like to this group?
 - What is a piece of advice you would give me if you were in my shoes?
 - What does discipleship and faith formation look like in this congregation?

Good for all applicants, but particularly for internal candidates or existing volunteers moving into a larger leadership role:

- In what ways do you see this changing my relationship with church staff? With parents? With youth?
 - How will you support my future spiritual and professional growth as I take this next step in leadership for our church?
 - What do I need to know about our church to make youth ministry successful that I may not already know?
- Interview teams should spend time creating interview questions that will help the team evaluate the fit of a candidate for the church in addition to the applicant's skills, gifts, and passions. The following questions may be a helpful place for an interview team to begin:
 - What Methodist or Wesleyan teachings have influenced your own discipleship?
 - The mission of the United Methodist Church is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” What does this mean to you? How would this look in your expression of youth ministry if you were to be hired?
 - How would you define discipleship?
 - The mission, vision, values of our church are (fill in the blank). How could these statements be expressed through youth ministry?
 - What things energize and excite you about youth ministry? What parts of the job description that look life-giving to you?

- What things challenge you in youth ministry? Are there parts of the job description that look difficult?
- Are there things that you're uncertain or unsure of about this position?
- Tell us about your calling and faith journey. What are some of the most formational parts of your story?
- Why is youth ministry important to the overall life of a congregation?

Clergy

- When a clergy person is selected, the appointment process should be followed as set forth in the appropriate sections of *The Book of Discipline*.

Compensation

- Youth ministry staff persons should be compensated a living wage. A useful tool may be this calculator: <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>.
- The compensation package offered should not change based on the staff person's gender, race, or ethnic background nor their marriedness, singleness, or family situation with or without dependents.
- One starting point in determining a youth ministry salary for a full-time position is to consider the public-school teachers' pay scale in your area. Please note that public school teacher pay usually covers a ten-month period. Thus, salary for the youth ministry position should be adjusted to cover the full year. A teacher's compensation package also includes benefits such as access to healthcare, insurance, and time off for vacation as well as professional development. We believe this is a minimum level and encourage our churches to pay more, recognizing the value of youth ministry and considering the local economy and the resources of the local church.
- Other factors to consider are the person's level of education and experience. Experience in youth ministry is valuable, as are education and professional certifications. Advanced degrees and certifications should be recognized with compensation on the higher end of your church's pay scale.
- Please note that standards of living and costs of living can vary widely throughout different communities. Be prepared to offer salary ranges that allow individuals to live in the community in which they are serving. If the individual hired is ordained, the salary will need to be in line with the equitable compensation that is required for ordained persons by *Book of Discipline 2016*, paragraphs 331.10.b and 342.1 (2004 par. 331.14.b and 342.1). This salary amount can be found in the conference *Journal or Book of Reports* for the current year.
- If your church finds that it cannot adequately pay or offer benefits to a full-time paid youth staff at a living wage or above, you have several options. Consider looking across ministry needs and creating a hybrid position that includes youth ministry responsibilities in addition to other ministry areas. Many churches have leaned into a "discipleship

director," "faith formation," or "leadership development" type of role to create a full-time position. Likewise, many churches have embraced a "next generation" or a family ministry model that incorporates a holistic approach to ministry, staff compensation, and multiple generations of young people.

- For hiring part-time, divide the full-time amount by the number of hours you intend to incorporate into the job. For more details, see "Hours" section below. Churches and individuals should pay particular attention to federal and state employment laws that define and affect hourly employment, salaried or exempt staff positions, and contracted employees.
- When creating or hiring for a part-time position, consider that the youth ministry responsibilities and hours will need to be increasingly flexible for the other jobs, gigs, or responsibilities that an employee may have outside the church. Be honest and transparent in the number of hours required of a part-time staff person and set that person up for success by encouraging good boundaries and healthy scheduling.
- Merit increases in salary should be provided. This can be considered at any time, and especially during the recommended annual review process outlined later in this document.
- Cost of living adjustments should be made to salaries. These COL adjustments should be in addition to increases based on merit.
- By definition, volunteers serving staff roles are not compensated. Even so, churches should recognize their contributions and look for opportunities to offer appropriate gifts. Volunteers should also have access to some of the benefits outlined in the next section.

Benefits

- Benefits for lay staff employees, regardless of compensation status, should include, but are not limited to professional expenses of doing youth ministry (e.g., mileage reimbursement, fees to attend student events such as athletics and theater productions, etc.), continuing education training, "adequate health and life insurance, and severance pay," as well as retirement benefits. See *Book of Discipline 2016*, paragraph 258.2.g (8) (12) and (16).
- Benefits for lay staff employees, regardless of compensation status, should also include adequate vacation and sick leave time with pay. Number of years of experience and time earned at previous places of employment should be considered. Personal days should also be considered in addition to other types of paid time off.
- Churches and individuals may negotiate benefits with little to no financial impact, including but not limited to: flexible work hours, additional time off following holidays or busy ministry seasons, access to corporate discounts for mobile phones, internet access, or other subscriptions related to doing youth ministry, retirement matching,

mentoring programs, access to counseling, tuition assistance, or free or discounted childcare. Churches can provide childcare or a stipend to pay for childcare.

- Applicants should consider the balance of financial compensation and benefits in the overall hiring package as part of their decision making.
- Volunteer applicants may be offered access to non-monetary benefits. These applicants may need to be prepared to negotiate for access.

Job Description

- An effective job description should outline specific expectations of the youth ministry staff, while leaving flexibility to create a ministry that lives into the mission, vision, and values of the church. Please refer to the “Hours” section for some basic recommendations for job description expectations.
- Rather than listing specific programs or weekly activities, we recommend listing behavioral expectations that will inspire discipleship and spiritual growth for all participants in youth ministry. As previously noted, relationships should be the foundation of youth ministry...not programs. Use relational language.
- A detailed written job description should be provided by the staff-parish relations committee. See *Book of Discipline 2016*, paragraphs 256.3 and 258.2.g (7) The job description should be kept on file with the church’s administrative files, and a copy should be provided and available to the staff person.
- A job description should include reasonable expectations and be evaluated annually by both the youth ministry staff person and supervisor. Any changes in the job description should be discussed and agreed upon by both the youth ministry staff person and supervisor prior to any changes being made.
- Key skills often listed include: active listening, public speaking, decision making, instructional, and leadership skills; creativity, enthusiasm, and intermediate to advanced technological and communication skills.
- Churches can determine the theological qualifications required for youth ministry in their setting. We recommend opportunities through United Methodist seminaries and training through conference staff or general agencies for all youth ministry staff to gain basic knowledge regarding Methodist and Wesleyan theology, as well as a cursory knowledge of church structure and Methodist heritage.
- An applicant should expect to see, at minimum, the following items on a job description:
 - Name and contact information of church and hiring process coordinator
 - Job title and preparation date of job description
 - Job status (full-time, salaried, exempt, part-time, hourly, contract)
 - Benefits

- Purpose of the position, outlining high-level expectations that support the vision and mission of the church. Answer the question, “Why does our church have this position in the first place?”
 - Staff and supervision, outlining supervisor, expected networking and support elements in the structure of the church
 - Ministry focus, outlining the primary task and most important expectations of the position. Use language from the *United Methodist Guidelines for Youth Ministry*. Answer the question, “What is this position?”
 - Responsibilities, a specific though not exhaustive list of expected behaviors that will create a conducive atmosphere for youth ministry and discipleship. Answer the questions, “How do we expect this person to fulfill the position we have created?” and “Are these expectations reasonable and measurable?”
- Qualifications, Requirements, and Giftedness
 - Minimum and preferred education levels
 - Notes about certifications or expectations of completing certifications upon hiring within a certain timeframe.
 - Skills, aptitudes, or spiritual gifts that may be helpful for the successful candidate
 - *Listing the compensation level or a range for compensation is not required but is helpful in limiting applications to those who will probably accept a position within that range. If your church posts a job description where the level of expectation and responsibility does not meet the compensation level, your church may not receive many applications. In that case, your church leadership will need to revisit either compensation or the job expectations, so that they appropriately match. Increased levels of expectation and responsibility should come with appropriate increases in compensation.

Hours

- A church’s expectation of the number of hours that the youth ministry staff person will work should be clearly stated. That number of hours should also be recorded by the staff person, with church leadership encouraging the individual to work within that time boundary.
- It should be understood by both the church and the youth ministry staff person that ministry hours are defined as time spent with youth including, but not limited to, overnight events and attending programs and events to support a youth and/or the family. Communication with youth, families, and other youth ministry constituents or church members outside of face-to-face meetings, such as phone calls, messaging, video chats, etc. should be counted as ministry hours.
- While the youth ministry staff person may voluntarily work more hours than the stated expectation, the church should not expect more hours. Churches and staff need to be careful in setting these boundaries and offering additional compensation or benefits. State and federal laws may limit how much additional time an hourly staff person can give to accomplish the job. A person should be fairly compensated for meeting the requirements of the job.

- While there will be some days and weeks of the year that require more than the “normal hours,” consideration should be given to allow the youth ministry staff person to comp that time (compensatory time) with time off at other points or receive additional compensation within the guidelines set by employment law.
- Flexibility in keeping hours is important in youth ministry. Good youth ministry goes to the youth and families where they are (e.g., presence at a soccer game or a drama performance is youth ministry), rather than expecting staff to always come to the church building to accomplish ministry. Because the nature of youth ministry does not lend itself to “normal business hours,” consideration of this factor should be taken into account when considering whether and how many “office hours” will be maintained by the youth ministry staff person. With flexible office and ministry hours, the youth ministry staff person should be willing to account for the way her/his time is spent in a format agreed upon by both the church and the staff person.
- In the cases of both volunteer and paid youth ministry staff, the church should encourage self-care and encourage regular Sabbath times.

Hourly Responsibility Recommendations

- For every hour of in-person programming offered, add thirty minutes before and thirty minutes after for set-up and clean-up time. Also include at least one hour of planning time for each hour of presentation time. (i.e.: a traditional Sunday evening youth group is on the weekly schedule from 6-7 p.m. To plan and execute that one hour gathering actually takes at least three hours of staff time: one hour to plan, thirty minutes to set up, one hour to do the gathering, and thirty minutes to clean up.)
- Attending youth events (sports, performing arts, competitions, etc.) should include travel time to and from the event as well as the event itself.
- Events that are not during normal working hours or that require effort that would normally be considered overtime need special attention. (Lock-Ins, retreats, short-term mission trips, etc.) Churches should include the benefits of recovery time from these “above and beyond” work realities.

Guidelines for paid hour levels

- Each church should research their context and community ultimately to determine the expectations for their staff. A volunteer, unpaid ministry leader should not have the same expectations placed upon him/her as a paid staff person. The following guidelines simply outline traditional items that frequently appear on job descriptions that could realistically be accomplished in the paid hours given. This is not an exhaustive or complete list.
- 10 hours per week
 - Up to 1-2 youth meetings per week
 - Some administration and communication with parents and youth
 - Some connection with district or annual conference

- Limited to no involvement with staff or church meetings
 - Limited churchwide planning
 - No or very rare special events
 - Limited professional development time
 - Very limited availability to connect with the surrounding community and meet community needs
- 20 hours per week
 - Up to 2-3 youth meetings per week
 - Some administration and communication with parents and youth
 - Some connection with district or annual conference
 - Limited involvement in staff or church meetings
 - Some leadership and coordination of youth leadership and volunteers
 - Some oversight of Safe Sanctuaries or abuse-prevention policy
 - Infrequent special events (fundraisers, retreats, service opportunities, etc.)
 - Some churchwide planning
 - Infrequent presence in worship or other church gatherings
 - Some professional development time
 - Limited ability to connect with the community and meet community needs
 - 30 hours per week
 - Up to 4 youth meetings per week
 - Frequent administration and communication with parents and youth
 - Frequent connection with district or annual conference
 - Expected involvement with staff and church meetings
 - Coordination of leadership and volunteers serving youth ministry
 - Some oversight of Safe Sanctuaries or abuse-prevention policy
 - Organization, sometimes attendance, at regularly spaced special events
 - Participation in churchwide planning
 - Regular presence and participation in worship and other church gatherings
 - Some professional development time
 - Some ability to connect with the community and meet community needs
 - Some ability to outline and vision strategic youth ministry
 - Limited ability to manage other part-time staff
 - 40+ hours per week
 - Up to 5 youth meetings per week, potential coordination of more
 - Administration and communication with parents and youth
 - Frequent connection with district or annual conference
 - Expected involvement with staff and church meetings
 - Coordination of leadership and volunteers serving youth ministry
 - Oversight, solo or shared, of Safe Sanctuaries or abuse-prevention policy
 - Organization and attendance at regularly spaced special events
 - Participation in churchwide planning
 - Presence and participation in worship and other church gatherings
 - Professional development time

- Ability to connect with the community and meet community needs
- Ability to outline and vision strategic youth ministry
- Expectation of involvement and collaboration with other ministry areas
- Ability to manage other staff, part- or full-time

Wesleyan Theology and Methodist Doctrine

- Youth ministry staff should be familiar with Wesleyan theology and basic United Methodist doctrine or be willing to learn it. If training is needed, it could be provided under the supervision of the pastor and/or using available denominational and conference youth ministry resources. As of the publication of this document (2022), [The Crash Courses in Youth Ministry](#) and other online learning options from Discipleship Ministries are a recommended place to start.
- Conference staff related to youth ministry, leadership development, and discipleship are available to discuss training options. In the case when training and education on Wesleyan theology and Methodist doctrine is expected, there should be a reasonable, predetermined amount of time for completion with evaluation by the youth ministry staff person's supervisor and/or pastor as the final component of said training.
- Youth ministry staff should apply Wesleyan theology and basic United Methodist doctrine in their teaching with youth. The ideas should also inform the overall approach to youth ministry. Staff should also work to become aware of the resources available to support their ministry and growth in the United Methodist connectional system including district, conference, jurisdictional, and general church levels.

Supervision and Retention

- Supervision
 - Youth ministry staff should have supervision that provides mutual trust, caring, encouragement, loyalty, and partnership.
 - Persons providing accountability for youth ministry staff should be clearly defined. Preferably, an organizational chart of the church's reporting structure is made available to the youth ministry staff person.
 - Supervising pastors are encouraged to treat the youth ministry staff as a ministry partner.
 - Youth ministry staff persons should have access to the staff-parish relations committee. Every staff person should be assigned a liaison to direct contact who serves on the staff-parish relations committee. See *Book of Discipline, 2016*, paragraph 258.2.e.
 - Yearly evaluations of the youth ministry staff person should be conducted by the staff-parish relations committee with input by the pastor and/or direct supervisor. See *Book of Discipline, 2016*, paragraph 258.2.g (4) (5).
 - Critique of a youth ministry staff person's job performance should be constructive and offered in a manner that will "build up" (Ephesians 4:12) rather than tear down the person. Speak "truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Bear one another in love (Ephesians 4:1). Restore one who has transgressed in a "spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1).

- In matters of supervision, live by the Spirit, demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Retention

- The following items have been identified as those that most frequently impact a person’s ability to remain on staff and grow in discipleship as a youth ministry staff person. These can also apply to those serving a staff function in a volunteer capacity.
- Soul Tending
 - Youth ministry staff should be expected and encouraged to nurture and maintain their own spiritual vitality and to honor and keep the Sabbath. Appropriate time off should be encouraged. Boundaries set by youth ministry staff persons should be encouraged, respected, and protected.
 - Churches should provide time and financial assistance for spiritual renewal events, as may serve the staffer’s spiritual growth. See *Book of Discipline*, 2016, paragraph 258.2.g (8).
 - Staff and volunteers are encouraged to regularly engage in spiritual practices that maintain and grow their personal faith-life and discipleship.
 - Soul-tending practices should be shared with a supervisor or staff-parish relations to help a staff person with accountability and engagement
- Family Health
 - Youth ministry staff should be expected, encouraged, and protected to nurture their families. Churches should be considerate of providing flexible scheduling to provide some family time and allowing the staff person to take time off to be with family. See *Book of Discipline*, 2016, paragraph 258.2.g (16).
 - Single or younger youth ministry staff also have family and social lives. Appropriate ministry and work boundaries and the encouragement to socialize and care for their family members and friend groups is recommended.
 - A youth ministry worker’s spouse or partner is not an extension of the youth ministry worker. A partner or spouse may or may not be present in ministry activities, and “helping out” should not be a required expectation of that partner. Likewise, the youth ministry worker should not work less if it is discovered that the worker’s partner is doing some of the expected work of the youth worker.
- Training
 - Youth ministry staff should be expected to participate in continuing education and training. The staff person and pastor or staff-parish relations can determine appropriate opportunities to engage, learn, and grow.

- These opportunities should be a mix of practical and theological training that will better equip the staff person to lead t ministry in the context of the congregation and community in which the person serves.
- Churches should provide financial resources for youth ministry staff to receive continuing education and training in youth ministry.
- Participation in such training should be considered part of the job and “on the clock.” See *Book of Discipline, 2016*, paragraph 258.2.g (8).
- Networking
 - Youth ministry staff should be expected to be involved in networking groups with youth ministry peers, especially district, conference, and other United Methodist networking groups. These groups can meet in-person or use technology for virtual connection. Ecumenical support networks can also be very valuable, as can attendance at youth ministry conferences.
 - A church should provide financial resources for youth ministry staff to participate in such networking opportunities.
 - Participation in such networking opportunities should be considered part of the job and “on the clock.”
- Communication
 - Mentorship and relationships with the pastor, pastoral team, lay leader, or church committee members leads to better connections with youth ministry staff. Churches are encouraged to provide time and opportunities for youth ministry staff to communicate and share their needs and experiences with trusted mentors within the congregation or their network of support.
 - Churches and youth ministry staff should work together to determine the most effective platforms for communication with youth and parents, especially given the speed at which technology and trends change. Guidelines for boundaries between accounts and available times can be helpful for staff.
- Compensation
 - Transparency about compensation levels and possibilities of cost of living, merit-based, or church growth-based increases are always appreciated. Echoing earlier statements, earning at least a living wage is important as is the possibility of growing in compensation for longevity in youth ministry.
 - Several annual reports on compensation levels are available from sources like the Youth Cartel, Group, and YouthMinistry.com. Church leaders should be aware of these reports and work to compensate their staff who meet or exceed the averages reported in these studies using Cost of Living formulas as well as other demographic information.
 - Expectations for reimbursement for items purchased using personal funds should be clearly understood by the youth worker and the church, including the approval process for necessary supplies and expenses. We recommend that a church reimburse necessary ministry items, travel, and education within a church’s budget. A church should have a clear purchase requisition/order process that is clear to the youth worker and to the church finance committee. If a youth worker purchases items for ministry that are not

reimbursable, that youth worker should retain records and documentation for inclusion on tax files for that calendar year.

- In church settings where a youth worker is bivocational, the church should recognize and help the youth worker set clear expectations for how paid work outside of the church compliments and enhances the worker's ability to do ministry.
- Advocacy
 - Youth ministry staff should be encouraged to advocate for themselves and their needs by:
 - Keeping a list of challenges faced in ministry and how they have met or not addressed those challenges
 - Learning about support structures that exist for peers in ministry
 - Tracking their own time and measuring it against expectations
 - Maintaining consistent goals and language so they work to meet the requirements of the job.
 - Identifying advocates within volunteer, parent, staff-parish committee, and other church committees that can speak to the needs of the staff person and the youth ministry.
 - Staff-parish committee members (or designated individuals) should act as advocates on behalf of youth staff by:
 - Attending and participating in youth ministry events regularly enough to understand the context of the ministry, to become aware of the challenges and opportunities present, and to form relationships with the youth staff.
 - Meeting quarterly (or more frequently) with youth staff to listen to the needs, struggles, and triumphs.
 - Looking for complimentary opportunities with other ministry areas and supporting whole-church discipleship efforts in youth ministry.
 - Being present at parent or organizational meetings to help families understand what they can do to support their youth staff.

Termination of Professional Relationship

- When the staffing relationship ends between the church and the youth ministry staff person, we encourage all persons involved to show grace in the process. The youth and adults of the church will observe and/or learn how the ending of the relationship is handled. Model God's grace in closing this professional relationship while allowing appropriate measures for closure for youth and their families.
- Personnel policies should include instructions for appeals in the event of contested termination. For persons not subject to episcopal appointment, see *Book of Discipline, 2016*, paragraph 258.2.g (12). This would include severance pay as a benefit for staff.
- For volunteers or paid staff who have made their place of employment their spiritual home, extra care may be needed in the transition.
- Special attention may be paid to social media accounts, and staff people are encouraged to provide reasonable and timely access to the administration of any accounts they managed as a staff person to a transition team.

- Churches are encouraged to have a transparent process for termination that helps youth, families, leadership, and staff find closure for soul tending.

Affirmed by Discipleship Ministries, Young People's Ministries
 Endorsed by:
 The Methodist Youth Ministry Alliance, <http://methodistyma.com>
 The Youth Worker Collective, <http://youthworkercollective.com>

Based upon the "Epworth Document of 2007/2008" from the Association of
 Conference Youth Staff of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United
 Methodist Church and the "Youth Ministry Staff Position
 Recommendations" from the Division on Young People's Ministries of 2014

Shows of Support for Previous Versions of this Document (2020, 2021)

Name, title, affiliation, location.

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