

## Interdependence and Accountability at Youth Conferences in Northern New England

Our 7<sup>th</sup> UU Principle states that our congregations covenant to affirm and promote  
*Respect for the interdependent web of life of which we are all a part.*

Youth conferences (cons) serve purposes such as

- ❖ Building community (youth-youth and youth-adult) within a context of our UU faith
- ❖ Providing leadership opportunities for youth
- ❖ Providing a safe environment to seek truth and meaning
- ❖ Multigenerational worships
- ❖ Exploring various topics within workshops

All of these empower youth.

How can you as a parent, a DRE, a youth, minister or a youth advisor contribute to making youth cons safe, meaningful, welcoming and spirit-filled?

### Parents

- Read the registration forms thoroughly, provide your signature indicating understanding and help your child remember to meet the registration deadline (**very important**)
- Make sure you know and trust the adult who is accompanying/driving your child to the con. This adult should be on the district's 'certified adult' list, which means references have been checked and a background check has been done.
- Support this adult advisor by contributing gas money and expressing your thanks with a card, cookies, etc.
- Volunteer to act as a youth advisor and/or to drive youth to the con--don't wait to be asked. Attend as a parent to get the 'feel' of the con.
- Read the district's safety policy on the district's website. Discuss it with your child.
- If you choose to let your minor child drive to a con (or be driven by minors), read and sign the permission form acknowledging this and send it to the district office.
- Attend youth advisor trainings to understand their role, expectations and responsibilities.
- Ask questions.
- Read the *Introduction to Youth Ministry* power point on the district website under Youth to appreciate the richness of youth ministry.

### DREs

- Hold a meeting with the youth group and discuss their role in preparing to attend cons. Establish a covenant on how you can mutually support each other. Make sure youth understand the behavior expectations for cons.
- Publicize cons by distributing registration forms to youth groups.
- Send potential youth advisors to trainings.
- Attend trainings for youth advisors or other youth-related trainings
- If it is your role to recruit youth advisors for cons, inform them of the need to be 'certified' by the district and tell them how to do that.
- Read the district's safety policy. Discuss it with your youth group.
- Debrief the con with your youth group after they return.
- Consider planning and hosting a youth con in your church.
- Educate parents and advisors about what to expect at youth cons.
- Read the *Introduction to Youth Ministry* power point on the district website under Youth to appreciate the richness of youth ministry.
- Support youth advisors by including their con expenses in your RE budget.

## Youth

- Meet with your youth group to discuss roles in preparing to attend con.
- Help publicize the con within your congregation.
- Read the registration form, share it with your parent/guardian, complete it (write legibly), and send it to the district office **before** the deadline (**very important**)
- Inform your DRE or youth advisor that you want to attend the con, who your advisor is (the adult responsible for you at the con), and who is driving you.
- Educate your congregation about the purposes and benefits of youth cons.
- Help DREs or others recruit youth advisors.
- Express your gratitude to the youth advisor by contributing gas money, sending a card, etc.
- Share your experiences of the con with your DRE or church youth group advisor. Express how it helped you to define your own spirituality or faith, how you reached out to others in safe and appropriate ways of welcoming, what you learned, and how you contributed to the vitality of the con. Or, what you might do to improve the experience of cons.

## Youth Advisors

- Be familiar with purposes of youth cons. If you don't know that, ask a youth, your DRE, a parent, or others who have more experience with cons.
- Go through the 'certification' process by completing application, providing references, and agreeing to a background check. If you've done that through your congregation you can ask them to release that information to the district office. (You'll need to complete a release of information form which is available at the district's website under Youth section. You can also email the district and request one to be sent to you.
- Read the district's safety policies on the district's website.
- Communicate and collaborate with your congregation's DRE concerning which youth you are taking/driving. Share any concerns.
- Communicate with youth to determine times of departure, expectations for behavior, needs or any other concerns.
- Read, complete and return your registration form **before** the deadline (**very important**)
- Understand expectations of youth advisors and the scope of your responsibilities at cons. Ask your DRE, a YAC (youth-adult committee) member, or district program consultant.
- Debrief the con experience with the youth you took and with the DRE.
- Read the *Introduction to Youth Ministry* power point on the district website under Youth to appreciate the richness of youth ministry

## Ministers

- Understand the purposes of youth cons.
- Read the district's safety policies.
- Express support for youth by meeting with them on a periodic basis. Ask them about their experiences at youth cons.
- Attend a youth con as a chaplain.
- Support youth advisors by expressing thanks and providing a listening presence.
- Preach about youth ministry.
- Welcome youth and stay for a while at a con held in your church.
- Advocate for budgetary support of costs connected with cons.
- Read the *Introduction to Youth Ministry* power point on the district website under Youth to appreciate the richness of youth ministry

