

Mission Trip Planning Guide

For use in developing offerings for adults or youth



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland – Office of Lifelong Faith Formation
May 2019 (revised)

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Mission Trip Guidelines and Best Practices

Jesus commissioned the Church to go out and proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matt 28). All the baptized share in this mission so are called “to be present in society as believing Christians who are able and willing to bear witness to their faith in words and deeds” (National Directory for Catechesis 20.6). Sharing in missionary service as a group, whether locally or at a distance from familiar surroundings, is a significant part of being Catholic.

A “mission trip” involves activity that includes travel outside the local area typically traveled by parishioners and at least one overnight. A focus on the goals of a mission trip will help determine the destination and site for service. The goals of a mission trip include (but are not limited to):

- Learning and experiencing both the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
- Learning and understanding the purpose and principles of Catholic social teaching.
- Fostering community among the trip participants which will help strengthen a sense of community in the parish or school.

A foremost reason why mission trips with minors should be solely based within the 48 contiguous United States is the goals of a mission trip can be accomplished in the U.S. with the added advantage of promoting good stewardship of limited resources.

General Considerations when planning a trip

- **Local parish and Catholic school decisions always have diocesan implications.** A blessing and challenge of this solidarity in Christ is that we rejoice together as well as share the risks.
- **The pastor needs to know that to which he is saying “yes” before approving any trip,** especially those that include minors.
 - The adult who came up with the idea of a mission trip should talk things through with the pastor and the diocesan coordinator of youth ministry before informing the youth.
 - If the trip was the idea of a youth, have the youth walk through the process with an adult. Again, this should be done prior to informing the rest of the group or garnering support for the trip.
 - Plan to talk with the local parish councils and organizations, especially the finance and pastoral councils, to ensure the trip aligns with the mission priorities of the faith community.
- There should be a **clear, Catholic educational and formational purpose** for a service trip.
- The geographical **location needs to be safe.** Check U.S. State Department (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>) and the Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) websites for travel alerts and advisories. Also, contact the mission office of the diocese where you will serve to verify local conditions.
- Any youth going on an **overnight trip must be at least high school age.**
 - Parish-sponsored trips may only travel to the contiguous 48 states.
 - If the trip includes both male & female youth, there must be both **male and female chaperones.**



Mission Trip Guidelines and Best Practices

- **At least two adults must travel with the group** and the participant ratio should be **no less than 1 adult per 7 youth.**
- If **asking for online donations, WeShare is to be used** because it meets both data safety and security standards.
- Send a sample of the **permission form** to the Office of Risk Management.
- Provide diocesan Risk Management Office (also Safe Environment office if trip includes minors) an outline of proposed trip: Names of adults, number of minors & ages, travel agent being used, transportation, set up of facility to visit, sleeping arrangements, security at facility.

Safe Environment Considerations

- Before choosing an organization or work site, inquire about their protocols and what their safe environment training looks like.
- Travel plans, itinerary, and copy of emergency contact information should be left with someone NOT traveling with the group as well as the group leader carrying the originals.
- Ensure each person traveling carries copies of insurance cards and prescriptions and communicates medical conditions that may need specific care in an emergency.
- Additionally, if trip involves minors.
 - **Parishes may not sponsor a mission trip that involves international travel for any participant under 18 years of age.**
 - All chaperones, adults and any youth 18 years or older must complete all Safe Environment requirements which include background checks and Protecting God's Children training.
 - If trip is out of state, have forms signed and notarized for travel.
 - Remind chaperones to be vigilant.

Appendices of Helpful References and Sample Forms

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Mission Trip Planning Worksheet

Directions

1. Consider three major areas as you plan this trip:
 - a) *Discipleship: Identify goals and Secure permission from local pastor/administrator*
 - b) *Stewardship: Ensure accountability and appropriate use of resources (goods, money, people's time and talents)*
 - c) *Logistics: Attend to details for fruitful, safe experience*
2. Respond to the questions and suggestions offered throughout the worksheet to design a quality trip that also follows best practices and diocesan guidelines. Questions in black boxes will help determine next steps. Text in **red** indicates important points of consultation with the pastor or other groups before continuing with planning.
3. Summarize the worksheet data on the one-sheet proposal at the end of the guide. Record the dates of significant discussions with parish and diocesan leadership to assist the pastor in discerning whether or not to approve the parish-sponsored trip.

Basic Information

Parish/School _____ Organizer Name _____

Purpose of Trip: _____

Preferred setting & activities for trip: _____

Preferred date(s): _____

Will the trip include overnights? _____ Yes _____ No
If yes, all participants must be of at least high-school age (14 or older).

Host Organization (Name, address, contact info): _____

Is the host organization Catholic? _____ Yes _____ No
If no, check to ensure approach and policies support Catholic teachings and practices.

Service Site(s): ___ In Maine ___ In U.S.A. ___ International

Will the trip involve international travel? _____ Yes _____ No
If yes, all participants must be adults (18 or older).

Is the geographical location safe? _____ Yes _____ No
Check the U.S. State Department and the Centers for Disease Control websites for travel alerts and advisories. If no, seek another plan. Monitor sites for status changes.

Have you talked with someone from the mission office of the diocese where the service is will take place to verify the conditions and awareness of the host organization? _____ Yes _____ No
If no, check to ensure intended service supports local needs and efforts

Mission Trip Planning Worksheet

a) **Discipleship: Identify goals and Secure permission from local pastor/administrator**

Goals for the Trip

-
-

Intended impact on those engaging with on mission: _____

Intended spiritual, learning, and personal outcomes for participants: _____

Anticipated Participants: Ages ____ Number ____

Are any participants under 18? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, follow all Safe Environment Considerations closely,
including no parish-organized international travel.

Is this trip more about the travel than practicing Christian service? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, search out alternative site/activities.

Have you explored options for achieving these goals locally? ____ Yes ____ No

If no, search out alternative site/activities.

Seek initial approval from pastor before proceeding.

Mission Trip Planning Worksheet

b) Stewardship: Ensure accountability and appropriate use of resources (goods, money, people's time and talents)

Money

Anticipated costs per participant: \$ _____ (total costs/number of participants)

\$ _____ Fee to Host Organization

\$ _____ Transportation

\$ _____ Lodging

\$ _____ Food

\$ _____ Materials (group shirt, programs, etc)

\$ _____ Staff Leader wages

\$ _____ Other (copying, travel insurance, etc)

Trip TOTAL \$ _____

Who benefits most from utilizing resources in this way?

Is there an alternative trip that would result in more of the money directly benefiting those hoping to serve or addressing the issue of concern? _____ Yes _____ No
If yes, seek another plan.

Available funds for effort: _____

Will you accept donations for this effort? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, plan for and follow parish procedures for handling the money securely.
If yes, plan for and communicate how the funds raised will be used if the trip is cancelled.

Will you accept online donations for this effort? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, only use WeShare for online donations (it meets both safety and security standards).

Resources needed/available for fundraising (specifics for what, when, where, how):

Mission Trip Planning Worksheet

People

Anticipated parish leader(s) needed during trip: _____

Is the leader traveling with the group a member of the parish staff? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, determine the number of hours the staff person will work during the trip and the corresponding wages for these hours.

Discuss following question with pastor and finance council to answer.

Does this trip fit within the available time and wages for the staff? _____ Yes _____ No

If no, search out alternative site/activities.

Chaperones: _____ N/A _____ # Female _____ # Male Adult to Youth Ratio: _____

Are there at least two adults traveling with the group? _____ Yes _____ No

If no, secure necessary chaperones or do not travel with minors.

Is there at least one adult chaperone for every seven youth traveling? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, communicate with Safe Environment Office to verify background checks and training.

If no, secure additional chaperones or search out an alternative plan.

Will there be female youth on the trip? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, secure at least one female chaperone.

Will there be male youth on the trip? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, secure at least one male chaperone.

Accountability and Follow-up

Plan for sharing experience with parish after the trip:

Plan for building on the experience to deepen participants faith and identity as a Catholic:

Does this trip fit within the current vision and goals of the parish? _____ Yes _____ No

If no, search out alternative site/activities.

Mission Trip Planning Worksheet

c) Logistics: Attend to details for fruitful, safe experience

****An essential goal of any travel is to keep both youth and adults safe****

Notify diocesan Office of Risk Management of outline for proposed trip, travel agent being used, transportation, set up of facility to visit, sleeping arrangements, security at facility, etc. to help determine needs. If traveling with minors, also provide this same information to the Office of Safe Environment.

Sleeping arrangements:

Are the sleeping rooms private with multiple people per room? Yes No
If yes, assign by single gender unless family members; youth only with other youth; adults only with other adults.

Are the showers or bathrooms communal? Yes No
If yes, assign by single gender as well as separate for youth and adults.

Travel mode(s): Car Charter Bus Train Plane

Will you be working with a travel agent? Yes No
If yes, check references from other groups who may have used the agency and obtain a certificate of insurance showing they have adequate coverage.

Will volunteer drivers be used? Yes No
If yes, follow diocesan best practices, including all drivers being over 21, no 12-14 passenger vans, safe environment checks/training if transporting minors.

Will volunteer drivers be using personal vehicles? Yes No
If yes, follow diocesan best practices regarding driver application and insurance verification.

Needed travel/program insurance: _____

Communication plan (how information will be relayed to families, participants, and parish/school in case of emergency):

Parish contact NOT ON TRIP with who will have copies of all forms (medical forms/permissions; prescriptions, passports, airline tickets, etc.) _____

Mission Trip Proposal Summary

Goals: _____

Type of service and or learning/formation: _____

Trip Destination: _____ Dates: _____

Intended Participants _____ Target Group _____ Ages _____ Number _____

Host organization/travel agent _____

Leader(s) traveling with the group _____

Anticipated costs per participant: \$ _____ (total costs/number of participants)

\$ _____ Fee to Host Organization

\$ _____ Transportation

\$ _____ Lodging

\$ _____ Food

\$ _____ Materials (group shirt, programs, etc)

\$ _____ Staff Leader wages

\$ _____ Other (copying, travel insurance, etc)

Trip TOTAL \$ _____

Fundraising Plan (if applicable): _____

Record of Planning Conversations

Dates discussed initial trip plans with pastor: _____

Date(s) discussed trip plan with pastoral council: _____

Date(s) discussed trip plan with finance council: _____

Date(s) discussed with diocesan Office of Risk Management: _____

Date(s) discussed with diocesan Office of Safe Environment (if trip includes minors): _____

◆-----◆
Approved _____ *Rejected* _____ specify concerns:

Pastor Signature _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX A

Important Diocesan Resources to Assist in Planning

Office of Lifelong Faith Formation 207.773.6471 olff@portlanddiocese.org

Protecting God's Children Office, especially Diocesan [Code of Ethics](#)

Risk Management Office, especially [Risk Management Best Practices Guide](#) Sections 3.0 (Diocesan Insurance Program), 5.0 (Motor Vehicle Use), and 6.0 (Volunteers)

Office of Missions/CRS 207-321-7817

APPENDIX B

Recognized Catholic Mission Trip Organizations for Travel with Minors

Catholic Heart Workcamp <https://heartworkcamp.com>

Young Neighbors in Action www.cmdnet.org/ynia-home

APPENDIX C



Guideline: 18-year-old High School Students participating in Youth Ministry Activities

In the United States of America, one's 18th birthday marks a major threshold of opportunity and responsibility. The Diocese of Portland wants to accompany Catholic youth as they begin to navigate this beginning phase of adulthood. The following guidelines are intended to help 18-year-old high school students take advantage of the opportunities to grow closer to Christ through youth ministry activities while also taking their first steps to greater responsibility as Christian disciples who fill vital roles in creating and maintaining faith-filled and safe environments.

GENERAL GUIDELINE

For the purposes of the diocesan safe environment practices, an adult is considered anyone 18 or over who is not enrolled in high school.

Any youth 18 years or older currently enrolled in high school (including up to 3 months following graduation) who wish to participate in Youth Ministry or other parish programs may:

- Ask to participate in youth ministry or parish activities as a youth, understanding the same expectations of youth under 18 apply.
- Complete Protecting God's Children (PGC) training as a step in taking on greater responsibility for the care of the Catholic community. This training may be taken no sooner than 6 months prior to a person's 18th birthday.
- Complete required paperwork themselves – no parent signatures needed on permission, liability, image use or other registration forms, though recommend sharing the information
- Request background check to volunteer in ministry. This is not necessary if simply participating as a youth in parish or diocesan programs.

PRACTICAL STEPS

Protecting God's Children (PGC) Training

- Secure parent permission for any 17-year-old youth prior to the young person participating in a PGC training (see sample form*)
- As much as possible, training should have only youth in attendance. For this to happen, parishes are encouraged to work together to hold a regional training for teens rather than a parish-specific training. Please notify the diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator and the diocesan Coordinator of Youth Ministry when you schedule regional teen training, so they can help publicize the session

- Facilitator should be someone comfortable working with youth and able to draw them into conversation
- There should be several other adults (who the teens are familiar with) in addition to the trainer to provide support should the video and discussions trigger memories or responses
- If the youth are unable to attend the training specific to teens, they can go to a general training of PGC. They should attend with an adult they're comfortable with and there should be a conversation about the video and training (what the training is, why the need for training) prior to the workshop as well as a conversation after the workshop to process the information they've learned.

*** Sample Parent Permission Form for PGC Training**

Parish/School Name and City: _____

I am aware my child, _____ [name], freely chooses to participate in the Protecting God's Children (PGC) Training session for adults offered through the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland. I acknowledge my child is at least 17 years of age and has my permission to participate in this training.

Parent/Guardian Name (print) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

Background Checks

- If an 18-year-old high school student wants to volunteer in a ministry serving minors, he or she may request background checks following safe environment practices:
 - Parish or youth ministry leaders assist youth in gathering and submitting the appropriate forms that volunteers complete for background checks required to work with minors
 - Youth complete the forms no sooner than their 18th birthdays

APPENDIX D

Sample Youth Emergency Contact, Permission, & Liability Release Form

Contact the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation for an editable version of the form

Parish Name
Address
Zip, ME 04777
Phone: 207-
Fax: 207-

Please print clearly. Thank you!

Emergency Contact, Medical Info,
Permission & Liability Release

EVENT: [specify]

DATE & LOCATION: [specify]

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION:

PARISH, CITY: _____

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

Birth Date: _____

Gender: Male Female

Legal Guardian Name (if participant is under 18): _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:

1st Contact Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Daytime Phone #: _____

Evening Phone #: _____

2nd Contact Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Daytime Phone #: _____

Evening Phone #: _____

MEDICAL INFORMATION:

Doctor Name: _____

Doctor Phone #: _____

Insurance Co.: _____

Policy #: _____

Cardholder's Name: _____

Participant's Allergies/Sensitivities (include meds AND food): _____

Participant's Chronic Medical Problems (ex: Type 1 diabetes): _____

Current Medications (self-administered unless incapacitated): _____

PERMISSION AND LIABILITY RELEASE:

I, _____, the undersigned, request permission for myself/my child to attend this event to be held at the location specified. I understand this event will take place under the guidance and supervision of responsible employees/volunteers from the within the diocese and of the [parish]. I/my child agrees to abide by all the rules as outlined in the Code of Behavior/Ethics. The parish will not be liable if I/my child fails to cooperate with said rules and any infractions may result in immediate dismissal from this event. I will accept responsibility for costs for immediate transportation home. I understand that I am legally responsible for the my/my child's behavior.

If needed, I give permission for myself/my child to be evaluated, diagnosed, treated/medicated in accordance with standard medical practice. I relieve the parish of all responsibility and consequences that may arise because of this treatment. I will not hold the parish, chaperones, or representatives associated with this event responsible in the event of injury. If I cannot be reached in case of an emergency, I give permission for the parish group leader or event coordinator to act on my behalf. Further, I agree to accept ~~my~~ and ~~all~~ financial responsibility because of scheduling such care.

SIGNATURE/LEGAL GUARDIAN: _____ DATE: _____

APPENDIX E

Sample Image Release Form for Youth/Minor Participants

Contact the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation for an editable version of the form



Office of Lifelong Faith Formation
650 Ocean Ave.
Portland, ME 04102
Phone: 207-772-6424
Fax: 207-772-0482

Please print clearly. Thank you!

Image Use Consent - Minor

IMAGE USE CONSENT

EVENT INFORMATION: *name, brief description*

The Diocese of Portland would like to share good things happening in our schools, parish and diocese. One way we would like to do this is by highlighting program participants, including minors, by using images, videos, and/or audio recordings of them in certain media created within the Portland Diocese. For example, images or other depictions of participants might be featured in materials created by the parish, school, or diocese, such as bulletins, newsletters, its official websites, and its official social media pages, including but not limited to Facebook and Instagram.

This form will authorize the Diocese to publish the following:

- A. Photographs, videos and/or audio recordings of participants, including minors, at or involved in school, parish and/or diocesan activities.
- B. First name of participants and/or minors, grade level, activity and/or brief description related to image, video or audio recording.
- C. Individual or group work from school, parish or the diocese, such as creative writing, research projects, art work, music, performances, and audiovisual presentations.

By checking "I Agree", you understand and agree that the information about your child listed below may be used on the publications, official websites and official social media pages for the parish, school, or diocese. If you check "I Do Not Agree", no information about your child will be published on the parish, school, or diocese's publications, official website, or official social media pages.

I Agree

I Do Not Agree

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|--------|
| Name of Participant: | Name of Parish/School: | Grade: |
|----------------------|------------------------|--------|

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Name of Parent/Guardian: | Signature of Parent/Guardian: | Date: |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|

APPENDIX F

Sample Image Release Form for Adults

Contact the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation for an editable version of the form



Office of Lifelong Faith Formation
350 Conant Ave.
Portland, ME 04102
Phone: 207-773-6424
Fax: 207-773-0882

Please print clearly. Thank you!

Image Use Consent - Adult

IMAGE USE CONSENT

EVENT NAME & DESCRIPTION: _____

The Diocese of Portland would like to share good things happening in our schools, parish and diocese. One way we would like to do this is by highlighting program participants, including minors, by using images, videos, and/or audio recordings of them in certain media created within the Portland Diocese. For example, images or other depictions of participants might be featured in materials created by the parish, school, or diocese, such as bulletins, newsletters, its official websites, and its official social media pages, including but not limited to Facebook and Instagram.

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By checking "I Agree", you understand and agree that the information about you listed below may be used on the publications, official websites and official social media pages for the parish, school, or diocese. If you check "I Do Not Agree", no information about you will be published on the parish, school, or diocese's publications, official website, or official social media pages.

I Agree

I Do Not Agree

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Name of Participant: | Name and City of Parish/School: |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Signature of Participant: | Date: |
|---------------------------|-------|