

Youth Ministry Benchmark Indicators

This tool is based upon *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* issued by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997

BENCHMARK 1: ADVOCATING FOR YOUTH

The parish advocates for adolescents, especially those who are voiceless and powerless in society

Indicators:

- **Defending the Vulnerable:** Affirming and protecting the sanctity of life and building respect for the unborn, the poor, the disadvantaged, the sick, and the elderly
- **Political Advocacy:** Speaking on behalf of youth and their families on issues that affect their lives (support for education, quality housing, employment opportunities, safe neighborhoods and activities) and influencing political arena (joining networks, community organizations, etc.)
- **Youth Action:** Calling young people to responsibility for issues that affect them and their future: education, leadership training, organizing them for action
- **Networking:** Developing a shared vision with leaders and concerned citizens of all sectors, for building a healthy community and addressing issues affecting adolescents and their families

BENCHMARK 2: CATECHIZING YOUTH

The parish is working to involve all Catholic youth in some program of catechesis

Indicators:

- **Practical Instruction:** Providing age appropriate teaching and processes based upon the Catechism. Teaching is practical and is being applied to real life situations faced by the young
- **Varied Methods:** A wide variety of learning methods are being used (shared dialogue, group participation, home-based, mentoring, self-directed, parish and school programs, small-group programs, other activities and resources, etc.)
- **Family Faith Development:** Parental/family faith development is promoted (parent-adolescent catechetical programming, parent education and resources provided, programming designed with a family perspective, etc.)
- **Vocations:** Program includes explicit invitation for young people to explore call to ministry

BENCHMARK 3: PROVIDING COMMUNITY

The parish provides an atmosphere community life for adolescents

Indicators:

- **Friendly Environment:** Creating an atmosphere characterized by appreciation and meaningful relationships among young people and between youth and adults (friendship

making and friendship maintaining skills are taught grounded on Christian values, retreats are regularly held)

- **Relational Skills:** Family relations are enriched through programs, resources, and activities to improve skills such as family communication, decision making, and faith sharing
- **Parish Involvement:** Adolescents are engaged in life, activities, and ministries of parish and parish acknowledges, celebrates and values its adolescent members
- **Diversified Community:** Opportunities are provided for multicultural community building in order to promote respect for you peoples' ethnic culture and to develop skills for communication and understanding

BENCHMARK 4: EVANGELIZATION

The parish invites young people to hear about Jesus through the ministry of evangelization

Indicators:

- **Gospel Presentation:** The gospel is proclaimed to youth and the parish community is living as an authentic example of those following Jesus' teaching
- **Meeting Needs:** The needs and life situations of young people are being met (relationship building, providing healing care and concern, offering a genuine response to their hungers and inviting them into relationship with Jesus and Christian community)
- **Invitation to Mission:** Personal invitations are given to adolescents to join the life and mission of the Catholic community and they are experiencing the support, nurture and care necessary to live as Christians
- **Challenging Values:** Young people are being challenged to shape their lives in the vision, values, and teachings of Jesus. They are living his mission through witness and service, and evangelizing others

BENCHMARK 5: JUSTICE AND SERVICE

The parish involves youth in the ministry of justice and service

Indicators

- **Social Participation:** Adolescents are involved in direct service to those in need and efforts to address causes of injustice, thus engaging them in Catholic social teaching
- **Service Abilities:** Assets and skills are being taught and developed (moral reasoning ability, leadership and social skills, personal gift discovery, realization that they can make a difference and receive recognition from the community)
- **Planned Transformation:** Young people are moved from awareness to action by involving them personally in the issues, exploring the causes and consequences of injustice, reflecting with Catholic social teaching and then acting through direct service.
- **Communal Affirmation:** Community works together to provide support and affirmation to youth people in order to nurture a lifelong service orientation

BENCHMARK 6: LEADERSHIP

The parish empowers and supports strong youth ministry leadership

Indicators:

- **Youth Lead:** Utilizes adult and adolescent leaders in a variety of leadership roles
- **Supportive Structure:** Leadership systems are being developed to invite, train, support and nourish adult and adolescent leaders
- **Adult Training:** Adult leaders with lively faith are being nourished (solid theological understanding, relational and ministry skills, organizational ability, etc.)
- **Community Leadership:** Young people are being empowered for leadership and ministry with their peers in schools, parishes, and civic communities (affirmation of gifts, equipping with skills, placing in leadership roles and opportunities)

BENCHMARK 7: PASTORAL CARE

The parish cares pastorally for the needs of young people

Indicators:

- **Relational Abilities Developed:** Life skills are being developed in adolescents (relationship building, assertiveness, conflict resolution, planning, etc.)
- **Theology of the Body:** Healthy understanding of their sexuality is integrated with spirituality and developed such that they can be guided in making important life decisions
- **Parental Resources:** Programs and resources are being provided for parents and families (skills for effective parenting, communication, problem solving, reconciliation, networks of support for families)
- **Referral Services:** Support and referral resources are available for adolescents and parents experiencing separation and divorce, family problems, loss, unexpected crises, transition, etc. (self-help groups, counseling resources, collaboration with wider community to provide aid to youth-at-risk, etc.)

BENCHMARK 8: PRAYER AND WORSHIP

The parish develops young peoples' relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer and worship

Indicators:

- **Liturgical Participation:** Promotion of authentic participation of youth in liturgies (youth trained as liturgical ministers, periodic youth event liturgies, youth to help in liturgy preparation, youth musical styles)
- **Creative Prayer:** Opportunities for creative prayer in order to promote personal prayer life in youth (seasonal prayer experiences for and by youth, prayer mentors, provisions for family rituals, etc.)
- **Effective Preaching:** designed to connect with young people (inviting youth reflect on readings and to offer suggestions to homilist, use of story and examples from youth culture, etc.)
- **Hospitality** focus at liturgy (building sense of community prior to liturgy or scheduling fun events afterwards, encouraging attendance with friends, and ministering in a personal way)

Parish Planning Tool

Benchmark 1:	Present Activity	1=going strong 2=adequate 3=needs help 4=let's begin	Notes for Planning
Advocating for Youth			
<i>Indicators:</i> <i>Defending the Vulnerable:</i> Affirming sanctity of life		Select one	
<i>Political Advocacy:</i> Standing up for family issues		Select one	
<i>Youth Action:</i> Challenging young people to responsibility		Select one	
<i>Networking:</i> Building shared vision with community		Select one	

Benchmark 2:	Present Activity	1=going strong 2=adequate 3=needs help 4=let's begin	Notes for Planning
Catechizing Youth			
<i>Indicators:</i> <i>Practical Instruction:</i> Applied to real life		Select one	
<i>Varied Methods:</i> Teaching in various ways		Select one	
<i>Growing Family Faith:</i> Parent-adolescent catechetical programing		Select one	
<i>Vocations:</i> Explicit invitations		Select one	

Benchmark 3: Providing Community	Present Activity	1=going strong 2=adequate 3=needs help 4=let's begin	Notes for Planning
<i>Indicators:</i> <i>Friendly Environment:</i> Atmosphere of meaningful relationships		Select one	
<i>Relational Skills Taught:</i> Family communication, decision making, etc.		Select one	
<i>Parish Involvement:</i> Youth engaged in ministries of parish		Select one	
<i>Diversified Community:</i> Multicultural community building		Select one	

Benchmark 4: Evangelization	Present Activity	1=going strong 2=adequate 3=needs help 4=let's begin	Notes for Planning
<i>Indicators:</i> <i>Gospel Presentation:</i> Good news is clearly presented to young people		Select one	
<i>Meeting Needs:</i> Parish meets needs of young people		Select one	
<i>Invitation to Mission:</i> Parish supports and encourages youth mission involvement		Select one	
<i>Challenging Values:</i> Youth evangelizing others		Select one	

Benchmark 5:	Present Activity	1=going strong 2=adequate 3=needs help 4=let's begin	Notes for Planning
Justice and Service			
<i>Indicators:</i> <i>Social Participation:</i> Youth directly serve those in need		Select one	
<i>Service Abilities:</i> Moral reasoning, leadership, gift discovery		Select one	
<i>Planned Transformation:</i> Intentionally motivating youth to action		Select one	
<i>Communal Affirmation:</i> Community supports and affirms youth action		Select one	

Benchmark 6:	Present Activity	1=going strong 2=adequate 3=needs help 4=let's begin	Notes for Planning
Leadership			
<i>Indicators:</i> <i>Youth Lead:</i> Adolescents are given leadership roles		Select one	
<i>Supportive Structure:</i> System designed to invite and nourish youth leaders		Select one	
<i>Adult Training:</i> In order to develop a lively faith and necessary skills for youth ministry		Select one	
<i>Community Leadership:</i> Youth leading at school, civic communities, etc.		Select one	

Benchmark 7:	Present Activity	1=going strong 2=adequate 3=needs help 4=let's begin	Notes for Planning
Pastoral Care			
<i>Indicators:</i> <i>Relational Skills Grown:</i> Assertiveness, relationship building, etc.		Select one	
<i>Theology of the Body:</i> Self-understanding and decision making		Select one	
<i>Parental Resources:</i> Skills for effective parenting, reconciliation		Select one	
<i>Referral Services:</i> Support for divorce, loss, transition, etc.		Select one	

Benchmark 8:	Present Activity	1=going strong 2=adequate 3=needs help 4=let's begin	Notes for Planning
Prayer and Worship			
<i>Indicators:</i> <i>Liturgical Participation:</i> Training youth for involvement in music and liturgy		Select one	
<i>Creative Prayer:</i> Planned and led by youth, prayer mentors, etc.		Select one	
<i>Effective Preaching:</i> Connecting with youth		Select one	
<i>Hospitality:</i> Designed to connect with and to young people		Select one	