



Standards and Guidelines 2018

Introduction

As part of its vision and mission, the ELCA Youth Ministry Network has developed Standards and Guidelines for excellence in children, youth and family ministry.

The spirit that surrounds these Standards and Guidelines is about creating a learning community of youth ministers—a community that seeks to support and network with each other, as we live out our calls in ministry. The Standards and Guidelines will never be complete, nor will anyone master all of them. As a learning community, we will seek to faithfully attend to these realities.

Personal and professional growth is vital to the development of ministry leaders. Growth happens within the framework of personal renewal, continuing education, networking and relational support. The Standards and Guidelines are not intended as a checklist to fully complete; rather they are an essential set of core understandings and competencies for vocational development.

Competencies:

Children, Youth, and Family Ministry professionals are lifelong learners who continually deepen their competency in all areas of ministry throughout their career. It is our expectation that an adult who works with young people and families will demonstrate understanding and growing competency in the following areas:

- I. Faith and Spiritual Practice
- II. Knowledge
- III. Ministry Skills
- IV. Administrative and Organizational Skills
- V. Leadership Skills
- VI. Commitments

I. Faith and Spiritual Practices

It is critical that those who work with young people and their families have an understanding of the seven marks of discipleship identified by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

- Worship
- Study
- Invite
- Encourage
- Pray
- Serve
- Give

This core competency includes practicing these disciplines themselves, as well as being able to communicate and teach them to others.

In addition, a theological understanding and a commitment to living out the ELCA's five baptismal "gifts of discipleship" is critical.

II. Knowledge

Theological thought and reflection necessarily shape an understanding of ministry. Effective children, youth and family ministers are competent in these three areas:

1. Biblical Studies

- Understanding of the overall biblical narrative
- Ability to apply and teach biblical understandings within our changing culture

2. Lutheran belief and doctrine

- A solid understanding of Lutheran theology
- Ability to articulate that understanding and apply it to life situations

3. Theology

- An understanding of different theological positions
- Ability to engage these different positions in dialog

4. Human development

- Understanding of developmental stages of children, youth and their families

III. Ministry Skills

Children, youth and family ministry is by its nature interdisciplinary. The professional should work toward competency in these vital areas:

1. *Inter-generational ministry*
2. *Marking faith and life transitions and milestones*
3. *Effective teaching and learning methods*
4. *Relational Ministry*
5. *Pastoral care*
6. *Leadership development*
7. *Ministry in alternative settings (retreats, mission trips, etc.)*
8. *Multicultural skills*

IV. Administrative and Organizational Skills

Administration, planning and leadership are vital aspects of any ministry, and include:

1. *Safe-haven Management*
2. *Ministry Administration and Communication*
3. *Strategic Planning*

V. Leadership Skills

At the heart of professional ministry with young people is the ability to gracefully move between theory, theology and praxis. It is critical that all children, youth and family ministers develop and expand upon

baseline skills in each of these areas:

1. *Create nurturing relationships*
2. *Communicate and teach effectively*
3. *Create and tend collaborative leadership*
4. *Read cultural landscape and contextual realities*
5. *Effectively communicate the Gospel to a variety of audiences*

VI. Commitments

The ELCA Youth Ministry Network seeks to be a resource in supporting children, youth and family ministry leaders in their personal and professional growth. The Network strongly suggests the following:

- Living a vibrant life of faith in Jesus Christ.
- Membership and active participation in a faith community.
- Maintaining annual membership in the ELCA Youth Ministry Network.
- Participating in at least one Network Extravaganza or other ELCA Network event at least every three years.
- Participating in at least 20 contact hours of quality continuing education annually.
- Participating in coaching or mentoring relationships
- Networking with other children, youth and family ministry professionals
- Participating in local, synodical, regional, and churchwide continuing education and networking events.