



# College Ministries Help Sheet

*This help sheet is not intended as a substitute for the Safeguarding Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth or Safeguarding Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults. These policies may be found online: <https://www.epicenter.org/for-leaders/ministry-integrity-and-wellness/safeguarding/policies-and-help-sheets/>*

## **Overview**

Discerning how to best apply Safeguarding policies when ministering to and as young adults can be challenging. While college/university students and other young adults are adults in the eye of the law, developmentally many are still growing into full maturity. This help sheet is intended to assist campus missioners, their students, and others serving college ministries by giving some additional guidance around Safeguarding Policies. This help sheet assumes one has already read and is familiar with the [Episcopal Diocese of Texas's Safeguarding Policies](#).

## **Guidelines for meetings of missioners and young adults**

Like the guidelines for meeting with youth and vulnerable adults, it is important to be thoughtful when a campus missioners and young adults meet one-on-one. If meeting one-on-one, do so in a public setting or in an office with an open door or a window that can be easily observed by others.

## **Guidelines for campus missioners driving young adults**

Typically, it is not advisable for a campus missioner or other paid staff to drive a young adult with whom they have a pastoral relationship when it is just the two of them in the car. However, in certain circumstances (extreme weather, a dark parking lot, no other transportation etc.) the safest option may be for a missioner to drive a young adult. Measures that can be taken to protect the well-being of the young adult are: having the young adult sit in the back of the vehicle, placing a phone call to a third party to have a virtual third person in the car, or texting a third party before and after the ride.

## **Meeting frequency**

One of the gifts of campus ministry is that there are often more one-on-one pastoral conversations than in parish ministry. In parish ministry it is advised not to meet with a parishioner more than three times about any given issue before referring the person to professional help. Campus missioners may have some leeway with this rule if the topic is not a sensitive one, (e.g., stress related to homework, choosing a denomination, navigating a conflict with another student.) However, campus missioners should always refer to mental health professionals in cases involving anxiety, depression, other mental illnesses, abuse, complicated family of origin issues, sexual issues, and other topics that are beyond a priest's expertise. Typically, missioners should not meet one-on-one with students more than once a week.

## Travel with young adults

In many ways traveling with young adults is simpler than traveling with youth and children. While the ratios of qualified (Safeguarded) adults to children do not apply in campus mission settings, it is advisable to be thoughtful about everyone's safety.

- Waivers by participants must be signed. (The location/site to which the group travels may have waivers that would be sufficient.)
- Drivers must be licensed.
- Drivers must not consume alcohol or other intoxicants. In fact, since many young adults in campus ministry are not of legal drinking age, typically travel with college students should not include non-sacramental alcohol.
- When making sleeping arrangements, think about the well-being and safety of everyone in the group. Mission trips, retreats and other campus ministry travel are not appropriate contexts for sexual activity. Many camp sites have housing options based on gender. Some of our young adults are non-binary and/or trans. Plan-ahead to create housing arrangements that accommodate privacy and the dignity of each participant.
- Consider food allergies and disabilities of participants and alert the site of any special needs.

## Dating amongst members of campus ministries

Campus Missioners and other paid staff **may not** date members of campus ministries. (See [\*Safeguarding Policies for Safe Ministry with Adults\*](#), pg.10) If student leaders have pastoral relationships with other members (such as leader of a small group or bible study), and develop feelings for someone in their care, best practice is for the leader of the group to step back, or, if the feelings are mutual and consent is given, place the student in a different group.

## Title IX

Every university or college that accepts federal money has a Title IX officer. That person(s) is responsible for coordinating responses and investigations of sexual harassment and assault. It is a good idea for campus missioners to familiarize themselves with the student handbook of the university/college to which they are ministering so they can advise students who may have experienced assault about the resources and pathways available to them.