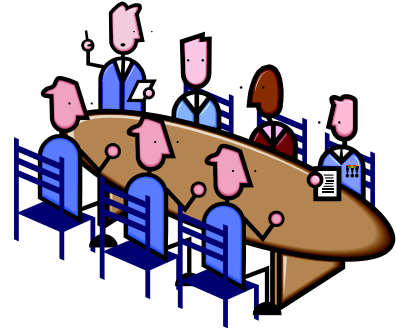


Seven Steps to Hiring a Paid Youth Advisor

1. Form a Hiring Committee

Your first step in hiring a youth advisor is bringing together key stakeholders to form a hiring committee. The stakeholders are those people in the congregation who care passionately about the youth program. These include youth, parents, the religious educator, volunteer youth advisors, the minister, and members of the RE committee or the congregation's board. It is important for at least half of the hiring committee to be made up of youth. Select youth of diverse ages, perhaps including a junior high youth and a young adult who recently bridged out of the youth program. It is important to have balance.



2. Decide What You Want in a Paid Youth Advisor

The first task for the hiring committee is identifying what the congregation wants and needs from a paid youth advisor. This is probably the most important part of the whole process. The hiring committee will ascertain the qualifications and experience they will seek in the new hire. It will also determine the duties of this new position and to whom the new youth advisor will report. The Youth Advisor Handbook, a resource for YRUU advisors, contains information about the role of advisors, programming, and support of youth advisors.

Besides input from the hiring committee it is vital that you get as much feed back as possible from an extended group of youth. If there is an existing youth group, have them talk about this new position at one of their meetings. If the new youth advisor will help start up a youth program you might invite some of the prospective youth members to a pizza party to share their thoughts. Ask the youth what qualities they would like the youth advisor to have and what they hope to get out of the youth program.

3. Create a Job Description

Before advertising the position it is critical that you have a clear and detailed job description. The process outlined above lays the groundwork for creating a job description.

Key components of a clear and detailed job description:

- **Position Title:** What will you call this position. Some churches call it Youth Advisor, others call it Youth Programs Coordinator or Director.
- **Time and Salary:** See a detailed discussion of fair compensation below. Time on the job will vary depending on the size of your church and youth program.
- **Purpose:** This is a short one- or two-sentence description of the purpose of this position. It basically says why you think it is important to have a paid person to work with youth.
- **Reports To:** It is critical to name the person/position to whom the new hire will report. Not doing this can lead to headaches later on.
- **Qualifications:** You identified these in step two when you decided what you want and need in a youth advisor. This should include specific education, training, and experience that you would like this person to have.
- **Responsibilities:** This is a basic list of the duties of the youth advisor. Be careful that the responsibilities are reasonable for the hours this person will work. Include expectations such as continuing education and attendance at weekend conferences.

4. Figure Out Fair Compensation

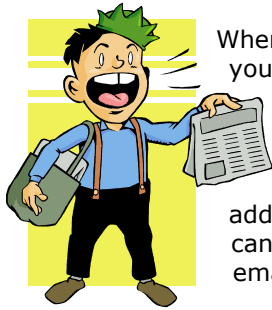
An important way of living our Unitarian Universalist values is through giving fair compensation to those who work in our congregations. This is true of Youth Advisors as much as any other position in the church.

The Office of Church Staff Finance of the Ministry and Profession Leadership Staff Group along with the UUA Compensation, Benefits, and Pension Committee make recommendations for compensation issues after collecting data from congregations. To date no compensation data has been collected on Youth Advisors, but Ralph Mero, Director of the Office of Church Staff Finance can make recommendations based on positions at similar levels in our congregations, for example Membership or Volunteer Coordinator. Check out the current compensation recommendations at <http://www.uua.org/programs/ministry/finances>. These salaries would be prorated according to the percentage of time worked.

The Youth Advisor position is crucial to the provision of a full range of services in many UU congregations, and we hope our local societies will fund these positions with appropriate salaries and the standard array of employer-paid benefits that should be offered to all staff that work at least half-time. These are also described on the website above.

The Youth Advisor position should be treated like any other position in relation to reporting to the Internal Revenue Service. Congregations are liable for the same taxes they would pay for all employees.

5. Publicize Your Search for a Youth Advisor



Where and how you publicize your search plays a big role in who will end up being your youth advisor. If you just advertise in your congregation and nearby congregations, you are likely to get an application pool that looks a lot like your local communities. To get an more diverse applicant pool in identity and experience it is important to publicize the position as widely as possible. The Youth Office is more than happy to help you do this. Just send us a copy of the job description for the position, the address for submitting a cover letter and resume, and the deadline for responding. You can send that to [The Youth Office](#) and it will be posted to a diverse set of continental email list serves and on the YRUU website.

6. Primary and Secondary Screening: Interviewing, Background Checks and so much more

There are two suggested steps for screening applicants for the youth advisor position: primary screening procedures and secondary screening procedures. Primary screening procedures include applications, interviews, and references. Secondary screening procedures include criminal records checks, advisor contracts and the 6-month rule.

Primary Screening Process: First establish an application procedure. There is a sample Advisor Application in the Youth Advisor Handbook. The procedure might be as simple as requesting applicants to submit a resume with references. In addition, you may want to ask applicants to respond to questions on topics of special concern to you. Many youth groups are interested in issues of oppression so during the application or interview process ask for information about the applicant's experience and understanding of oppression. Responses can provide information about whether her/his vision of youth ministry is similar to the one you want to guide your youth group. Call references, including a reference who can attest to their experience with youth. The second step is interviewing. It is a good idea to have an interviewing team. This could be a couple of people from the group that helped you create the job description. Do not include too many people, but make sure you have some youth on the interviewing team. They will perceive things that adults will miss.

After you have followed the above steps and selected your primary candidate, begin the secondary screening process. First do a background check on your candidate. [Church Mutual Insurance](http://www.churchmutual.com), the insurer for many Unitarian Universalist congregations, has safety information on their website, <http://www.churchmutual.com>. They recommend the organization ScreenNow which provides different levels of background checks, and Church Mutual clients receive a special rate. Before the background check, decide your threshold for hiring. Set this threshold in consultation with others in your hiring committee. For example, would a DWI (driving while intoxicated) finding automatically disqualify the applicant, or would it depend on how long ago it was? You might have a 45-year-old candidate charged with DWI when they were 18 years old. You should also decide if a criminal record for civil disobedience would disqualify someone. One more consideration, be aware that in some states consensual same-gender sexual acts are considered sex-crimes.

After the background check is completed, create a advisor contract, setting a 6-month review as a part of the agreement. There is a sample Youth Advisor Contract in the Youth Advisor Handbook. In the agreement detail the responsibilities of the position, including hours and schedule, and requirements for continuing education. Much of this will come from the job description. Include a provision for a 6-month no-fault review period; following evaluation after this period you or the new hire can step away if things are not working out.

7. Ongoing Training, Supervision and Evaluation

Ongoing continuing education is important. The Youth Office provides a series of trainings for youth advisors. Check with your district office for the schedule. If none is scheduled in your district, start advocating for trainings. Ongoing evaluation is also critical to the professional growth of a youth advisor. Make sure that youth in the program have a voice in evaluations. Do an evaluation at least once a year.

