

UUA Staff User Guide for the Youth Ministry Working Group Report

Introduction

The Youth Ministry Working Group (YMWG) was created in 2008 by UUA President William Sinkford and given the following charge:

To recommend to the UUA Administration and UUA Board of Trustees a framework and strategic imagination for Unitarian Universalist youth ministry based on the findings of the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth and the recommendations of the Summit on Youth Ministry.

The YMWG report was presented to the UUA Administration and Board of Trustees in April of 2009. To facilitate the usefulness of the report's recommendations, a series of User Guides were developed for various stakeholders willing to strengthen our youth ministry. This guide focuses on the responsibilities and opportunities of all UUA staff. Living into the vision of vibrant, multicultural, multigenerational youth ministry will take time and the work of all of us, but our ministries and our faith will be deepened by our efforts.

Highlights

While you are strongly encouraged to examine the entire report and consider ways you can support its recommendations, the highlights below identify those sections of the report most relevant to staff.

Section I

In Section I, Structure and Scope, the age-range for youth is defined as Grades 9-12 or the equivalent for home-schooled youth. UUA staff in all departments and districts is encouraged to incorporate youth participation or input into their work and programs. This section also calls for the creation of some specific opportunities for youth.

Subsection B asks congregations to develop opportunities for youth. As staff, consider any resources, programs or assistance we provide in the areas listed and how those can be adapted to be youth-inclusive. This subsection also recommends that General Assembly be a financially accessible, multigenerational event planned by a multigenerational team by 2011, and UUA staff have significant responsibilities for General Assembly.

Subsection C recommends a variety of ways to include youth. Most importantly for staff, recommendations 2 and 3 call for all committees, groups and task forces at all levels of the Association to be open to youth membership and youth input. Where youth are members, it is further encouraged that youth not serve alone, but rather in groups of two or more, and that all committees, groups and task forces evaluate their requirements and meeting styles for accessibility to youth. Where youth are not members of groups or committees, it is recommended that youth be consulted. The language of the

recommendation reads: “this involvement should extend to all aspects of congregational life, district activities and UUA staff work, not just those specifically targeted to youth.”

Subsection C, recommendation 5, calls for financial support to assist youth in attending events at all levels of the Association. Staff planning such events should consider the possibility of youth scholarships.

Subsection D addresses diverse needs, abilities and identities, including recommendations for creating opportunities and providing support for BGLTQ youth, youth of color, youth with physical, sensory, mental health, and intellectual disabilities, youth of all socioeconomic levels and youth facing a variety of life circumstances including but not limited to addiction, abuse and involvement in the prison system. Staff involved in creating or maintaining programs, events or resources in these areas should examine them for youth inclusivity and consider ways to serve these youth populations.

The remainder of Section I provides recommendations to the Administration and Lifespan Faith Development regarding regional staffing, service-delivery structures and national youth ministry staff responsibilities. It also contains a recommendation that congregations or clusters of congregations hire youth ministry staff and it directs the UUA, particularly the Youth and Young Adult Ministries Office, to enhance the use of technology.

Section II

This section directs staff who administer existing trainings and programs to review them for the inclusion of youth and youth perspectives to ensure that they are youth-friendly and offer opportunities for multigenerational communities of learning and faith.

This section also recommends the creation of new resources and programs for multigenerational ministry, anti-racism/anti-oppression/multiculturalism, spirituality development, mentoring and bridging. Staff should refer to this section when reviewing or planning resources and programs.

Section III

This section will be of particular interest to staff who work with ministers, religious educators and other religious professionals and volunteers. The recommendations here address training opportunities, grant programs, and professional competencies.

Subsection A calls for robust training opportunities for youth advisors and volunteers, and advocates for grants.

Subsection B addresses the need to enable all religious professionals to minister successfully to and with youth. The first recommendation asks Ministry and Professional Leadership staff to include multicultural youth ministry in the annual Interim Ministry Training. Several recommendations are related to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee and ministerial competence in youth and multigenerational ministry. Staff whose work intersects with the MFC and the Regional Subcommittees on Candidacy should consider

ways they can help implement these recommendations. District staff are asked to create opportunities for teams of professional and lay leaders within the district to gather and learn together. Other recommendations address opportunities for continuing education and seminary preparation.

Subsection C specifically addresses providing opportunities for youth leaders, outlining ways in which staff can provide opportunities, particularly in service/social justice projects and interfaith work. A recommendation is made to District staff to make adult leadership development opportunities multigenerational by including youth in planning and participation.

Section IV

This section addresses the accountability and assessment structures related to the recommendations. Staff should be aware that the Administration is charged with establishing an assessment process. Both national and district UUA staff will be reporting in this process. District staff may also have a role in soliciting reports from congregations.

How Do I Do This? / Questions for Discussion

As you go through the report, the following questions may help you focus and encourage you to think about specific actions you can take as we move toward this new vision of youth ministry. These questions may be useful for individual reflection or for staff discussion.

Take a few moments to articulate your own, or your staff group's, role in the Association. What services do you provide? Do you maintain any programs? Do you plan events? How do you interface with congregations? With districts? With UUA Staff Groups?

With those services, roles and relationships in mind, consider these questions:

How does this recommendation affect the work I am currently doing? What may need to change?

How feasible is this recommendation for me at this time?

What impediments do I/we face?

What immediate steps can I take?

What are the long-term implications for me/my office?

What assistance do I need?

For recommendations directed at congregations, staff groups other than your own, theological schools, and stakeholder groups, consider these questions:

Do I provide resources or services that others use in the areas described in this recommendation? How can these services be more useful in outreach to youth and those that work with youth?

In what ways can my work better assist others in their efforts to implement these recommendations?

How the Youth and Young Adult Ministries Office Can Help

Ministering to and with youth in our Association is a responsibility that falls to each of us, not just those directly involved in youth ministry, and the Youth and Young Adult Ministries Office staff is available to consult with you as you work to implement recommendations.

Some ways this office can help you:

Communication

The office maintains several e-mail lists you may use to advertise events, solicit youth input on programming, or communicate with youth in other ways.

The office can include your announcements in their newsletters, helping your events reach a broader audience of youth and adults who work with youth.

The office maintains a presence on Facebook which can be used to further advertise or solicit input.

Consultation

The office staff is available to consult with you or your staff group on a number of topics.

The office can consult on numerous facets of youth safety at your events, including chaperoning, selection of adult volunteers, transportation, etc.

The office can consult on ways you can include youth in your programs and events, including in the planning and development stages.

Consultation is also available regarding including youth on committees, design teams, search teams, etc.

The office is also able to consult on ministry to and with youth and young adults of color to assist you in making your events, programs, committees, and work as inclusive as possible.

Training

The office will continue to provide trainings through the Chrysalis Training Program for district staff who work with youth.