

# **Jeremiah 1.7**

**A Safe Environment Program  
for High School Age Volunteers Assisting Adults in Ministry  
to Children and Youth under the Age of 18**



**Program Overview**

**Operating Procedures & Forms**

## Table of Contents

### Page

- 3     **Memo from the Directors of the Offices of Youth Ministry and Continuing Christian Education**  
      - Rationale and General Program Operating Procedures
- 4     **Program Overview**
- 5     **Operating Procedures**  
      - Recruiting Youth Volunteers  
      - Securing Appropriate Forms  
      - On-site procedures for the Jeremiah 1:7 youth program  
      - On-site procedures for the Jeremiah 1:7 adult facilitator training
- 6     **Qualifications & Procedures for Certifying Adult Program Facilitators**
- 7     **Quick Checklist: Jeremiah 1:7 Program**

### Forms

- 8     **High School Youth Volunteer Application**
- 9     **Parent Letter**
- 10    **Parent Release Form**
- 11    **Youth Volunteer Code of Conduct Form**
- 12    **Training Attendance Form**

## Jeremiah 1:7

To: All Parish Catechetical Leaders (DREs, CYMs)  
From: Brian Johnson, Director of the Office of Youth Ministry  
Anne Comeaux, Director of the Office of Continuing Christian Education  
Date: August 23, 2010  
Re: *Jeremiah 1:7* Safe Environment Program

This memo is in regards to **safe environment formation for high school age volunteers in ministry with other children and youth under age of 18**. There are occasions when adults invite high school age youth to assist them in various catechetical or youth ministry efforts where they have regular contact with persons under the age of 18. While not yet adults themselves, it is of great importance that they learn how to establish appropriate relationships with children and other teens whom they serve. **Note:** Any high school youth who turns 18 should be directed to attend the VIRTUS program for adults.

Since 2004, in response to the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston has provided VIRTUS, a safe environment program, for all adults sustaining regular contact with children. Recently, the Offices of Youth Ministry and Continuing Christian Education in consultation with the Archdiocesan Safe Environment personnel have developed a program, called **Jeremiah1:7**, aimed at providing high school youth with age appropriate knowledge and skills needed to foster a safe and protective environment with the children whom they serve.

On July 15, 2010, Cardinal DiNardo sent a letter to all pastors indicating that “is my strong desire that high school age youth who regularly assist adults ministering to children under the age of 18 participate in (the) age appropriate safe environment program, called *Jeremiah 1:7*”. In the letter he asked pastors to “strongly encourage your catechetical leaders who have high school age youth assisting adults with other youth under the age of 18 to support this program of formation”. He indicated that the Offices of Youth Ministry and Continuing Christian Education would provide the necessary formation and process for implementation of the program.

**In collaboration, the Offices of Youth Ministry and Continuing Christian Education have worked together to design and implement the following:**

1. A 2-hour safe environment program, *Jeremiah 1:7*, for high school youth who assist adults ministering to children and other youth under the age of 18.
2. A team of Archdiocesan adult facilitators trained to
  - a. provide regional 2-hour safe environment programs for high school youth in ministry with children and youth under the age of 18.
  - b. provide 2-hour training of qualified adults as local parish program facilitators
3. A process for scheduling, promoting, and recording participants in both the youth program and adult facilitator training. This will be coordinated through the Office of Youth Ministry by Norma Torok. All inquiries or correspondence should be sent to [jeremiah1-7@arcgh.org](mailto:jeremiah1-7@arcgh.org)
4. A schedule for regional youth formation and qualified adult facilitator formation can be found on the OYM website [http://www.archgh.org/pastoral\\_youth.htm](http://www.archgh.org/pastoral_youth.htm). All program forms have been posted in PDF files that can be downloaded and printed.
5. Review the attachments which explain both the youth program and adult facilitator formation.

**A Safe Environment Program for High School Age Youth  
who Assist Adults in Ministry to Children and Youth  
under the Age of 18**

**Program Overview**

At the heart of this formation is a collaborative effort within the Church to assure that youth in leadership positions are given the necessary tools to assist adults in creating and sustaining an environment that protects the safety and well-being of the children and youth whom they serve. Parents in partnership with adult ministers and volunteers will always be charged with maintaining the primary responsibility and accountability for the care and safety of children. Any adult utilizing teens or other minors in a ministry capacity with children and teens must always be cognizant of this reality. From this understanding follows the general principle that a minor should never be allowed to have primary or solitary responsibility for minors. *(In other words, there should always be an Adult present when and where the teens are volunteering with children under the age of eighteen).*

Formation of high school youth in ministerial roles working with other minors includes specific levels of responsibility and accountability. Thus the formation in this session provides ministerial tools both to help youth understand their ministerial role and to implement this responsibility. This includes learning appropriate boundaries for themselves, with other leaders, and with those whom they serve. It also involves developing appropriate skills to help protect the children and youth with whom they minister. In addition, the training will help them to avoid situations where they may be vulnerable to accusations of boundary violations.

## Operating Procedures

**For any Parish Catechetical Leader who utilizes high school age youth to assist adults working with children and youth under the age of 18**

1. When securing high school age volunteers for various ministerial roles with children and youth under the age of 18, explain to the youth and their parents that attending safe environment formation will be strongly encouraged before beginning ministry with those age groups.

2. Provide each teen with the following forms: a **Volunteer Application**, **Parent Letter** which explains the formation, and a **Parent Consent Form**. The Volunteer Application and Parent Consent Form should be returned sometime before the training. **No youth may participate in the formation without the completed Parent Consent form. All forms should be kept on file at the parish.**

### **3. On-site procedures for the Jeremiah 1:7 youth program:**

a. Download and print **Participant Handbook** and **Youth Code of Conduct** form. Distribute 1 per youth and adult small group leader at the training.

b. Have one Adult Group Leader for every four – six youth participating in the training.

**Note:** All Adult Group Leaders should have previously completed the VIRTUS' training.

These Group Leaders should be attentive listeners, allowing the teens to express their feelings, thoughts, questions, and concerns as needed. The Group Leader's role primarily involves listening and assisting in the activities of the training. Group Leaders should be interspersed as a part of the group, supporting the facilitator, being respectful at all times, allowing the facilitator to function and adding to the flow of discussion.

c. Download a copy of the youth attendance form. Before the program begins, have teen participants sign in. After the program is completed, a copy should be sent to: the Office of Youth Ministry at [jeremiah1-7@archgh.org](mailto:jeremiah1-7@archgh.org) or fax: 713-741-8775 (Attn: OYM). Please retain a copy at the parish.

### **4. On-site procedures for Jeremiah 1:7 adult facilitator training**

a. Download and distribute one copy of the Facilitator Handbook and One Copy of the Youth Program Handbook for each approved adult participant. After the adult training is completed, send the names of adult facilitators to [jeremiah1-7@archgh.org](mailto:jeremiah1-7@archgh.org). These adults are approved to facilitate ONLY the youth *Jeremiah 1:7* program, NOT train other adult program facilitators. **Scheduling of the Jeremiah 1:7 program** (outside Archdiocesan scheduled sites) should be communicated to the OYM and follow all listed procedures.

## **Qualifications & Procedures for Certifying Adult Program Facilitators**

1. **Prospective adult facilitators** must receive approval from the Office of Youth Ministry before attending facilitator training or facilitating the Jeremiah 1:7 program.

**The approval is contingent upon a successful background check and other requirements listed below.**

2. A minimum of two adult facilitators are required to offer the program for teens. The following guidelines should serve in the process for training facilitators:

### **Prospective Facilitator Requirements:**

1. **The adult facilitator** should possess the following:

- experience with large and small group facilitating skills
- certified in the Archdiocesan human sexuality catechist formation/equivalency
- be VIRTUS-trained
- complete and return background check form to [jeremiah1-7@archgh.org](mailto:jeremiah1-7@archgh.org)
- have a youth-friendly demeanor.

2. **The adult co-facilitator** should possess the following:

- large and small group facilitating skills
- highly recommended to be certified in the Archdiocesan human sexuality catechist formation/equivalency
- be VIRTUS-trained
- complete and return background check form to [jeremiah1-7@archgh.org](mailto:jeremiah1-7@archgh.org)
- have a youth-friendly demeanor

**Note:** A co-facilitator without the Archdiocesan human sexuality formation can only facilitate a session with an adult facilitator who possesses this requirement.

Before registering for one of the Archdiocesan scheduled facilitator trainings, submit the completed background check form to the Office of Youth Ministry at [jeremiah1-7@archgh.org](mailto:jeremiah1-7@archgh.org). **Please allow a minimum of 2 weeks** for an OYM staff to complete the background check and sexuality catechesis checklist and respond to the request. With the notification of approval to participate in the facilitator training, the **Facilitator Program Guide** will be sent in an attachment. This guide should be printed and brought to the facilitator training.

All inquiries should be sent to the Office of Youth Ministry at [jeremiah1-7@archgh.org](mailto:jeremiah1-7@archgh.org)

## Jeremiah 1:7

### **Quick Checklist: Jeremiah 1:7 Program**

- ◇ Distribute to every high school participant: Volunteer Application, Parent Letter and Parent Permission forms.
- ◇ Collect Volunteer Application and Parent Permission forms from every high school participant before training.
- ◇ Notify the on-site training contact person with the number of high school participants at least 7 days before training date.
- ◇ Bring attendance form to the training site. Every high school participant signs the Jeremiah 1:7 attendance form before the training starts.
- ◇ Distribute one youth handout packet for every high school participant and adult small group leader.
- ◇ By the completion of training, have one Youth Code of Conduct form signed by every high school participant. (Keep this form on file at the parish).
- ◇ At the end of training, have every high school participant complete and return program evaluations to Program Facilitators.
- ◇ Following completion of *Jeremiah 1:7* program, each CYM or PCL who had youth participants in the training program is asked to forward the completed attendance form to OYM; (Retain one copy on file at the parish).

**High School Youth**  
**Volunteer Application**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Please list 2 names and phone numbers of adults for emergency contacts:

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent,

Your son/daughter has been invited to serve in ministry to children or youth under the age of 18. This ministry, which assists adults in the care of children or youth, involves special attention to their safety and well-being. The Catholic Church has been especially committed to this endeavor through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' establishment of a national charter to protect God's children. Articles 6, 10, and 12 of the USCCB charter provide for age appropriate formation to ensure that proper care and safety has been established in the care of children.

**USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People Essential Norms**

**ARTICLE 6.** There are to be clear and well-publicized diocesan/eparchial standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other paid personnel and volunteers of the Church in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people.

**ARTICLE 10.** The whole Church, especially the laity, at both the diocesan and national levels, needs to be engaged in maintaining safe environments in the Church for children and young people.

**ARTICLE 12.** Dioceses/eparchies are to maintain "safe environment" programs which the diocesan/eparchial bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, volunteers, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people. Dioceses/eparchies are to make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to children.

In that light, your son and daughter, as part of their role as a volunteer serving in regular contact with minors, has been asked to participate in a 2-hour formation program. The formation will be provided by trained facilitators acting on behalf of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

**The objectives of the 2-hour program, named *Jeremiah 1:7*, serve to help the high school person involved in ministry to minors to:**

1. understand the meaning of ministerial authority, stewardship, service and the effects of personal power in relationships
2. understand the meaning of sexual abuse
3. learn the meaning of personal and relational boundaries
4. acquire skills to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries
5. develop skills to recognize and report concerns and abuses for boundary violations with children and other teens

**Your written permission for your child to attend this formation is required.** Please direct any questions regarding this formation to your parish coordinator of this program. Thank you for your support in the care of God's children.

## Parent Release Form

**The Parent Release Form authorizes permission for high school youth to participate in *Jeremiah 1:7*, a 2-hour safe environment program for high school persons assisting adults with children under the age of 18.**

Name of Teen \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Please list 2 names and phone numbers of adults for emergency contacts:

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give my consent for my son/daughter to partake as a volunteer in ministries with children/youth under the age of 18 and to participate in the teen ministry training program for protecting God's children.

I understand that the formation my child will be attending will be facilitated by a trained facilitator serving in accordance with the guidelines established by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or guardian signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Youth Volunteer Code of Conduct**

As a community of faith we are committed to safeguard our children and youth, the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. The following rules and regulations reflect that commitment and are a condition of teenage volunteers in ministry.

**As a youth volunteer, I will:**

- Represent my Parish/School as an example of the Catholic Christian values it represents.
- Safeguard children and youth entrusted to my care at all times.
- Treat everyone: children, youth and adults, with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with a child or youth at church/school activities.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children or youth.
- Not use foul or inappropriate language in the presence of the children or youth serve.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in my relationship with the children and youth I serve.
- Refrain from giving inappropriate, personal gifts to children or youth.
- Report concerns about boundary issues to a responsible, safe adult.
- Report suspected abuse or neglect to a responsible, safe adult immediately.

**As a youth volunteer, I will not:**

- Risk the safety of, or violate the healthy boundaries of any child or youth in my care.
  - Smoke or use tobacco products on parish property and/or in the presence of children or youth.
  - Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at any time while volunteering.
  - Spank, shake, or slap children, youth or any other person.
  - Humiliate, ridicule, threaten or degrade children, youth or any other person.
  - Touch a child, youth or any person in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
  - Engage in any conduct that frightens or humiliates children, youth or any person.
  - Commit an illegal or immoral act in the presence of children and/or youth.
  - Use profanity or tell dirty jokes in the presence of children and/or youth.
  - Sexually harass any person, e.g., requests for sexual favors, sexually explicit statements.
- Take, post or exchange pictures of the children or youth with whom I volunteer without the permission from the individual's parent or guardian.

As a youth volunteer, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Code of Conduct. I commit to being an example of Catholic Christian love and support to those I am allowed to serve. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in my suspension or termination of my role as a youth volunteer.

**Name (print)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name (signature)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parish** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

