

## Q: What IS a Youth Advisor?

**A:** Each of us who interacts with youth is providing YOUTH MINISTRY. Within appropriate boundaries established by responsible adults such as you, youth are provided a forum to learn and to be able to gain experience in a protective environment.

There are different roles for adults working with youth at district YRUU functions. All adults participating in district YRUU functions must be registered for the event.

**Parents** provide transportation and act as the adult responsible for their own youth.

**Sponsors** provide transportation and act as the adult responsible for up to eight youth from their own congregation.

**Local Youth Advisors** are sponsored by their church, have undergone some local church advisor training and meet the local church requirements for their child safety policy (background check, etc.). Local Youth Advisors are expected to fully participate in the event and provide guidance regarding their local church policies.

**District Youth Advisors** have met the requirements for Local Youth Advisor, have attended Basic Youth Advisor Training, an LDC and an SDC, and have successfully completed the process to be designated as a District Youth Advisor, including a District background check.

**Advanced District Youth Advisors** have completed all of the above requirements, have attended Advanced Youth Advisor training, have verified current CPR/First Aid training and have 3 years recent experience working with youth in a SWUUC congregation.

Contact the DDFLD or any member of CYA for more information on becoming a District Youth Advisor.

We encourage you to apply our principles to all YRUU interactions.

*We covenant to affirm and promote*  
The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

## Q: I keep hearing about Youth Empowerment. What is it?

**A:** Youth empowerment is shared leadership within parameters set by adults. Youth empowerment does not mean that adults are disempowered or that there are no boundaries. It does mean youth and adults share power and responsibility, which creates leadership and decision making opportunities for youth.

One goal of youth programming is for our Unitarian Universalist religious communities, including adults and youth, to understand that all people, regardless of age, are whole persons with physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual aspects. As youth are empowered to be full members of UU communities, both they and their communities will be strengthened. The phrase we use is:

**Power shared is power multiplied!**

## The Adept Advisor

A youth-empowering advisor does not usually control outcomes via direct action, but is nevertheless ultimately responsible for the actions of the group.

This responsibility may lead to a kind of anxiety that can only be calmed through the profound knowing that it will be okay even if things sometimes go wrong.

The most empowering solution is to actively create a team environment of trust and accountability with the goal of building a process and atmosphere where:

- Advisors are expected to set limits, especially where safety is concerned;
- Youth regulate behavior;
- Issues are addressed and remedied by the youth themselves with the adults as advisors;
- Youth will learn from both positive and negative events;
- The process is just as important as the outcome;
- Youth and adults feel safe expressing displeasure or concern to the group;
- Confidentiality is respected within the limits of the law and your church's child/youth protection policy;
- The group can act creatively, whimsically, sometimes even outrageously, without unnerving the adults.
- Youth and adults come together to foster faith development.

## A Delicate Balance

The role of being an advisor is often tricky business. Both composition and dynamics of the group change with each successive generation, which in youth terms is every two to four years. In order to be able to provide appropriate and protective spaces for youth, we must depend upon our own collective wisdom passed among adult advisors and youth leaders who are actively participating.

You as an advisor must constantly assess the status of your group to determine how much you need to lead or advise. As your group is learning to lead themselves, you may be required to more actively model leadership skills. While never abdicating ultimate responsibility, you may step back as your group matures and develops. If you lead too much your group may be disempowered. A group that has achieved balance has achieved shared leadership.

## Your Congregation

YRUU does not exist in a vacuum within your congregation. Here are some things you might want to learn about:

- History of youth/adult interactions
- Procedures for communications, calendar approval for events and fundraisers, room reservations, and reimbursement of expenses
- Child and Youth Protection and/or Safety Policies
- The staff and adult leadership

## Six Components of a Balanced Youth Program

- Worship
- Youth and Adult Relations
- Community Building
- Social Action
- Learning
- Leadership

Each youth group should strive to balance their programming to include these elements. Encourage the group to take an “inventory” of the types of activities the group has been doing the past year.

DO NOT DESPAIR if the activities are not evenly distributed. Listen to the youth and you will find these components overlap throughout the program. Opportunities to include new activities will abound, but remember – success will only come when youth interests lead where the group goes.

## Five Steps to

### Building Community

- Bonding
- Opening Up
- Affirming
- Stretching
- Deeper Sharing and Goal Setting

Each group will move back and forth through different stages at different times, with changing youth leadership and membership. Deeper sharing is not an end goal. Read more about these steps by visiting [www.uua.org/YRUU/resources.html](http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources.html)

## Committee on Youth Advisors (CYA)

This committee of the SWUUC Board was formed in part to support adults in ministry with youth. Contacting this committee can provide you with a depth of experience and resources. If you have questions, suggestions or concerns, you may reach the CYA at 1-800-737-9882.

## YRUU ABCs

### CYA (Committee on Youth Advisors)

Provides leadership, support, and resources for adults working with youth

### DDLFD (District Director for Lifespan Faith Development)

The individual who administers the Religious Education program

**GA (General Assembly)** The annual business meeting of the UUA, to which congregations send delegates.

### LDC (Leadership Development Conference)

This is held yearly in the SW district to help youth learn leadership skills.

### MRE (Minister of Religious Education)

An ordained individual who administers the Religious Education program

### OWL (Our Whole Lives) A sexuality

education curriculum.

**Rally A** youth conference held in the SW district

**SC (Steering Committee)** The executive committee of the YRUU Youth Council

### SDC (Spirituality Development Conference)

This is held yearly in the SW district to help youth learn spirituality & worship skills.

### SWUUC (Southwestern Unitarian

Universalist Conference) this district

**YAC (Youth Adult Committee)** A common name for local and district youth governing organizations.

**YAT** Youth Advisor Training

**YATF** Youth Advisor Task Force

**YCR (Youth Council Representative)** Any of the district representatives and at-large representatives who serve on Youth Council.

**Youth Council** is the governing body of Continental YRUU

**YPS (Youth Program Specialist)** A youth who works in the YRUU office in Boston

**YRUU** Young Religious Unitarian

Universalists

8/31/06

## Your Support Network

In your congregation

- Develop a good relationship with staff and leadership
- Encourage your Board to adequately budget for youth ministry

In the Southwest District

- Contact the CYA to establish a mentor relationship with at least one experienced advisor
- Attend rallies
- Attend trainings - LDC, SDC, YAT (Encourage your congregation to budget for these expenses)

Continentially

- Call the youth office; talk to a YPS
- Look for resources on the web

## Resources Available

### Regular Publications of the UUA:

- REACH Packet
- [www.uua.org/re/reach/index.html](http://www.uua.org/re/reach/index.html)

- Synapse

[www.uua.org/YRUU/synapse/index.html](http://www.uua.org/YRUU/synapse/index.html)

### Websites:

- [www.uua.org/YRUU/](http://www.uua.org/YRUU/)
- [www.uua.org/YRUU/resources.html](http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources.html)
- [www.uua.org/YRUU/yatf/](http://www.uua.org/YRUU/yatf/) (Youth Advisor Task Force)
- [www.swuuc.org](http://www.swuuc.org)
- [www.swuucyruu.org](http://www.swuucyruu.org)
- <http://swuuc.org/about/policy/youthprote> ctpolicy.rtf

### Listserve

- [www.uua.org/lists/](http://www.uua.org/lists/) YRUU-L
- [www.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/yruu-l](http://www.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/yruu-l) Advisor-L
- [www.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/advisor-l](http://www.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/advisor-l) SWUUC Advisors
- [swd-youth-advisors@lists.uua.org](mailto:swd-youth-advisors@lists.uua.org) And many other lists at [www.uua.org/mailman/listinfo](http://www.uua.org/mailman/listinfo)

### District Director for Lifespan Faith Development (DDLFD)

Jennifer Nichols

6720 Brentwood Stair Rd  
Fort Worth, TX 76112  
(800) 737-9882

# Are you a NEW Youth Advisor?



Here's your –

# NEW ADVISOR

*QUICK*

*START*

# PAMPHLET

## A Resource for New Youth Advisors

Produced by the

Southwestern Unitarian

Universalist Conference

Committee for Youth Advisors

To be distributed by DREs,

Ministers and

RE Committees