

Thriving in Unity 2.0
Benchmark 6: Youth and Family Ministry (YFM) Program Assessment—1

Benchmark 6: Assess Your Youth and Family Ministry Program

The Art & Spirit of Youth & Family

Serving families is not only part of our reason for being in spiritual community, it is also essential to our long-term success in creating a world that works for all. If our congregations begin aging without new faces joining in, we may eventually experience a decline in future growth potential. Thriving ministries offer congregants a strong Youth & Family Ministry (YFM) program to support parents in the important task of teaching and modeling spiritual principles to our youth. We have a message that changes lives at any age!

Getting Started

This benchmark provides you a comprehensive assessment tool to discover the areas of excellence in your youth and family programming as well as the opportunities for growth. Youth and family ministry in Unity encompasses young people from infants to 18 years of age and the people around them that create their families. The goal is to provide a safe and nurturing environment that promotes spiritual growth, physical and emotional health, and positive self-esteem. This assessment tool will help you to celebrate your successes and find new ways to enhance your programming by giving you a snapshot of your current program's expression.

Terms to keep in mind while reviewing the assessment:

- Uniteens: ministry for middle-school youth (11 to 13 years)
- YFM: Youth and Family Ministry
- YOU: Youth of Unity, a ministry for high school youth (14 to 18 years)

Action Steps

1. Look over the entire assessment tool on the following pages.
2. Create a team to oversee the assessment process. The team should include staff, parents, YFM volunteers, a board representative, and a YOUer.
3. Complete an honest and in-depth assessment of where your program stands.
4. The team reports its findings to the ministry leadership.
5. Implement the Guest Evaluation following this section for first-timers with families. (Optional)
6. Take the required action steps and identify additional steps for future action in your youth and family ministry.
7. Complete the Benchmark Tracking Sheet and submit it to the association home office (Attn: Communications) as soon as you have completed the benchmark. You will find tracking sheets in this book, as well as on the web as a fill-in form (www.unity.org/thrive).

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This assessment is divided into several sections. To complete it, answer the following questions, make note of required action steps (if any) and report to church leadership.

Glossary of terms used in this assessment

Uniteens: ministry for middle-school youth, usually 11–13 years of age

YFM: Youth and Family Ministry

YOU: Youth of Unity, a ministry for high school ages, usually 14–18.

Planning and Support

Item	Yes	No	Required Action
Do you have a copy of the Youth and Family Ministry Guide? (See www.UnityWorldwideMinistries.org or call 816.524.7414 and ask for the ordering department)			Order for your ministry #6010 (\$36.95)
Do you know where to find past issues of <i>Education Links</i> ?			Go to www.unity.org/el
Are you signed up to receive the online bi-weekly update, <i>The Path</i> ? www.unity.org/enews			Sign up for this free resource
Do you know the names and contact information for your Regional Education Consultants and your International Youth Coordinators?			Get information and connect
Have you visited the Youth and Family web pages on www.UnityWorldwideMinistries.org ?			Review website offerings

Programming

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Is there a clear vision statement for the YFM that is shared by the church leadership?			
Is the mission and purpose statement of the YFM clearly articulated?			
Is the YFM program funded appropriately for the organization's mission?			
Does the YFM have a budget?			
Is the budget reviewed by the board of trustees and minister?			
Are the YFM activities scheduled on the church calendar?			
Do the YFM coordinator and minister meet regularly?			
Does the YFM coordinator communicate to parents and the congregation?			
Do you have family events and/or parenting classes?			

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Curriculum

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Is the Living Curriculum philosophy being used? (See UnityWorldwideMinistries.org for a description of the Living Curriculum philosophy.)			
Have you chosen a curriculum, or curricula, that reflect your church's mission and vision?			
Does each curriculum utilize multiple intelligences?			
Is each curriculum used age-appropriate?			
Does it engage both boys and girls?			
Does it demonstrate Unity principles?			
Does it honor family diversity?			
Is the curriculum teacher-friendly?			
Does it utilize supplies that are easily acquired and within the budget?			
Do you have special holiday lessons and activities?			

Environment for welcoming families

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Is the YFM information easy to find on the church's website?			
Are there easy-to-read signs clearly marking the church entrance and children's ministry areas?			
Is the YFM ministry area easy to find in the church?			
Are greeters informed and helpful in directing families to the YFM area?			
Are printed materials containing information about YFM ministry easily accessible?			
Are the classrooms labeled?			
Are classrooms in reasonably close proximity to each other?			
Are classrooms in reasonably close proximity to the sanctuary?			
Are visitors able to identify the YFM ministry director, youth minister, or other designated staff members?			
Are visiting children welcomed and identified as visitors in each classroom?			
Is the sign-in area prepared (materials available for each event)?			
Is parent contact information on file?			
Is snack information clearly posted?			

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Sunday morning classrooms

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Are the classrooms ready 15 minutes before service time?			
Is there a pre-session activity?			
Are the teachers ready to receive students 15 minutes before service time?			
Have they prepared a lesson ahead of time?			
Is there a prayer time for teachers and volunteers before each church service?			
Is there a child's prayer request form?			
Is a prayer chaplain available?			
Is there a time of prayer/meditation in each class?			
Is there a class routine that helps give structure to the hour?			
Is there consistent program implementation?			
Is there a planned opening for each session?			
Is music incorporated?			
Does it include time for the youth to connect?			
Are heart agreements used?			
Are the heart agreements current?			
Did the youth help create the heart agreements?			
Have the youth and teachers signed the heart agreements?			
Do the teachers have the lesson supplies they need?			
Are the supplies organized and easy to find?			
Are old supplies recycled or discarded?			
Are the children and teens actively engaged in their classes?			
Do teachers check to determine if the youth understand the lesson and its practical life application?			

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Uniteens (11 - 13 years)

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Do you have a copy of the Teen Ministry Handbook?			
Have the Uniteen sponsors read the handbook?			
Do the Uniteens attend local and/or regional Uniteen retreats?			
Is there a procedure for event paper work to be completed and processed?			
Is participation in service projects available and encouraged?			
Do you have a policy about Uniteen fundraisers?			
Are the current fundraisers working?			
Do the Uniteens have the funds to do the activities they desire?			
Are there social events in addition to the regional retreats?			
Do you have a Rites of Passage program for graduating Uniteens?			

YOU (Youth of Unity 14 - 18 years)

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Do you have a copy of the Teen Ministry Handbook?			
Have the YOU sponsors read the handbook?			
Do the YOUers attend regional rallies and international YOU events?			
Is there a procedure for event paper work to be completed and processed?			
Is participation in service projects available and encouraged?			
Do you have a policy about YOU fundraisers?			
Are the current fundraisers working?			
Do the YOUers have the funds to do the activities they desire?			
Are there social events in addition to the regional retreats?			
Do the youth take appropriate levels of leadership both in and out of the classroom?			
Is there a teen representative on the board?			
Is there a process for teens to ask questions and give input to the board?			
Is there a process in place for the next level of participation in the ministry for graduating YOUers?			

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Intergenerational Activities

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Are programs in place that encourage and support interaction of congregants of all ages?			
Are there recurring multigenerational activities that happen with intention?			
Are there times for multigenerational play (i.e.: picnics, plays, family activities and outings?)			

Staffing/Volunteers

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Is there a list describing all YFM volunteer ministry positions available?			
Are the positions regularly evaluated and updated?			
Do volunteer descriptions include what is expected of the volunteer and how long they will serve in that position?			
Are people given an accurate picture of how much time and effort it will take to fulfill the requirements of the position they are being recruited for?			
Do the YFM volunteers understand how their work contributes to the mission of the church?			
Is there sufficient staff? Are all the positions filled?			
Are personal invitations extended to prospective YFM volunteers?			
Is there an application process used and followed consistently?			
Are references checked and documented?			
Are background checks run on all volunteers and staff working with children and updated every 2-3 years?			
Is there an established procedure for conducting one-on-one interview with potential volunteers?			
Is a volunteer orientation and training program in place?			
Do you provide volunteers with a written handbook regarding the policies and procedures?			
Is sacred safety training available for YFM volunteers?			
Do volunteers understand how your church defines and practices confidentiality and privacy?			

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Staffing/Volunteers (cont.)

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Do YFM volunteers have an opportunity to “try out” a position before making a commitment to serve?			
Is there a current commitment statement for each team member on file?			
Is there a performance review process in place for volunteers?			
Are complaints or concerns about volunteers’ behavior handled immediately?			
Are there written procedures for terminating volunteers?			

Training/Meetings/Development

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Are meetings/trainings held on a regular basis?			
Are meetings organized? Engaging? Well-attended?			
Are the teachers and minister kept up-to-date?			
Is the staff trained in YFM practices?			
Is the staff trained in Sacred Safety?			
Is the staff trained in how to use the Bible?			
Is the staff trained in multiple intelligences?			
Is the staff trained in Unity teachings?			
Is the staff trained in first-aid procedures?			
Is the training current?			
Is there a planned, intentional calendar in place for group recognition events and/or a system for recognizing volunteers individually?			
Do volunteers have someone available to encourage and assist them in developing and growing in their roles (a mentor)?			
Are volunteers given an opportunity to give feedback and suggest changes that would improve the position?			
Are volunteers given an opportunity to change positions on a regular basis?			
Is there an exit interview process in place?			
Are records kept in the YFM of the volunteer service of each member?			
Are regular evaluations of our YFM ministry goals, objectives and action plans done?			
Is there regular planning for YFM leaders to identify needs and establish goals?			

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Sacred Safety

Policies and Procedures

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Does the ministry have a Sacred Safety Policies and Procedures (SSPP) manual (examples available on UnityWorldwideMinistries.org)?			
Is the above manual available to parents and YFM teachers?			
Do you provide SSPP training for volunteers?			
Are the board members and other church staff trained in SSPP practices?			
Are the SSPP formally reviewed on a regular basis?			
Do you diligently adhere to the SSPP practices?			
Are emergency numbers posted and easily accessible?			
Are contact numbers posted for emergency utility issues?			
Does the SSPP manual include procedures for evacuation?			
Does the SSPP manual include procedures for severe weather?			
Does the SSPP manual include procedures for Shelter In Place (missing child, suspicious person)?			
Does the SSPP manual include procedures for medical emergency?			
Is an incident report process for volunteers in place?			
Is there an adequate emergency communication system for informing parents, staff, adult service, other classes, etc?			
Are there first-aid kits? Do the kits have current and appropriate supplies?			
Are the fire extinguishers labeled, accessible and does the staff know how to use them?			
Are volunteers and staff aware of the location of utility safety mechanisms, i.e. water shut off valves, alarm systems and circuit breakers?			
Do you have room usage guidelines?			
Are harmful supplies stored safely? (anything that would be harmful when ingested or skin/eye contact)			

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Policies and Procedures (cont.)

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Are youth adequately supervised according to the time, place and activity?			
Do you have a policy of two-adults per room?			
Are there guidelines on who is allowed in the classrooms on Sunday and/or during the week?			
Are attendance records kept?			
Are allergies noted on records?			
Are old records retrievable?			
Is there a registration form completed for each youth?			
Is this information accessible to teachers who have a need to know?			
Is there a sign-in procedure?			
Is it followed, reviewed, communicated?			
Is it used outside Sunday classes?			
Is there a medical release completed for each youth?			
Is the medical release accessible to the adults who have the need to know?			
Are permission slips used for attendance at events?			
Are pictures only taken of youth with photo releases?			

Insurance/Travel

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Do you have general liability coverage for the volunteer program? Who is covered and when?			
Is the liability coverage reviewed periodically?			
Have you assessed your programs for, and are you within, the level of liability coverage required?			
Have you developed a relationship with your insurance representative and know best practices?			
Does the church have adequate insurance coverage for youth on playground during the week?			
Does the church have adequate insurance coverage for everyone on grounds at anytime?			
Does the church have adequate insurance coverage for outside groups using or renting space?			
Are these groups aware of your policy and procedures for young people?			

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Insurance for Drivers

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Does the ministry have insurance that covers volunteer drivers?			
Is it primary or secondary to the drivers' insurance?			
Are the drivers involved informed of this information?			
Are all vehicle types covered, including 15-passenger vans?			
Do you check for current driver's licenses and keep copies of current insurance on file for volunteers driving their own vehicles?			
Are volunteers made aware that they may need to notify their personal auto insurance carrier of their volunteer driving activities?			
Do you check driving records?			
Does each driver have all the appropriate forms for youth and adults in the vehicle?			
Does each car have emergency kits for weather and driving conditions?			

Playground (This applies if the church has a designated outdoor play area, especially if it has play equipment.)

Item	Yes	No	Priority of Goal
Has the playground been checked for cleanliness?			
Are there regular inspections of the area and play equipment?			
Is the area fenced?			
Are there rules for use (posted, trained, and followed)?			

Congregant Input

Use the form that follows to get additional information on your YFM program from the congregant perspective.

Guest Evaluation

In assessing your youth and family ministry, you may want to have input from “fresh eyes.” Below is an evaluation form directed at those who are new to your ministry, or for whom this is their first time at the church. Ask each family to fill in and mail back in your stamped self-addressed envelope provided with the evaluation.

You may decide to add some questions particular to your ministry. Remember that the fewer questions you ask, the more likely it is that the form will be filled out and returned.

Guest Evaluation

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1. The youth and family ministry area was inviting and welcoming	1	2	3	4	5
2. I was greeted immediately during my visit to the youth and family ministry area	1	2	3	4	5
3. I was informed about the:					
a. Vision/mission of the youth and family ministry	1	2	3	4	5
b. Morning schedule	1	2	3	4	5
c. Sign-in and registration procedures	1	2	3	4	5
d. Signing-out process	1	2	3	4	5
e. Sacred Safety Procedures	1	2	3	4	5
4. I was consulted about:					
a. Snacks/allergies/health concerns	1	2	3	4	5
b. Parent contact information	1	2	3	4	5
5. I felt secure leaving my child while attending worship	1	2	3	4	5
6. My family would enjoy visiting this community again	1	2	3	4	5
7. My family was thanked for coming, and invited to return	1	2	3	4	5
8. My child was welcomed by the teacher and children	1	2	3	4	5
9. My child had a good experience during their class	1	2	3	4	5
10. My child was concerned about something during the morning	1	2	3	4	5
11. What was your child's favorite part of the morning? _____					
12. What did you find the most helpful? _____					
13. Do you have any recommendations?					