

Welcome...to the wonderful world of Youth Conferences!

For the purposes of this pamphlet, the terms "youth advisor" & "advisor" refer to adults who are present and responsible for the youth at a weekend-long youth conference, regardless of their role with their home congregation's YRUU group.

This pamphlet is designed to give first-time advisors at Mid-South District Youth Cons an idea of what to expect, and what is expected of them.

A Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

Code of Ethics - standard UUA document that adults working with YRUU are required to sign.

Con - short for Youth Conference

MSD - the Mid-South District, the district defining the area including Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Middle Tennessee and parts of the Florida panhandle.

Spirit Committee - a committee of youth and adults who deal with keeping community spirit alive at Cons. They also deal with rule infractions and make decisions about consequences for breaking community.

Synapse - a magazine by and for youth, published by the Youth Office of the UUA. Available online at www.uua.org.

Touch Group - A small group formed for the purpose of building community at a Con...generally including both youth and adults.

UUA - The Unitarian Universalist Association

Worship - a ritual ascribing worth to a concept or theme; some would say the most powerful or meaningful element of a youth conference.

YAC - The Youth/Adult Committee, the policy making group for local or district groups.

Youth Office - The department of the UUA devoted to Youth Programming.

YRUU - Young Religious Unitarian Universalists

For Further Reference:

WWW.UUA.ORG/MSD

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YRUU in the MIDSOUTH DISTRICT

Advice for First Time Conference Advisors

A resource for local YRUU groups and adults who support them.



A Con can be seen as a dynamic organism with a life of its own. It requires steering and energy from youth, together with insight and support from the adults. Advisors work in conjunction with youth, especially the youth leaders, as a team, caring for each other & the community's needs.

Event Planning

Information about Youth Cons should come to your Minister and DRE of your home congregation. There is also information about upcoming Cons on the MSD Website at www.uua.org/msd. Registration forms should be mailed in two weeks prior to the Conference.

One of your first questions might be about driving. Many church insurance policies require the individual driver to provide primary coverage. The host church should supply you with directions or a map to the site. Use your time on the road well...road trips are great opportunities to build youth/adult relationships.

Once At the Con

Many a Con will begin with an extended Registration & Check-In time. This will be followed by group building games of some sort. Most Cons will start late to accommodate travelers. You can expect a general orientation for all Con participants once everyone has arrived. Most Con rules apply equally to adults and youth...these will all be reinforced during the Orientation. You can expect a more specific adult orientation and a short Worship to take place before "lights out".

Sleeping arrangements are sleeping bags on the floor. If you have an air mattress...bring it! There will be a room for women, one for men, and perhaps an all night co-ed room. An adult must sleep in each room. There are always quiet rooms available for youth and adults who go to bed early. There is often a separate sleeping area for adults who have traveled long distances and need sleep. The host church will provide local adults to stay up late with the youth. Usually, the adults will take 2-4 hour shifts to keep the "all nighters" supervised.

A typical Saturday: Three meals, Workshops (sign up for your choice), Free Time, Touch Group Meetings, a Saturday night event (often a youth talent show) and an intense evening Worship.

Sunday has clean-up time; final Worship; good-byes and evaluations. Expect most youth to be exhausted!

The Basic Responsibilities:

Every youth attending a MSD Con must have an adult advisor arranged prior to the conference. Those without adult advisors will be turned away at the door. Youth shall:

- * Follow all Conference rules.
- * Make regular check-ins with their advisor throughout the Con.
- * Clean up after themselves and respect the space provided by the host congregation.
- * Speak up if you see activity that is not safe or appropriate for a Conference.
- * Have fun!!!

These adult advisors shall do all of the above, as well as:

- * Be aware of, monitor, and be prepared to respond to medical conditions or allergies of your youth.
- * Keep emergency notification numbers for parents of sponsored youth.
- * Attend an Adult Orientation and sign agreement to the UUA's Adult Code of Ethics.

Nowhere does it state that you are the primary enforcer of the rules. Adults and youth alike should be empowered to either confront any behavior that makes them uncomfortable, or to approach a youth leader or adult advisor with their concerns. Rule infractions are addressed by the Spirit Committee, a group of youth and adults at the conference. If you see a rule being broken, notify a member of the Spirit Committee. Leave it to them to sweat the serious stuff, and DON'T SWEAT THE LITTLE THINGS YOURSELF!

You are also not in the position of cleaning up after the youth. You can pitch in if everyone is cleaning up, but the youth need to be primarily responsible for clean-up. Helping to give gentle reminders and encouragement can be more helpful than doing all the work yourself.

Common Questions from Advisors at Cons:

Do I have to participate?

It is expected that adults participate in the Conference activities. There will be advisor meetings and workshops of interest to adults, giving the adults time to talk, share and learn about UU youth and youth programming. Most Cons require at least one adult to be present at all Con activities.

Who do I go to if I have a Question?

Most Cons have a "Dean", the primary youth planner. The Dean and their adult support are generally introduced at the Orientation, as are other members of the Planning Group. Seek them out, or talk to a member of the Spirit Committee if there is a problem.

How late do I need to stay up?

If you need sleep, take an early shift for supervising the youth. When you go to bed, be sure to notify the youth in your care. Make certain that you get the sleep you need to drive safely!!

What about sleeping arrangements?

Separate accommodations for males & females should be available. An adult must be present in all sleeping rooms. Often, there will be a "quiet room" for adults only available as well.

Can I leave and come back?

It is preferable for adults to stay for the whole conference; if you must leave, you must inform the designated person, and ensure that the youth you are responsible for know that you're leaving, and have another adult designated as their advisor in your absence.

Adults who participate in Cons come to know YRUUers in a whole different way! Enjoy the experience...and plan to do it again!!!