

Ten Steps to Building Hispanic Youth Ministry

Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things and turn it into an attractive means of evangelization. Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity. – Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 131

“Frequently, the young Hispanic feels somewhat out of place in a North American cultural environment. For this reason it is elemental to our efforts to try to discern in particular cases how strong the sources of Hispanic cultures are in our youth groups. We do this for the purpose of helping them create for themselves a comfortable space.” –Archbishop Flores, Detroit, MI

1. Support the formation of your Hispanic youth by meeting the youth and their families where they are in their faith journey. Parishes should not force integration or assimilation but foster *acculturation* as stated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
2. Develop culturally responsive and inclusive programming that responds to the particular needs and circumstances of Hispanic teens and their families (*Renewing the Vision*).
3. Offer a culturally Hispanic youth program. A bicultural bridge-builder is necessary if a DYM is not able themselves to be that bridge-builder. If multiple youth programs exist within the same parish, DYMs will plan routine events or activities, several times a semester, where the two programs will meet together.
4. Ensure that all youth programs have equal share to the resources of the parish.
5. Work to involve Hispanic youth in all the same diocesan, national, and international events that non-Hispanic youth are invited to attend. Economic disparities will be considered in the planning.
6. Attempt to keep Hispanic parents informed about the youth ministry program. Regular updates for parents, both verbal and written, should be made available in both English and in Spanish. This allows Hispanic parents to understand what their teen is doing, makes them more comfortable with the DYM and the programs, and helps to keep the Hispanic youth involved in the programs.
7. Plan around the schedule of the entire family. This may require an additional activity for parents and younger siblings. Involving the family as much as possible will ensure greater attendance of Hispanic youth within a program. The family unit is very important within the Hispanic culture.
8. Meetings where Hispanic youth are present should allow for the use of both Spanish and English. Generally all conversations and presentations will take place in English. Prayers

however may need to be said in the language most teens are comfortable with, which often times is the language they first learned their prayers in (Spanish).

9. If you're unfamiliar with basic prayers in Spanish (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be - Padre Nuestro, Dios te Salve Maria, Gloria) – learn them! This is an easy way to connect with youth who feel more comfortable praying in Spanish.
10. Allow for a bilingual setting. Volunteers working with Hispanic teens feel more comfortable knowing they can speak to the teens in Spanish even if the teens respond in English.