

Small Group Adult Facilitator Expectations

1. Affirm the teachings of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

As a representative of our parish, your role is to help teens trust in the authority and teachings of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Recognizing that teens do not want to be told what to believe, you will facilitate dialogue and discussion. It is important for teens to know that your faith is important to you but that you don't judge them for what they believe or don't understand. You accept them for who they are but you also provide encouragement for them to grow in their faith.

2. Strengthen the authority of parents.

Teenagers naturally 'push back' against their parents as they are in the process of establishing their independence. This can be a challenging time for parent and they need to know that you are an ally and that you desire to strengthen the relationship they have with their teens. It is also important for teens to know that what they share in the group will not get back to their parents or peers outside the group, unless they share something that falls into the area of "mandatory reporting." This confidentiality gives them the freedom to open up about thoughts, doubts and struggles. They may even share struggles they have in their relationship with their parents. You want to listen patiently to them while giving their parents the benefit of the doubt.

3. Engage parents.

A key way to help strengthen the relationship parents have with their teens is to give parents the opportunity to get involved in supporting youth ministry. Serving on the youth ministry committee, serving snacks and mingling with the group and other parents for 10-15 minutes communicates care while giving the group privacy during each session. Your role as a facilitator is to encourage your group members to communicate with their parents. You also want to make sure you communicate with parents by providing them with the Parent Sheet after each session.

4. Be a facilitator, not a teacher.

The provided materials help you introduce topics and facilitate discussion. You should become genuinely interested in what teens have to say and try to understand and their frame of reference. Avoid making judgments about the ideas or convictions. When their ideas/convictions conflict with the Church teaching, respectfully ask, "have you thought about it this way?" While you want to make sure that the teens do most of the talking, you also want to share how the topic of the session has personally impacted your life. Your personal experience is more powerful than teaching. Remember, teens don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

5. Be a mentor, not their parent.

Parents have the responsibility of reprimanding their children and giving them direction. As a mentor, you do not have this responsibility and this a powerful leverage in helping them grow. For example, they may share with the group a movie they watched that their parents would not approve of. This is a great opportunity to dialogue with them about the movie and help them evaluate their decision. You can ask how you might be able to help them revisit these temptations in the future and even build accountability around media use within the group. Your role is to encourage them to do good rather than correct them or be disappointed in them when they fall. However, you do need to use your authority to enforce the rules of the small group: respecting one another, allowing everyone the opportunity to share, and maintaining confidentiality with what is shared.

6. Expect to be blessed.

Don't underestimate the impact you can have by simply taking a genuine interest in the lives of teenagers and their parents. The research overwhelmingly shows that the majority of adults active in their faith today, had three key influencers in their adolescence: faith sharing in the home; relationships with other caring, faith-filled adults; and peer support. You will be blessed in these relationships and your generosity will have eternal significance!