

Archdiocese of Cincinnati
Catholic Youth Athletics Initiative



The Role of Spiritual Liaison

Introduction

See below for what the *Charter on Catholic Youth Athletics* says about Spiritual Liaisons. The Task Force that developed the Charter envisioned a person whose job it would be to pay special attention to the mission, and to help everyone else in the athletics organization stay focused on it:

Catholic Youth Athletics furthers the mission of the Catholic Church by providing sports experiences for youth that are firmly rooted in the Catholic faith tradition, based on the goals of Catholic youth ministry, and aligned with the evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church. (Charter section 1.2)

Sometimes hospitals and schools designate a “mission effectiveness” officer, and the Spiritual Liaison provides a similar kind of service to athletics organizations. The role isn’t so much to provide the spiritual and religious components to the athletics program, but to encourage everyone in the organization to take responsibility for the spiritual and religious components, including officers, board members, coaches, parents, fans and young athletes.

Spiritual Liaisons will work closely not only with the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry, but also the Archdiocesan Youth Athletics Commission and other Spiritual Liaisons to provide the resources that people in the athletics organization will need to keep it closely aligned with the mission. That means that Spiritual Liaisons can develop their own materials and approaches, but they won’t have to do so. The Archdiocese and its leaders will support Spiritual Liaisons by providing what they’ll need for the role.

The bottom line: Spiritual Liaisons must know, understand, and be in full support of the above mission statement, and be willing to encourage and support the rest of the organization in living it out.

Snapshot of a Spiritual Liaison

If you’ve been recruited as the Spiritual Liaison of your athletics organization, your first question will probably be, “What do I have to do?”

Firstly, you don’t have to be a saint, but you do have to be a practicing Catholic whose faith really means something to you. It won’t do for Spiritual Liaisons to be occasional Sunday Mass attenders, or people

who behave in ways contrary to what we Catholics believe and strive to live out. Ideally, a Spiritual Liaison will “walk the walk, and talk the talk” of a Catholic follower of Jesus.

Secondly, you’ll need to attend the Spiritual Liaison gatherings provided by the Archdiocese. That’s the main way that you’ll receive important information and access all the different resources for you to make available to your coaches, teams and families. At these gatherings you’ll hear about what other Spiritual Liaisons are doing, what their challenges and best practices are, and what things we’re learning across the Archdiocese and even the country. Gatherings of Spiritual Liaisons will normally happen 2-3 times a year.

Thirdly, you’ll be responsible for bringing those resources back to your organization and making them available to your people. For instance, there will be special prayer cards for parents and coaches, and it will be your job to get those to the right people, and encourage them to use them.

Fourthly, when it comes to assessing how well coaches are doing, your job is to help with taking stock of the youth ministry aspects of their role. Specifically, if a coach needs help in living up to the mission of Catholic Youth Athletics, your job may be to provide some guidance, suggestions or even charitable correction. Not to worry, you’ll receive resources and assistance in this.

Fifthly, your job in your organization’s grievance procedures is to be a listener and a peacemaker, always lifting up the standards of our faith – that we are merciful and forgive seventy times seven times, and that we also steadfastly protect the well-being of our children and the beliefs and practices of our faith.

Finally and ideally, our Spiritual Liaisons will model and lift up faith, hope and love in their roles and in their organizations. Your job isn’t to be a spiritual/religious judge or nudge, although sometimes the role will require you to remind people of what Catholic Youth Athletics is – and isn’t – all about. Mostly the role will involve providing resources, encouragement, ideas and suggestions so as to build up the ministry mission of Catholic Youth Athletics.

There are a few other specific responsibilities detailed below that can help round out this snapshot. Keep in mind that you’re not alone in this role, that all our athletics organizations are required to have a Spiritual Liaison, and that the Commission and the Archdiocese will be assisting you along the way.

Thanks for your generosity and willingness to say yes to this vital new role in our athletics organizations!

The Spiritual Liaison Role in the Charter (see section 6.2.14)

The Role of the Spiritual Liaison. As noted above, athletics organizations should have a designated Spiritual Liaison (the “Spiritual Liaison”) as follows:

- (a) Selection:

- (i) Catholic: The Spiritual Liaison should be an active Catholic in good standing with the Church. The Spiritual Liaison may be ordained, religious or lay, a paid staff member, or a volunteer.
 - (ii) Appointed by Pastor or principal: In a parish, the Spiritual Liaison should be appointed by the Pastor and report directly to him or his designee. In a non-parish school, the Spiritual Liaison should be appointed by the principal or his or her designee.
- (b) Duties:
- (i) Communication: Responsible for communicating the spirit, mission, goals and principles of this Charter to all in the athletics organization.
 - (ii) Meetings and monitoring: Ensure that the annual coaches' ministry meeting(s) is (are) scheduled. Attend the annual coaches' ministry meeting(s) and monitor attendance at such meetings by the coaches.
 - (iii) Promote ministry spirit: Assist coaches in implementing a spirit of ministry, as reviewed annually at the Coaches' ministry meeting, in practices and games throughout the season.
 - (iv) Evaluations: Participate in end-of-year evaluations of coaches and discussions regarding their return for future years.
 - (v) Resources: Provide resources, including prayers and other resources, to assist coaches in their youth athletics ministry.
 - (vi) Listening: Be a listening ear outside of the athletics organization for coaches, parents or athletes.
 - (vii) Develop guidelines: In consultation with the Pastor, or principal of a non-parish school, and athletics organization leadership, establish any guidelines to be fulfilled by coaches or teams to integrate Catholic/Christian faith and spirituality more fully into the athletics programming.
 - (viii) Grievance Committee: The Spiritual Liaison should be a member of the athletics organization Grievance Committee.
- (c) Evaluation: An annual review of the Spiritual Liaison should take place with the Pastor, or principal of a non-parish school, or designee, with input from coaches and athletics organization leadership.