

**POLICY MANUAL FOR  
BEGINNING EXPERIENCE  
TEAMS**

**2016 EDITION**



# POLICY MANUAL FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS

2016 EDITION

Published by Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

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This Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams is intended for use by peer ministry teams affiliated with Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and authorized and trained to present Beginning Experience® programs.

The policies contained in this manual guide the establishment, administration and operation of these peer ministry teams in accordance with the ministry's vision and mission, ethical standards, and applicable law.

*Beginning Experience® is a registered trademark of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.*



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**POLICY MANUAL FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS**

**SECTION A:**

**MINISTRY ORGANIZATION**



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## **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE® VISION**

A hurting people, healed, transformed, and free again to love themselves, others, and God.

## **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE® MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the *Beginning Experience* ministry is to facilitate the grief resolution process for separated, divorced and widowed persons, and children of these losses, thereby enabling them to again love themselves, others and God.

We accomplish the purpose by offering quality, copyrighted, grief resolution programs presented by trained peer ministers. These programs are designed to move grieving people through a transformational process to a new beginning in their lives.

We believe that through resolving the grief of a significant loss:

- Individuals participate in the death and resurrection of Christ as he lives in the world today;
- Those working through this experience can effectively walk with others for whom the experience is new and hard; and that
- The invitation to recover offers an opportunity for transforming one's life, and for freeing individuals to love self, others and God in new and deeper ways.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors

—Adopted July 3, 2003

—Revised Nov. 2, 2014



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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Alumni:** Former Beginning Experience® team members, presenting or support, who have moved on from active team service. Alumni may participate in team social gatherings, spiritual or personal growth activities and fund raising efforts, and/or are eligible for membership in a formal or informal alumni group.

**Beginning Experience® Community:** Persons who participate in Beginning Experience® programs, but receive no training and do not serve in presenting ministry programs are welcomed as part of the community and may be included in social or spiritual activities.

**Beginning Experience® Team:** That group of people who, having made a *Beginning Experience* weekend and received the necessary training to serve as a facilitator/presenter of talks or in a support capacity, volunteer their services as wounded healers in ministry programs.

**Commissioned Team:** A team that has completed all requirements to be commissioned by the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. as a fully functioning affiliate team within the international ministry community.

**Counselor on Call:** A professionally certified counselor who is available by telephone throughout a Beginning Experience® weekend. This individual provides professional advice to the team, should it be needed, regarding how to handle an emergency situation with a participant. This person should not be a member of the presenting team for that weekend.

**Emblem:** Registered with the United States Office of Patents and Trademarks, the emblem is one of the graphic images identifying Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. Used to identify official documents, program or training materials, and carrying the history of the ministry, it consists of a cross symbolizing our identification with Christ's suffering and death; an anchor, which is an ancient symbol of hope; and a rising sun, symbolizing the dawn of a new day. Because it is a registered mark, there are legal requirements regarding its use. See "Organizational Identity" in Section E of this manual,

**Emerging Team:** A group which has inquired about starting the Beginning Experience® ministry in their local community. The group is considered an emerging team until a successful pilot weekend has been presented, or for a minimum of one year.

**Executive Director:** The person hired by the International Board of Directors to implement its plans and policies for the ministry on a day-to-day basis. Chief administrator of the Beginning Experience International Ministry Center, he or she hires and evaluates any office staff.

**Guideline:** A general statement of responsibility for Beginning Experience® teams and local boards.



**Initial Team Training:** An emerging team’s training provided by trainers assigned by the Executive Director using Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. training materials to prepare the team members to present a pilot weekend.

**International Board of Directors (IBD):** The group of persons having authority for the entire Beginning Experience ministry worldwide. The IBD is responsible for ministry integrity, financial health and compliance with legal and ethical standards.

**International Ministry Center (IMC):** The office from which the day-to-day activities of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) are conducted under the administration of the executive director.

**Local Board of Directors:** The group of persons having authority for the administration of a local team.

**Logo:** Registered with the United States Office of Patents and Trademarks, the logo is one of the graphic images identifying Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. Used in communications to the general public, it consists of a human figure moving toward a horizon, and doing so in a lighted area in the shape of a cross. Because it is a registered mark, there are legal requirements regarding its use. See Section E of this Manual, “Organizational Identity.”

**On-Going Team Training:** Continued training that commissioned teams conduct for themselves using Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. training materials; local resource persons or consultants may be invited to participate in this process.

**Pilot Weekend:** The first weekend in the location of an emerging team, with that team assuming primary responsibility.

**Policy:** A required principle, plan or course of action to guide decision-making for Beginning Experience teams and Local Boards.

**Principle:** A fundamental law, doctrine, belief or assumption.

**Recommissioning:** The on-going local team monitoring process provided by Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. to protect the integrity of its programs and ministry, and the health of the local team.

**Regional Board of Directors:** The group of persons having authority delegated from the International Board for the administration of the Beginning Experience® ministry in areas outside of North America. The two regional boards are:

- The Asia Pacific Regional Board (APRB) oversees the ministry in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore.
- The Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board (GBIRB) oversees the ministry in Britain, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.



**Signature:** When the Beginning Experience® logo or emblem is combined with the name, it is referred to as the **signature**. Because the signature consists of elements registered with the United States Office of Patents and Trademarks, there are legal requirements regarding its use. See “Organizational Identity” in Section E of this manual.

**Style Guide:** Policies for the use of name Beginning Experience® as a registered trademark. See “Organizational Identity” in Section E of this manual.

**Support Programs:** Includes 1) “Coping with Life Alone,” a pre-weekend program designed to help the newly grieving or those who are ready for a weekend that is still some time away, and 2) post-weekend programs, including “Continued Beginnings” and “Vision and Leadership,” designed to help weekend participants further their healing and growth.

**Team member:** A person who regularly works on behalf of the local ministry. See “Team Membership and Areas of Service” in Section G of this manual.

**Trademark:** The ministry’s name, logo, emblem, sign, signature, symbol, or brand name, which identifies its programs and services. Special rules govern the use of the trademark. See “Organizational Identity” in Section E of this manual.

**Youth Ministry:** Beginning Experience® programs for those who have suffered the loss of their parents’ marriage through death, divorce or separation –1) “Beginning Experience for Children,” an overnight program for ages 8-12; 2) “Beginning Experience for Young People,” a weekend program for ages 13-17; 3) “Beginning Experience for Young Adults,” a weekend program for ages 18-25+; or “Who Am I Now?” offered for ages 4-8, 9-12, and/or 13-17.

**Youth Team:** A Beginning Experience® team of adults and peers (children, teens or young adults) presenting any of the ministry’s programs for those who have suffered the loss of their parents’ marriage through death, divorce or separation.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted 2016



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## HISTORY OF THE MINISTRY

The Beginning Experience® ministry began in October 1973 when Sister Josephine Stewart, SSMN and a friend who was divorced, Ms. Jo Lamia, attended a marriage enrichment program. During that weekend program, Ms. Lamia wrote a letter of closure to her former husband. Both Sister Josephine, a professional family counselor, and Ms. Lamia immediately perceived the impact of the closure experience and the sense of beginning that followed.

With people at the Catholic Renewal Center of North Texas, Sister Josephine and Ms. Lamia perfected plans for the first *Beginning Experience* weekend. In October 1974, they piloted the program.

From a few typed notes that guided facilitators through that first weekend, the original Manual for the Beginning Experience was developed and copyrighted in early 1976. By July of that year, the ministry was in motion on the east and west coasts of the United States and many points in between. This indicated the very real need in the Church for this type of program. The original manual for the program has been revised, updated and copyrighted, and renamed it Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Presenting Team, and accompanied by a companion manual, Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Coordinators.

A principle basic to the development of the *Beginning Experience* ministry is the belief that those who have suffered significant loss can, through the shared pain of others, find the capacity to heal and be healed. The program is constructed so that on each weekend, a specially trained team leads participants through a simple program. The program consists of: (1) presentations by the team followed by (2) personal private reflection, and (3) dialogue in small groups.

The dialogue groups, led by team members, are gently formed into warm, supportive communities by a simple non-threatening method of dialogue. Through this process, the weekend program creates the time and space where those who have suffered the loss of a significant life relationship can come together, share, reevaluate themselves and their lives, and move on to the future with hope.

Each *Beginning Experience* weekend is designed as an invitation to participants to turn the trauma of the separation events into an adventure of grace. It is intended to offer each participant the opportunity:

- To find support and direction in resolving the grief that accompanies the ending of the marital relationship through permanent separation or death
- To deal constructively with guilt and find the reconciling power of God through the sacramental ministry of the Church
- To experience the care and compassion of the Church through the non-judgmental witness and ministry of the team
- To discover their own inner strengths and gifts, so as to face the future with hope for themselves and with Christ-like compassion toward others



From the first, the *Beginning Experience* weekend was conceived of as a lay, peer-to-peer ministry of persons who, although wounded through the loss of a spouse, have experienced healing and now reach out as “wounded healers” to their sisters and brothers who still suffer. Each team is basically composed of these men and women, trained to conduct the weekend experience. However, religious, clergy and others with experience in life renewal may also be members of *Beginning Experience* teams.

### **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE FOR CHILDREN**

The development of a *Beginning Experience* ministry for children paralleled that of the weekend program for adults. In the summer of 1974, a group from the Catholic Renewal Center of North Texas met to plan a pilot *Beginning Experience* program for children. Some of the people in this group were members of single-parent families and recognized the need for such a program. The initial weekend for children took place in December 1974 with participants from ages eight (8) to 18. The program was later refined into parallel tracts for ages eight (8) to 11, and 12 to 15. The Manual for the Children’s Beginning Experience was published and copyrighted in 1980. In 2006, the program name was changed to “Beginning Experience® for Children.”

### **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

In 1976, four team members from Beginning Experience of Boston, Massachusetts journeyed to the Catholic Renewal Center of North Texas to consult with the Beginning Experience National Office (as the International Ministry Center was then known) about the development of a similarly structured program for young people between the ages of 12 and 17. With National Office permission, the Boston Board of Directors developed the program. The pilot weekend was held in May, 1978 in Andover, Massachusetts. The copyrighted Manual for the Young People’s Beginning Experience was published in March 1983. In 2006, a revised manual was published and the title changed to Manual for Beginning Experience for Young People.

### **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG ADULTS**

The *Beginning Experience* program for young adults is a special weekend for those 17 and over who have experienced the death of a parent, or their parents’ separation or divorce. The program is based on the adult *Beginning Experience* weekend. Created by Beginning Experience of Chicago, Illinois, the program was piloted in 1982 for prospective teams from Alaska, California, Texas, Louisiana, Massachusetts and South Dakota. The Manual for the Young Adult Beginning Experience was copyrighted in 1983. In 2006, the title changed to the Manual for Beginning Experience for Young Adults.



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## **ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS**

In the early 1980s, then Executive Director Fr. E. Guy Gau, OSB, and team members from Beginning Experience of South Dakota developed a nine-week “Support Program for the Widowed, Separated and Divorced,” intended to precede the *Beginning Experience* weekend. Beginning Experience of Omaha, Nebraska adapted the material to a six-week program, “Coping.” In the early years of the 21st century, the International Board of Directors updated and combined the programs, renaming the resulting program “Coping with Life Alone.”

Also in the 1980s, team members from Beginning Experience of Detroit developed a six-week program intended to reinforce the weekend experience and explore its topics more fully. This program, intended to follow the weekend program, was called “Continued Beginnings.”

Beginning Experience of Chicago team members were interested in a program to help people who had reached some acceptance of the loss and to help them face life issues as single-again adults. They developed a weekend program they named “BE II.” In the first decade of the 20th century, the program manual was revised by the International Board of Directors and renamed the Manual for Beyond Beginning Experience<sup>TM</sup>.

## **CONCLUSION**

The growth of the *Beginning Experience* movement, with programs for adults, children, teens and young adults indicates the need for this ministry. At the same time, requests for the ministry from throughout the United States and from other countries makes a governing body necessary to comply with legal requirements and to develop policies and guidelines for safeguarding the integrity of the programs and for ensuring the healthy development and functioning of teams on the local level.

—Sister Josephine Stewart, Co-founder, 1980

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Revised 1998, 2006, 2016



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## **PROGRAM CONTINUUM**

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. offers a continuum of programs for those who have lost a marital relationship due to death, divorce or separation and for children of these losses. These programs move individuals through the experience of grief and loss into a future with hope renewed. Each program is presented by those who have suffered such losses themselves who are willing to share their story in order to help others.

### **FOR THOSE WHOSE LOSS IS RECENT**

“Coping with Life Alone” is a six to ten-week pre-weekend support program. It is intended for those whose loss is new and for those not yet ready for the Beginning Experience® weekend. The sessions focus on such topics as the grief process, changes in family and other relationships, trust, and coping with memories of the deceased spouse or dealing with the former spouse.

### **THE BEGINNING EXPERIENCE® WEEKEND**

The weekend is the core program and the foundation of the ministry. It is intended for those who are ready to come to terms with the lost relationship and to begin to move forward with their lives. The most powerful program, the weekend facilitates the grieving process and offers an opportunity, through God, for turning the pain of loss into an experience of positive growth.

### **AFTER THE WEEKEND**

Additional programs help those grieving loss to continue the support offered on the weekend experience.

“Continued Beginnings”

“Building Happiness”

“Rebuilding”

“Beyond Beginning Experience”

“Vision and Leadership”

NOTE: Not every program is offered in every community.

### **FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

The loss of a parent through death, or a changed parental relationship through divorce or separation, is a traumatic experience for children of all ages. In dealing with these losses, they may become withdrawn, fearful, insecure, act out for no apparent reason, become confused or depressed, or blame themselves.

*Beginning Experience* programs provide help and support to work through these emotions. A safe, secure environment allows caring acceptance and feelings of community to blossom. The aim of each program is to help sort out the feelings of loss and pain, while strengthening self-esteem and self-acceptance.

- Children’s Beginning Experience® is an overnight program for ages 8-12
- Young People’s Beginning Experience® is a weekend program for ages 12-17
- Young Adult Beginning Experience® is a weekend program for ages 18-25 and up
- Who Am I Now? is a set of six-week support programs for ages 5-8, 9-12, and 13-17

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors, 2016



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## ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

At the outset of any movement, charismatic people and the enthusiasm of success are the most effective guarantees of growth. However, when the test of time, geographical spread and numerical increase has passed, appropriate administrative structures are the best guarantee of continued growth in the original freshness of a movement's spirit.

—Paul Werner, 1979

*Member of the original Central Board of Directors*

The creation of a Central Office, now the International Ministry Center (IMC) and a Central Board, now the International Board of Directors (IBD), was a response to the urgent need for accountable growth that arose within the ministry during its early years.

The proprietary, copyrighted programs of the *Beginning Experience* ministry help divorced, permanently separated and widowed persons, as well as their families, work through the trauma of the loss of a spouse and make a new beginning in life. The programs were designed by and for Catholics and have their roots in sound Catholic tradition and the sacramental life of the church. True to the ecumenical spirit in the church since Vatican II, the ministry has been open to grieving persons of all faiths from the beginning.

The International Board of Directors (IBD) deems it essential that the ministry have a definite link with the Catholic Church and its ministry to the divorced, separated and widowed in each area where a team emerges.

The IBD and its administrative arm, the executive director and the staff of the International Ministry Center (IMC), have the responsibility of safeguarding the integrity of the ministry and its programs by providing training, commissioning and ongoing direction for teams as they develop in the United States and other countries.

At the same time, the IBD, the executive director and the IMC also exist to promote a collaborative relationship between established or emerging *Beginning Experience* teams and their local church structure. In order to accomplish these ends, the IBD offers the policies, guidelines and procedures in this [Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams](#) for the establishment and administration of teams and for their relationship with the church on the local level.



—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors

Adopted 1998

Revised 2006, 2016

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## INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Early in its history, the Beginning Experience® ministry grew from the courageous dream of a few willing healers to a flourishing ministry spread throughout the land. Along with the joys and pains of expansion came an awareness of the awesome responsibility to guide the ministry. As Sr. Josephine stated, “This dream is no longer just my dream; it belongs to everyone. The decision to continue or stay where we are belongs to the people.” This statement marked a major turning point in the ministry’s leadership.

The decision was made to extend the responsibility for the future from a single person, Sr. Josephine, to a board of directors chosen from the diversity of the individual talents and geographical regions that the ministry encompassed. From then on, the growth of the organization and the weight of critical decisions were shared by a body representative of the people of the movement.

The *Beginning Experience* ministry is sacramental in nature, therefore church. We hold ourselves accountable to that which is church, the entire people of God. The stability of the ministry lies in the process of the weekend and the other programs, and in its leadership. The fundamental responsibility of the board of directors is to maintain the integrity of the *Beginning Experience* process as it continues to heal people through the stages of grief and transition.

The response of the board to this call is a commitment of its members to the gentle growth of the movement. The life given our dreams far exceeds the aspirations of any one individual or group of individuals; therefore, our stance is to maintain a humble, prayerful openness to what we are about, the wounded healing the wounded.

—Vince Horan, March 1979  
*Member of the 1st Board of Directors*

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Revised, 2006



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# QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD

## INTRODUCTION

The International Board of Directors (IBD) is the governing body of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM). As such, it is responsible for making policy, setting guidelines, establishing procedures, and providing mediation.

The IBD shall consist of seven to eleven (7 to 11) voting members in addition to the executive director, who is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the board. Other non-voting members include the previous executive director, current presidents of the Asia Pacific Regional Board (APRB) and the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board (GBIRB) and the IBD spiritual advisor.

IBD members have staggered terms. Upon expiration of these terms, the remaining members of the board shall select replacements for the outgoing members from among those candidates nominated by local teams, *Beginning Experience* team members, and/or the executive director.

—Central Board  
Adopted 1979

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Revised 1998, 2006, 2016

## QUALIFICATIONS

Candidates for the IBD are solicited from the active *Beginning Experience* teams in the United States of America and Canada. They are representatives of the following states in life from the *Beginning Experience* team membership: separated, divorced, widowed, remarried, clergy and religious, with a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the voting members of the board consisting of divorced, separated or widowed persons. Each candidate shall have qualifications from among the following:

1. Commitment to the psychology and theology of the *Beginning Experience* ministry;
2. Commitment to the vision and mission of the *Beginning Experience* ministry;
3. Shall be a Christian;
4. Currently active in the *Beginning Experience* ministry, or have the capacity to connect to where the ministry has progressed;
5. Service as a trained presenting team member for a minimum of two (2) years;



6. Experience as a board member of his/her local board and a recommendation from that board
7. Professional work and/or volunteer experience that will enhance his or her contribution as a director of the *Beginning Experience* ministry
8. Participation in a regional or international convention and/or recognition of the value and purpose of such gatherings
9. Willing to phase out of local team involvement and into IBD responsibilities.

The effectiveness of the board is best served when it consists of persons with diverse backgrounds and skills. However, as a Catholic ministry, it is the policy that a simple majority of the IBD be practicing Catholics.

—Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.  
Bylaws, Article IV, Section 2B  
Adopted 1980

Amended December 1990, December 1993, March 1998, July 1998  
May 2004, November 2008, March 2012



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## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD

The general functioning and operation of the International Board of Directors (IBD) is as follows:

1. The full voting membership of the IBD and the executive director shall meet in person at least twice annually in order to govern the ministry. Special meetings may be called by the executive director, the president of the IBD or any three (3) of the directors.
2. The IBD authorizes the release of the report of its meetings and activities to local teams.
3. The IBD shall be concerned equally with the needs of each region.
4. Members of the IBD shall serve without compensation beyond reasonable, actual expenses.
5. The areas of responsibility of the IBD shall include but not be limited to the following:
  - A. Attend all board of directors and committee meetings; board members shall be absent only under exceptional circumstances
  - B. Develop long-range goals for three to five (3 to 5) years into the future
  - C. Develop, implement and evaluate plans to insure the financial stability of the Beginning Experience® ministry
  - D. Approve and review the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) budget
  - E. Hire and evaluate the executive director
  - F. Approve any use of the copyrighted *Beginning Experience* programs
  - G. Develop and implement effective team and board training programs
  - H. Assure effective recommissioning processes to protect program and ministry health and integrity
  - I. Maintain efficient BEIM and team support and communication in North America
  - J. Strengthen and support the international ministry through effective working relationships with overseas regional boards
  - K. Respect the ministry's Roman Catholic origin and foundation as well as its ecumenical outreach, both to those who serve and those who are served
  - L. Maintain an affiliation and collaboration with the Catholic Church

—Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

Bylaws, Article IV, Section 10

Adopted 1980

Amended December 1990, December 1993, March 1998, July 1998

May 2004, November 2008, March 2012



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## REGIONAL BOARDS

### INTRODUCTION

Regional boards are established by the International Board of Directors (IBD) and report to the executive director. Their purpose is to assist in governing the Beginning Experience® ministry in specific geographic regions **outside North America**. Regional boards operate under the authority and with the approval of the IBD and report to the executive director.

As of April 2014, there are two regional boards:

- The Asia Pacific Regional Board (APRB) assists in governing teams in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore.
- The Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board (GBIRB) assists in governing teams ministry in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 2016



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## QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL BOARDS

Candidates for the two regional boards of directors are solicited from the active *Beginning Experience* teams in the relevant region. They are representative of the following states in life from the *Beginning Experience* team membership: separated, divorced, widowed, remarried, clergy and religious, with a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the members of each regional board consisting of separated, divorced and widowed persons. A simple majority of each regional board shall be practicing Catholics. Each candidate shall have qualifications from among the following:

1. Shall be committed to the psychology and the theology of the *Beginning Experience* ministry
2. Shall be committed to the *Beginning Experience* vision and mission
3. Shall be a Christian
4. Shall have been trained and served as a presenting member of his or her team for a minimum of two (2) years
5. Shall have served as a member of his/her local board and shall be recommended by that board
6. Shall have participated in a regional conference or international convention
7. Shall currently be active in the *Beginning Experience* ministry or be able to connect to where the ministry it has progressed
8. Shall have professional work and/or volunteer experience that will enhance the contribution to the regional board
9. Willing to phase out of local team involvement and into IBD responsibilities.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors

Adopted 1987

Revised 2006, 2016



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## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL BOARDS

Responsibilities of the regional boards shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Develop long-range goals for the region, including plans to develop new teams in the region and visit established teams as part of the recommissioning process under the direction of the executive director and in accordance with the policies outlined elsewhere in this Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams
2. Develop plans to ensure the financial stability of the *Beginning Experience* ministry in the region
3. Send semi-annual financial statements for the region to the executive director
4. Maintain regular communication with the executive director and, through the executive director, with the IBD regarding the status of the ministry within the region
5. Send the regional board president to the international convention and to the meeting of the IBD held in conjunction with that convention; the regional board president shall function as a non-voting member of the IBD
6. Act as a channel of communication to the teams in the region
7. Maintain the integrity of the *Beginning Experience* process in the region
8. Act as a resource when problems arise within teams in the region
9. Promote the *Beginning Experience* ministry in the region
10. Arrange for regional conferences to serve the teams in the region
11. Ensure links with local Catholic Church authorities, organizations and other regional bodies with a mission similar to that of the *Beginning Experience* ministry

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors

Adopted 1987

Revised 2006, 2016



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## LEGAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) is incorporated in the State of Texas in the United States of America. It has been granted exempt status from federal corporate income taxes by the United States Internal Revenue Service under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and subsequent amendments. This status also allows those who donate to the ministry to deduct their gifts from their personal income tax. BEIM is governed by an approved set of bylaws.

The BEIM has registered the name “Beginning Experience” as a trademark with the United States Office of Patents and Trademarks. The graphic images representing the ministry and used to communicate with the public are also registered trademarks with that office. The following Beginning Experience® programs and training materials are currently copyrighted and federally registered:

- [Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Presenting Team](#)
- [Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Coordinators](#)
- [Coping with Life Alone: Coordinator’s Manual](#)
- [Coping with Life Alone: Manual for Presenting Team](#)
- [Coping with Life Alone: Workbook](#)
- [Manual for Continued Beginnings](#)
- [Facilitator’s Manual for Vision and Leadership](#)
- [Participant Workbook for Vision and Leadership](#)
- [Facilitation Skills Manual for Beginning Experience Teams](#)
- [Building Happiness: A Manual for Program Presentation](#)
- [Building Happiness: A Workbook for Participants](#)
- [Manual for Beyond Beginning Experience](#)
- [Coordinator’s Manual for Beyond Beginning Experience](#)
- [Manual for Beginning Experience for Children](#)
- [Manual for Beginning Experience for Young People](#)
- [Manual for Beginning Experience for Young Adults](#)

These registrations protect the ministry name, graphic images and programs under laws of the United States and other countries.

BEIM has also been granted written permission to use certain programs whose copyright is held by others, i.e. “Rebuilding When Your Relationship Ends.” The copyright for this program is held by Impact Publishers.



BEIM is administered by an International Board of Directors (IBD) which has established structures to ensure fidelity to the principles and process of the ministry’s programs and to provide training, commissioning and recommissioning of *Beginning Experience* teams in various areas.

No group or individual may presume to use the *Beginning Experience* name or any of the ministry's graphic images or its programs without first having fulfilled the requirements for establishing and forming a team, successfully undergoing training for team participation, and participating in ongoing commissioning as an affiliate team of BEIM as set forth in the guidelines below. However, a parish or diocese offering pre-weekend *Beginning Experience* support programs under signed contract is required to promote the program as part of the *Beginning Experience* program continuum.

The *Beginning Experience* ministry is a lay, peer-to-peer ministry of persons who have suffered the trauma of the loss of a marital relationship through divorce, permanent separation, or death. Each *Beginning Experience* team is composed of those who seek to minister through the ministry's programs to their sisters and brothers who still suffer. In addition, these teams may also include religious, clergy and others who are qualified and committed to this ministry.

*Beginning Experience* programs are rooted in sound Catholic teaching and traditions. The ministry seeks to be accorded the same recognition and autonomy as that accorded other lay programs, such as Marriage Encounter, Engaged Encounter and Cursillo that minister to particular needs of individuals within the community of believers.

In keeping with the above, the IBD cannot allow local *Beginning Experience* programs to be absorbed by or become the property of local church structures such as Family Life Offices, Family Bureaus, Care Centres or the like. For the IBD to permit this would be to relinquish its responsibility to maintain the uniform process of the programs and the quality, composition and ongoing commissioning of local teams.

Each local *Beginning Experience* team is obliged to meet the requirements for team training and to model its structure, administrative policies and guidelines after those approved by the IBD. Where these policies are not followed, the IBD reserves the right to withdraw its approval of a local team, and to deny it the right to use the ministry's name, graphic images and copyrighted materials.

The *Beginning Experience* ministry does not presume to present itself as the total, exclusive or all-encompassing ministry to the divorced, separated and widowed and children of these losses. Many fine programs exist and minister very effectively within the church on the national, local and diocesan levels. The *Beginning Experience* ministry is one particular form of this ministry existing alongside of, and in collaboration with, the wider ministry of the church to these persons.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted 1987  
Revised 2016



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## THE BEGINNING EXPERIENCE LOCAL TEAM

One of the responsibilities of the International Board of Directors (IBD) is delivery of the ministry's grief resolution programs to divorced, separated and widowed persons, and children of these losses.

This responsibility is fulfilled by establishing local affiliate teams who, with the permission of the bishop in their diocese, deliver these programs in their geographic area. Each local team is incorporated as an affiliate of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) Each local team is a legal entity with responsibilities prescribed by the laws of the jurisdiction in which it is incorporated, and with reporting responsibility to the local bishop.

To summarize, local teams have responsibilities to:

- The state or provincial government
- The federal or national government
- The bishop of the local diocese
- Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

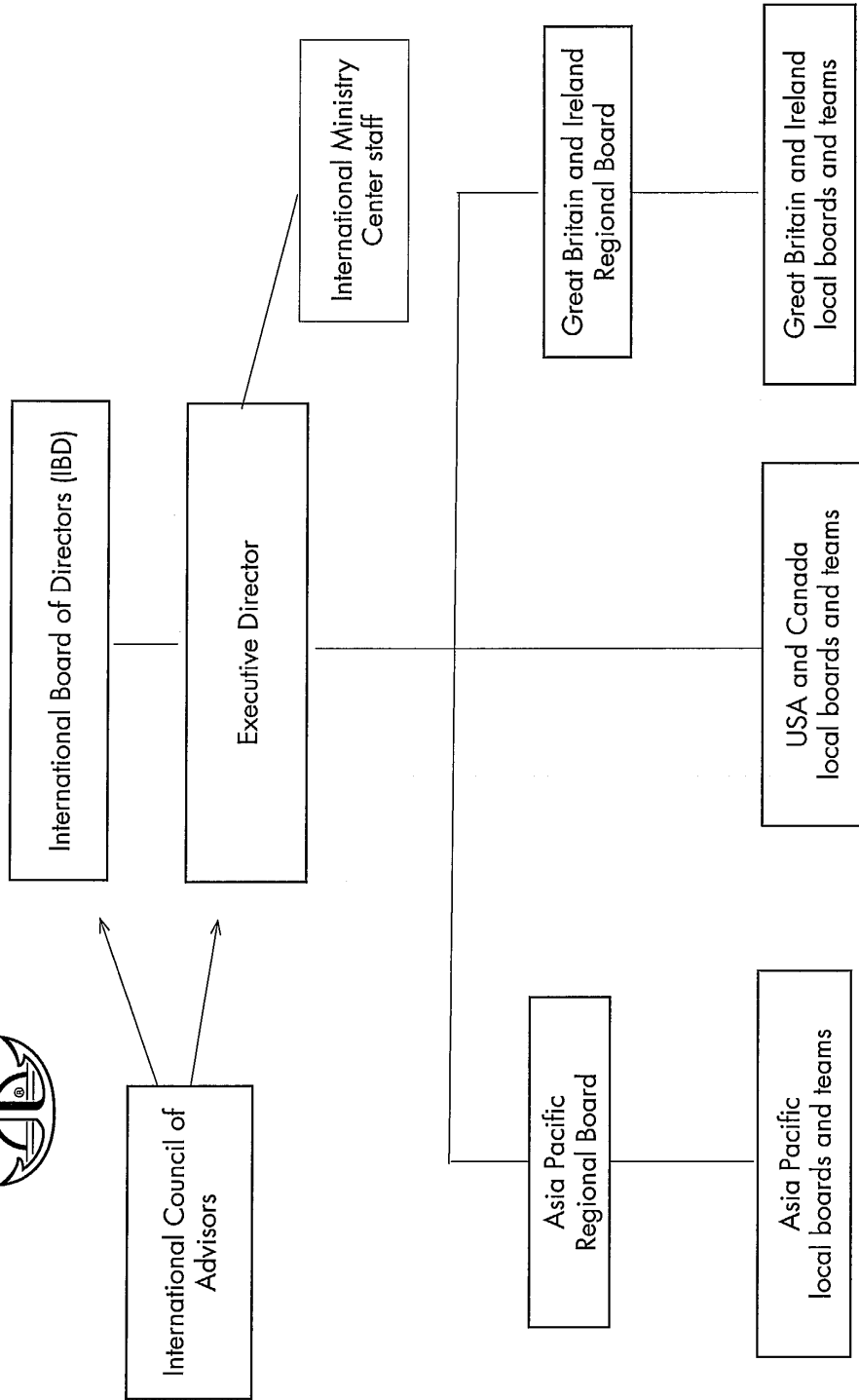
—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted 2016



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 BEGINNING EXPERIENCE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY, INC.
   
 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



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**POLICY MANUAL FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS**

**SECTION B:  
TEAM GOVERNANCE**



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## LOCAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Formation of a local board of directors for a Beginning Experience® team is essential to the effective functioning of both new and established teams. If a team has only one person making all of the decisions and doing most of the work, it is much more difficult later to move toward a board composed of several people working together and is more likely to fail when this individual “moves on” from team.

The local board of directors is responsible for team finances and for decisions concerning team selection, team training, scheduling of *Beginning Experience* programs and preparation for them, and for maintaining the team’s connection to the international level of the ministry.

Power struggles and conflicts create very difficult situations for people trying to work together. It is most important that the energy of team members be used for the *Beginning Experience* ministry and not be drained off into negativity or unproductive conflict or power struggles.

Organizational structure is not an end in itself; the purpose of the structure is to serve the ministry. An effective administrative structure provides the framework for an empowered ministry, and thus contributes to avoiding power struggles and conflict.

—Central Board  
Adopted March March 1982

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adapted 1998



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## SELECTION OF THE LOCAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The composition of the local board of directors reflects the peer character of the *Beginning Experience* ministry. Therefore, the majority of the board members are divorced, separated or widowed.

Board members receive their authority from the team as a whole and must be committed to the work involved on behalf of the team. Board members are servant leaders of the ministry and the local team. No member should seek to serve on the board to fulfill personal needs of power, prestige, or for personal gain.

Each board member must be effective in listening to others, gathering ideas, and evaluating courses of action, and must be capable of speaking honestly and in a straightforward manner.

All voting board members must be trained presenting members of the team and serving in that capacity at the time of their election. Because board decisions involve the integrity of the weekend process and adhering to the integrity of the ministry's programs, each board member needs sufficient understanding of the *Beginning Experience* process to make decisions with a view to protecting the process and adhering to the ministry's vision and mission.

—Central Board  
Adopted March March 1982

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adapted 1998



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## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL BOARD

The *Beginning Experience* local board of directors assumes full responsibility of and governance of the local team. It must be structured in such a manner that it is able to function independently of other support groups or diocesan ministries.

However, the local board is to follow directives of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) in cooperating with the local church and its representatives in the church's ministry to adults who have suffered the loss of a spouse, and/or to children who have suffered the loss of a parent through death, or their parents' marriage through divorce or separation.

In the United States, the local *Beginning Experience* team shall incorporate according to the laws of the state in which the team is formed. In Canada, the team shall incorporate according to the laws of the province in which it is formed. Teams in other countries shall follow the laws of that country for the establishment of charitable organizations.

Each incorporated local team in the United States is granted tax-exempt status by the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) through inclusion in the group exemption of BEIM under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code of 1954 and subsequent amendments. Teams are required to comply with IRS requirements to maintain their tax-exempt status. Failure to comply will result in revocation of the team's tax-exempt status.

Local teams in other countries should seek charitable status where feasible in accordance with the laws of the country in which they serve, and should complete all requirements to maintain the team's charitable status.

Each local team shall define its governing structure through adopting bylaws (in the United States and Canada), Rules and Guidelines (in the Asia Pacific Region), or a Constitution (in the Great Britain and Ireland Region) according to models approved by BEIM.

The purpose of the team's local board is to ensure that the ministry's programs are conducted according to the format in the manual for each *Beginning Experience* program. Once a new team is certified by the executive director, the local board is responsible for ongoing team formation, which includes team member selection and training in accordance with the guidelines established by the International Board of Directors (IBD).



The local board shall assume responsibility for the finances of the team including participant fees, the stewardship assessment, insurance and any other fees due to BEIM, or due to the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board (GBIRB) or the Asia Pacific Regional Board (APRB), as appropriate.

The team president is the primary liaison between the team, the International Ministry Center and, if appropriate, the GBIRB or the APRB. This means:

- 1) Sharing communication from the International Ministry or the appropriate regional board with the team, and
- 2) Assuming responsibility to send reports and fees to the International Ministry Center or to the appropriate regional board.

—Central Board  
Adopted March March 1982

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adapted 1998



## **TEAM AGREEMENT WITH BEGINNING EXPERIENCE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY, INC.**

*In recognition of its ongoing affiliation with Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and its responsibilities as an affiliate, each newly established team enters into this agreement at the time of its commissioning, and renews it with each recommissioning.*

THIS AGREEMENT is entered into this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_ between Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. a Texas Corporation (“International Ministry”), and Beginning Experience of \_\_\_\_\_, (Team) an affiliate corporation.

WHEREAS, International Ministry has formulated and authorizes local affiliates to offer various ministerial services including the *Beginning Experience* weekend and various support programs, adults who have suffered the loss of a spouse and/or children who have suffered the loss of a parent through death, divorce or separation under the “Beginning Experience” name and marks, assisting them to heal from their loss and grow in their personal and spiritual lives; and

WHEREAS, Team wishes to provide spiritually based programs of healing, recovery and support in operating a *Beginning Experience* ministry as its principal purpose; and

WHEREAS, International Ministry is willing to appoint Team as a *Beginning Experience* affiliate licensee, subject to Team’s strict compliance with the term of this Agreement.

### **NOW THEREFORE, THE PARTIES AGREE AS FOLLOWS:**

#### **1. *Beginning Experience* Programs and Ministry Operation**

- A. Team shall offer the *Beginning Experience* weekend and other programs authorized to be provided by Team as Team shall select from within the *Beginning Experience* ministry in accordance with the requirements and guidelines set forth by International Ministry.
- B. Team shall also follow the guidelines for operation of a *Beginning Experience* ministry as set forth in International Ministry’s manuals and other guidelines published for Team use by International Ministry. International Ministry may in its discretion revise these manuals and published materials from time to time.
- C. It is important that Team’s programs and activities be operated in accordance with International Ministry’s requirements. Team shall provide orientation and training to team’s volunteer members in accordance with International Ministry policies. Team is expected to participate in International Ministry conventions/conferences and other training programs.



Local teams benefit significantly from this connection with the worldwide ministry, networking opportunities with others in the ministry, spiritual enhancement, and consistent implementation of programs and policies. Generally, at least one convention or conference is made available for attendance by Team annually.

- D. Team shall select from its members to provide services and support activities for programs in accordance with guidelines established by International Ministry.
- E. Team shall select and retain members of its board of directors in accordance with written guidelines set forth by International Ministry.
- F. The articles of organization and by-laws of Team, including any modifications thereof, shall be subject to prior written approval of International Ministry.

**2. Name, Use of Trademarks, Service Marks, and Other Intellectual Property**

- A. Team shall use the name “Beginning Experience of \_\_\_\_\_” as its sole and only name to describe its ministry.
- B. Team acknowledges and agrees that the “Beginning Experience” name and *Beginning Experience* logos are the property of International Ministry. The *Beginning Experience* team ministry authorized by this agreement shall be operated and publicized only in accordance with the guidelines set forth by International Ministry. Promotional brochures and other written publicity shall be approved in writing in advance by International Ministry.
- C. Team is the owner of various *Beginning Experience* manuals and program materials. The program and other manuals acquired by Team are loaned to its volunteer members for use in ministry programs only during the term of this agreement, may not be duplicated or reproduced except as authorized in writing by International Ministry, and must be returned to International Ministry upon termination of this Agreement.

**3. Reports and Information**

Team agrees to provide such reports and information prior to and after the offer of each program as International Ministry shall require. Team shall provide at least annually, or more frequently if requested, a list of all programs to be offered by Team, and shall advise International Ministry of any changes in the programs to be offered as soon as reasonably possible, but in any event at least 30 days before any ministry program is provided.

**4. Fees Owed to International Ministry**

- A. International Ministry charges program fees for programs provided. Team shall pay all required program fees to International Ministry. International ministry may change the amount of required program fees from time to time in its discretion.



- B. Each *Beginning Experience* team is required to pay an annual stewardship fee to the International Ministry. The stewardship fee may be revised from time to time. Team agrees to pay the stewardship fee in accordance with International Ministry's requirements.
- C. International Ministry has devised a cooperative program of liability insurance to pay for certain liabilities that may be incurred by *Beginning Experience* teams and the International Ministry. Team agrees to pay for their portion of the insurance expense that International Ministry determines to be Team's responsibility.

**5. Items Purchased**

Team shall pay for all items purchased from the International Ministry in accordance with the price and terms of payment set forth by the International Ministry.

**6. Other programs and Services**

In the event a team chose to offer programs or services other than *Beginning Experience* programs, such team shall obtain the prior written approval of the International Ministry.

**7. Religious Orientation of Programs**

The *Beginning Experience* ministry and programs were founded in the Catholic tradition. A team shall operate only with the approval and sponsorship of a local religious authority. A team's sanctioning religious authority is the \_\_\_\_\_ Diocese of \_\_\_\_\_. A team shall file a written report annually with the local religious authority, in accordance with International Ministry's guidelines.

**8. Suspension and Termination**

- A. International Ministry may suspend a team's right to provide *Beginning Experience* programs or any particular program under Paragraph 1 by delivering written notice to such team to this effect.
- B. International Ministry may terminate this agreement by delivery of written notice to a team.
- C. A team may terminate this agreement upon providing at least sixty (60) days' notice to the International Ministry.
- D. In the event of termination of this agreement, a team shall discontinue providing *Beginning Experience* programs. Any fees or monies previously assessed or due shall be promptly paid to the International Ministry. All ministry activities shall be discontinued, and all property of such team, including all bank accounts and other funds of the team, shall be delivered to the executive director. The International Ministry may specify the timing and circumstances of such delivery.





## LOCAL TEAM LEGAL DOCUMENTS

### INTRODUCTION

In addition to the team agreement with Beginning Experience International Ministry, (BEIM) found elsewhere in this section, each team operates within a state or provincial jurisdiction. Governments require organizations to establish a legal framework which governs the team's interaction with the general public in that jurisdiction.

In the United States, incorporation as a not-for-profit organization defines the ministry's role in and service to the community, and its responsibilities toward that community. Incorporation is a requirement to be included in the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. group tax exemption from the United States Internal Revenue Service. Incorporating is also recommended due to the perpetual existence of a corporation and its limited liability.

Each newly formed team is to check with the state's Office of the Secretary of State for the incorporation documents and process required. Many states have websites with downloadable forms for incorporating as a non-profit organization. Once the completed form is submitted to the appropriate state authority, a copy is kept in the team's local files, and a copy sent to the International Ministry Center for permanent retention there.

NOTE: Many states require periodic reporting from the local team to maintain incorporated status and may impose penalties for failure to do so. It is the responsibility of the local board to provide these reports in a timely fashion.

If a state does not have its own form for incorporating, sample Articles of Incorporation follow.

Bylaws to provide an operational framework for the team are also required. Model bylaws follow also. The model is written to conform to BEIM organizational policies. Any deviation from the model bylaws should be discussed with the executive director, since the bylaws require his or her approval.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted May 2016



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# **SAMPLE ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS IN THE UNITED STATES**

## ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE OF \_\_\_\_\_

We the undersigned, acting as incorporators of a corporation under the Non-profit Corporation Act of the State of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby adopt the following Articles of Incorporation:

### ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this corporation shall be Beginning Experience of \_\_\_\_\_.

### ARTICLE II: PLACE OF BUSINESS

The place of this State where the principal office of the corporation is to be located is the City of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County.

### ARTICLE III: PURPOSE

The purpose of this corporation is to help separated, divorced and widowed persons, and children of the same make a new beginning in life. Though its roots lie in the Catholic tradition, the Beginning Experience ministry is open to persons of all religions and faiths. The purpose of this corporation shall be achieved through, but not limited to, weekend programs consisting of personal, private reflection and dialogue in small groups, group meetings, sessions and reading material.

### ARTICLE IV: AFFILIATION

This corporation acknowledges its affiliation with the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and will abide by the policies set by the Board of Directors of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., an exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and subsequent amendments.

### ARTICLE V: POWERS

This corporation shall have the unlimited power to engage in and do any lawful act concerning any and all lawful business for which corporations may be organized under the Nonprofit Corporation Act of the State of \_\_\_\_\_. Specifically, but not in limitation, this corporation shall have the power to solicit, receive and maintain a fund or funds of real and/or personal property, and subject to the restrictions and limitations hereinafter set forth, to use and apply the whole or any part of the income therefrom and the principal thereof for the purposes set forth above and for charitable, religious, educational, scientific or literary purposes, either directly or by contributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.



#### ARTICLE VI: REGISTERED AGENT AND OFFICE

The initial registered agent of the corporation shall be \_\_\_\_\_,  
and the address of the initial registered office for said agent shall be as follows:  
Insert name and address of a local representative with a permanent address.

#### ARTICLE VII: MEMBERSHIP

The corporation shall have no members.

#### ARTICLE VIII: CORPORATE EXISTENCE

The date on which the corporation's existence shall begin is the date of the approval of these Articles of Incorporation by the Secretary of this state, and its duration shall be perpetual.

#### ARTICLE IX: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The number of directors of this corporation shall be not less than three (3) nor more than eleven (11), which number may be changed by subsequent vote of the Board, as provided by the Bylaws, and the names and residences of those persons who are to serve as the initial Board of Directors until the election of their successors are as follows:

*Insert names and addresses of initial Board members here.*

#### ARTICLE X: LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

All conveyances and other instruments affecting real estate and all chattel mortgages, releases of mortgages, liens, judgments, or other claims that are to be legally binding upon the corporation shall be executed by the president and secretary of the corporation, and the vice president shall have the authority to execute instruments for either of the above officers in the event they are unable to act in their respective capacities.

#### ARTICLE XI: BYLAWS

This corporation acting by and through its directors by a two-thirds (2/3) vote may adopt Bylaws or repeal or alter them at their pleasure.

#### ARTICLE XII: INCORPORATORS

The names and addresses of the incorporators are as follows:

*Insert names and addresses of three initial Board members here.*



### ARTICLE XIII: AMENDMENTS

These Articles of Incorporation may be amended in the manner provided by law at the time of the amendment provided such amendment is approved by majority of the then present Board of Directors.

### ARTICLE XIV: PROHIBITED ACTIONS

No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall benefit, or be distributed to, its officers, directors, trustees or other private persons except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services actually rendered the corporation and make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth herein.

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate in, or intervene, directly or indirectly in any manner, in any political campaign or on behalf of any candidate for public office.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these Articles, the corporation shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on by (A) a corporation exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code) or (B) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170 (c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

### ARTICLE XV: DISSOLUTION

Upon dissolution of the corporation, all its assets shall be transferred to the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., a corporation exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned incorporators have hereunto fixed their names on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_:

*Incorporators sign here*



\*\*\*\*\*

STATE OF \_\_\_\_\_, COUNTY OF \_\_\_\_\_, ss:

BE IT REMEMBERED that on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, before me, the undersigned Notary Public in and for the State of \_\_\_\_\_, County of \_\_\_\_\_ of the above stated addresses, to me personally known to be the identical persons named herein and who executed the foregoing instruments as incorporators and whose signatures and names are affixed hereto, and acknowledged that they executed the same as their voluntary act and deed.

Witness my hand and notarial seal at \_\_\_\_\_, on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public in and for Said State

—Central Board  
Adopted 1982

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Revised 1998



**MODEL BYLAWS FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE® TEAMS  
IN THE UNITED STATES**

BY-LAWS OF

BEGINNING EXPERIENCE OF \_\_\_\_\_

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this Corporation shall be Beginning Experience of \_\_\_\_\_ (the Corporation), which shall be a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of \_\_\_\_\_. The Corporation shall not have a seal.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this Corporation is to help separated, divorced and widowed persons and children of the same, to make a new beginning in life. Though its roots lie in the Catholic tradition, the Beginning Experience ministry is open to persons of all religious faiths. The purpose of this corporation shall be achieved through, but not limited to, weekend programs consisting of personal private reflection and dialogue in small groups, peer support, group meetings, sessions and reading materials offered and provided in accordance with guidelines established by Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., a nonprofit corporation.

To achieve the aforementioned purpose, the Corporation shall have the power to solicit, receive and maintain a fund or funds of real and/or personal property, and subjects to the restrictions herein after set forth, to use and apply the whole or any part of the income therefrom and the principal thereof for the above stated purpose, and for charitable, religious, educational, scientific, or literary purposes, either directly or by contributions or organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section (c) 3 of the United States International Revenue Code of 1954 and subsequent amendments.

ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP

The Corporation shall have no members.

ARTICLE IV: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This Corporation shall be managed by a Board of Directors hereinafter called the "Board," consisting of not less than three (3) nor more than eleven (11) board members.\* The Board shall have the control and management of the affairs and business of this the Corporation. Such Board shall only act in the name of the Corporation when it shall be convened in Board meetings or by unanimous consent as set forth in Article V.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\* *Insert a number within this range of sufficient size to meet the needs of the team.*



The Board of Directors shall consist of persons who are divorced, widowed, or permanently separated at the time of their election to the Board. To be eligible to serve as a director, the nominee must have participated in a *Beginning Experience* weekend, have been team trained, have functioned as a team member within the *Beginning Experience* ministry, and shall be currently active as a presenting member of the team.

One-half of the initial Board of Directors will serve a full term of two years with the remaining directors serving an initial term of one-half (1/2) the length of the time. Determination of the initial terms shall be by lot in the event that the Directors are unable to reach agreement. Thereafter, each newly elected Director shall serve a term of two years and shall be eligible for re-election to a second two-year term only, and may serve a maximum of four years.

The Board members are elected by a majority of the team members voting. A team member is defined as a person who has completed a *Beginning Experience* weekend, has been team trained and is currently functioning as a team member within the *Beginning Experience* ministry. Voting will be taken either by mail or at an annual meeting of the team, which shall be held in November or December each year. The term of office shall begin January 1st of the following year. Alternatively, Board members may be selected by a majority of the team members through a discernment process.

A member of the Board may resign at any time by notifying the Vice President or the President of the Board, who in turn, shall notify the Secretary. Vacancies in the Board of Directors shall be filled by a vote of the majority of the remaining members of the Board of Directors for the balance of the term.

#### ARTICLE V: MEETINGS

Regular Meetings of the Board of Directors. There shall be a minimum of three (3) meetings annually of the Board; with one of those meetings being held in either December or January. Dates of the meetings are determined by the President with input from the members of the Board. A meeting at which a quorum is initially present may continue to transact business notwithstanding the withdrawal of one or more directors. Each director shall have one vote. A quorum consists of a simple majority of the voting members of the board.

**Unanimous Consent.** If the directors unanimously consent in writing to any action required or permitted to be taken by the Board at any meeting, such action shall be as valid as though it had been authorized at a meeting of the Board.

**Special Meetings.** A special meeting may be called by the President, the Secretary, or by any three directors.

**Telephone Meetings.** Telephone meetings of the Board of Directors shall be valid, provided each director can communicate with all of the other directors concurrently.



## ARTICLE VI: OFFICERS

**Titles.** The officers of the Board shall consist of a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer, and at the option of the Board, a Vice president. Other directors shall assume such responsibilities as may be determined by the Board.

**Election.** The officers of the Board of Directors shall be elected annually by the Board at the first board meeting that follows the annual meeting of the team held in November or December.

**Term of Office.** The term of office for each officer shall be one year and shall take effect January 1st. Each officer shall hold office until December 31st of the following year, or until his or her successor shall have been duly elected. No individual shall hold any one office for more than two terms.

**President.** The President shall be the principal officer of the corporation and shall be responsible for overseeing the activities of the corporation. He/she shall, when present, preside at all meetings of the Board. He/she shall have authority to sign, execute, and acknowledge, on behalf of the corporation, all documents and instruments whatsoever, necessary and proper, to be executed in the course of the corporation's activities which shall be authorized by resolution of the Board; and except as otherwise provided by law of the Board, he/she may authorize a Vice President or other officer, or agent of the corporation, to sign, execute, and acknowledge such documents or instruments in his/her place and stead. He/she shall have the power to appoint committee chairpersons and committee members. In general, he/she shall perform all duties incident to the office of President or a nonprofit corporation and such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board from time to time. The local board president is the official contact person between the local team and the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

**Vice President.** The Vice President shall perform such duties as the Board shall prescribe. He/she shall assume the duties of the President in his/her absence in meetings or upon resignation or termination of the President's position. Also, the Vice President may assume the duties of any other director that becomes vacant through resolutions of the Board so directing him/her.

**Secretary.** The Secretary shall give notice of all meetings of the Board, record the minutes of all such meetings; and safely keep all documents and papers related to corporate business which come into his/her possession. In general, he/she shall perform all duties usually incident to the office of Secretary of a nonprofit corporation as may be delegated to him/her by the Board or President

**Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall have charge and custody of and be responsible for all funds and securities of the corporation. He/she shall render statements of the condition of the finances of the corporation at least three times a year. In general, he/she shall perform all duties usually incident to the office of Treasurer of a nonprofit corporation as may be delegated to him/her by the Board or President.





**Other Board Members.** Other elected members of the Board shall have such duties as assigned by the Board or by the President.

**Vacancies.** A vacancy occurring in any office for any reason shall be filled for the unexpired portion of the term by vote of the remaining members of the Board.

**Signature of Certain Documents.** All checks, drafts, or other orders for the obtainment of money issued in the name of the corporation shall be signed by the President of the corporation, and/or by such other officer or agent as the President or Board shall designate.

**Removal of Officers.** Any officer or agent elected or appointed by the Board may be removed by official action of the Board whenever, in the judgment of the Board, the best interests of the corporation will be served thereby.

#### ARTICLE VII: AFFILIATION WITH OTHER GROUPS

**Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.** Recognizing that the Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Presenting Team and other printed materials to be used in the Corporation's activities are copyrighted and proprietary, that the Corporation's activities are to be associated with the *Beginning Experience* identity, and that Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. exists to safeguard the program and provide direction, this corporation acknowledges its affiliation with the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and will abide by the policies set by the Board of Directors of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., an exempt organization under Section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

**Church Affiliation.** To safeguard the spiritual aspect of the *Beginning Experience* ministry, Beginning Experience of \_\_\_\_\_ shall be affiliated in a reporting function to the local Catholic Diocese of \_\_\_\_\_. The Corporation shall abide by the all policies and guidelines concerning the reporting relationship issued by the Board of Directors of the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

#### ARTICLE VIII: DISSOLUTION

Upon dissolution of the Corporation, all its assets shall be transferred only to the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., a Corporation exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and subsequent amendments.

#### ARTICLE IX: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

**Fiscal Year.** The fiscal year of the corporation shall end on the 31st day of December.

**Absence.** Absence from three (3) successive Board meetings by a member of the Board may be considered cause for termination of that individual's membership on the Board.





**Procedures.** Unless otherwise specified herein, the procedures at all meetings of the Board shall be governed by Roberts Rules of Order.

ARTICLE X: AMENDMENTS

To safeguard the tax-exempt status of this Corporation under the group exemption letter of the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., these Bylaws may be altered, amended or repealed, and new Bylaws may be adopted by the Board with an affirmative vote of not less than 2/3 of the members of the Board at any regular meeting of the Board, subject to the written approval of the Executive Director of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.

Beginning Experience of \_\_\_\_\_

ATTESTED TO BY:

\_\_\_\_\_  
President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director  
Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted 1982  
Revised 1998, 2012



# BOARD MEMBERSHIP RECORD

<i>First &amp; Last Name</i>	<i>Date Elected</i>	<i>Date 1st Term Ends</i>	<i>Date Re-elected</i>	<i>Date 2nd Term Ends</i>	<i>Office or Responsibility</i>



## U.S. INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE GROUP TAX EXEMPTION

The United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has determined that Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) is a nonprofit corporation within the definition of Internal Revenue Service Code 502 (c) 3; as such, BEIM is exempt from liability for federal corporate income taxes, and donors to the corporation may deduct their gifts from their personal federal income tax.

In addition, a group exemption has been issued which allows all incorporated U.S. teams to be similarly recognized as tax-exempt, non-profit organizations under the umbrella of BEIM. In addition to exemption from liability for federal corporate income taxes, this status allows those who donate to the local team, as well as those who donate to the International Ministry, to deduct those gifts from their personal federal income tax.

In recent years, the IRS has added the requirement that all local teams covered by the group exemption file an annual Form 990-N, attesting that the team has annual revenues (not net gains) of \$50,000 or less, and thus is exempt from filing the full Form 990. Form 990-N is an electronic postcard accessed from [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). While the 990-N is a simple form to file, **failure to do so for three (3) consecutive years results in automatic loss of inclusion in the group exemption and loss of federal tax-exempt status.**

Should this tax-exempt status be lost, the team becomes liable for federal corporate income taxes and must annually file the full Form 990. The team is also then liable for state corporate income taxes and must comply with the laws of their state for reporting annual income and paying any taxes due. This also means that donors to the team may not deduct gifts from their personal federal income tax. Such teams may re-apply for federal tax-exempt status on their own at considerable time and expense, and are then responsible for maintaining that status.

—Central Board, Adopted February 1981

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors

Revised 1998, 2006



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## TEAMS OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

If your team serves a country other than the United States, you will need to determine if your team should incorporate and if so, follow the procedure for incorporation and for seeking charitable status in the country your team serves. In order to make these determinations, it is recommended that the team board members consult with the executive director, local legal counsel, and the appropriate regional board serving the geographic region for the team.

The Articles of Incorporation and bylaws for use by teams in the United States are designed to comply with U.S. law and the policies of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. Simple adaptations may be appropriate for teams in Canada. However, they may not follow the laws of countries other than the United States. The Articles of Association may be permissible for these teams.

—Central Board  
Adopted 1982

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Revised 1998, 2016



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# MODEL BYLAWS FOR TEAMS IN CANADA

## BY-LAWS OF BEGINNING EXPERIENCE OF \_\_\_\_\_

### ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this corporation shall be BEGINNING EXPERIENCE OF \_\_\_\_\_, which shall be a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the Province of \_\_\_\_\_. The corporation shall not have a seal.

### ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this corporation is to help separated, divorced and widowed persons and children of the same, to make a new beginning in life. Though its roots lie in the Catholic tradition, the *Beginning Experience* ministry is open to persons of all religious faiths. The purpose of this corporation shall be achieved through, but not limited to, weekend programs consisting of personal private reflection and dialogue in small groups, peer support, group meetings, sessions and reading materials.

To achieve the aforementioned purpose, the corporation shall have the power to solicit, receive and maintain a fund or funds of real and/or personal property, and subject to the restrictions herein after set forth, to use and apply the whole or any part of the income there from and the principal thereof for the above stated purpose, and for charitable, religious, educational, scientific, or literary purposes, either directly or by contributions or organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under the Income Tax Act for Canadian charities.

*(Remainder of the document is the same as for U.S. Teams)*



## BOARD MEMBERSHIP RECORD

<i>First &amp; Last Name</i>	<i>Date Elected</i>	<i>Date 1st Term Ends</i>	<i>Date Re-elected</i>	<i>Date 2nd Term Ends</i>	<i>Office or Responsibility</i>





# MODEL BYLAWS FOR TEAMS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

BY-LAWS OF BEGINNING EXPERIENCE OF \_\_\_\_\_

## ARTICLE I

NAME: The name of this organization shall be BEGINNING EXPERIENCE of \_\_\_\_\_ (the Organization) which shall be a nonprofit organization under the laws of the (State/Country/Republic) of \_\_\_\_\_. The Organization shall not have a seal.

## ARTICLE II

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Organization is to help separated, divorced and widowed persons and children of the same, to make a new beginning in life. Though its roots lie in the Catholic tradition, the Beginning Experience® program is opened to persons of all religious faiths. The purpose of this organization shall be achieved through, but not limited to, weekend programs consisting of personal private reflection and dialogue in small groups, peer support, group meetings, sessions and reading materials offered and provided in accordance with guidelines established by Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., a non-profit organization.

To achieve the aforementioned purpose, the Organization shall have the power to solicit, receive and maintain a fund or funds of real and/or personal property, and subject to the restrictions hereinafter set forth, to use and apply the whole or any part of the income therefrom and the principal thereof for the above stated purpose, and for charitable, religious, educational, scientific, or literary purposes, either directly or by contributions or organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under the governing countries authority and regulations regarding not for profit/charitable organizations.

## ARTICLE III

MEMBERSHIP: The Organization shall have no members.

## ARTICLE IV

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: This Organization shall be managed by a Board of Directors hereinafter called the “Board”, consisting of (not less than five (5) nor more than eleven (11) board members.<sup>1</sup> The Board shall have the control and management of the affairs and business of this Organization. Such Board shall only act in the name of the Organization when it shall be convened in Board meetings or by unanimous consent as set forth in Article V.



\_\_\_\_\_  
<sup>1</sup> A number within this range shall be selected of sufficient size to meet the needs of the team.

The Board of Directors shall consist of persons who are divorced, widowed, or permanently separated at the time of their election to the Board. To be eligible to serve as a director, the nominee must have participated in a Beginning Experience® weekend, have been team trained, have functioned as a team member within the Beginning Experience® program, and shall be currently active as a presenting member of the team.

One-half of the initial Board of Directors will serve a full term of two years with the remaining directors serving an initial term of one-half (1/2) the length of that time. Determination of the initial terms shall be by lot in the event the Directors are unable to reach agreement.

Thereafter, each newly elected Director shall serve a term of two years and shall be eligible for re-election to a second two-year term only.

The Directors are elected by a majority of the team members voting. A team member is defined as a person who has completed a Beginning Experience® weekend, has been team trained and is currently functioning as a team member within the Beginning Experience® program. Voting will be taken either by mail or at an annual meeting of the team, which shall be held in November or December each year. The term of office shall begin January 1st.

A member of the Board may resign at any time by notifying the Vice President or the President of the Board, who in turn, shall notify the Secretary. Vacancies in the Board of Directors shall be filled by a vote of the majority of the remaining members of the Board of Directors for the balance of the term.

## ARTICLE V

### MEETINGS:

**Regular Meetings of the Board of Directors.** There shall be a minimum of three (3) meetings annually of the Board, with one of those meetings being held in either November or December. Dates of the meetings are determined by the President with input from the members of the Board. A meeting at which a quorum is initially present may continue to transact business notwithstanding the withdrawal of one or more directors. Each director shall have one vote. A quorum consists of a simple majority of the voting members of the board. Any decision of the Board at the meeting shall be determined by a simple majority of members who form the quorum at the meeting.

**Unanimous Consent.** If the directors unanimously consent in writing to any action required or permitted to be taken by the Board at any meeting, such action shall be as valid as though it had been authorized at a meeting of the Board.

**Special Meetings.** A special meeting may be called by the President, the Secretary, or by any three directors.



**Telephone Meetings.** Telephone meetings of the Board of Directors shall be valid, provided each director can communicate with all of the other directors concurrently.

## ARTICLE VI

### OFFICERS:

**Titles.** The officers of the Board shall consist of a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer, and at the option of the Board, a Vice-president. Other directors shall assume such responsibilities as may be determined by the Board.

**Election.** The officers of the Board of Directors shall be elected annually by the Board at the first board meeting that follows the annual meeting of the team held in November or December.

**Term of Office.** The term of office for each officer shall be one year and shall take effect January 1st. Each officer shall hold office until December 31st of the following year, or until his or her successor shall have been duly elected. No individual shall hold any one office for more than two terms.

**President.** The President shall be the principal officer of the organization and shall be responsible for overseeing the activities of the organization. He/she shall, when present, preside at all meetings of the Board. He/she shall have authority to sign, execute, and acknowledge, on behalf of the organization, all documents and instruments whatsoever, necessary and proper, to be executed in the course of the organization's activities which shall be authorized by resolution of the Board; and except as otherwise provided by law of the Board, he/she may authorize a Vice President or other officer, or agent of the organization, to sign, execute, and acknowledge such documents or instruments in his/her place and stead. He/she shall have the power to appoint committee chairpersons and committee members. In general, he/she shall perform all duties incident to the office of President or a non profit organization and such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board from time to time. The local board president is the official contact person between the local team and the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

**Vice President.** The Vice President shall perform such duties as the Board shall prescribe. He/she shall assume the duties of the President in his/her absence in meetings or upon resignation or termination of the President's position. Also, the Vice President may assume the duties of any other director that becomes vacant through resolutions of the Board so directing him/her.

**Secretary.** The Secretary shall give notice of all meetings of the Board, record the minutes of all such meetings; and safely keep all documents and papers related to corporate business which come into his/her possession. In general, he/she shall perform all duties usually incident to the office of Secretary of a nonprofit organization as may be delegated to him/her by the Board or President



**Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall have charge and custody of and be responsible for all funds and securities of the organization. He/she shall render semi-annual statements of the condition of the finances of the organization. In general, he/she shall perform all duties usually incident to the office of Treasurer of a non profit organization as may be delegated to him/her by the Board or President.

**Other Board Members.** Other elected members of the Board shall have such duties as assigned by the Board or by the President.

**Vacancies.** A vacancy occurring in any office for any reason, shall be filled for the unexpired portion of the term by vote of the remaining members of the Board.

Signature of Certain Documents. All checks, drafts, or other orders for the obtainment of money issued in the name of the organization shall be signed by the President of the organization, or by such other officer or agent as the President or Board shall designate.

**Removal of Officers.** Any officer or agent elected or appointed by the Board may be removed by official action of the Board whenever, in the judgment of the Board, the best interests of the organization will be served thereby.

## ARTICLE VII

### AFFILIATION WITH OTHER GROUPS:

**Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.** Recognizing that Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. programs are proprietary in nature, that all program and other printed materials to be used in the Organization's activities are copyrighted, that the Organization's activities are to be associated with the Beginning Experience® identity, and that an International Board of Directors exists to safeguard the program and provide direction, this organization acknowledges its affiliation with the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and will abide by the policies set by the Board of Directors of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

**Asia Pacific Regional Board.** Recognizing that the Asia Pacific Regional Board has been delegated authority to assist in governing the Beginning Experience® ministry in the Asia Pacific Region, the Organization acknowledges its affiliation with the Asia Pacific Regional Board and will abide by the policies set by the Asia Pacific Regional Board.

**Church Affiliation.** To safeguard the spiritual aspect of the Beginning Experience® programs, Beginning Experience of \_\_\_\_\_ shall be affiliated in a reporting function to the local Catholic diocese of \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *In the case of teams requesting and receiving permission to form in another faith affiliation, the reporting function shall be to the church authority of that denomination.*



**Reporting Relationships.** The Organization shall abide by all policies and guidelines concerning the reporting relationships issued by the Board of Directors of the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and the Asia Pacific Regional Board.

#### ARTICLE VII

**Dissolution:** Upon dissolution of the Organization, all its assets shall be transferred to the Asia Pacific Regional Board, a not-for-profit Organization exempt from federal taxes operating under the authority of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation.

#### ARTICLE IX

##### MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS:

**Fiscal Year.** The fiscal year of the organization shall end on the 31st day of December.

**Absence.** Absence from three (3) successive Board meetings by a member of the Board may be considered cause of termination of that individual's membership on the Board.

**Procedures.** Unless otherwise specified herein, the procedures at all meetings of the Board shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order.

#### ARTICLE X

##### AMENDMENTS:

These Bylaws may be altered, amended or repealed, and new Bylaws may be adopted by the Board with an affirmative vote of not less than 2/3 of all of the members of the Board at any regular meeting of the Board, subject to the written approval of the President of the Asia Pacific Regional Board and the Executive Director of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.

BEGINNING EXPERIENCE OF \_\_\_\_\_

##### ATTESTED TO:

By \_\_\_\_\_ By \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization President Organization Secretary

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
President, Asia Pacific Regional Board

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director, Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Approved May 2016





# MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR TEAMS IN THE GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND REGION

## MODEL CONSTITUTION OF BEGINNING EXPERIENCE OF \_\_\_\_\_

### ARTICLE I

NAME: The name of this association shall be BEGINNING EXPERIENCE of \_\_\_\_\_ (the Association) which shall be a nonprofit association under the laws of \_\_\_\_\_(Country). The Association shall not have a seal.

### ARTICLE II

PURPOSE: The Purpose of this association is to help separated, divorced and widowed persons and children of the same, to make a new beginning in life. Though its roots lie in the Catholic tradition, the Beginning Experience® programme is opened to persons of all religious faiths. The purpose of this association shall be achieved through, but not limited to, weekend programs consisting of personal private reflection and dialogue in small groups, peer support, group meetings, sessions and reading materials offered and provided in accordance with guidelines established by Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., a not-for-profit organization incorporated in the United States.

To achieve the aforementioned purpose, the association shall have the power to solicit, receive and maintain a fund or funds of real and/or personal property, and subjects to the restrictions herein after set forth, to use and apply the whole or any part of the income therefrom and the principal thereof for the above stated purposes.

### ARTICLE III

MEMBERSHIP: The Association shall have no members.

### ARTICLE IV

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: This association shall be managed by Members of a Board hereinafter called the “Board”, consisting of (not less than five (5) nor more than eleven (11) board members.<sup>1</sup> The Board shall have the control and management of the affairs and business of this association. Such Board shall only act in the name of the association when it shall be convened in Board meetings or by unanimous consent as set forth in Article V.



<sup>1</sup> A number within this range shall be selected of sufficient size to meet the needs of the team.



To be eligible to serve as a Board member, the nominee must have participated in a Beginning Experience® weekend, have been team trained, have functioned as a team member within the Beginning Experience® programme, and shall be currently active as a presenting member of the team. The voting members of the Board shall consist primarily of persons who are divorced, widowed, or permanently separated. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of the Board members must consist of people described in the previous sentence.

One-half (1/2) of the initial Board will serve a full term of two years with the remaining members serving an initial term of one-half (1/2) the length of that time. Determination of the initial terms shall be by lot in the event the Board is unable to reach agreement.

Thereafter, each newly elected Board member shall serve a term of two years and may be eligible for re-election to a second two-year term only. No Board member may serve more than two terms.

The Board members are to be elected by a majority of the team members voting. A team member is defined as a person who has made a Beginning Experience® weekend, has been team trained and is currently functioning as a presenting team member within the Beginning Experience® programme. Voting will take place at an annual meeting of team, which shall be held in May or June of each year.

A Board member may resign at any time by notifying the Vice President or the President of the Board, who in turn, will notify the Secretary. Vacancies in the Board shall be filled by a vote of the majority of the remaining members of the Board for the balance of the term.

## ARTICLE V

### MEETINGS:

**Regular Meetings of the Board.** There shall be a minimum of three (3) meetings annually of the Board, with one of those meetings being held in either May or June. Dates of the meetings are determined by the President with input from the Board members. At any meeting of the Board a two-third (2/3) majority of the members shall constitute a quorum. A meeting at which a quorum is initially present may continue to transact business notwithstanding the withdrawal of one or more members. Each member shall have one vote.

**Unanimous Consent.** If the members unanimously consent in writing to any action required or permitted to be taken by the Board at any meeting, such action shall be as valid as though it had been authorized at a meeting of the Board.

**Special Meetings.** A special meeting may be called by the President, the Secretary, or by any number directors constituting at least one-third of the Board).

**Telephone Meetings.** Telephone meetings of the Board shall be valid, provided each director can communicate with all of the other directors concurrently.





## ARTICLE VI

### OFFICERS:

**Titles.** The officers of the Board shall consist of a President, Vice President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. Other members shall assume such responsibilities as may be determined by the Board.

**Election.** The officers of the Board shall be elected annually by the Board at the first board meeting that follows the annual Team Meeting held in May or June.

**Term of Office.** The term of office for each officer shall be one year and shall take effect immediately after the Annual Meeting of the Team. Each officer shall hold office until the next Annual Meeting of the Team. or until his or her successor shall have been duly elected. No individual shall hold any one office for more than two terms.

**President.** The President shall be the principal officer of the Association and shall be responsible for overseeing the activities of the association. He/she shall, when present, preside over all meetings of the Board. He/she shall have authority to sign, execute, and acknowledge, on behalf of the Association, all documents and instruments whatsoever, necessary and proper, to be executed in the course of the Association's activities which shall be authorized by resolution of the Board; and except as otherwise provided by law of the Board. He/she may authorize a Vice President or other officer, or agent of the association, to sign, execute, and acknowledge documents or instruments in his/her place and stead. In general, he/she shall perform all duties incident to the office of President of a charitable Association and such duties as may be prescribed by the Board from time to time. The local board president is the official contact person between the local team, the Regional Board and the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

**Vice President.** The Vice President shall perform such duties as the Board will prescribe. He/she shall assume the duties of the President in his/her absence in meetings or upon resignation or termination of the President's position. Also, the Vice President may assume the duties of any other office that becomes vacant through resolutions of the Board so directing him/her.

**Secretary.** The Secretary shall give notice of all meetings of the Board, record the minutes of all such meetings; and safely keep all documents and papers related to association business which come into his/her possession. In general, he/she shall perform all duties usually incident to the office of Secretary of a nonprofit association as may be delegated to him/her by the Board or President.

**Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall have charge and custody of and be responsible for all funds and securities of the Association. He/she shall render both annual statements and interim (each Board meeting) statements on the condition of the finances of the association. In general, he/she shall perform all duties usually incident to the office of Treasurer of a charitable Association as may be delegated to him/her by the Board or President.



**Other Board Members.** Other Board members shall assume such responsibilities as may be determined by the Board.

**Vacancies.** A vacancy occurring in any office other than that of President, shall be filled for the unexpired portion of the term by vote of the remaining members of the Board.

**Signature of Certain Documents.** All cheques, drafts, or other orders for the obtainment of money issued in the name of the association shall be signed by the President of the association, or by other such officer or agent as he/she shall designate.

**Removal of Officers.** Any officer or Board member elected or appointed may be removed by official action of the Board whenever, in the judgment of the Board, the best interests of the association will be served thereby.

## ARTICLE VII

### AFFILIATION WITH OTHER GROUPS:

**Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.** Recognizing that Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. programmes are proprietary in nature, that all program and other printed materials to be used in the Association's activities are copyrighted, that the Association's activities are to be associated with the Beginning Experience® identity, and that an International Board of Directors exists to safeguard the program and provide direction, this organization acknowledges its affiliation with the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and will abide by the policies set by the Board of Directors of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

**Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board.** Recognizing that the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board has been delegated authority to assist in governing the Beginning Experience® ministry in the Asia Pacific Region, the Association acknowledges its affiliation with the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board and will abide by the policies set by the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board.

**Church Affiliation.** To safeguard the spiritual aspect of the Beginning Experience® programme, Beginning Experience of \_\_\_\_\_[team name] shall be affiliated in a reporting function to the local Catholic diocese of \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>2</sup>

**Reporting Relationships.** The Association shall abide by the all policies and guidelines concerning the reporting relationship issued by the Board of Directors of the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of teams requesting and receiving permission to form in another faith affiliation, the reporting function shall be to the church authority of that denomination.



ARTICLE VIII

**Dissolution:** Upon dissolution of the Association, all its assets will be transferred to the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board.

ARTICLE IX

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS:

**Fiscal Year.** The fiscal year of the association will end on the 30th day of April.

**Absence.** Absence from three (3) successive meetings by a Board member may be considered cause of termination of that individual’s membership of the Board.

**Procedures.** Unless otherwise specified herein, the procedures at all meetings of the Board shall be governed by Robert’s Rules of Order.

ARTICLE X

AMENDMENTS: This Constitution may be altered, amended or repealed and a new Constitution may be adopted by an affirmative two-thirds (2/3) vote by the Board at any regular or special meeting of the Board, so long as they do not conflict with the existing Constitution, subject to the written approval of the President of the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board and the Executive Director of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.

BEGINNING EXPERIENCE OF \_\_\_\_\_

ATTESTED TO:

By \_\_\_\_\_ By \_\_\_\_\_  
Association President Association Secretary

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
President, Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director, Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Approved May 2016





## ETHICS POLICY: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to provide general direction for board members, team members, employees and volunteers on issues related to the subject of acceptable standards of operation.

Board members, team members, employees and volunteers have an obligation to conduct business within guidelines that prohibit actual or potential conflicts of interest. This policy establishes the framework within which Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) wishes both its business and that of Beginning Experience® teams to operate.

An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when an individual board member, team member, volunteer or employee is in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for the individual or for a relative as a result of BEIM or *Beginning Experience* team business dealings. For the purpose of this policy, a relative is any person who is related by blood or marriage, or whose relationship with the board member, team member, employee and/or volunteer is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage.

### POLICY

While no “presumption of guilt” is created by the mere existence of a relationship with outside firms, if an individual has any influence on transactions involving purchases, contracts or leases, it is imperative that he or she disclose to an officer of the organization, as soon as possible, the existence of any actual or potential conflict of interest so that safeguards can be established to protect all parties.

Personal gain may result not only in cases where an individual board member, team member, volunteer, employee or relative has a significant ownership in a firm with which BEIM or the *Beginning Experience* team does business, but also when that board member, team member, employee, volunteer or relative receives any kickback, bribe, substantial gift, or special consideration as a result of any transaction of business dealings involving BEIM or a *Beginning Experience* team.

The materials, products, designs, plans, ideas, and data of the ministry are the property of **BEIM** and should never be given to an outside firm or individual except through normal channels and with appropriate authorization. Any improper transfer of material or disclosure of information, even though it is not apparent that a board member, team member, employee or volunteer has personally gained by such action, constitutes unacceptable conduct.

Any board member, team member, employee or volunteer who participates in such a practice shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the board or team, or discharge in the case of an employee.



## **RATIONALE**

Board members have the legal duty of loyalty; that is, putting the interests of the organization above their personal interests. They demonstrate this by avoiding conflicts of interest and disclosing any potential conflicts of interest that might exist. Local board members, team members, volunteers and employees must abide by conflict of interest policies.

Conflict of Interest policies make clear what conflict of interest is, what board members, team members, volunteers and employees must do to disclose possible conflicts of interest, and what they should do to avoid acting inappropriately in a conflict of interest situation.

United States Internal Revenue Service regulations have created ways to punish nonprofit leaders who engage in misconduct. The intermediate sanctions law regulates “excess benefit transactions” and imposes stiff tax penalties on boards, most officers, key staff and, in some cases, outsiders who are in the position of exercising influence on financial decisions.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted Feb. 22, 2009  
Revised May 2016



## LEGAL PROTECTION FOR TEAMS AND THE MINISTRY

### POLICY

Beginning Experience International Ministry Inc. (BEIM) and its affiliated teams will maintain practices to protect those served, those who serve and the ministry as a whole.

### RATIONALE

BEIM and its teams function within the communities they serve and must maintain the reputation of the ministry and insure financial stability.

### LEGAL PROTECTION FOR TEAMS

In response to concerns about legal exposure in conducting the Beginning Experience® weekend and all other *Beginning Experience* programs, the International Board of Directors instituted a program of insurance for North American teams including liability coverage, directors' and officers' coverage, and professional liability coverage with premiums for these policies shared among the teams. By sharing the premium, each teams pays substantially less for participating in a group plan, rather than seeking coverage on its own.

This insurance program protects team members and board members from risking their personal assets or the assets of the team in the event that a claim is filed against them by a participant.

If a venue requests proof that the team has insurance coverage, the team submits a "Request for a Certificate of Insurance Form" to the International Ministry Center. A copy of the form follows; it may be accessed from [www.beginningexperience.org](http://www.beginningexperience.org).

In addition to this coverage, to maximize our protection, defend against a claim and manage the cost of insurance premiums, the following applies:

- Each *Beginning Experience* team must be faithful to the program manual for each program that the team presents.
- Small group facilitators must not pressure any participant to divulge more of his/her feelings than he/she decides. All confrontation is restricted to keeping the dialogue on the topic and on a feeling level that is "in the room."
- Each presenter and small group facilitator must receive adequate training using materials approved by IBD.
- A counselor with credentials qualifying him or her to handle difficult situations must be available to the team during each *Beginning Experience* weekend.
- All brochures and publicity describe the weekend experience so that all participants know what the program entails, and in no way describe the weekend as therapy.



- The interviewing process in the Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Coordinators is closely followed so that each participant has spoken to a trained *Beginning Experience* team member prior to the weekend in order to know what the program entails and to ascertain his/her readiness for it.
- Any participant in therapy must be encouraged to discuss his or her readiness for the intensity of the weekend experience with his or her therapist.
- If possible, the applicant will provide written documentation from his or her therapist of the counselor's assessment that the applicant is ready to participate in the *Beginning Experience* weekend. A sample for obtaining such documentation follows this policy.
- The "Document Retention Policy," found in this section of this policy manual, shall be closely followed.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors

Adopted 2016





If a venue requests proof that the team has insurance coverage, the team submits this "Request for a Certificate of Insurance Form" to the International Ministry Center. It can be accessed from [www.beginningexperience.org](http://www.beginningexperience.org).

**Request for Certificate of Insurance**

**Named Insured: BEGINNING EXPERIENCE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY, INC.**  
395 W. Avon Rd., Avon, CT 06001

*To display this form, please set your computer's document margins at 1" top, bottom and both sides.*

Your name:	Today's Date:
Home phone & area code:	Work/cell phone & area code:
Email:	Fax:
Your Team:	

Program or event for which the certificate is requested (please place an X in the appropriate space):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Beginning Experience® weekend/ YABE/YPBE/CBE/Beyond BE weekend	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other event – please describe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly support program - name the program:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social event (please describe):
<input type="checkbox"/>	Training or Renewal program	<input type="checkbox"/>	Will liquor be served? (yes/no)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fundraising event (Please describe):	<input type="checkbox"/>	If liquor will be served, indicate: B for beer/wine or H for hard liquor

**Our insurance does not include liquor liability.** Please call the International Ministry Center to request a one-time liquor liability rider for an additional premium amount.

CERTIFICATE HOLDER - Location where the program or event will be held (name of retreat center, church, administrative organization, etc.):	
Address of location:	
Contact person at location:	Contact phone & area code:
Contact person email:	Contact person Fax:
Start date:	Start time (allow time to set up):
End date:	End time (allow time to clean up):
<b>Date Certificate is needed by:</b>	<b>Additional Insured:</b>

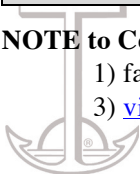
Complete the form and send as an e-mail attachment to [victoria.arel@beginningexperience.org](mailto:victoria.arel@beginningexperience.org)

OR Fax to: International Ministry Center, 877-296-0856

<b>FOR IMC USE ONLY</b> Notes:	Date request received:
	Date request processed:
	Date certificate received:

**NOTE to Certificate Processor: Please e-mail a copy of the certificate as an attachment to:**

- 1) facility contact person
- 2) team member making request
- 3) [victoria.arel@beginningexperience.org](mailto:victoria.arel@beginningexperience.org)



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## **PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING COUNSELOR ASSESSMENT OF APPLICANT READINESS**

During the applicant screening process, the applicant is asked if he or she is currently working with a counselor. If so, the applications coordinator will explain the Beginning Experience policy regarding obtaining that counselor's assessment of the applicant's emotional readiness for the weekend program.

Receipt of the counselor's assessment may be completed in several ways.

1. If the applicant provides the counselor's name and contact information, the counselor assessment form can be sent directly to the counselor by the applications coordinator.
2. The form can be sent directly to the applicant, and the applicant can provide the form to the counselor with the request that it be completed. Providing a stamped, self-addressed return envelope is helpful in receiving the completed form prior to the weekend.

Completed counselor assessment form should be retained by the team according to the "Document Retention Policy" in Section H of this manual.

Contact with the counselor is also an outreach opportunity. Several extra brochure copies may be included with the form.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 2016



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# SAMPLE COUNSELOR APPROVAL FORM

*This form is available from [www.beginningexperience.org](http://www.beginningexperience.org)*



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

REGARDING Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Client Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_

The person listed above has submitted an application to participate in a Beginning Experience® weekend program from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. It is our policy that a person in therapy request the acknowledgement of the therapist before the person is accepted for the weekend program. Would you please indicate your recommendation below in this regard?

A brochure about the program and our ministry is enclosed. Please call if you have questions.

*Please circle one:*

Yes      No      It is my professional opinion that \_\_\_\_\_  
is emotionally ready to participate in the Beginning Experience® weekend and  
I recommend that he/she be accepted.

Yes      No      If for some reason, my client should experience serious difficulties in the course  
of the weekend, I would be willing to be contacted for professional help and  
advice.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning Experience® representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_



**Please return this form as soon as possible to:**

(Insert Address)

**Thank You!**

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## FINANCIAL PHILOSOPHY

The Beginning Experience® ministry to the divorced, separated and widowed, as well as their families, was developed out of the compassion and hard work of people who know the value of this process in dealing with their own pain. Therefore, a primary value of the ministry is that it shall be invitational in nature. That is, no participant shall be forced, coerced or expected to achieve any pre-designed goal or level of well-being. It is out of the deeply rooted faith in the open and caring dialogue of the *Beginning Experience* process that those who are invited often experience healing by their own choice of participation in the elements of the programs.

In order to preserve the integrity of *Beginning Experience* operations, this same value is fundamental in the pursuit of financial and material needs to facilitate the ministry's growth and development. The ministry has grown out of the good will and generosity of those who have experienced loss and are empathetic to the needs of the divorced, separated and widowed and their families.

It is in this same spirit of compassion and faith in the effectiveness of the *Beginning Experience* process that we reach out for financial and material support in order that the ministry can continue to be offered to the divorced, separated and widowed still in pain.

This material support includes:

- Seeking gifts and donations to support the work of the ministry at all levels
- Placing sufficient financial value on the worth of the programs offered as reflected in the request for adequate fees to attend the programs
- Stewardship and fees paid to support the work of the international ministry

—Vince Horan, August 1981  
*Member of the original Central Board*

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adapted 2006  
Revised November 2014



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## YOUR STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION

### *How Stewardship and Participant Fees are used*

<b>BEGINNING EXPERIENCE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY, INC. PROVIDES FOR TEAMS:</b>	<b>IF THERE WERE NO INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY, THE EFFECT WOULD BE:</b>
<p>1) Maintenance of the copyright protection for the ministry's programs and trademark protection for the name and graphic images to provide an identity for the ministry worldwide.</p>	<p>1) Copyrights and trademarks would fall into the public domain; anyone could use them for their own purposes. Ministry identity and program integrity would be lost.</p>
<p>2) Authorization to present the copyrighted programs, train team members with ministry training materials, and identification with the trademarked name and graphic images.</p>	<p>2) Without a body to protect registered copyrights and trademarks from unauthorized use, anyone or any group could use ministry material without fear of reprisal. Ministry identity and program integrity would be compromised.</p>
<p>3) Develops and updates model legal structure for development of these team documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model Articles of Incorporation</li> <li>• Model Articles of Association</li> <li>• Model team bylaws</li> <li>• Model conflict resolution procedures.</li> </ul>	<p>3) Each team would need to develop these documents on their own and complete the legal steps necessary; organizational consistency among teams would be lost; each team would need to "reinvent the wheel."</p>
<p>4) Maintenance of tax-exempt status [not for profit or 501(c)3 status] for United States teams, which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protects team income from U.S. federal taxes</li> <li>• Entitles those who contribute to the ministry to a tax deduction for gifts in excess of value received</li> <li>• Saves teams the time, effort and cost of applying for and maintaining non-profit status on their own.</li> </ul>	<p>4) In order to function in the United States as a not-for-profit organization, each team would need to apply for tax exempt status on its own, complete the required documents, and pay the associated fees. If the team does not have tax exempt status, it must file an annual federal corporate income tax form, state corporate tax form, and are liable for these taxes.</p>



<p>5) Researching insurance coverage and carrying group insurance policies providing the following for teams in the U.S. &amp; Canada:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection from claims of damage to facilities by participants or team, including fire and legal liability. (Certificate of Insurance is provided to each facility upon request.)</li> <li>• Protection for team and team members from personal loss resulting from claims of personal and/or psychological injury by/ from participants in weekend or other programs.</li> <li>• Protection for board members from personal liability due to decisions made in their role as a board member</li> </ul>	<p>5) Each team would need to research, provide the detailed information required to apply for coverage, and pay the premiums as a lone organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the carrier that agreed to provide the coverage, these premiums vary from \$2,500 to \$5,000 per team.</li> <li>• Alternatively, teams could decide to take their chances and risk their team's assets as well as all the personal assets of their team and board members if a claim for damages was made.</li> </ul>
<p>6) Policies to guide team functioning and decision-making that provide a framework for making difficult decisions.</p>	<p>6) Policies to guide team decision-making, often developed from lessons learned the hard way from multiple teams, would be non-existent. There would be no guide when difficult situations arose. Each team would need to learn these lessons the hard way.</p>
<p>7) Organizational direction for all teams through mission and vision statements.</p>	<p>7) Each team would be on its own to decide what its mission was; no consistency among teams.</p>
<p>8) Safeguards for program and mission integrity through structures for team development, commissioning and recommissioning, and review and revision of program and training materials.</p>	<p>8) Standards for effective functioning would be non-existent; if they were to exist, each team would need to develop these on their own. Even so, there would be no outside body to hold the team to a standard, nor to update materials. Consistency of program and training materials would be lost. Teams would be at greater risk of claims for damages without a standard to adhere to.</p>



<p>9) Public relations and marketing through an international website, news releases to national Catholic and secular media, and newsletters to national referral groups such as Catholic Family Life directors, Marriage Tribunal judges, etc.</p>	<p>9) Each team responsible totally for its own messaging at a local level; no consistency in the message.</p>
<p>10) Provides education and training programs for teams at conferences and conventions, and through development of training materials covering such topics as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing for participants</li> <li>• Team invitation and training</li> <li>• Budgeting for and financing the local ministry</li> <li>• Training new team members</li> <li>• Training board members</li> <li>• Many other topics.</li> </ul>	<p>10) Each team would be on its own for developing training and educational materials, isolated from anyone else providing similar services. No consistency; the benefit and impact of a larger, consistent approach would not exist. Everyone would be “reinventing the wheel.”</p>
<p>11) Spiritual direction through faith-based programs, a faith-filled environment and developing spiritual resources for teams.</p>	<p>11) Each team responsible for developing its own spirituality resources.</p>
<p>12) Provides for inter-ministry communication via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Telephone contact</li> <li>• Personal visits</li> </ul>	<p>12) Any inter-team communication that existed would be unstructured and haphazard.</p>
<p>13) Established a central administration through the executive director and an International Ministry Center to provide services listed above and apply ministry policies.</p>	<p>13) Without an executive director and staff to do the work of maintaining copyrights, trademarks, updating materials, developing communication, etc., this would not exist.</p>
<p>14) Access to counsel, advice and encouragement from executive director, International Ministry staff and members of the International Board.</p>	<p>14) Advice would come only from others on team or from past team members. In conflict or power/control situations, the lack of experienced outside advice can lead to the downfall of the team.</p>



<p>15) Establishes regional boards (one in Great Britain and Ireland and one in the Asia Pacific area) to assist in the administrative responsibilities and ministry oversight.</p>	<p>15) Teams in Britain and Ireland and in the Asia Pacific region would lack any entity to help with governmental and church structures that differ from those in the United States; would lack a connection that understood differences in culture and circumstance.</p>
<p>16) Church connection at a national level through a bishop serving as liaison for the ministry to the U.S. Catholic Bishop's Conference and membership in the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers; and connections at a national level with other national/international ministries. (Regional boards connect with bishops and diocesan offices in other countries.)</p>	<p>16) No connection at a national level; at a diocesan level only; each team responsible for this on their own.</p>
<p>17) Provides long-term stability for a ministry whose local teams are fluid in their team membership.</p>	<p>17) Little institutional memory or learning since team members work through their grief and move either into supportive roles or move on into other ministries.</p>
<p>18) Peer representation in international decision-making and policy development through International Board members who are selected from the teams and have local ministry experience.</p>	<p>18) Without an international body, there would be no peer representation in the decisions made or policies established for the benefit of all teams and the ministry as a whole.</p>

**SUMMARY:**

**WITHOUT THE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY, TEAMS WOULD CEASE TO EXIST.**

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
 Developed December 2000  
 Revised October 2006, May 2012, April 2016



## RECOMMISSIONING OF TEAMS

The concept of team recertification was introduced to Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) in 1988 by Sr. Tarianne DeYonker, OP, who was then executive director. Sr. Tarianne recognized that in order to be able to minister together as a community and to leave something behind for the people who follow us, it is necessary to do the “work” of team ministry. Making this happen effectively requires meeting the organizational expectations we have come to call the “criteria for recertification.” In 2016, the International Board of Directors changed the name of this process from recertification to recommissioning.

The recommissioning process is a dynamic one that includes a team self-evaluation — a series of questions that help teams take a good look at how they conform to the principles and policies that guide the ministry. Through the team’s own reflections and dialogue, often with an on-site visitor, the goal of recommissioning is to affirm and strengthen the team, to learn what resources are needed to help the team remain strong and vibrant, and to address any areas of concern.

The on-site visitors, whenever possible, attend a weekend or other program with the team. The process, conducted in its entirety or in part provides an opportunity for the BEIM to appreciate the challenges facing an individual team, to affirm its successes, to address weaknesses and enhance strengths, and to encourage effective communication between that team and the international ministry.

Teams are not alone as they work through this process. Resources are available to help them accomplish established goals and to stay faithful to the vision and mission of the *Beginning Experience* ministry.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted 1988  
Revised 2016



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**POLICY MANUAL FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS**

**SECTION C:  
YOUTH MINISTRY**



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## YOUTH MINISTRY INTRODUCTION

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. acknowledges that, just as adults are deeply affected by the loss of their marriage, young people are deeply affected by the loss of their parents' marriage through death, divorce or separation. Ministry to these vulnerable youth is a vital part of the Beginning Experience® mission.

For this reason, several programs have been developed, suitable for various age groups, to serve these young people. The programs include:

- 1) "Beginning Experience for Children," an overnight program for ages 8-12
- 2) "Beginning Experience for Young People," a weekend program for ages 13-17
- 3) "Beginning Experience for Young Adults," a weekend program for ages 18-25+
- 4) "Who Am I Now?" a weekly support program for ages 4-8, 9-12, and/or 13-17

There are specific considerations that must be attended to when working with youth. The *Beginning Experience* ministry places the utmost importance on providing a secure and safe environment for participants in these programs to process their grief. To maintain such an environment, the *Beginning Experience* ministry has developed the policies and procedures that follow. The policies and procedures in this section are not meant to replace or negate any other policy in this manual.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 2016



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## GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING A YOUTH PROGRAM

Those presenting youth ministry programs consist of both adults and young people. An effective team member is flexible, able to improvise, is enthusiastic, willing to play, sensitive to the needs and moods of the young participants, and most of all, happy to be a part of the experience in whatever role he/she may have on the weekend — coordinator, group leader or facilitator, presenter, kitchen worker or other role.

It is important that the team members know how to look for and acknowledge the good in each child or young person participating in the program. Equally important is for each team member to be relaxed, accepting, and capable of listening attentively to very small bits of information and feelings without making judgments or criticisms.

The plan for training team members for the youth programs is aimed at providing well-trained, sensitive leaders who will be able to work effectively with minors and young adults who have experienced the death of a parent or their parents' divorce or separation.

In addition, the following requirements apply:

1. An experienced adult coordinator of a youth program, or someone assigned from the board must attend the first youth program that any team conducts.
2. A parent may not attend the same program that his or her child attends as a participant.
3. Each youth serving in youth ministry shall have received training in group dynamics and active listening either through the local adult *Beginning Experience* training program or from the youth training team, using approved training materials from Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.
4. Any person who is an adult facilitator on a *Beginning Experience* youth weekend is expected to have attended an adult *Beginning Experience* weekend and received training for team. Exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the executive director.
5. Every adult present during a youth weekend must have a specific role in the weekend consistent with the "Program Observers Policy" in Section H of this Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams.



Roles a non-presenting/facilitator team adult can have include:

- a) Cook - responsible for meals, snacks, beverages (would not ever be present in large group or small group activities)

- b) Free-time activity helper with kids (helps relieve team fatigue)
- c) Chaperone (at night when team needs sleep)
- d) Participation as an adult who suffered parental loss as a minor
- e) Coordinator, co-coordinator or assistant coordinator

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 2016



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## PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING YOUTH PROGRAMS AND TEAMS

1. An adult Beginning Experience® team must be well established in a location before initiating the process of presenting a youth ministry program or establishing a youth team. The establishment and maintenance of youth ministry is a demanding process requiring the support, both emotional and financial, of the adult team. At a later time, the youth team has the option of establishing its own coordinating board, remaining in dialogue with the adult team.
2. Youth ministry programs can be presented in locations where there is not an established youth team. On occasion, the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) will coordinate a youth ministry program in a location where an interest for such a program is expressed and determined to be mutually beneficial to the local community and BEIM.
3. Contact the executive director for information about youth ministry, the resources needed, training schedules and possible training dates. The executive director will send material about youth ministry so the interested team can determine their ability to pursue the establishment of a youth program or team.
3. If the adult team, with the approval of the International Board of Directors, decides to pursue presenting a youth program or establishing a youth team, the executive director will assign a trainer or trainers. The training program includes mechanics and preparation for the weekend, community building, facilitation and listening skills, and the process of the weekend itself. The local adult team or emerging youth team works with the trainer(s) in preparing and implementing a pilot youth program or weekend.
4. The local adult team or emerging youth team continues to consult with the trainer(s) concerning their development after its pilot youth program. A youth emerging team does not require Articles of Incorporation since it operates under the direction of the adult team. However, each youth team is to develop its own team guidelines, which address issues related to presenting the programs in their location. When the guidelines are completed, with the recommendation of the trainer(s), the new team is commissioned by the executive director and becomes accountable directly to both the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and the adult team.
5. Youth teams will be periodically re-commissioned by Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.
6. In order that the children attending a youth weekend return to a warm supportive family structure, it is essential that each custodial parent be informed of the process of the youth weekend, its goals, the theology and the psychological assumptions before the actual weekend takes place.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors

Adopted February 1981

Revised 1998, May 2016



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## BACKGROUND CHECK REPORTS

### POLICY

All team members or volunteers 18 years of age or older must present a national criminal background check report, or equivalent vetting procedure, before becoming involved in any form of Beginning Experience® youth ministry. The report shall be treated with strictest confidence and used ONLY for the purposes of determining the individual's suitability for working with minors. The report must be provided to the local *Beginning Experience* program coordinator or must be on file with the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. prior to that team member/volunteer's interaction with any minor.

### RATIONALE

This policy is necessary in order to exclude persons unsuitable for ministering to minors, to protect the safety of the minors the ministry serves, to promote a respectful ministry environment, and to reduce potential claims against the ministry related to having unsuitable individuals working with minors.

A national criminal background check for teams in the United States, a police check for teams in Canada and the Asia Pacific Region, or a vetting procedure for teams in the Great Britain and Ireland Region from a nationally accredited agency is therefore required for all team members or volunteers 18 years of age or older before becoming involved in any aspect of *Beginning Experience* ministry involving minors. The fee for obtaining the report is to be paid by the individual volunteer.

The report shall be treated with strictest confidence and used ONLY for the purposes of determining the individual's suitability for working with minors. The report must be provided to the *Beginning Experience* program coordinator prior to a team member/volunteers' interaction with any minor.

The rationale for this policy is to protect both children and the ministry from claims of having unsuitable individuals working with minors. In the event that an allegation or instance of child sexual or physical abuse, or child endangerment should occur during the course of a team member or volunteer's ministry, the reports from the background checks will be one source of evidence that Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. was not negligent in permitting a team member and/or volunteer from serving in the ministry and, from the reasonable information available, that the individual was indeed suitable for the tasks or role given.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted January 2004  
Revised May 2016



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## **RETENTION OF BACKGROUND REPORTS**

### **POLICY**

The criminal background check reports shall be retained on file by the ministry indefinitely.

### **RATIONALE**

Documentation from an independent third party will reduce miscommunication or possible oversight and will help demonstrate part of the *Beginning Experience* initial screening process for team member/volunteer selection for youth ministry programs.

The reports must be on file with, and kept on file indefinitely at the International Ministry Center, and with either the Asia Pacific Regional Board or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board for teams in those regions. The reports must be sent to the International Ministry Center for permanent retention. It is critically important that some proof be retained that proper care was taken in the initial screening of a team member or volunteer.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted January 2004  
Revised May 2016



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## CAUSE FOR EXCLUSION

### POLICY

Prior convictions for certain unlawful activities will exclude a volunteer/team member from work in *Beginning Experience* youth ministry programs.

### RATIONALE

To exclude persons unsuitable for ministering to minors, to protect the safety of the minors the ministry serves, to promote a respectful ministry environment, and to reduce potential claims against the ministry related to having such individuals working with minors.

Convictions for sexual abuse, physical abuse, or crimes involving the use of force shall exclude an individual from service in youth ministry. Convictions for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol shall exclude the individual from transporting minors.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted January 2004  
Revised May 2016



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# RESPECTFUL MINISTRY ENVIRONMENT TRAINING FOR WORKING WITH MINORS

## POLICY

Training for the protection of youth **is required** of all team members and volunteers 18 years of age or older serving in Beginning Experience® youth ministry.

## RATIONALE

The rationale for this training is to educate *Beginning Experience* volunteers/team members, to enhance the safety of the minors the ministry serves, to promote a respectful ministry environment, and to reduce potential claims against the ministry related to having such individuals working with minors. See “Respectful Ministry Environment Policy” in Section H of this Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams.

Training for the protection of youth is required of all team members and volunteers 18 years of age or older serving in *Beginning Experience* ministry to minors, and proof of such training in the form of a letter from the trainer or in the form of a certificate must be on file with the local team and at the International Ministry Center, and with either the Asia Pacific or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board for teams in those regions.

The letter or certificate verifying this training must be presented to the local youth program coordinator prior to the beginning of any program involving youth. Renewal/update training must be completed as required by the local diocese where the program takes place for any team member and/or volunteer 18 years of age or older. Proof of renewal/update training shall be submitted to the local team youth program coordinator and to the International Ministry Center, and if applicable, to either the Asia Pacific or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board for teams in those regions.

The rationale for this procedure is to provide evidence of education regarding providing a safe environment and knowledge of appropriate and/or inappropriate behavior when working with minors. This training is in addition to, above and beyond, the training required for presentation of *Beginning Experience* youth programs.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted January 2004  
Revised May 2016



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**POLICY MANUAL FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS**

**SECTION D:**

**USE OF PROGRAM AND TRAINING MATERIALS**



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## **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE<sup>®</sup> PROGRAMS**

While a series of programs are approved by the Beginning Experience International Board for presentation by local teams, the Beginning Experience<sup>®</sup> weekend is the **cornerstone** of the ministry. Teams **shall** plan and present the *Beginning Experience* weekend program and may choose to present any of the other programs listed below to meet the needs of their team members and participant population.

**Coping with Life Alone:** A weekly support program intended for those whose loss is very new and who are not yet ready for the *Beginning Experience* weekend, or for those who feel in need of support now but a weekend program is not scheduled in the immediate future. The program has been written for flexible presentation in a time frame from six (6) to 10 weeks.

**Beginning Experience Weekend:** Intended for those who have moved past the initial reaction to their loss, are ready to face the loss and do the work needed to begin moving into the future. *This is the core program of the Beginning Experience ministry and is the one program teams are required to present.*

**Continued Beginnings:** A six-week support program for those who have completed a *Beginning Experience* weekend, offering an opportunity to further address the grief issues encountered on the weekend.

**Vision and Leadership:** A weekly support and training program which begins to address issues of personal growth for single again persons; includes communication skills training and prepares participants for potential service on the local team.

**Building Happiness:** A weekly support program which addresses issues of personal growth for single again persons.

**Rebuilding:** A 10-week program using, with written permission, material by Bruce Fisher and supplemented by *Beginning Experience* videotaped material.

**Beyond Beginning Experience:** A capstone weekend program intended for those who have reached some acceptance of the loss and wish to address issues they are facing now concerning their future as single persons.

**Beginning Experience for Children:** An overnight program intended for those ages 8-12 who have experienced the death of a parent, parental divorce or separation.

**Beginning Experience for Young People:** A weekend program for those ages 13-18 who have experienced the death of a parent, parental divorce or separation.

**Beginning Experience for Young Adults:** A weekend program for those ages 18-25 who have experienced the death of a parent, parental divorce or separation.

**Who Am I Now?** A weekly support offered for three age ranges: 5-7, 8-12 and 13-17.



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## USE OF BEGINNING EXPERIENCE® MATERIALS

### POLICY

Beginning Experience® program and training materials shall be used only for the purpose of presenting *Beginning Experience* programs authorized by Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) and may not be reproduced by any means without prior written permission.

### RATIONALE

BEIM has the responsibility to maintain the integrity of programs presented under its name and to protect the proprietary nature of these programs.

The Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Presenting Teams, the Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Coordinators, the Manual for Training a Beginning Experience Team to Certification, the Facilitation Skills Manual for Beginning Experience Teams, and other *Beginning Experience* program and training manuals are **copyrighted materials that are proprietary in nature**, and are registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office. This registration protects the copyrights under the laws of the United States and other countries. **NO** reproduction of these materials, in whole or in part, may be made without prior authorization.

Ownership of the copyrighted program and training materials is held by BEIM. At no time has verbal or written permission been given to any group or individual, to reproduce or copy by any means these copyrighted, proprietary program or training manuals.

Therefore, these materials, in whole or in any part, may not be reproduced, scanned, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or any media or by any means: electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior express written permission of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. ANY copies or reproductions by any means are unauthorized and illegal. Violation may infringe Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.'s copyright, and any such violation constitutes theft of intellectual property, has legal repercussions, and shall terminate any license to use these publication or to present the program outlined within it.

The International Board of Directors requires that each local team gives emphasis during each *Beginning Experience* weekend and other copyrighted *Beginning Experience* programs, and in their application/brochures and other promotional material, that *Beginning Experience* programs are copyrighted and proprietary, and that programs cannot be initiated without the express permission and written approval of the executive director.



Each person serving as a presenting team member must have a complete knowledge and understanding of the process, and of the theology and the psychology of the *Beginning Experience* weekend before he or she can function effectively as a peer minister in any program. IT IS REQUIRED that each presenting member of the team be issued, under signed contract, a copy of the *Beginning Experience* program manual for his or her personal use for each program in which he or she serves as a presenting team member.

Each presenting member of a *Beginning Experience* team must read and sign the “Contract for Use of Program Materials” when he or she receives the manual for each copyrighted program.

The local board president or his/her representative sends the signed original contract to the International Ministry Center (IMC) within 30 days of the person receiving the copyrighted material. The contract is kept on file at the IMC for the legally required time period. The local team and the signer should each retain a copy.

***Material is to be returned to the team when the member moves on from membership as a presenting member of the team.*** Any fees that may be paid for such materials are for use of the materials in presenting Beginning Experience programs only and do not convey ownership.

Material may be reissued to another team member under a new contract. New contracts may be downloaded from the team section of the website at [www.beginningexperience.org](http://www.beginningexperience.org).

—Sr. Josephine Stewart, SSMN  
*Co-Founder of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.*

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Revised 2006, 2016



© Copyright 2016 Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

*This contract appears in all Beginning Experience program manuals.*

### **CONTRACT FOR USE OF PROGRAM MATERIALS**

\_\_\_\_\_ (insert manual name here)

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. exists to strengthen and assist those who have experienced the loss of a spouse through divorce, separation or death, and children of these losses. To this end, the *Beginning Experience* weekend and other ministry programs have been designed as integral programs presented by specially trained leaders within a specified structure and sequence of activities, as outlined in the copyrighted program manuals.

Deviation from the prescribed programs, or by other than the prescribed presenters may result in the loss of effectiveness as to the intended purpose. Restructuring or misapplication of the programs could be a disservice to those for whom they are intended. Therefore, *Beginning Experience* programs must be conducted as outlined by a *Beginning Experience* team of peer ministers in the specified time period and in the designated environment.

Copyrights for program and training materials are held by Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and are registered with the United States Office of Patents and Trademarks. The *Beginning Experience* name and graphic images to be used to identify the ministry to the public are registered trademarks with the United States Office of Patents and Trademarks. These copyrights, trademarks and graphic images are protected by the laws of the United States and other countries. Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. policies and procedures are in place to guide program presentation, participant and team selection, ongoing team development, and use of programs, training materials, names and images.

I certify that I am in the process of, or have completed, the required training as established by the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. I hereby agree and contract that the materials provided to me will be held as proprietary to Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., and will be used only to present *Beginning Experience* programs. These materials are loaned to me and any fees that I may have paid for such materials are for the designated purposes only, and do not convey ownership. I will not deviate from program requirements established in any of the *Beginning Experience* program manuals, without prior written approval from Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

I further agree to be accountable to the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. regarding the use of the program manuals I have received. I agree that when I leave the team, these materials will be returned to the team.

Name (please print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/mobile phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Team \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: When materials are returned they may be reissued to another member of the team under a new contract. New contracts may be downloaded from the team section of the website at [www.beginningexperience.org](http://www.beginningexperience.org).*



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## A SUMMARY OF THE PROPRIETARY NATURE OF BEGINNING EXPERIENCE<sup>®</sup> PROGRAMS

Proprietary information, also known as a trade secret, is information an organization wishes to keep confidential. Examples of proprietary information can include formulas, processes, and production methods. It can also include an organization's business and marketing plans, salary structure, customer lists, contracts, and details of its computer systems.

It is in this sense that all *Beginning Experience* program and training materials are proprietary to maintain the integrity of the ministry's programs.

### LEGISLATION

In the United States, federal legislation came into effect in 1996 with the enactment of the Economic Espionage Act of 1996 (EEA). The EEA was in part modeled on the Uniform Trade Secrets Act (UTSA), a model law drafted by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws but expands UTSA's definition. The EEA definition of trade secret follows from Section 1838, paragraph (3):

“[T]he term ‘trade secret’ means all forms and types of financial, business, scientific, technical, economic, or engineering information, including patterns, plans, compilations, program devices, formulas, designs, prototypes, methods, techniques, processes, procedures, programs, or codes, whether tangible or intangible, and whether or how stored, compiled, or memorialized physically, electronically, graphically, photographically, or in writing if—

“(A) the owner therefore has taken reasonable measures to keep such information secret, and

“(B) the information derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable through proper means by, the public[.]”

With the passage of EEA, trade secrets now enjoy protection under federal law as do inventions through patents, creative works through copyright, and unique names and symbols through trademark legislation. In addition, 39 U.S. laws also define trade secrets in various ways and define the conditions under which theft has taken place.

Based on such laws a significant body of case law covers proprietary information and trade secrets. This legal framework recognizes an organization's right to have proprietary information and provides the organization with remedies when its trade secrets have been misused or illegally appropriated.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted May 2016



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## PROTECTING TRADE SECRETS

In general, for information to be considered proprietary, organizations must treat it as confidential. Courts will not treat information readily available in public sources as proprietary. In addition, proprietary information must give the organization some sort of competitive advantage and should generally be unknown outside of the organization.

An organization must be able to demonstrate that it has taken every reasonable step to keep the information private if it hopes to obtain court assistance in protecting its rights. “Courts require that trade secret holders take ‘reasonable’ steps to maintain the secrecy of their trade secrets,” Randy Kay wrote in the San Diego Business Journal. “Courts do not require that organizations take all measures conceivable to maintain the secrecy, nor do courts require absolute secrecy. Rather, the confidentiality measures must be ‘reasonable under the circumstances.’”

An organization has several options to keep its information proprietary. Key employees with access to such information may be required to sign restrictive covenants — also called confidentiality, nondisclosure, or noncompete agreements — that prohibit them from revealing that information to outsiders or using it to compete with their employer for a certain period of time after leaving the organization. Restrictive covenants are usually enforced by the courts if they are reasonable with respect to time and place and do not unreasonably restrict the former employee’s right to employment. In some cases the covenants are enforced only if the employee has gained proprietary information during the course of his or her employment.

In addition, the courts generally consider it unfair competition for one organization to induce people who have acquired unique technical skills and secret knowledge at another organization to terminate their employment and use their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the competing organization. In such a case the plaintiff can seek an injunction to prevent its former employees and its competitor from using the proprietary information.

Organizations may also develop security systems to protect their proprietary information from being stolen by foreign or domestic competitors. Business and industrial espionage is an ongoing activity that clandestinely seeks to obtain trade secrets by illegal methods. A corporate system for protecting proprietary information would include a comprehensive plan ranging from restricting employee access, to data protection, to securing phone lines and meeting rooms. In some cases a chief information officer (CIO) would be responsible for implementing such a plan.

As Kay noted, other means of demonstrating reasonable efforts at secrecy include marking documents as “confidential,” prohibiting people from making photo copies of trade secret documents or removing them from organization premises, limiting the access of employees or volunteers to sensitive materials, creating a written trade secret protection plan, and bringing suit for the theft of trade secrets as required.



On the other hand, small organizations are unlikely to prevail in cases involving trade secret protection if they sell a product or publish technical literature that discloses the trade secret, expose the secret to employees or colleagues who haven't signed confidentiality agreements, publish information about the secret in professional journals or on the Internet, or disclose the trade secret in public documents such as court records and government filings.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted May 2016



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## **A SUMMARY OF COPYRIGHT LAW**

Copyright is the EXCLUSIVE LEGAL RIGHT to make copies of intellectual property: books, music, poetry, pictures, drawings, and other original materials. The creator(s), or assigned agents such as publishers are the ones who own this exclusive legal right.

An author and/or a publisher has a right to expect a fair return from his or her investment of time and money — the very considerable costs of creating, engraving, proofreading and printing, as well as the costs of paper, printing equipment, publicity, distribution, and other costs.

IT IS ILLEGAL to reproduce by any means either text or music or both of copyrighted materials without the express written permission of the copyright owners. The fact that these duplicated materials are not for sale, but for private use only, or for any good cause, does not alter the legal or moral situation of the practice of copying without permission.

Permission to reproduce copyrighted materials may be sought by requesting permission directly from the owner of the copyright or his/her agent, the publisher.

The remedies provided by the law to a copyright owner mean that churches, groups, teams or individuals found making illegal copies, or otherwise infringing, could face:

- Payment of from \$250 to \$10,000 in statutory damages and, if the court finds willfulness, up to \$50,000 per infringement
- If willful infringement for commercial advantage and private financial gain is proven, fines of up to \$50,000 and/or two years' imprisonment, or both.

These legal remedies indicate that copyright infringement is serious and needs to be viewed with concern.

Copyright law prohibits **us** teams from reproducing the songs played during the *Beginning Experience* programs. However, teams are permitted to provide participants with a list of the songs played and the artist that performed them.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
May 2016



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**POLICY MANUAL FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS**

**SECTION E:**

**ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY —**

**USING THE LOGO, EMBLEM AND NAME**



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# **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY, INC. ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY PROGRAM**

## **POLICY**

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) and all affiliated teams shall comply with this Organizational Identity program when communicating about the Beginning Experience® ministry.

## **RATIONALE**

Following established standards when using organization trademarks assures recognition of our ministry and its programs, ensures consistency in communication and preserves the legal protection granted by federal registration of our name and graphic images in the United States and other countries.

An organization's trademarks (its graphic representations and the names of the products or services it provides) are among its most valuable assets, which help to establish public recognition of the organization and its services to those it serves. Through that recognition, people place their trust in the quality of the products or services they will receive from the organization.

The organization's identity program is its guide to clear, consistent communication about the organization itself and about its products or services. Consistent compliance with the identity program is intended to strengthen and protect the organization's public recognition.

BEIM has registered the following marks with the United States Patent and Trademark Office:

- The words "Beginning Experience"
- The emblem of the cross and anchor with rising sun
- The logo of the figure on the hill

Following established standards when using these trademarks assures recognition of our ministry and its programs, ensures consistency in communication and preserves the legal protection granted by federal registration of our name and graphic images in the United States and other countries.

The standards outlined in the "Organizational Identity Program" consist of:

- A graphic standards policy outlining acceptable uses of the graphic images
- A style guide outlining use of the ministry's name

For questions about using the organizational identity program, contact the executive director.



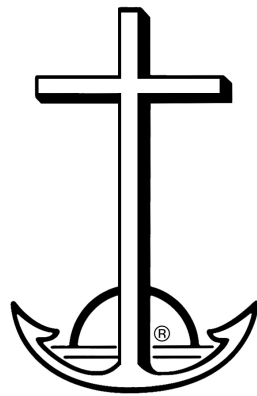
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## GRAPHIC STANDARDS FOR THE LOGO AND EMBLEM

There are two graphic images that identify Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., (BEIM) and each of its teams as part of that ministry.

The first of these images is the logo, the figure on the hill. It is a symbol used to identify our values and our mission in communication to the public. It is used whenever the ministry is represented visually to the public, whether in print (on letterhead, brochures, leaflets, posters, or tee shirts) or in electronic media (such as video, TV or the internet).



The second of these images is our emblem, the cross and anchor. The emblem carries with it our history, our identification with Christ's death and resurrection, and our deep commitment to the quality of the ministry of which we are a part.

It is used to identify our most official communication. It is found on official international ministry program and training materials, international ministry communication about official education and training events held for Beginning Experience® team members, and is used on team commissioning documents.

## GENERAL PRACTICES

All uses of the *Beginning Experience* logo and emblem are clear, consistent and in good taste, reflecting the quality of the programs we offer.

Both the logo and the emblem are trademarks registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, providing legal protection for their use in the United States and other countries. The executive director's permission is required to use the logo or the emblem; approval of the use is required.

Using and reproducing the logo and the emblem require special care to be certain the use is appropriate for the audience (externally to the public or internally within the ministry). Neither the logo nor the emblem may be distorted.



EITHER the logo or the emblem may be used by a team when communicating within the ministry, such as in a newsletter to team members, in a reunion announcement, or in an announcement of another team event.

**The logo should be used when communicating with the public.**

## LOGO COLORS AND TRADEMARK

The logo is reproduced in a solid color, PMS 266 purple, PMS 366 green, or black, or may be reversed from one of these colors. A percentage or screen of the solid color image may also be used. The symbol “®” indicating that the logo is a registered trademark **always** appears on the logo.

## EMBLEM COLORS AND TRADEMARK

The emblem is reproduced in a solid color, PMS 266 purple, PMS 366 green, or black, or may be reversed from one of these colors. A percentage or screen of the solid color image may also be used. The symbol “®” indicating that the emblem is a registered trademark is **always** part of the emblem.

## DESIGN OF PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

These policies apply to individual teams and must be adhered to when developing promotional materials. Promotional materials include business cards, decals, T-shirts, mugs, posters and other materials carrying the ministry’s name. New banners created by any team (new or established) that use the emblem or the logo to must be consistent with this policy.

Design guidelines for using the logo and signatures help maintain our image. General principles include:

- 1) Use the logo on the front of communications, forms and freestanding pieces, such as a registration form or banner, when communicating with the public.
- 2) Remember to ask approval from the executive director for each new design and use.
- 2) If any other graphics are used on the piece, those graphic images should be placed *away* from the logo or signature and used in a way that assures no confusion with the logo and therefore no confusion with our identity.
- 3) The typeface for the name should be Garamond and only one other typeface should be used (preferably Helvetica, Futura or Arial) in the same piece.

## PAPER STOCK

Paper stock for external use is white Capital Bond 40 lb. or firmer.



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## PRACTICES TO AVOID

- 1) Neither the logo nor the emblem is ever worked into any pattern or other logo or emblem. No other image is superimposed on either the logo or the emblem, nor are they superimposed on each other.
- 2) Neither the logo nor the emblem is ever modified in any way, including the basic design, the proportions or the thickness of the lines.
- 3) Use only one image on a page—either the logo or the emblem, but not both.

### *DON'T DO THIS: distort the image proportions*



### *DON'T DO THIS: add another image*



## SIGNATURES: TYPE AND TRADEMARK

When the Beginning Experience® logo or the emblem is combined with the name, it is referred to as the **signature**.

- The full signature should be used when possible.
- Use the logo alone when the signature is inappropriate.
- Both the image and the name carry the Registered Trademark symbol (®).

There are two versions of the signature using the **logo**:

- 1) The typeface for the name is **GARAMOND BOLD SMALL CAPS** or **GARAMOND SEMIBOLD SMALL CAPS**; the words of the name are stacked and centered below the figure on the hill.



**Beginning  
Experience®**



**Beginning Experience®**

- 2) The typeface for the name is Garamond Bold Upper/Lower case or Garamond Semibold Upper/Lower case; the words of the name appear on one line aligned with the left side of the graphic image and extending to the right. When this version is used, it should be placed on the left side of the page.

There are also two versions of the signature using the **emblem**:

- 1) The typeface for the name is Garamond Bold or Semibold Upper/Lower case and the two words of the name are stacked and centered below the cross and anchor.



**Beginning  
Experience®**



**Beginning Experience®**

- 2) The typeface for the name is Garamond Bold or Semibold Upper/Lower case and the name appear on one line aligned with the left side of the graphic image and extending to the right. When this version is used, place it on the left side of the page.



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## STYLE GUIDE: USING THE BEGINNING EXPERIENCE® NAME

A style guide is an established standard reference assuring consistent written communication with the public, whether in print or electronically. The International Board of Directors (IBD) has adopted two references as our official style guides:

- The Chicago Manual of Style for published material such as program manuals, training material and electronic publications. This reference will be used by the International Ministry Center.
- The Associated Press Style Guide for less formal communication, such as press releases or newsletters. This reference will be used by both the International Ministry Center and by local teams.

The IBD has adopted additional guidelines to supplement these two references when communicating with the public about our published materials, our organizational entities and when using our trademarks.

## BEGINNING EXPERIENCE® PUBLISHED MATERIALS

Beginning Experience® program and training materials are copyrighted publications. When referring to these publications, use the entire title and underline it.

EXAMPLES:

Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Presenting Team

Manual for Beginning Experience for Children

Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams

Coping with Life Alone

Vision and Leadership

## USE OF THE INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY NAME

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc., (BEIM) refers to the legal entity that owns the copyrighted programs, training materials and trademarks, and authorizes local teams to use them in their work with grieving people and their children.

1. When referring to this legal entity, the name is completely spelled out when first used in a document with no differentiation in the text in which it appears.
2. If the name is to be abbreviated in subsequent uses in the same document, the abbreviation should appear in parentheses immediately after the first use.
3. In second and subsequent uses, the abbreviation may be used alone since its meaning was explained earlier.



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#### EXAMPLES – FIRST USE:

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) offers several programs serving the widowed, separated and divorced and their families.

Mary Jones contacted the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) for information about establishing their grief resolution program in her community.

#### EXAMPLE – SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT USE:

As these programs are updated, BEIM will register new copyrights for the revised materials.

Executive Director Mary Jones outlined the programs that are offered by BEIM.

### **USE OF THE TEAM NAME**

Team names refer to the local legal entities (local team organizations) that are authorized by the executive director to present the copyrighted programs in a given area.

1. When a local team name appears for the first time, it is entirely spelled out.
2. If a team name is to be abbreviated, the abbreviation should appear in parentheses immediately after the first use in a given document.
3. In second and subsequent uses in the same document, the abbreviation may be used alone since its meaning was explained earlier.

#### EXAMPLES—FIRST USE:

Beginning Experience of Oklahoma City (BEOKC)

Beginning Experience of Los Angeles (BELA)

Beginning Experience of Hudson Valley (BE of Hudson Valley)

Beginning Experience for Children of Western North Dakota (CBE of WND)

#### EXAMPLES—SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT USE:

BEOKC

BELA

BE of Hudson Valley

CBE of WND

***Note that the FULL abbreviation for the team name is used, NOT simply BE.***



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## USE OF THE TRADEMARKED NAME

The words “Beginning Experience” are registered with the U.S. government as a trademark. The trademark refers to the ministry—the programs and the services offered through the legal entity Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) or presented by local teams. The trademark also applies to teams of peer ministers (the people on the team) who deliver those programs and services.

### NOTE:

**Standards for use of the trademark differ from standards for the use of the legal name of the ministry or the legal name of a local team.**

In order to preserve the legal protection the trademark offers, special rules guide use of the trademarked name in text:

- “Beginning Experience” is **never abbreviated** — it may only be abbreviated when used as a part of a team’s legal name as described above.
- On first reference, the symbol “®” indicates the trademark.
- In subsequent references, the trademark symbol may continue to be used or the trademarked name is differentiated from surrounding text by the use of italics or capital letters. One or the other must be used consistently within a document.

### EXAMPLES — FIRST REFERENCE:

Beginning Experience® weekend  
Beginning Experience® team

### EXAMPLES — SUBSEQUENT REFERENCES:

Beginning Experience® program  
Beginning Experience® ministry

OR

*Beginning Experience* program  
*Beginning Experience* ministry

OR

BEGINNING EXPERIENCE program  
BEGINNING EXPERIENCE ministry

Use one of these examples consistently, but **do NOT use “BE weekend.”**



Except when used as a sign (such as in the title of a brochure when the words with the trademark symbol may be used alone), “Beginning Experience” as a trademark:

- **Is always used as an adjective or modifier**
- **Is never used as a noun**

DO USE THE TRADEMARKED NAME AS A ADJECTIVE with the type differentiated from the surrounding text.

USE EXAMPLES LIKE THESE:

The *Beginning Experience* weekend offers an opportunity for growth.

The Beginning Experience® ministry reaches out to hurting people.

The core BEGINNING EXPERIENCE program is an invitation to healing.

DO NOT USE THE TRADEMARKED NAME AS A NOUN even if the type is differentiated.

AVOID:

*Beginning Experience* offers an opportunity for growth.

Beginning Experience® reaches out to hurting people.

BEGINNING EXPERIENCE is an invitation to healing.

## **NOTICE OF TRADEMARK**

Material intended for public distribution should carry the following notice: “Beginning Experience® is a registered trademark of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.”

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 6, 2012  
Revised 2016



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**POLICY MANUAL FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS**

**SECTION F:**

**THE MINISTRY AND CHURCH RELATIONSHIP**



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## THE MINISTRY AND CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

### POLICY

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) and each of its affiliated teams will maintain a cooperative and collaborative relationship with the local church.

### RATIONALE

This policy is in place to maintain the theological foundations of the ministry and to respect the ministry's Roman Catholic origin and foundation as well as its ecumenical outreach to those who serve and those who are served.

### ECUMENICAL GUIDELINES

While the *Beginning Experience* ministry was founded in the Roman Catholic tradition, and has been recognized as an official ministry within the Catholic Church, it has been open to persons of all faiths from the beginning.

Occasionally, other religious denominations have sought the permission of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. to establish a *Beginning Experience* program especially adapted to their own religious traditions. Such requests have been granted, with each request being considered individually.

Where such teams exist, they are subject to the same policies, guidelines and administrative structures set forth by the International Board of Directors as all other teams. Where adaptations are necessary because of denominational differences (i.e. the denominational affiliation determines the liturgy and approach to the sacraments), these require the approval of the International Board of Directors.

Each team is also obliged to be open to participation by those of all faiths who are in need of this grief ministry, and to involve itself in the same collaborative relationship with, and accountability to, their local denominational church structure as is required of teams operating within the Roman Catholic tradition.

For denominations that are making a request, these elements are needed:

- A theological foundation that includes the concept of the Risen Christ living within us and an understanding of the power of God working in the lives of the faithful; essential elements of the sacraments
- An understanding of and appreciation for the power of reconciliation through a spiritual dialogue, and expressing the desire to forgive and to be forgiven

With these elements in mind, the following mainline religious traditions may be considered for team formation due to their theological compatibility with the Catholic tradition:

- Anglican or Episcopal
- Methodist
- United Church in Canada (combined Methodist and Presbyterian)
- Lutheran
- Presbyterian



Once the faith basis of the team is established, team and team leadership, regardless of their individual faiths, are expected to present the program and form the team in the denomination in which the team was originally established.

—Sr. Josephine Stewart  
Co-founder, Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.  
September 15, 2004

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Revised 2016



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## FAITH CONNECTION

The executive director of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. connects on behalf of the entire ministry with the Catholic Bishops in the United States. This is accomplished through the episcopal moderator (i.e., the liaison for the *Beginning Experience* ministry to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.) The current episcopal moderator is the Most Reverend Patrick Zurek, Bishop of Amarillo, Texas.

The episcopal moderator provides an official church sanction for the ministry and opens these doors:

- Recognition of the ministry as sanctioned by the Church
- Inclusion in the Official Catholic Directory, also known as the Kennedy Directory
- Inclusion in the Directory of Ecclesial Movements and Communities
- Inclusion in the Catholic Almanac
- Publicity in national Catholic media
- Membership in:
  - The National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers
  - Catholic Divorce Ministry

At the local level, it makes possible:

- Recognition by the local diocese
- Inclusion in diocesan directories
- Listing on diocesan websites
- Publicity in diocesan media
- Other support

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted 2004  
Revised 2016



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## ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE TEAM TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

It is the policy of the International Board of Directors (IBD) for *Beginning Experience* teams to cooperate and collaborate with the local bishop or church authority and his representative(s). It is of special concern to work with representatives of the local church in implementing their “Plan of Pastoral Action” or similar plan especially as it relates to ministering to hurting and single-parent families.

While maintaining its own structure and lines of accountability with the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM), each local team must cooperate and collaborate with the diocesan Office of Family Life or similar organization. Since programs in every diocese are the responsibility of the bishop and those he appoints to assist him, each *Beginning Experience* team must, by way of rendering an account of their ministry, submit to the local bishop and his representative in this ministry an “Annual Update.” This update shall contain the following:

- Number and place of *Beginning Experience* weekends and other programs offered by the team
- Number and parish affiliations of team members serving and participants served, if available
- Areas where the team has involved itself in collaborating in the wider ministry of the local church to divorced, separated and widowed persons and their families
- An expression of appreciation for any cooperation or support received from the representatives of the local church and a request that such cooperation continue or be developed

A duplicate of this report must be sent to the International Ministry Center or, if applicable, to the Asia Pacific Regional Board or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board.

In setting forth the policies and guidelines for the formation and administration of *Beginning Experience* teams, it is not the intent of the IBD to engage in restrictive legislation, but more to clarify the role of the *Beginning Experience* ministry within the larger ministry of the local church to the divorced, separated and widowed persons and open avenues for greater collaboration.

**NOTE:** Although certain local teams are affiliated with the diocesan Office of Family Life or other diocesan organizations, each *Beginning Experience* team is ***accountable directly*** to BEIM.



—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted 1998  
Revised 2006, 2016

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## THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE TEAM WITH THE LOCAL DIOCESE

### WHY IS A RELATIONSHIP NECESSARY?

A positive and cooperative relationship with the local diocese has been a goal for each Beginning Experience® team since the inception of the ministry. The necessity of a collaborative relationship is:

- To experience the reconciling power of God through the sacramental ministry of the church
- To experience the care and compassion of the local diocese for the separated, divorced and widowed
- To share with each diocese the availability *Beginning Experience* program and its uncommon success with grief resolution for separated, divorced and widowed
- To provide a definite link to the local Catholic diocese as an essential aspect of the vision of the *Beginning Experience* ministry
- To maintain warm and workable relationships with the clergy who share a concern for the recovery and spirituality of the separated, divorced and widowed

Any relationship other than a semi-autonomous one is detrimental both to the church and the continued existence of the *Beginning Experience* team.

### POTENTIAL CHALLENGES WITH THE TEAM/DIOCESAN RELATIONSHIP

In the years since the ministry was founded, most teams have related collaboratively and cooperatively with the diocese or diocesan office. Though rarely experienced, the following challenges have been identified:

- **Overdependence on diocesan support to maintain the team.** When there is a change in structure and/or personnel at a diocesan level, there can be a reduction in support and/or a shift in ministry decision-making, which belongs to a team.
- **Diminution of enthusiasm and self-directedness.** Diocesan personnel may take over the team responsibility for advertising, developing a newsletter, the application process for weekends or managing the team's finances and training. While some teams may see this as normal, it can lead to significant challenges.
- **Loss of vision and commitment to the program.** Occasionally a diocesan office may insist on using the format of their own program, which loses sight of the spiritual dynamism of the *Beginning Experience* team. Teams that have invested time and energy into becoming independent and maintaining their own financial support are healthier teams.
- **Issues of power and control.** A loss of focus on the essential role of spirituality, reconciliation and collaboration is detrimental to the well-being of the team and the weekend participants.



## **WHAT SHOULD A TEAM DO IF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DIOCESAN OFFICE OR FAMILY LIFE OFFICE IS OTHER THAN COOPERATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE?**

1. Identify clearly and factually what the issues are. Develop a clear understanding of how the team can best proceed with the proper procedure to find resolution to these challenges.
2. Contact the director or coordinator of the Office of Family Life, Office of Faith Formation, Pastoral Care Centre, or other appropriate diocesan office and discuss ways you might work together to improve the relationship. Remember that a planned, gradual change is generally better and less detrimental to the team (and the church) than an immediate and radical change of circumstances.
3. Generally, the Office of Family Life, Pastoral Care Centre or other diocesan office personnel will be receptive to improving its relationship with the local *Beginning Experience* team. Experience has shown that in those rare instances where there is not a desire to work toward a cooperative and collaborative relationship, this is often the result of one individual's desire to distance themselves (and the local church) from the *Beginning Experience* ministry, or to control the local *Beginning Experience* programs. It may be useful to contact other individuals in the Office of Family Life or Pastoral Care Centre and review the situation, seeking advice about possible ways to move forward.
4. If the initial attempt to improve the team's relationship with the local church is unsatisfactory, an appeal should be considered to a higher level within the local church's administration. This step should be considered only after a consultation with the executive director. The team should present the mission and vision of the *Beginning Experience* ministry and an overview of its programs, in an attempt to demonstrate to the group or individual an understanding of the benefits of a mutually cooperative and collaborative relationship. Often differences or misunderstandings are based on insufficient information.
5. If the team is not able to improve this relationship by working with the leadership of the local church, the team should document its efforts for future team members. A plan should be developed to identify those functions that need to change and how the team can or should deal with these issues until a change in personnel, attitude or circumstances will make a new appeal feasible. It is critically important that written notes or minutes of conferences and conversations relating to the matter are kept for future reference.
6. The team is to alert their international or regional board of directors representative and the executive director at key stages in the effort to resolve any challenge or tension. A clear statement of the challenges or issues is to be sent to the executive director outlining the steps that have been taken, including the names and positions of the people involved in the effort. The executive director may have helpful suggestions.



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## **CONCLUSION**

The primary focus of these deliberations should be on supporting the spiritual mission and needs of those served by the *Beginning Experience* program. It is critical that all parties focus on these goals. Never should the issues or differences become a personal matter. An objective, prayerfully taken view, based on the *Beginning Experience* vision, should be the guide in all efforts to maintain the integrity of the program and the spiritual well-being of all its participants.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted March 1998  
Revised 2006



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**POLICY MANUAL FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS**

**SECTION G:  
TEAM MEMBERSHIP**



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## TEAM MEMBERSHIP INTRODUCTION

Becoming part of a Beginning Experience® presenting team is not simply volunteering with a charitable service organization. Presenting members of a team in this ministry are committed to the *Beginning Experience* process of listening with care as wounded healers. Team members have experienced a deep loss, and a subsequent death and resurrection experience. They have an awareness of God as the source of their healing, and are committed to personal growth and to upholding the integrity of the *Beginning Experience* ministry.\*\* The International Board of Directors and the executive director of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. are responsible, therefore, for providing team training, team commissioning and ongoing direction for teams.

Recognizing that team membership for each individual will end, this section of the Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams provides an outline of areas of service through the natural life cycle of being a team member, beginning with the “Invitation to Team Training” from the Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Coordinators. This section also addresses questions about various areas of service such as team support, pre- or post- weekend programs, youth ministry, alumni groups, etc. A sample “Moving On” ceremony to recognize an individual’s service to the team and to those it serves is included for use when members leave presenting team.

There are also policies and guidelines for addressing interpersonal difficulties among team members as well as for team conflict. There is a model team conflict resolution process for *Beginning Experience* teams to implement when necessary.

The primary responsibility for implementing team membership and training requirements rests with the local board of directors.

The executive director or the team’s international or regional board representative is always a resource to call upon with any question related to team membership.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted November 2005  
Revised 2016



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## TEAM MEMBERSHIP AND AREAS OF SERVICE

The Beginning Experience® team includes everyone who **regularly volunteers on behalf of the ministry.** The ministry focuses on the grief process, which has a beginning and, eventually, an end. The programs are based on the effectiveness of peer-to-peer ministry, the extraordinary and life-giving healing that occurs when hurting people share their experiences to help others. *Beginning Experience* peer ministers are in various places on the journey through grief, from newly hurting to nearly healed. As “wounded healers,” they reach out from their own place in the journey to those who are newer to it. Participation by those in EACH stage is needed for a healthy team. Eventually, each person’s journey is complete and one moves on to a new path in life.

It is the woundedness of the team member that is of value in peer-to-peer ministry. To this end, all weekend participants are potential team members and, with rare exception, should be invited to explore what it means to be on team by attending an Orientation Session, and invited to further training for talk writing and facilitating training if they feel called to do so.

**Team membership is a mutual invitation process.** The team invites potential members to complete training in order to promote continued personal growth of the individual and to meet the needs of the team. In return, potential members accept the team’s recognition of their woundedness as a possible instrument of the Holy Spirit for reaching participants. Team membership is conveyed through the ongoing mutual agreement between those willing to serve and the approval of the local board to accept their service. Note that in this team membership process, there is no place for a “probationary period” or “team-in-training” requirement for making a second weekend, making “Continued Beginnings” or other barriers to service. Nor is it the intention that those who make the weekend “might be ready in six months” or “ready in a year.” **It is their woundedness NOW that makes them effective as peer ministers.** At any time, a team member may choose to move on, or in accordance with *Beginning Experience* policies and guidelines, the local board may require a team member to move on for the good of the ministry.

How then, are teams to be certain that the people they invite to team will be good team members? There is no such certainty. **The team must:**

- Weigh the insights of the facilitators, team trainers and local board who, in accordance with *Beginning Experience* policies and guidelines, evaluate the person’s :
  - Willingness to serve
  - Grasp of the mission and vision
  - Understanding the requirements for service, and
  - Reasons for offering to serve
- Trust in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit
- Trust in the *Beginning Experience* healing process, ongoing throughout training and team service
- Realize that even with many restrictions, there are no problem-free guarantees
- Remember that you have your team’s conflict resolution procedure, The Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams, the executive director, and international or regional board representatives to rely on if difficulties arise.



With the above criteria in mind, some participants should not be invited to an orientation session. Such participants include:

- A person with significant mental or emotional problems (other than those resulting from the grief experience)
- A person with major resistance to or lack of cooperation with the Beginning Experience process
- A perpetrator of violence or abuse
- A person unwilling to work within the ministry's Catholic/Christian foundation
- An active alcoholic or user of illegal drugs

The following presents the *Beginning Experience* team membership process. It reinforces the importance of the peer relationship in the *Beginning Experience* programs, and recognizes and affirms the important contribution of team members in all capacities. Both peer-to-peer ministry and support services are described in the chart on the following page.





**To qualify for team, an individual:**

- Has experienced separation, divorce or widowhood and has begun reflecting on the pain of that loss
- Is familiar with the elements of a *Beginning Experience* weekend by having participated in the weekend program
- Has been invited to and participates in an orientation session
- Commits to further training in facilitation skills and talk writing, or commits to providing support services
- Understands and agrees to be faithful to the vision and mission of the *Beginning Experience* ministry
- Agrees to maintain and uphold the integrity of the weekend process
- Believes that the power to change comes from God, not from team members
- Realizes that the role of the peer minister is to enable others to find their own answers in their own ways
- Contributes to an atmosphere of loving care and concern
- Has qualities which enable him or her to:
  - Communicate with others
  - Reach out to others in pain
- Respects the feelings of others
- Is open to experiencing the ministry's worldwide nature through attending conferences or conventions
- Has been approved by the local board or, in the case of emerging teams, by the trainers appointed by the executive director (or, if appropriate, the Asia Pacific Regional Board or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board)

**A team member participating in the ministry:**

- Attends team meetings and team renewals in accordance with local team guidelines
- Is included on the team membership list submitted to the International Ministry Center and/or the Asia Pacific Regional Board or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board
- Receives communication from the International Ministry Center and/or Asia Pacific Regional Board or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board
- Is asked to attend regional conferences and international conventions in order to experience and understand the ministry's worldwide nature



TRAINING	LEVEL OF SERVICE AND COMMITMENT
<p>1. <b>Orientation Session or Session 3 of the <u>Vision and Leadership</u> program),</b>  <b>which includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Introducing the Beginning Experience Ministry” DVD, including history, theology and psychology of the ministry</li> <li>• “The Beginning Experience Mission and Vision” DVD</li> <li>• The international nature and the organizational structure of the ministry</li> <li>• Local team bylaws and guidelines, including dating and respectful ministry policies</li> <li>• Becoming aware of the <u>Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams</u> and other ministry resources</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. After completing the Orientation Training Session, the Support Team Member:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commits to such support activities as— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Program set up and pack up</li> <li>—Greeting and registering participants</li> <li>—Fund raising</li> <li>—Mailings</li> <li>—Organizing socials</li> <li>—Newsletters</li> <li>—Kitchen duty</li> <li>—Publicity, community outreach, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Attends the portion of the program for which his or her support service is required</li> <li>• May vote for members of the board</li> </ul>
<p>2. <b>Plus Facilitator Training</b> (or Sessions 4 through 8 of <u>Vision and Leadership</u>) to  prepare participants for presenting peer-to-peer ministry using approved program manuals and training materials, issued under signed contract, and which cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program structure and process</li> <li>• Writing, critiquing and updating talks</li> <li>• Basic and ongoing facilitation skills</li> <li>• Additional related training</li> <li>• Becoming familiar with the content of the <u>Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams</u> and other ministry resources.</li> </ul>	<p><b>B. In addition to the above, and completing initial Facilitator Training, the Presenting Team Member:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commits to facilitating small groups, and writing, rewriting and presenting talks in <i>Beginning Experience</i> programs</li> <li>• Attends the entire program for which a commitment has been made</li> <li>• Attends on-going team training</li> <li>• May serve on the local board</li> <li>• May serve as program coordinator</li> <li>• May serve as committee chair</li> <li>• May serve as screener</li> <li>• May serve as/assist team trainer</li> </ul>
<p>3. <b>Moving On from Presenting Team</b> </p> <p>Team members who have served in presenting the ministry’s peer-to-peer programs but are no longer peer in the grief journey (i.e., no longer feel the pain of their own grief and are no longer engaged in their personal grief journey) should be invited to participate in a moving on ceremony.</p> <p>This ceremony should recognize and honor the person’s contribution to the ministry, and offer an opportunity to say goodbye and express what the ministry has meant in his or her life.</p> <p>These members may choose to serve in the Beyond Beginning Experience™ program, or serve in the <i>Beginning Experience</i> youth ministry.</p> 	<p><b>C. At this level, the former Presenting or Support Team Member, including the re-married**:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May, <b>at the request of the local board</b>, assist with support activities listed in Section A above under “Level of Service and Commitment”</li> <li>• May, <b>at the request of the local board and with the specific approval of the executive director, Asia Pacific Regional Board or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board</b>, assist on a temporary basis with selected activities listed in Section B above if appropriately trained to do so</li> <li>• May not present talks/facilitate pre-weekend, weekend, or “Continued Beginnings” programs</li> <li>• May <b>at the request of the local board</b>, facilitate other <b>post-weekend personal growth</b> programs if trained to do so</li> <li>• May, if a former presenting team member, assist the team with talk writing and critiquing talks</li> <li>• May participate in social gatherings, spiritual or personal growth activities and fund raising efforts</li> <li>• May not vote for members of the local board</li> </ul>

**\*\***Note that it is *Beginning Experience* policy that those who are co-habiting (living as married without being married) refrain from any team participation, i.e. chose either the relationship or the ministry.

Note: See the “Romantic Relationship Policy” in Section H of this manual.

### **PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WHO RECEIVE NO TRAINING**

Those who participate in *Beginning Experience* programs but receive no training and do not serve in presenting the ministry, are welcomed as part of the *Beginning Experience* community, but are neither team nor alumni members of the team.

Questions that arise about the team membership process may be directed to the executive director, International Board representative the Asia Pacific Regional Board representative or the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board representative for clarification.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted March 2005  
Amended Nov. 2, 2005  
Revised April 2016



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## INVITATION TO TEAM TRAINING

As you consider your small group participants, keep in mind that team membership is a mutual invitation process. Because it is a person's woundedness that is of value in this peer-to-peer ministry, all weekend participants are potential team members. With some exceptions, each participant should be invited to explore what it means to be on team by attending orientation and training sessions or participating in the "Vision and Leadership" program, and invited to further training for talk writing and facilitating if they feel called to do so.

If, during the course of the weekend, you perceive major concerns, the person should not be invited to Orientation and training for team. Such concerns include:

- A person with significant mental or emotional problems (other than those resulting from the grief)
- Major resistance to or lack of cooperation with the *Beginning Experience* process
- A perpetrator of violence or abuse
- A person unable to work within the ministry's Catholic/Christian foundation
- An active alcoholic or user of illegal drugs

Weekend date \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No major concerns perceived

### OR

**Specify and describe** below major concerns you perceived. Use the back of this form if needed.

If no concerns are indicated, the participant should be invited to explore what it means to be on team by attending an orientation session and invited to further training for talk writing and facilitating if they feel called to this area of service.

The participant will be expected to grow further through the training experience. Keeping in mind the mutual invitation to team service, should major concerns arise during the course of training or thereafter, the person will be invited to find a volunteer opportunity other than in the *Beginning Experience* ministry.

*May be reproduced only by teams authorized to present the Beginning Experience weekend program. For use by small group facilitators at the close of the Beginning Experience weekend to evaluate potential members of the team.*

—This form, from the Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Coordinators, first edition 2012, is used at the end of each weekend program



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## TEAM ALUMNI GROUPS

### POLICY REGARDING ALUMNI GROUPS

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) encourages local teams to form alumni groups for the purpose of assisting the team in the successful operation of its local ministry and supporting activities.

**Definition.** In this policy, “alumni” refers to Beginning Experience® team members, presenting or support, who have moved on from active team service. An alumni group may be:

- A simple list of individuals who have expressed a willingness to assist as needed; the list is kept by the team

OR

- An organized group of former team members established with the permission of the *Beginning Experience* local board and operating under local board authority

At the team’s option, an alumni group may include former team members of other *Beginning Experience* teams who have moved to the area and who are verified as former team members in good standing by the previous team.

**Purpose.** The purpose of an alumni group shall be to assist the team in order to enhance its ability to present *Beginning Experience* programs. This assistance includes activities appropriate for both former presenting and support team members. (See “*Team Membership and Areas of Service*” elsewhere in this section of the *Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams*.)

Additional activities and purposes of an alumni group may include fostering spirituality and/or individual growth of the alumni members, contributing to the spiritual and/or personal growth of the team members, and providing opportunities for social interaction among the alumni and/or team members, and supporting the BEIM.

**Accountability to Team.** Each *Beginning Experience* alumni group shall be accountable to the local board of the team.

**Accountability to the International Ministry.** Each *Beginning Experience* team, initially and as requested periodically by BEIM, Asia Pacific Regional Board or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board shall provide the names and contact information for members of any alumni group.

BEIM or the applicable regional board may also require an accounting of alumni group activities, either reported with local team activities, or reported separately. Further, the executive director or applicable regional board may require an alumni group to be discontinued if it determines that it is functioning contrary to the interests of the local team or the BEIM.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted January 2009  
Revised 2016



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## TEAM RENEWAL

### POLICY

At least one renewal event will be held annually by each Beginning Experience® team to provide an opportunity for each team member to renew the sense of joy experienced as part of the ministry, to enrich his or her connection with God, to further their personal growth, and to deepen connections with each other in community. Every team member — presenting, support and alumni — is urged to attend.

The agenda for the renewal should include time for prayer and for fun. Schedule activities intended to deepen each member's connection with the Creator, their sense of mission as inspired by the Holy Spirit, and their connections with each other as members of a *Beginning Experience* team family.

### RATIONALE

*Beginning Experience* team members often devote much time and energy to serving as God's instruments of healing, walking with others on the journey of grief, in addition to meeting the needs of family, the demands of work and other challenges of daily life. Our effectiveness comes when we give to others from the fullness of his love, just as others have given to us from that same love.

Eventually, though, if left untended, our spirit will begin to run dry and we run the danger of entering the path to burnout. We begin giving to others from a sense of duty or weariness, rather than from the fullness of love and care.

Thus, self-care (tending to our own inner lives and spirit, and our connectedness with each other in community) is as much a part of the ministry as is giving to participants. When much is given, there is a need to be replenished.

For team renewal ideas, check [www.beginningexperience.org](http://www.beginningexperience.org), communicate with other teams, and/or contact the executive director or president of the appropriate regional board.

—Beginning Experience Central Board  
Adopted November 1986

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted 1998  
Revised 2006, 2016



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## MOVING ON FROM PRESENTING TEAM

As presented in this section of the Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams, serving on team, particularly as a small group facilitator and talk presenter, is most effective when the team member is still in the midst of the grief journey.

### POLICY

Team members who are no longer peer to the participants in their grief journey shall be invited to participate in a moving on ceremony that expresses appreciation for all that they have given and received as wounded healer. It is also a time to celebrate their transition to other areas of service.

### RATIONALE

Team members who are actively involved in their own healing are best equipped to walk with participants in their grief journey. Likewise, those who no longer feel the pain of their grief, or who are no longer engaged in the personal grief journey, actually detract from the effectiveness of the program(s) offered to participants.

The spiritual core of the *Beginning Experience* ministry is moving through death to resurrection – from grief to acceptance and then to reaching out. After grieving, growing and letting go, we arrive at resurrection and acceptance. While, when we are ready to move on with our lives is the good news, this can be a confusing, painful time. Our team service has brought meaning, growth and deep friendship into our lives. We may experience new feelings of grief about leaving that might include fear, denial, bargaining, anger, depression, and realistic and unrealistic guilt.

The unique quality of the *Beginning Experience* ministry is that it is a “peer” ministry. Its very core is that everyone is actively dealing in the grief with each other. Being a “peer” is being that weekend participant—one of the wounded—beginning our healing, and serving on team as a wounded healer.

The weekend is a “felt experience” of grief, not just a memory of it. When we have gone beyond that feeling point, we really must move on to that new place of happiness, peace and joy. Having arrived at this place makes us no longer “peer.” We have become healed, transformed and free to love again — and to move on with life.

Often we are tempted to look back and miss looking ahead to the promise that lies before us. The difficulty is that we may feel, now that we have healed, that we want to continue helping others through the same process that was so beneficial to us. But we may fail to recognize that we were most helpful when we were on the journey with others who were hurting, too. Now it is time to discern other ways to help.

Though the decision to move on usually rests on the individual, engaging the team is very crucial. A mutual involvement enhances a more natural and timely decision.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 2016



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## **EFFECTS OF MOVING ON**

When members move on from presenting team—or fail to do so—there are positive and negative effects.

### **POSITIVE EFFECTS WHEN TEAM MEMBERS MOVE ON**

- Provides an example of healing, demonstrating hope that the Beginning Experience® process can help people move on from their grief
- Allows other team members to grow into leadership positions
- May allow program growth as facilitators move on to start new programs, such as programs for youth
- Allows for team member's own growth as he or she joins new organizations with the talents and skills developed during his or her service in this ministry

### **NEGATIVE EFFECTS WHEN TEAM MEMBERS STAY TOO LONG**

- Burnout of the individual member
- Dependency on the ministry or team, stunting the individual's growth
- Loss of effectiveness in helping participants since it is more difficult to relate to others' grief as time passes
- May be seen as an example of the ministry's ineffectiveness in resolving grief
- Blocks other team members from growing into leadership roles by continually occupying these positions

### **RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TEAM AND LOCAL BOARD**

It is the responsibility of the team and its local board to ensure that moving on is a natural, anticipated process. Some ways to accomplish follow.

- Ask team members make an annual commitment indicating whether they will continue to serve or move on.
- Establish responsibilities that presenting team members move into so that they don't experience moving on as a "divorce" from the ministry, rather than as a final step before reaching beyond it.
- Establish ways of continuing the friendships.
- Hold a formal moving on ceremony.
- Include the concept of eventually moving in other directions as part of team orientation and training so that new members do not feel that their commitment is for life.
- Be alert and attentive to possible feelings of loss and grief about leaving.
- Sometimes it is necessary for the local board to address this issue with team members who need to take this step but are unable to do it themselves.



## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS FOR MOVING ON

Below are some situations to reflect upon when discerning whether a team member is ready to or, in fact, should move on. Care should be taken to help team members in this process. Leaving presenting team creates the loss of team relationship(s) and the role of wounded healer for which the member may experience feelings of grief. Consider sharing the following “checklist” with team members at regular intervals.

- I am sitting at a team meeting thinking that I would rather be home.
- I am losing my effectiveness as a team member.
- I lack enthusiasm.
- I miss meetings or come late to them.
- I stop volunteering for extra duties.
- I neglect the duties I already have.
- I want to be somewhere else when on a *Beginning Experience* weekend.
- I no longer relate to the talks on the weekend – mine or those of others.
- I have a great resistance to writing new talks and revising existing talks.
- I do not allow participants to be where they are.
- I am using the ministry as a crutch or escape.
- I feel the need to move on, but I am afraid to go it alone.
- I become critical and judgmental of others on team.
- I think that the team cannot get along without me.
- I think that nobody can do it as well as I can.
- I continue to serve the *Beginning Experience* ministry as the only organization in which I am involved, even many years beyond my initial weekend.
- I am uncomfortable in situations not involving my team family.
- I feel resentful about how much time my team membership takes.
- I begin to wonder about other ways I could help people.
- I wonder if God wants me to use my gifts for a different ministry.

The difficulty is, now that we are healed from this process, we want to help others through continuing to participate in the process that was so beneficial to us, even though it was our pain, rather than our resurrection, that made us effective.

## OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Noticing that we may not be as effective as we could be as facilitators is not the signal for immediate withdrawal. We may come to a point when we decide not to do another weekend for our own sake as well as for the good of the participants — always a primary consideration. It is important to ask ourselves and other team members the question, “What else can I do? Where can I go?” Obviously, we could decide to leave the team permanently, but we can still be very capable of performing many other tasks that serve the ministry and community.



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## LEAVING THE MINISTRY IN THE HANDS OF OTHERS

Our co-founder, Sister Josephine, herself experienced the difficulty of moving on. She wrote: “I continually work and pray toward a greater purity of intention and letting go of the *Beginning Experience* process as my property, and see it more and more as a gift from God to his hurting people.”

After five years of guiding the ministry’s initial growth as executive director, Josephine turned the administrative reins over to Fr. Guy Gau, OSB. To ensure that she truly did let go of operating the ministry and did not interfere with Fr. Guy’s work, Josephine left the United States to spend a year in New Zealand.

She firmly believed that God is guiding the ministry and that he will be with it at all times. Further, she believed that he expects us to use our human abilities to safeguard what he gave us, even when safeguarding this gift means that we entrust it to the next generation of wounded healers.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 2016



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## **SAMPLE MOVING ON CEREMONY**

The following is a sample ceremony to celebrate those moving on from presenting team. The ceremony may be used as is or adapted. In adapting the ceremony, these are the essential elements:

- 1) Prayer and music appropriate for the occasion
- 2) An appreciation and acknowledgment of the persons leaving and their service as wounded healers
- 3) An opportunity for those who are leaving to briefly share memories from their time on team, express what they have gained from serving as wounded healers, and their feelings about moving on into a new phase of life

### **INTRODUCTION**

Play a song about friendship, serving others, etc.

### **READING**

Acts 20:1-6, 36-38

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GIFTS**

#### **Leader:**

You were called by God to be a servant among His wounded people. You have been willing to accept His challenge and integrate this ministry into your life through prayer, listening to God's word, accepting healing in your life, and reaching out in healing service to others.

You promised to bring the healing presence of Christ to separated, divorced and widowed persons by offering them some of the many gifts you have discovered through your sufferings and through your own Beginning Experience® process. You shared those gifts with others in fulfillment of your promise and your responsibilities to this ministry.

#### **Team representative:**

On behalf of the members and friends of Beginning Experience of \_\_\_\_\_ (Team Name), we are grateful that you so willingly responded to God's call. We thank you for sharing the beautiful gift of yourself and the talents and skills God gave you. We know that by your example and by your prayers, witness, and love for others you will continue in some new way to be a healing servant to the wounded in our world.

*(Ask team members to mention each person by name filling in the blanks below and adding a brief affirmative statement recognizing the gifts the person has given the ministry or you, as a team member, in particular.)*



Thank you for being \_\_\_\_\_  
Thank you for your gift of \_\_\_\_\_  
Thank you for your service as \_\_\_\_\_

**Leader:**

And now we offer each person who is moving on from serving as a presenting member of this team an opportunity to share with us what he/she has gained from this experience and what it has meant in his/her life.

*(Those who are moving on may share their feelings orally or by reading a letter of closure).*

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**Leader:** As you journey onward in your life, may you remember always that our love and appreciation for you are etched in our hearts.

**All Respond:** We know that God goes with you.

**Leader:** As you experience the pain of change and the insecurity of moving on, may you also experience the blessing of inner growth.

**All Respond:** We know that God goes with you.

**Leader:** As you meet the poor, the pained, the stranger on your way, may you see in each one the face of Christ ...

**All Respond:** We know that God goes with you.

**Leader:** As you walk through the good times and the hard times, may you never lose sight of the shelter of God's loving arms.

**All Respond:** We know that God goes with you.

**Leader:** As you question your decisions and wonder about the fruits of your choices in the days ahead, may the peace of God reign in your heart.

**All Respond:** We know that God goes with you.

**Leader:** We praise and thank you, O God of the journey, for our dearly loved colleagues who are soon to leave. We entrust (name the team members who are moving on) into your loving care. We know that you are always the Faithful Traveler and Companion on our way. Shelter these beloved friends of ours, protect them from all harm and useless anxiety. May the future be a source of many enriching and transforming moments for each of them.

**All:** Amen.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 2016



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# MANAGING TEAM CONFLICT

## INTRODUCTION

In any human organization, including Beginning Experience® teams, conflicts and/or behavior inconsistent with the mission and vision of the organization will occur. Such conflict or behavior cannot always be **resolved** but must be **managed** for the health of the overall organization and its purpose.

## POLICY

It is the policy of the Beginning Experience International Ministry Inc. (BEIM) that teams utilize the procedures that follow to resolve or manage conflicts and/or behaviors inconsistent with the mission and vision of the ministry.

## ADDRESSING BEHAVIORS THAT DISRUPT TEAM FUNCTIONING

Team membership or other volunteer service in the local *Beginning Experience* ministry is a mutual invitation process. In keeping with the team membership process, the person volunteers his or her service; the local board makes a decision to accept that service.

Individual behaviors that contradict ministry policies and processes impact the team's ability to function collaboratively, and its ability to focus fully on its ministry to participants. At other times, an individual's behavior may damage the reputation of the ministry in the community or its reputation with the church.

The local board **must address these situations** and must reconsider an individual's suitability for continued service. In its discernment, the local board prayerfully considers the following points:

1. Is the person in question aware of and dedicated to the process and integrity of the ministry?
2. Is this person able to work in harmony with other team members as well as the local community?
3. Will/does this person feel comfortable on the team? Do other team members feel comfortable with this person on the team?
4. Will denominational (local Church) support be eroded if this person is a member of the team?
5. The *Beginning Experience* weekend is transformational in nature, designed to reconcile a person to self, to others and to God. Is this person able to work within the framework?
6. In your opinion, what is this person's motivation for wanting to be involved on a *Beginning Experience* team?



7. From your observation, is this person committed to peer ministry and does he/she express a sincere Christian concern for others in actions as well as words?
8. The *Beginning Experience* ministry has a peer (like-to-like) focus. In the case of the person under consideration, have circumstances in life changed so as to make it difficult to work as a peer?

Peer focus means grieving to grieving; wounded to wounded. Therein lies the strength of the *Beginning Experience* ministry. A team member who no longer shares in the grieving process should exclude him/herself from peer ministry to the wounded on weekends and programs for the newly hurting.

However, the ministry can benefit greatly from the person's skills and share in celebrating his or her growth.

Those team members who have moved on from their grief, such as those who have remarried, are involved in a serious committed relationship, or for other reasons are no longer grieving, will be asked by the local board of directors to change their area of service to appropriate support team activities, to youth programs or to the Beyond Beginning Experience™ program.

Team members who have moved on from their grief are encouraged to participate in a "Moving On" ceremony in which they have the opportunity to share what they have gained from the ministry and to say goodbye to this area of service.

If the individual chooses not to move on, the local board must consider suspending or removing the person from the presenting or support team, from other volunteer service, and/or from *Beginning Experience* community activities.

Once a decision is reached by the local board, it must be communicated to the individual in person by two board representatives if possible, followed by written communication. In both in-person and written communication, remember that while the individual is valued and treated respectfully as a person, his or her behavior cannot be allowed to damage the team or its ministry.

—Beginning Experience Central Board  
Adopted 1986

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Revised 1993, June 2016



## ADDRESSING DIFFICULT INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

### POLICY

Each team will establish a conflict resolution procedure as a means of attempting to resolve interpersonal team issues. A copy of this procedure is to be sent to the International Ministry Center and kept on file there. This procedure is to be followed whenever difficult interpersonal issues arise.

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

Each of us, as Beginning Experience® team members, carries with us varying degrees of loss and pain. Conflicts will inevitably arise in the time we spend together and may be impacted as well by our feelings of loss in other areas of our lives. As team members, we are not looking to place blame and guilt on others, but rather to see such conflicts as opportunities for spiritual and emotional growth that may include making amends for and/or forgiving real or perceived wrongs.

Members of the *Beginning Experience* community are committed to:

- Treating others with respect and dignity
- Accepting responsibility for establishing and maintaining a safe environment to nurture the needs of participants and of each other
- Using the principles of the process learned from *Beginning Experience* programs and training and, with an open heart, to give this gift to other team members just as we have to our participants
- Focusing on the issue at hand rather than dredging up past problems
- Gently confronting individuals, situations or problems in which there are disagreements rather than simply complaining
- Seeking solutions to problems rather than blaming, shaming or attacking.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted May 2016



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# MODEL TEAM CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

## PRELIMINARY PROCEDURE

Individuals who have a disagreement with another person are encouraged to discuss the issue with the person(s) with whom they are in conflict. If this is unsuccessful or is not possible, further steps will be considered.

A formal written complaint may be submitted to a board member and may be forwarded by the board to a conflict resolution committee. Suggestions for committee members include:

- The team's spiritual director
- An alumni local board member
- A current local board member

The complaint and attempts at resolving it will be kept as confidential as possible, involving as few people as necessary. (If a member of an established conflict resolution committee is one of the parties in conflict, a substitution on the committee is required.)

The conflict resolution committee will meet as soon as possible to prayerfully consider the issues and discern possible courses of action. The committee should consider whether the person or persons involved:

- Are aware of and dedicated to the process and integrity of the ministry
- Have violated the team bylaws, standing guidelines or policies outlined in the Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams
- Have interfered with the integrity of peer ministry by such actions as (but not limited to) solicitation for financial gain, dishonesty, threatening the safety of others

The conflict resolution committee will then designate two spokespersons to advise the individual(s) involved of the complaint.

A date, time, and neutral place will be scheduled for a conflict resolution meeting. No more than 90 minutes for each session shall be scheduled at any one time. If additional time is needed, one additional date, time and place must be scheduled.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION MEETING

### Prayerful intention

Begin the session with a prayer, such as the Prayer of St. Francis (“O Lord, make me an instrument of your peace...”)

### Problem Identification

Emphasize that as *Beginning Experience* team members, we attempt to be non-judgmental in regard to the motives or actions of individuals. However, we must address issues that impact the ministry, and must make assessments of actions or behaviors that negatively impact participants, the team or the ministry.



### **Process Agreement**

Each person present is asked to agree to the 90-minute time limit and within that time to:

- Take responsibility through the use of “I” statements for what is said and for the feelings and observations expressed
- Use empathic, compassionate listening when others are speaking
- Thoughtfully consider what has been heard and what is felt before speaking
- Examine their own assumptions and preconceptions
- Treat others present with respect and dignity

Each person present is given an allotted time to speak; their concerns are listened to with respect.

### **Seeking a Solution**

A discussion of possible solutions will be initiated. This discussion should include active listening and creative brainstorming. Discussion of the ideas presented follow and must include consideration of:

- The impact on the individuals involved
- The effect of unacceptable conduct on the board, the ministry, the team and participants; that is, the *Beginning Experience* ministry at large.
- The “fit” of proposed solutions within Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. policies for teams

A solution should be agreed upon, if possible, and a written statement drafted which includes a time line for agreed upon actions and responsibilities assigned for completing those actions. This solution is presented to the individuals involved, and to the board.

If a solution cannot be agreed upon, the issue is referred back to the local board. Board action may include suspension or expulsion from the *Beginning Experience* ministry in order to protect the integrity of the program, the reputation of the ministry, or the healthy focus and functioning of the team.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted May 2016





## WHEN A TEAM MEMBER MOVES

### POLICY

When a team member moves from one section of the country to another, he or she may contact the team in the new area with a request to be considered for team membership. The following information should be provided with the request:

- The name of the team from which he or she is moving
- The date of the initial *Beginning Experience* weekend
- The length of time involved on the previous team
- The level of training received and the area of service
- Any areas of team leadership roles or responsibilities held

### RATIONALE

In our mobile society, it stands to reason that *Beginning Experience*<sup>®</sup> team members will often move from one part of the country or state to another. When this happens, can that team member from one area assume that he or she will be automatically accepted as a member of the team in the new location? The answer is no, not necessarily.

### PROCEDURE

The new team will:

- Confirm the information with a call to the previous team and the executive director
- Meet with the person requesting team membership to consider the request
- Outline a process for new team involvement, which may include:
  - Making a weekend in the new community and participating in team training
  - OR
  - Participating in team training only

At a minimum, the individual must participate in weekend preparation meetings before serving on the new team.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted March 2002  
Revised 2016



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## TEAM VIABILITY ISSUES

### POLICY

When a concern develops that threatens the team's on-going viability and ability to live the vision and mission, the local board shall contact the international level of the ministry for guidance and direction.

### RATIONALE

The Beginning Experience® grief resolution ministry has proven to be both powerful and effective. Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) exists to safeguard the program, provide direction to teams and to recommission teams to present the ministry's copyrighted programs in their areas.

It is important to recognize that a team's vibrancy is cyclical in nature, following a pattern of growth, maturity, decline, and growth renewed. To ensure that commissioned teams continue to maintain the integrity of *Beginning Experience* programs and have the resources to continue to minister in their communities, the International Board of Directors (IBD) has established a recommissioning process. Its purpose is to monitor a team's faithfulness to the *Beginning Experience* ministry, to celebrate areas of strength and to identify areas needing improvement.

Sometimes difficulties or challenges that severely impair the ability to minister effectively become apparent during the recommissioning process. At other times, a team may experience challenges or problems between recommissioning visits, or may have been struggling with them for some time. Examples include insufficient volunteer personnel, lack of revolving leadership, inadequate funding, lack of community support or other challenges.

Whenever such difficulties, challenges or problems become apparent, the executive director will work with the local team, either directly or through appointed representatives, to resolve the issues and protect both the integrity and effectiveness of the ministry. If the challenges or problems are severe enough, the executive director may temporarily suspend the team from presenting the *Beginning Experience* weekend or other programs to allow time to focus on creating an implementing an action plan.

### ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The executive director (or the Asia Pacific Regional Board or the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board if applicable), either directly or through appointed representatives, will work collaboratively with the team to draft an action plan that includes:

- A clear statement of the difficulties or challenges faced
- A plan of action to correct the situation/meet the challenge
- Assigning responsibility for action plan steps



- Deadlines for accomplishing action plan items
- A process for keeping the executive director or the applicable regional board informed of the team's progress in accomplishing the plan

The executive director keeps the IBD informed of the situation.

In the event that there is disagreement regarding the nature of the challenges faced, the action plan or the time frame for resolution, the authority and determination of future action resides with the executive director.

## **CLOSURE**

Should the previous steps fail, the executive director (in collaboration with regional board, if applicable), will make a final decision for closure in the best interests of the team, the region, the community and the ministry as a whole.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted July 1998  
—Revised March 2003, 2016



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## REQUEST TO CLOSE THE TEAM

A request for closure may come from a team that has been struggling for some time and believes that it is unable to continue.

### POLICY

In order to make every effort to avoid depriving the community of the ministry, the executive director (or the applicable regional board) will work collaboratively with the team to develop a **written action plan for its revitalization** that includes:

- A clear statement of the difficulties or challenges faced
- A plan of action to correct the situation/meet the challenge
- Assigning responsibility for action plan steps
- Deadlines for accomplishing action plan items
- A process for keeping the executive director or the applicable regional board informed of the team's progress in accomplishing the plan

The executive director keeps the IBD informed of the situation. Should these steps fail, the executive director will honor the team's request for closure.

### CLOSURE PROCESS

Whenever a team closes, the team:

- Returns all program and training manuals and other copyrighted materials to the International Ministry Center (IMC), or to the appropriate regional board resource centre to protect the registered copyrights and propriety nature of the programs
- Closes all bank accounts and forwards all financial assets to the IMC in compliance with U.S. Internal Revenue Service rules for funds held by organizations given a 501 (c) 3 tax exempt determination; in other countries, a similar process if followed with the funds forwarded to the appropriate regional board
- Forwards bank statements showing closure of the accounts to the executive director or the applicable regional board president
  - These funds are held in trust by the IMC for two years to be used for the purpose of restarting a team in that community or in a community nearby.
  - Should the emergence of a new team not occur during that time, the funds are released to start new teams elsewhere or for other ministry needs.
- Follows the procedure of the state or other governing authority to dissolve the team as legal entity
- Forwards all legal documents to the IMC (or to the appropriate regional board resource center) for archiving
- Holds a special Mass or prayer ceremony as a final step in the closure process, allowing those involved with the team throughout its history an opportunity to give thanks for all they have received from the ministry, to celebrate the growth in those they served, and to say goodbye



Whenever a team closes, the executive director:

- Issues a statement to be included in the closure ceremony thanking the team for their years of service, and acknowledging their dedication to the people they have served
- Formally advises the International Board of Directors, the local Catholic diocese or the administrative office of any other faith connection, and the Asia Pacific Regional Board and Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board of the closure.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors

Adopted July 1998

—Revised March 2003, 2016



**POLICY MANUAL FOR BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAMS**

**SECTION H:**

**PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**



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# RESPECTFUL MINISTRY ENVIRONMENT POLICY

## INTRODUCTION

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) honors the integrity of participants by respecting the purpose of their participation in ministry programs, their vulnerability, and their need for a place where they can be secure in their person. Abuse and/or harassment of minors and/or adult participants will not be tolerated. Members of each Beginning Experience® local board of directors and team must cooperate to comply with moral and legal imperatives to ensure that both minors and adults are protected.

Participants in *Beginning Experience* programs are grieving persons attempting to adjust to the loss of a relationship, and come to the ministry in an emotionally and psychologically vulnerable condition. *Beginning Experience* policy reflects the vulnerable state of participants, respecting the obligation to minister in an environment where they can feel safe.

## POLICY

Any kind of abuse—physical, sexual or emotional—is unacceptable and not permitted within the *Beginning Experience* ministry. The safety and welfare of our children, youth and adult participants, as well as that of team members, are of foremost importance and will not be compromised.

Problems of abuse and related behaviors that come to the attention of the team or a team member must be reported to the appropriate authorities according to the dictates of local law and regulations regardless of the individuals involved in the abuse. It is the responsibility of the authority to assess the seriousness of the situation and determine any action to be taken.

## SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies in its entirety to behavior of:

1. Members of each local board of directors, all team members, and other volunteers assisting on every *Beginning Experience* team
2. Members of each regional board of directors, employees and volunteers working on behalf of each *Beginning Experience* regional board
3. Members of the International Board of Directors, employees, and volunteers working on behalf of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

## SEXUAL MISCONDUCT INCLUDES:

1. Any kind of sexual activity with a minor by any other person
2. Any conduct by *Beginning Experience* personnel which has as its intent unwarranted or inappropriate touching of a minor or non-consenting adult; such behavior shall be considered a breach of trust
3. Inappropriate behavior that could be construed as an indication of potential sexual misconduct as defined above



Because of the particular concern for minors, at a minimum *Beginning Experience* personnel should be aware of the appearance of inappropriate behavior.

Sexual harassment shall be considered sexual misconduct. This includes sexual advances, sexual innuendo, requests for sexual favors, or other conduct of a sexual nature directed to another person, whether participant, team member, or volunteer. **It is important to note that any conduct which might be construed to be offensive is prohibited.**

- All team members must comply with *Beginning Experience* policies on dating and relationships. These policies are designed to protect participants and ensure the peer nature of the ministry. See “Romantic Relationship Policies within the Ministry” in this section of this manual.
- All adults who propose to serve in *Beginning Experience* youth ministry in any capacity must comply with the requirements set forth in Section C ~ “Children and Youth Ministry” in this Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams.

### **APPLICABLE LAW**

This policy shall be implemented in accordance with all applicable national, state or provincial, and local laws and ordinances. All *Beginning Experience* personnel are legally responsible for complying with applicable laws regarding incidents of actual, alleged or suspected abusive or sexual misconduct, and with procedures outlined in this document. In addition, *Beginning Experience* personnel will adhere to all policies and procedures of the local Church.

### **INFORMATION AND TRAINING CONCERNING THIS POLICY**

The Board of Directors of each *Beginning Experience* team shall be responsible for providing information to team members concerning this policy. All team members and volunteers shall complete any required diocesan training program concerning the maintenance of a respectful ministry environment.

### **REPORTING ALLEGED ABUSIVE CONDUCT**

Any individual connected with *Beginning Experience* who has reasonable belief that sexual, physical or emotional abuse has occurred, is to report the situation to civil authorities. (This may include local law enforcement, adult protective services, child protective services, other social service agencies in the local area, and possibly the local diocese.)

The individual shall notify the local board or program coordinator of the situation. The local board president shall inform the executive director and, if applicable, the Asia Pacific Regional Board (APRB) or the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board (RBGBI). Each allegation of sexual misconduct has the potential of liability (the filing of a claim) against a team member, the local *Beginning Experience* team, a regional board, or Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.



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In the event of allegations of sexual misconduct **by a team member or other volunteer**, the local board of directors shall determine whether it would be in the interest of the ministry for the individual to be removed from the ministry. In making this determination, the board shall evaluate the facts using the guidelines set forth in the Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams, Section G, “Managing Team Conflict.”

In the event of allegations of a sexual nature or other misconduct **by a participant**, the local board of directors (or, during a program, the person in charge of the program with an additional team member) will address the issue with the participant, and may determine that it would be in the interest of the ministry and the other participants for this participant to leave the weekend. In making this determination, the local board or the person in charge of the program shall evaluate the facts using the guidelines set forth in the Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams, Section G, “Managing Team Conflict.”

In the event that a **participant discloses** a current situation involving abuse, intent to harm him or herself or a specific other person, some intervention may well be required. Confidentiality of individual sharing is an integral condition for participants and group success. Knowledge that their confidences will be respected allows the participants to share freely and honestly, and to confront the issues of their lives, their grief and their loss. However, it must be understood that participants have the choice of disclosing only what they wish to disclose.

Facilitators are bound by reasonable limits of confidentiality and facilitation process guidelines found in the Beginning Experience Weekend Manual for Presenting Team. Caution should be exercised not to force anyone to disclose material that is unlawful and/or self-incriminating. If such information is disclosed, the procedures below are to be followed:

- The team member reports this information to the program coordinator.
- Together, the team member and program coordinator evaluate the substance of the situation, possibly in consultation with the team’s counselor-on-call.
- Together, the team member and program coordinator approach the participant and may suggest that he or she seek professional advice or counseling, which the team is not trained to provide.
- In addition, notifying state or local authorities may be required and/or taking other appropriate action.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 10, 2007  
Amended Feb. 8, 2008  
Revised May 2016



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## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

### **POLICY**

It is the policy of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. (BEIM) that members of the International Board of Directors (IBD), International Ministry Center (IMC) employees and volunteers of this ministry at any level must not disclose, divulge, or make accessible confidential information belonging to or obtained through their affiliation with BEIM or any Beginning Experience® team to any person, including relatives, friends, and business/professional associates. This does not apply to persons who have a legitimate need for such information and to whom the ministry has authorized disclosure.

### **RATIONALE**

Nonprofit organizations often deal with sensitive information about clients, donors, employees, and volunteers. In particular, boards are often exposed to confidential information critical to the well-being of the organization. Confidentiality policies are important to an organization's credibility and reputation. Board members, team members and staff at all levels of the ministry should understand their responsibilities in this area. The following is a statement guiding their actions.

Confidential information includes sensitive data about program participants, team members, clients, donors, employees and volunteers, as well as confidential material critical to the well-being of the corporation.

The voting and non-voting members of the IBD, IMC employees and volunteers, members of local boards, teams and team volunteers shall use confidential information solely for the purpose of performing services as a board member, team member, volunteer or employee for the ministry. This policy is not intended to prevent disclosure where disclosure is required by law.

Board members, team members, volunteers, and employees must exercise good judgment and care at all times to avoid unauthorized or improper disclosures of confidential information. This includes all forms of electronic and social media communication including, but not limited to: e-mail messages, text messaging, and any other form of written communication.

This also includes private and public conversation in places such as restaurants, elevators, airplanes, etc. In addition, board members, team members, volunteers and employees should be sensitive to the risk of inadvertent disclosure and should, for example, refrain from leaving confidential information on desks or otherwise in plain view. All such persons should also refrain from the use of speaker phones to discuss confidential information if the conversation could be heard by unauthorized persons.



At the end of a term in office, upon leaving the team or upon the termination of an employee's employment, he /she shall return, at the request of the local board or of BEIM all documents, papers, and other materials, regardless of medium, which may contain or be derived from confidential information, which have been in his/her possession.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted February 2009  
Revised 2016



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## COUNSELOR ON CALL

### POLICY

Teams shall secure the consent of a professionally certified counselor to be available throughout each weekend program by phone for consultation with the team in case a participant behavioral or mental health situation develops.

### RATIONALE

Disclosure of abusive conduct involving any participant of a Beginning Experience® weekend program, adult or minor, may also create some obligation to act. We as *Beginning Experience* team members and as caring and responsible individuals, understand the necessity of seeing that abusive behavior is challenged, which may involve informing appropriate authorities about the abusive conduct.

These concerns are especially important during the weekend program and even though every participant is screened, a certified counselor is on call for the team should the need arise. The on-call counselor is available for possible consultation to the team. The on-call counselor should be someone who knows local area requirements for reporting instances of abuse and who has the resource information needed to assist the team assist the participant.

When a situation of abuse, intent to harm, or possible suicide surfaces, this professional individual should be contacted as soon as possible. Ideally, in order to maintain professional objectivity and for other reasons, this person is not a member of the team.

Each team should identify in advance the procedures to be followed in the event of a physical, behavioral or emotional health emergency during the weekend. Calling 911 or other emergency number is appropriate.

The initial screening for the weekend is critically important. Acute and emotionally over-laden individuals should not be accepted for a weekend program until readiness and suitability are established. People receiving professional counseling are requested to obtain permission from their therapists before the acceptance to participate in the weekend is finalized. At a minimum, the person must be directed to discuss their readiness for the program with their counselor.

Each team should ensure that each participant is informed during the first small group session that information or behavior revealed or shared on the weekend which is reportable by law will be reported in conformity with the directives of local, county or state law.



It is important to keep in mind that a facilitator is in no way to act in the capacity of a professional counselor. The facilitator serves as a model and source of encouragement through his or her own writing and sharing. The formation and training program for facilitators underscores the wisdom of knowing one's role, its limitations, and the necessity for following the guidelines and referral procedures described in this statement.

The current policies and procedures are to be strictly complied with, including the following considerations:

- Adhering strictly to the screening process guidelines for weekend participants
- Reviewing the training materials for the leaders and small group facilitators
- Alerting program participants to the procedures that will be followed if certain kinds of information is disclosed

The *Beginning Experience* ministry is spiritually based and its thrust and objectives focus on the process of resolving grief and loss in a religious context. The ministry essentially provides peer support for adults and children in their grief and experience of loss.

The ministry is not a venue for counseling or therapy, nor is it intended to identify any need for therapy. Therefore, *Beginning Experience* programs are not to be used as a substitute for needed professional intervention. However, problems of abuse and related behavior that do come to the attention of the team are to be reported to the appropriate authorities according to the dictates of local law and regulations.

Finally, it is important to remember that most participants want help and are grateful that there are trusted and empathetic individuals in the *Beginning Experience* ministry who can assist them to find a “new beginning” in their life's search for direction and inner peace.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted June 1997  
Revised April 2014, 2016



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# ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP POLICIES WITHIN THE MINISTRY

## INTRODUCTION

It is not within the vision of the Beginning Experience® ministry to foster romantic or intimate relationships among its team members and certainly not among its program participants. (*Beginning Experience* teams are NOT singles clubs or dating services.)

Forming romantic relationships sometimes occurs in the journey through grief. Such relationships have the potential to endanger the spirit or integrity of the ministry's peer focus. Therefore, it is crucial that team members understand their proper role and relationship with participants and with each other.

## POLICY

- It is *Beginning Experience* policy that team members refrain from establishing romantic relationships with participants within three months of the participant's initial support program or weekend.
- It is the policy that team members involved in a romantic relationship with each other may not serve in the same *Beginning Experience* program on the same occasion. The involved team members will be asked to decide which one will be present and which one will wait for another weekend or another session of the support program involved.
- Team members who have married, are involved in a serious committed relationship, or for other reasons have moved on from their grief, must change their area of service from presenting team to one of the later support programs, to appropriate support team activities, to youth programs or to ministry in the Beyond Beginning Experience™ program.
- Cohabitation (living as married without being married) by a team member is a very serious issue regarding relationships because it is seen as inconsistent with basic denominational teaching. Therefore, it is the policy that the local board of Directors ask the team member or members involved to choose between ceasing the cohabitation or leaving the team.
- If a team member in any of the above situations is unwilling to abide by these policies, it is the responsibility of the local board to enforce the policy.

## RATIONALE

- A participant beginning the journey through grief needs time and space to process the invitation to growth and healing. Encouraging a participant to enter a new romantic or intimate relationship, either directly or indirectly, cheats the participant from fully benefiting from the *Beginning Experience* process.
- Participants are often very vulnerable. This vulnerability must be respected both for that individual's healing process and to prevent the ministry from incurring any possible legal and/or ethical liability.



- The presence of any two people involved in a romantic relationship (whether participants, presenting or non-presenting team) for any part of the same *Beginning Experience* weekend or the same support program designed for the early stages of the grieving process (“Coping with Life Alone” or “Continued Beginnings”) significantly alters the peer focus of that level of ministry.
- Situations altering the peer focus interferes with the invitation extended to each participant, and to each team member as participant, to enter fully into self-encounter.
- It is strongly recommended that team members who serve on the weekend, or in support programs appropriate to the early stages of grief, refrain from establishing romantic relationships with each other both in respect for their own vulnerability and in order to maintain their focus on the ministry.
- A team member involved in a romantic relationship with someone before that person’s involvement with a *Beginning Experience* program need not terminate the relationship, but should remember that this person, too, needs time and space to process the grief experience.

## **SUMMARY**

All of these policies and guidelines are based on the consideration of the common good of the *Beginning Experience* ministry and that of its participants and are not moral judgments.

Whenever serious questions or conflicts arise as to the suitability of an individual for initial or ongoing team membership, please use the policies stated above to guide your decisions. If, after a serious attempt has been made to apply these policies, the conflict remains unresolved, the local board of directors is encouraged to contact the executive director for assistance.

While we view contact from the board president as normal administrative procedure, this does not preclude individual team members from making contact with the executive director to discuss their specific concerns.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
 Adopted February 1986  
 Revised December 1993, 2006, 2013, June 2016



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## PRIVACY POLICY

### POLICY

- Each participant will be provided with a printed copy of this privacy policy at the start of each weekend program.
- The confidentiality of personal information shared during *Beginning Experience*® programs shall be kept confidential by all individuals involved. Thus small or large group personal sharing is not recorded or retained in any form, nor is it repeated outside the room in which it is shared unless the safety of the individual or the integrity of the program is at issue.

### RATIONALE

The *Beginning Experience* ministry is spiritually based and its thrust and objectives focus on the process of resolving grief and loss in a religious context.

The confidentiality of personal information shared during *Beginning Experience* programs has been important to us from the day the ministry was founded in 1974. Thus small or large group personal sharing is not recorded or retained in any form, nor is it repeated outside the room in which it is shared unless the safety of the individual or the integrity of the program is at issue. Disclosure of a participant's imminent risk of harm to self or others, or disclosure of abuse of a minor or elderly person, may be reported to local authorities as required by law. Nothing in this policy is intended to prevent disclosure where disclosure is required by law.

Protecting the privacy of your personal contact information and demographic data about you is equally important to us. By informing you of our policy regarding your personal information, and helping you understand that policy, we can provide the best service possible to you and to others who need this ministry.

BEIM must also ensure that the legal requirements addressing the privacy of individuals are met at the local, regional and international levels. This policy represents the minimum requirements for *Beginning Experience* teams.

In certain instances, BEIM may empower a local or regional board to develop and implement additional procedural guidelines which, when approved, ensure that legal requirements in a particular state or country are met. Such additional approved procedures are binding for that team or for local teams within that region.

### INFORMATION WE MAY COLLECT AND HOW IT MAY BE USED

The personal information or data we collect and the way we use it varies with your connection with the ministry:

- If you are inquiring about a *Beginning Experience* program, we collect and use your personal contact information to communicate with you about our programs and when and where they are available. The information we may collect includes your name, address, phone number and e-mail address.



- If you register for one of our programs, we collect and use additional information to ensure that you have the best experience we can offer. This information may include your marital status, your date of birth, your gender, your religious affiliation, and your parish or church. This information helps us form appropriate sharing groups for the program. Health and emergency contact information alert us to any special needs you may have.
- If you are registering someone for a program for children or teenagers, we also collect contact information about parents, siblings and/or guardians, as well as the parent's marital status.
- Once you have completed one of our programs, we use your information to communicate with you about additional programs, ministry events in which you may be interested, or opportunities to serve the ministry if you wish to reach out to help other hurting people.
- We may also ask you to voluntarily provide additional information to include in an anonymous statistical profile of the ministry and those it serves. This profile is used for such purposes as grant writing, reaching people like you who also need the ministry, and identifying others who need the ministry but whom we are not currently reaching.
- If you are a team member or accept a leadership position in the ministry, we collect information to help us communicate with you about your role as a member of the team, about your leadership responsibilities or to help us meet the ministry's leadership needs.
- If you are a former team member or if it has been more than a two years since you last participated in a ministry program, we may communicate with you about selected programs or events in which we believe you may have an interest either for yourself or for someone you know, or to inform you about general developments in the ministry.

If you no longer wish to be connected with the ministry, notify the International Ministry Center in writing to stop receiving further communication.

## **How We Collect Information**

We collect information about you in several ways. For example, we ask for your contact information when you correspond with us by mail or e-mail, call us, register for a program or event, or accept a team membership or leadership role. You have access to the information we have about you by contacting your local team, the president of the Asia Pacific Regional Board (APRB), the president of the Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board (GBIRB) or the International Ministry Center (IBD), and you may update that information at any time.



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## **INFORMATION WE SHARE**

Your information may be shared for communication and administrative purposes within the ministry, but only with those leaders or employees who require access to such information in order to fulfill their volunteer leadership or employment responsibilities. Your information is never sold or rented, nor is it provided to persons or organizations outside the ministry unless required by law or unless they are contractually performing a service on our behalf (mailing services, for example). We expressly require any person or organization providing such services on our behalf to protect the confidentiality of the selected information provided in order to perform the service.

## **HOW YOUR INFORMATION IS PROTECTED**

The security of your information is safeguarded with physical, electronic and managerial procedures. For example, health information to meet special needs you may have during a specific program is shredded when the need for the information is past. Our electronic records are protected by industry standard electronic security. Unless you specifically give permission to share your information with other program participants, access within the *Beginning Experience* ministry is limited to those leaders or employees who have a legitimate need for the information in order to serve you and to serve the ministry.

If you have questions or concerns about this policy, you may contact your local team, the president of the relevant regional board, or the executive director.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted January 2004  
Revised January 2016



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## **POLICY REGARDING NON-MARITAL AND OTHER LOSS**

Beginning Experience® teams sometimes receive a request from someone suffering a loss of a relationship other than a marital relationship to participate in a program. While the focus of the ministry for adults is on a lost marital relationship, requests from those suffering other relationship losses should be considered.

Such requests may be met, with special consideration given during the applicant's weekend screening process, and to preparing the team to minister to this loss. Teams receiving such requests may contact the executive director for further guidance in preparing the participant.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted Dec. 9, 2002  
Revised 2006, 2016



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## **PROGRAM OBSERVERS**

### **POLICY**

There shall be no observers attending Beginning Experience® programs.

### **RATIONALE**

The confidential nature of the programs and the vulnerability of the participants prohibit observers.

*Beginning Experience* teams are sometimes presented with a request from a member of the clergy, a counselor, or other professional to attend a weekend or other *Beginning Experience* program as an observer.

However, the confidential nature of the programs and the vulnerability of the participants prohibit observers. Clergy and counselors who wish to attend the entire weekend or other programs are welcome to do so only as full participants.

If the individual has not suffered the loss of a love relationship, he or she is expected to enter fully into the process by working on another significant loss in life, such as the loss of a parent, grandparent or sibling.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted March 2002  
Revised 2006, 2016



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## **MEDIA RELATIONS**

### **POLICY**

The right to privacy and confidentiality of any program team member's and/or participant's personal information shall not be violated by any communication with a journalist.

### **RATIONALE**

The Beginning Experience® ministry must maintain the confidential nature of its programs in the context of advertising/marketing these programs to those the ministry serves.

The International Board of Directors and executive director are aware that neither they nor any local team have control over what a participant may write or report about his/her experiences or feelings following a *Beginning Experience* weekend or other *Beginning Experience* program.

However, the confidential nature of the weekend and other programs and the vulnerability of the participants prohibits a local board or team from allowing a journalist to attend a weekend or other program in order to write about it.

Local teams have a vital interest in communicating to hurting people the benefits to be gained from attending ministry programs. Therefore, teams are encouraged to invite journalists to interview those team members who are willing to share their experience of *Beginning Experience* programs openly. Such sharing should be from a **personal perspective**, revealing only as much of their personal stories as the team members feel comfortable revealing, and focusing on the impact that attending a weekend or other program has contributed to their grief recovery and life experience.

It is considered a violation of the confidentiality of *Beginning Experience* programs and of the individual participant's right to privacy to interview anyone who is not willing to openly share their personal experience.

For further information on publicizing the *Beginning Experience* ministry in your area, see [www.beginningexperience.org](http://www.beginningexperience.org).

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors

Adopted 1998

Revised 2016



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## TEAM DOCUMENT RETENTION/DESTRUCTION POLICY

### POLICY

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. and its affiliated teams shall retain and destroy documents to conduct the business of the ministry.

### RATIONALE

This policy specifies how important documents (hardcopy, online or other media) should be retained, protected, and when they are eligible for destruction. The policy also ensures that documents are promptly provided to authorities in the course of legal investigations or lawsuits.

### DOCUMENT RETENTION SCHEDULE

One copy of each of the following types of documents will be retained for the following periods of time. Where indicated, copies are sent to the International Ministry Center (IMC); the IMC will keep hard copies and electronic backup copies.

### TEAM RECORDS

Team Articles of Incorporation; copy filed with the International Ministry Center (IMC)	Permanent
Employee Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for teams in the United States; copy retained by the IMC	Permanent
Bylaws – executive director approval required; copy filed with the IMC	Permanent
Recertification document copies; originals retained by the IMC	Permanent
Annual reports to the diocese; copy filed with the IMC	Permanent
State sales tax exemption documents, if any; copy filed with the IMC	Permanent
Annual corporate filings with the State, if any; copy filed with the IMC	Permanent
Team agreement with Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.; copy retained in the IMC	Permanent
Team member/International Ministry use of materials contract copies; original filed with the IMC	Permanent
Local board guidelines; copy filed with the IMC	Permanent
Local board meeting minutes	Permanent
Local team history; copy filed with the IMC	Permanent
Local team conflict procedure; copy filed with the IMC	Permanent
Communication regarding conflict situations; copy filed with the IMC	Permanent
Court case documents, if any; copy filed with the IMC	Permanent
Team member background checks (youth teams); copies filed with the IMC	Permanent
Completed program report copies; originals to the IMC	Permanent
Weekend Applications once the IMC is sent information for data purposes	3 years
Screening documents after the weekend program	6 weeks
Emergency information after the weekend or other program	6 weeks



## TEAM TAX RECORDS

Annual tax filing (IRS Form 990-N for teams in the USA)	Permanent
State tax filing, if required by your state	Permanent
Filings of fees paid to professionals, if any (IRS Form 1099 in the USA)	7 years

## TEAM FINANCIAL RECORDS

Chart of accounts	Permanent
Fiscal policies and procedures	Permanent
Audits or review of the team finances	Permanent
Financial statements	Permanent
General ledger	Permanent
Check registers/checkbooks	7 years
Team business expenses documents	7 years
Bank deposit slips	7 years
Cancelled checks	7 years
Invoices	7 years
Investment/savings account records (deposits, earnings, withdrawals)	7 years
Property/asset inventories (Manuals, crosses, etc.)	7 years
Petty cash receipts/documents	3 years
Credit card receipts	3 years

## INSURANCE RECORDS

Summary of insurance (provided annually by the IMC)	7 years
Insurance claim incident reports, if any	7 years
Insurance disbursement / denials	7 years

## TEAM CONTRACTS

Legal correspondence, if any	Permanent
Vendor contracts, if any	7 years
Warranties, if any	7 years

## DONATIONS

Grant dispersal contract, if any	Permanent
Grant applications	7 years
Donor lists	7 years
Donor acknowledgements	7 years

## DOCUMENT PROTECTION

Documents (hardcopy, online or other media) will be stored in a protected environment for the duration of the document retention schedule. Computer backup media will be included.



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## **DOCUMENT DESTRUCTION**

Hard copy of documents will be destroyed by shredding after they have been retained until the end of the document retention schedule. Online copies will be destroyed by fire or other proven means to destroy such media after they have been retained until the end of the document retention schedule.

## **PROVIDING DOCUMENTATION FOR INVESTIGATIONS OR LITIGATION**

Documents requested and subpoenaed by legally authorized personnel will be provided in a timely manner, following consultation with the executive director. The executive director and the president of the International Board of Directors will authorize provision. No documents will be concealed, altered or destroyed with the intent to obstruct the investigation or litigation.

—Beginning Experience International Board of Directors  
Adopted November 2013  
Revised 2016



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