Helping children and teens grow in faith is a vital mission of every parish. Youth group meetings, Bible study and special activities are all important elements offered by parishes to help children build a life-long relationship with Christ. When it comes to planning special activities for parish youth, leaders and staff directly involved with youth ministry have a higher duty of care as they are responsible for the health and safety of children during parish-sponsored activities. With this in mind, it is important that special events are planned with consideration to the safety of every child involved.

Trampolines are hugely popular with both youth and adults. Trampoline use has increased tremendously over the last decade, mostly due to their easy accessibility and affordability. Many households have trampolines in their backyards, providing hours of fun for children and adults. The recent emergence of commercial indoor trampoline parks has also increased the widespread popularity of trampoline activities. A commercial indoor trampoline park is equipped with trampoline surfaces mounted on the floors and walls of the facility. Jumping, performing acrobatic stunts, and the option of playing dodgeball games are just some of the entertainment options offered by these facilities.

While trampolines are a lot of fun, they are dangerous and considered a serious injury hazard. Even with safety rules in place, injuries and death can still occur from trampoline use. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that in 2010 there were 92,159 hospital emergency room-treated injuries associated with trampolines. It is also estimated that nearly two-thirds of trampoline injury victims were children 6 to 14 years old.

Most trampoline-related emergency room visits are for treatment of injuries from trampoline jumpers colliding with one another, falling on the trampoline springs or frame, falling or jumping off the trampoline or attempting somersaults and stunts. Crippling injuries and/or death, including paralysis from spinal cord injuries have also occurred due to falls off of the trampoline. In addition, more than half of trampoline injuries occur when two or more persons are using the trampoline at the same time.

Forty percent of all trampoline-related injuries are sprains and strains, most frequently affecting the leg or foot. Nearly one-third of injuries are fractures, many of which require surgery. Younger children appear to be at the greatest risk for fractures, while older children often suffer sprains and strains. Head and neck injuries account for approximately 10 percent of injuries associated with the trampoline. Fifteen percent of head injuries involve fractures, concussions and closed-head trauma. Deaths from trampoline use are rare (on average, less than one per year).

Due to the injury risks associated with trampolines, the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that trampolines never be used at home, on playgrounds, in physical education classes, or for athletic competition. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has stated that children under six years old, should not use trampolines in any setting, due to their immature motor skills.

Trampoline injuries don’t just happen to children. In March 2012, New York Yankees baseball player Joba Chamberlain, underwent surgery to repair damage to his ankle, which happened while jumping on a trampoline with his 5-year-old son. Following the surgery, Chamberlain spent six weeks in a cast.
The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) supports the position that trampolines pose a high risk of injury and should not be used in home environments or outdoor playgrounds. John Purvis, M.D., spokesperson for the AAOS states:

“Although trampolines can be fun for both kids and adults, they pose a high risk for injuries, especially when two or more people jump at one time. Orthopedic surgeons recommended that trampolines not be used in home environments or in outdoor playgrounds because of the high risk of injuries from this activity.”

The risk of injury, permanent paralysis and death from trampoline use far outweigh the few moments of fun this activity offers. Trampolines pose a serious injury hazard for those who use this type of recreation. It is strongly recommended that dioceses prohibit the use of any type of trampolines within their facilities. In addition, field trips or planned activities involving Trampoline Parks should be prohibited as well.

To view the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) position statement on trampoline safety, log on to www.aaos.org.

Additional resources include:

Article sources:

http://www.fscip.org/tramp.html