

PARISH HEALTH MINISTRY MODEL

Why should we get involved in our parish in a parish health ministry?

In Titus 3:14 it is stated "And let people learn to devote themselves to good works in order to meet urgent needs..."

Jesus was a healer who looked not at the disease alone, but at the whole person and as such Health ministry focuses on the person. Health ministry at the parish level is to be a compassionate ministry focused on the whole person in the various stages of life from conception to death. In caring for the spiritual wellbeing of a person, we also address their physical well-being.

Parish Health Ministry is a movement that encourages parishes to renew their role in health care, which includes promoting health, preventing disease, responding to crisis, and emphasizing a holistic approach to wellness and health care. We should bear in mind that lives are changed because of the screenings and outreach program provided.

The health ministry stems from the healing ministry of Jesus, who promoted wholeness of body, mind and spirit. It is based on the premise that health is not just the absence of disease, rather the maximum attainable state of a person's emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual and vocational well-being.

As Christians, our task is to use whatever means possible to bring wholeness and health. Christians are called to understand health, healing and wholeness as a portion of their faith responsibility. Individually and corporately, we are to celebrate and give thanks for God's love for us and for all people. As we respond to this love we unite together as a justice seeking, compassionate and healing community. Ezekiel 18:16 states "...as not to oppress anyone, give bread to the hungry and cover the naked with a garment".

We are mandated as Christians to seek compassionate ways to meet the health care needs of others. We are to responsively and responsibly care for others as well as our selves, meeting others at the point of their need. This is especially so in a social and economic context where this is a great disparity in our country today. We as Christians are called to be active participants in fashioning a just and effect health care system in our society of today in and through our parish health ministry. This we achieve

through reflecting the needs, interests and resources of the faith community. Our conviction is that parish environment is a place where professionals and lay people can work together to keep people well, empower and educate, to advocate for health and to care for people in need.

The possible activities that can be incorporated in parish health ministry

There are many kinds and types of activities that can be done individually, as a parish or at a diocesan level. Here are a few of them: as we take up these activities we should remember that God wants wholeness and salvation for each individual.

- Collect and develop resources and teaching materials related to access to health care within the diocese, as well as individually.
- Run trainings on pastoral care for the sick in their homes and train a parish team to provide this service
- Assist people in evaluating avenues of care and treatments in various complementary systems.
- Seek ways to collaborate with and support the church's social ministry organizations such as meal programs and various wellness clinics.
- Advocate health ministry in and through local parishes, utilize Workshops, retreats and special events to address physical, emotional and spiritual needs within the context of a parish community.
- To become involved with other organizations within the parish and the Diocese and its surroundings that are concerned about accessing quality health care for all people.
- Contact the nearby government clinic manager to request their presence at a parish health day or event; they can bring test kits, pamphlets, etc and test people for TB, HIV, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc and advise on good health practices
- Provide and/ or teach health care and health care policy to continue to develop a Christian approach to pressing issues that affect the health care in our society.
- Provide prevention information and/ or teach methods to prevent spread HIV in churches and other educational settings.
- To educate our youth as well as adults about various drugs and alcohol and to initiate if possible "NO to Drugs" or "NO CRIME" campaign.
- Within the diocese, deaneries, and parishes develop a policy to assist those who are vulnerable to rape, aged, domestic violence and children who have no funds to go to school.
- Promote education program to increase public awareness of elder abuse and to work with agencies on prevention program to inform elders of the availability.

- Include all parish organizations, committees or ministries that offer some form of outreach to the parish. The purpose of this assessment is to eliminate duplication of services and provide coordination of the outreach ministries, programs and activities offered in the parish.
- To work with the public and private sector to ensure that all citizens have access to quality long term care services which would include such services as home, medical and nursing care, home health care, assisted living facility and day care services.
- Coordinate on regular basis with your priest, Diocesan Chaplain about the activities of parish healthcare.
- Attend retreats and training sessions on regular basis.

Possible events:

- A Parish Health Day (usually on a Sunday or public holiday) where government nurses can be present to test, counsel and inform, health professionals from the parish can contribute, pamphlets can be distributed, dieticians can advise a eating well, etc
- Form an Outreach service to nearby poorly-off communities; where a parish outreach team of volunteers (perhaps assisted by a home-based care organization in the parish) can regularly visit poor communities in the parish to provide home-based care, pastoral care and support, etc.
- A special parish event, such as a Caring for Our Elderly day, Diabetes Day, Know Your Status (HIV) day, Children's Health day, etc where organizations that offer services to people can come in and advise, test, run activities, etc
- Celebration of World Day of the Sick each year on February 11th (Our Lady of Lourdes feast day)
- Identify and keep a list of health professionals in the parish who will make themselves available when the need arises, to advise or refer (dieticians, occupational therapists, nurses, doctors, pharmacists, psychologists, physiotherapists, social workers, etc)
- Organize a Help Yourself day where organizations working with drug addicts, people with depression, alcoholism, can come and offer their help to the parish – keep a list of these organizations in the parish office to refer people to for help (especially those who may feel suicidal).

CATHCA which plays a facilitating role seeks to support coordinators of the diocesan/parish health and welfare projects to act as channels for communications and trainings.