



Parish-Based Programs That Serve Aging and Chronically Ill Persons

The Catholic Health Association recently asked healthcare organizations to submit information about their successful programs involving healthcare, parishes, churches, and other agencies.

Following are the responses we received. These are also available on CHA's website, www.chausa.org.

You may submit a description of your program through the website, or send it to Julie Trocchio at

the Catholic Health Association, 1875 Eye St., NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20006-5409

(fax: 202-296-3997; e-mail: jtrocch@chausa.org).

Parish Nurse Ministry Program Baptist/St. Vincent's Health System

St. Vincent's Medical Center
Jacksonville, FL

This unique program is based on the concept of the early Christian communities. Volunteer parish nurses focus on health and well-being, using a model that addresses the spirit, mind, and body. The program emphasizes that every person, as a child of God, must be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of age or illness. It recognizes that individual health is a concern of the entire community and that faith is an essential element in the stewardship of health. Parishioners and other healthcare providers besides the parish nurses volunteer their time.

Parishioners and the parish nurse identify each parish's needs. The program provides the following services as needed:

- Assistance with training and coordinating volunteers
- Referrals to churches, community agencies, and healthcare providers
- Support for parishioners in making health choices
 - Integrating faith and health
 - Health education and promotion
 - Counseling
 - Visits or phone contacts with parishioners in their homes or in healthcare facilities
 - Arranging healing liturgical services, including transportation to them
 - Coordination of various types of support groups

St. Vincent's Medical Center provides education for volunteer parish nurses for a minimal fee.

Participants

Thirty-two churches representing Assembly of God, Baptist, Catholic, Christian, Church of Christ, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations

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Parish Nurse Coordinator
Baptist/St. Vincent's Health System
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Jacksonville, FL 32204
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Mercy Endeavors

New Orleans

Mercy Endeavors is a senior activity center administered through a grant agreement with the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The Sisters of Mercy Health System, St. Louis, provides funding for the center. The center provides a meeting place and companionship for active older persons, about half of whom are white and half African American. Currently 52 persons, age 55 to 91, are enrolled in the program.

Three days a week the center offers activities such as Bible study, bingo, exercise sessions, health screenings and education, crafts, holiday parties, and field trips.

The program is staffed by a director and a part-time assistant. Representatives from the faith and business communities volunteer their time and resources.

Participants

St. Thomas Irish Channel Consortium; St. Thomas Health Clinic; Behavioral Healthcare

Center of Chalmette; Holy Cross School of Nursing; St. Alphonsus School; St. Alphonsus Parish; Hope House; Archdiocese of New Orleans; Mackie Shilstone Pro Spa; Sisters of Mercy Health System, St. Louis

Contact Sr. Jane M. Briseno, RSM
Director
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Parish Nurse Program of Resurrection Health Care

Chicago

The program promotes health and well-being, especially for those who are aging and/or experiencing chronic illness. Seven parish nurses, employees of Resurrection Health Care, visit people in long-term care facilities, their homes, and hospitals. In 1997 the nurses made more than 3,700 contacts, about 3,000 of which were with persons over age 65.

Nurses assess patients' health status and needs for devices such as a walker or cane, or assistance with activities of daily living, meals, or transportation. They link the person with volunteers who can assist with transportation, meal preparation, housekeeping, personal care, or respite care.

Many nurses offer support groups to address specific concerns such as bereavement, stress, or dealing with chronic illness. They demonstrate the close relationship between spiritual and physical well-being, often with such activities as anointing masses, times of reflection, and retreats. Nurses provide health education—for example, by placing articles in church bulletins and newsletters.

Participants

Christian Churches Caring (an interfaith outreach of 12 churches, including three Catholic, to older adults in the Old Irving Park community); six Catholic parishes in other communities

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Parish Nurse Program of Resurrection Health Care
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Communities of Care

Chicago

Seventeen care teams assist families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Team members, who come from about 12 faith communities, currently serve 96 clients. Once a week the care teams check with clients to find out what they need. In addition to offering companionship, the teams provide assistance with a range of activities such as child care, transportation, light housekeeping, and meal preparation.

Participants

AIDS Pastoral Care Network; nine churches representing Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Unitarian denominations; Edgewater Community Religious Association (an interfaith team of several churches)

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Parish Nurse Flu Shot Program

St. John Hospital and Medical Center
Detroit

St. John, through its interdenominational parish nurse program (which employs 12 parish nurses), offers free flu shots at the 10 parishes in the program. The flu shot program targets older persons in the churches and their surrounding communities. Nurse volunteers from St. John administer the shots, and the hospital publicizes and coordinates the program. In 1998 more than 2,400 people received the vaccine, the cost of which was covered by a grant. (St. John Health System's other four hospitals offer similar programs through their own parish nurse programs.)

Participants

Ten churches representing Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations

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