

Parish Nursing Ministry: A Call to Serve

Faith Community Nursing is defined as: “The specialized practice of professional nursing that focuses on the intentional care of the spirit as well as the promotion of the whole-person health and the prevention or minimization of illness within the context of faith community and the wider community”.

(Faith Community Nurse Scope and Standards, 2017)

Qualifications and Definition:

- ◆ A Parish Nurse (PN) is a Registered Nurse, ideally with a Bachelor of Science degree and is licensed to practice nursing in a given state. *(Faith Community Nurse Scope and Standards, 2017.)*
- ◆ The PN should have a minimum of three to five years of clinical nursing experience.
- ◆ The PN candidate is required to complete a Foundations of Faith Community Nursing Course, which provides the PN with specialized knowledge and skills related to the specialty and the role.

The American Nurses Association designated Parish Nursing as a specialty of nursing in 1987. In 2005, the terms Faith Community Nursing and Parish Nursing began to be used interchangeably.

How Can a Parish Nurse Ministry Benefit Your Congregation?

- ◆ A PN raises awareness of the relationship between the body, mind, and spirit. The nurse supports whole person health.
- ◆ PN ministry serves as a community outreach of the congregation to support the congregation’s mission and vision.
- ◆ A Parish Nurse becomes a healing presence as she visits and serves the congregation.
- ◆ The PN serves as a member of the Pastoral Team to collaborate in meeting the needs of the congregation and staff.
- ◆ Congregational members are assisted to achieve personal health goals through educational initiatives.
- ◆ The isolation of individuals is addressed during times of illness as well as in health.
- ◆ Personal responsibility is connected with spiritual motivation by planning activities to promote whole person health.
- ◆ The nurse assists individuals and families navigate the increasingly complex healthcare environment.

Establishing a Parish Nursing Ministry

- ◆ Offer education about parish nursing to all leaders of the congregation and to members. Help all understand the role and how the PN will complement the ministry team and existing ministries. While this is an ongoing process, leadership must be knowledgeable enough to embrace the role.
- ◆ Develop a Health and Wellness Committee to support the ministry.
- ◆ Prayerfully consider calling a Registered Nurse to serve on your ministerial team.
- ◆ If you decide to proceed, develop a job description to include hours of work, the role, compensation, and reporting relationships and requirements.
- ◆ Determine if the position will be paid or unpaid. A paid model allows for more accountability and sustainability.
- ◆ Develop a PN budget to include mileage for travel, initial and continuing education and professional liability insurance.
- ◆ Select the nurse through an interview process. Requesting a spiritual autobiography is a helpful tool.
- ◆ After selection of a parish nurse, make arrangements for the nurse to attend a Foundations of Faith Community Nursing Course, if not already completed.
- ◆ Resources for more information and support include ELPNA: <https://elpna.org> or the Westberg Institute: www.westberginstitute.org