

Faith Community Nursing



Health Ministry

When He sent out his disciples, Jesus told them not only to preach the kingdom of God but also to heal the sick.

-New Testament Luke 9:2-

**The Indiana Center for Parish Nursing
a Chapter of the
Health Ministries Association
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Mission Statement

The Indiana Center for Parish Nursing (ICPN) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to build and sustain healing ministries in a variety of faith-based communities through Indiana.

Purpose and Goals

The purpose and goals of the Indiana Center for Parish Nursing include the following:

- Collaboration with faith communities
- Partnerships with health care organizations
- Health ministry for public, faith-based and nursing communities
- Consultation on creating, sustaining and evaluating health related ministry programs
- Data collection and evaluation of faith-based community nursing activities and outcomes
- Sharing of best practices

A History of the Development of the Parish Nursing and Health Ministries Concepts

- In the 1960's and 1970's, Dr. Granger Westberg, a hospital chaplain and medical school professor, established holistic health clinics in churches. A physician, nurse and pastoral counselor provided staffing.
- In the early 1980's, the concept of a "ministry of health" emerged, and began to focus on the role that the nurse can play in congregational health.
- By 1986, Parish Nurse Education programs were established at Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Illinois, and Iowa Lutheran Hospital in Des Moines, Iowa.
 - Through its corporate structure, Lutheran General Health Care Systems established a model of partnership with churches and the Parish Nurse Resource Center was founded.
 - Through out this country and the world, there are currently about 10,000 people serving in a Parish Nurse/Congregational Health Ministry role. These Parish Nurses work typically as non-paid staff although some are in paid positions, supported by hospitals, congregations or long-term care facilities. Collaborative ventures in Parish Nursing/Congregational Health Ministry, especially between hospitals and congregations are also popular.
 - Dr. Granger Westberg's (now deceased) vision continues in the Parish Nurse and Health Ministries movement through the International Parish Nurse Resource Center and the Annual Westberg Symposium.
- In 1989, due to an increasing interest in the Health Ministries concept, the Health Ministries Association was incorporated as a non-profit organization. This association serves the full congregation's involvement in Health Ministry, including laity, clergy and health professionals.

- Today, the growing movement is towards a Congregational Health Ministry Program. With this concept, the congregation has the freedom to create a team approach to meet the Wholistic health needs of its membership. Often, the team is a council, cabinet or committee comprised of both health professionals and lay people who determine how the assessed needs will be met. Congregational Health Ministry or Parish Nurse Programs are based in a congregation or faith-based organization.

What is a Parish Nursing/Congregational Health Ministry?

Parish Nursing/Congregational Health Ministry is a health promotion, disease prevention ministry based on the care of the whole person, mind, body and spirit. The Parish Nurse (Registered Nurse) is the catalyst in leading the congregation to become a community of health and wholeness. The nurse models an understanding of health as being more than physical and encourages members of the congregation to become good stewards of the gift of health. Within the congregational setting, the nurse fulfills seven key roles:

- **Integrator of Faith and Health** – in conjunction with the pastor and lay leaders the Parish Nurse assists the congregation to understand the interrelationship between spiritual, physical and mental health, and healing as understood by their faith tradition.
- **Health Educator** – promotes learning experiences to increase awareness of the relationship between life style, personal habits, attitudes, faith, health and well-being. This may be accomplished through a variety of formats, classes, workshops, health screenings, small discussion groups, newsletters, educational material and bulletin boards.
- **Health Counselor** – is an active listener, allowing the parishioner/congregant to share health concerns, providing input as needed thereby equipping the parishioner/congregant to make informed decisions about health care issues.
- **Facilitator of Support Groups and Volunteers-** assist in identification of needs within the congregation, assist with organization of support groups and trains volunteers to assist and support health ministries within the congregation.
- **Health Care Advocate-** woven into all the other roles of Parish Nursing/Congregational Health Ministry. Encourages individuals to make health care decisions that represent their best interest by assisting in interpretation of medical jargon, providing accurate information and acting as a sounding board within their faith tradition.
- **Referral/Resource Agent-** acts as a liaison between the church and community resources/services by providing information, assisting with access and coordinating needed services.

Roles the Parish Nurse does not Perform- the parish nurse does **not** provide “hands on care” or perform invasive procedures as in the traditional nursing setting. However, there are other functions such as; blood pressure checks, health assessments and teaching that a professional nurse can perform in the congregational health setting as a Parish Nurse. These practices are outlined and defined under the state’s Nurse Practice Act and the Parish Nurse Scope of Practice Statement, American Nurses Association.

How does Parish Nursing differ from other kinds of nursing?

There are four ways that Parish Nursing/Congregational Health Ministry differs from other types of nursing:

1. **Environment-** the location is in and through a congregational and community setting.
2. **Person-** the individual receiving ministry is a church member or a community resident associated in some way with the congregation. The person may or may not have a diagnosed health condition. There are no fees or no need for insurance.
3. **Nursing-** the type of nursing care is wellness (also known as health promotion/disease prevention) and also includes elements of pastoral care. Parish Nurses do not provide invasive services, replace the need for a physician nor duplicate existing nursing services available in the community through hospital, home health or physician offices.
4. **Health-** the goal is to help the person be as well as possible considering their total needs for good functioning through out their entire life. This includes physical, mental and spiritual health. It also incorporates personal responsibility and relationships with family, church, friends and community. The focus is on healing and caring not curing.

Benefits of Parish Nursing

- Increases Self Care Ability
- Decreases Demands for Inappropriate Medical Services
- Increases Access to Primary Care
- Increases Healthy Behaviors
- Decreases Disease Risk Factors
- Promotes Health and Spiritual Wellness
- Prevents Illness
- Improves Social Support

What is the role of the pastor?

The pastor supports the Congregational Health Ministry by being a member of the health committee and providing theological background for the health ministry. Pastoral support and commitment is critical for this ministry to flourish.

How does the church support and co-minister with the nurse?

The congregation establishes a Health Cabinet (committee) which consists of 6-12 members who have a strong interest in the relationship between faith and health. The health committee should include both health professionals and health consumers of varying ages. The health committee develops plans and implements the Health Ministry. The committee's mission is to be a strong influence on the congregation to the end that stewardship of health is expressed in all areas of the church life including worship, education, support and recreation.

What special preparation does a Parish Nurse require?

The only requirement is that the Parish Nurse be a registered nurse licensed in the state of Indiana. However, a basic preparation course specific to Parish Nursing is highly recommended. The course assists the nurse and congregation to understand the concepts of Congregational Health Ministry, and equips the nurse to fulfill the roles. In addition, the course provides consistency and credibility to the practice of Parish Nursing/Congregational Health Ministry. This course is available at various universities and hospitals through out Indiana. The cost of the course varies depending on location. Through out the state of Indiana Parish Nurses are paid and non-paid staff, and serve their congregations through Congregational Health Ministry.

How can I learn more about Parish Nursing/Congregational Health Ministry?

Contact the Indiana Chapter of Health Ministries, Indiana Center for Parish Nursing by visiting www.IndianaParishNurses.org or via e-mail at icpn@indianaparishnurses.org. The Indiana Center for Parish Nursing can assist your congregation by:

- Providing information on organizing a Parish Nurse/Congregational Health Ministry.
- Providing leadership and guidance to Health Ministry committees in assessing resources and needs of individual faith communities.
- Assisting Parish Nurses in developing health promotions and prevention activities for their faith communities.
- Promoting holistic nursing care within the faith community.