



## Menu of Mental Health Support Options for Parishes

### Start a Mental Health Ministry Team at your parish

- **Send a Parish team to the next Mental Health Ministry Team training. We are looking for a group of 3-5 people per parish who can lead the ministry.** Rebecca Freeman, Pastoral Care Ministry Coordinator, will come to your parish and train those leaders. [rfreeman@rcbo.org](mailto:rfreeman@rcbo.org) or 714-282-6059. For more information, see
  - **English** [Mental Health Ministry Flyer](#)
  - **Spanish** [Ministerio de Salud Mental](#)

### **Join a national movement: the Association of Catholic Mental Health**

**Ministers.** Their website <https://www.catholicmhm.org/> has many resources including ministry grants, educational resources, worship & liturgy resources, and ways to network.

Check out **local mental health ministry events** at the website for the Diocese of Orange's chapter of the Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers. <https://catholicmhm.org/orange>

**The following is a list of resources/events/organizations that you can use to bring awareness and accompaniment to your parish, in order of time/effort commitment. Most are free or low cost.**

### **Free, one-time events that make a difference**

- **National Weekend of Prayer:** Advertise and participate in the National Weekend of Prayer for those touched by suicide. (In 2020, this changed from September to May; May 14-16, 2021). <https://theactionalliance.org/faith-hope-life/national-weekend-of-prayer>. Host a resource table and link homilies and prayers of intercession to those with mental illness.
- **Stamp out Stigma:** Pledge to be a parish or community that is free from the stigma that keeps people from seeking mental health services. "Stigma" is the disapproval of, or discrimination against, a person based on perceivable social characteristics that serve to distinguish them from other members of a society. It feels like shame. [Pledge to Be Stigma Free!](#) <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/StigmaFreeOC>
- **Promise to Talk:** Invite county mental health agencies to have a resource table at your events. Promise to Talk <https://promisetotalk.org/> is a campaign of Each Mind Matters.
- **International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day** (the Saturday before Thanksgiving) click link to find local events. This event raises awareness and offers support to those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

- **Provide prayer services.** Get together with the liturgy team at your parish and hold a mass for those with mental illness; provide anointing of the sick. Pray the rosary with and for those with mental illness. Have a Taize service dedicated to intentions for mental health. Invite parishioners from nearby parishes.

## Free, on-going events that show a church welcomes and values persons with mental illness

- **Priests/Deacons talking about own or family's mental health or substance abuse challenges** and how his faith was challenged and strengthened. [Homily and intercession/petition resources](#)
- **Priests/Deacons talking about resources for MH or substance dependence** that they want to build in their parish or how the gospel relates to Mental Health Ministry (resources available)
- **Engage your parish in the Sanctuary Course for Catholics.** This free, eight-session course—designed for use in small groups—explores the realities of mental health and illness, as well as the vital need for faith-based community conversations about these topics. The sessions are accompanied by compelling films that feature the stories of Catholics living with mental health challenges, along with the insights of archbishops, theologians, and psychologists.  
<https://www.sanctuarymentalhealth.org/catholics/>
- **Educate yourself** by reading "[Welcomed and Valued](#)," a resource created by [The National Catholic Partnership on Disability's Council on Mental Illness](#) : A binder of information for churches to minister to people with mental illness and their families.
- **Easily link parishioners to Resources for Mental Health** provided by the diocese in [English](#), [Spanish](#), or [Vietnamese](#) by displaying paper copies and linking to the [diocese's webpage on Behavioral Health](#).
- **Link parishioners to therapists** who understand and affirm their religion by using the diocese's list of vetted therapists. All priests, deacons, and trained mental health ministry leaders have this list.
- Parish Administrators provide wellness, healthy boundaries, and self-care education for staff and they “walk the walk”.

## One-time events (many low cost) that take lay volunteer time to organize, publicize, and coordinate

### Trainings/Speakers

- **[Mental Health First Aid \(MHFA\)](#)—8 hours:** This is a national, certificated, evidenced-based training to teach the initial help given to a person showing symptoms of mental illness or in a mental health crisis (severe depression, psychosis, panic attack, suicidal thoughts and behaviors) until appropriate professional or other help, including peer and family support, can be engaged. It is currently administered by the OC Health Care Agency and supported by funds from Prop 63, The Mental Health Services Act. The diocese also has certified trainers for adult and youth MHFA.
- Talks given by therapists on various mental health topics.
- **In Our Own Voice: Living with Mental Health Conditions** is provided by [NAMI OC](#). It is a recovery education presentation given by trained client presenters for other consumers, family members, friends, professionals, and lay audiences. A brief, yet comprehensive interactive presentation about mental health conditions—including a DVD portraying clients with different mental health conditions, personal testimony, and discussion—enriches the audience's understanding of how people with these serious disorders cope with the reality of their illnesses while recovering and reclaiming productive lives.

**Ongoing support that is free and requires regular volunteer commitment from laity as well as meeting space. Ideally, your parish Mental Health Ministry Team would take on one of these.**

### **Spiritual Support Groups**

- Spiritual Support Group for persons with mental illness. Check the website of the Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers <https://catholicmhm.org/> to find resources on this.
- [Hope for Mental Health](#) a monthly gathering with knowledge and activities related to mental health along with celebration and connection. This is the plan that was developed by Saddleback Church in Lake Forest.
- [Grace Alliance](#) is a nondenominational Christian program that supports churches who want to run spiritual support groups for persons with mental illness and/or their caregivers & family members.
- [Catholic in Recovery](#) is a nonprofit organization that seeks to serve those suffering from addictions and unhealthy attachments (including alcoholism, drug addiction, pornography addiction, sex and relationship addiction, compulsive overeating and food addictions, gambling addiction, codependency and the impact on family, and general fear, control, and anxiety). The organization supports parishes and communities with group resources that draw people closer to two powerful sources of grace: the sacramental life of the Church and the 12-step recovery program. It is the aim of Catholic in Recovery to share the Good News that God can bring about healing and recovery, even in the most hopeless of cases.
- [Beyond Disaster](#) is a program from the [Trauma Healing Institute](#) that provides materials to help people recover from natural and man-made disasters. The program integrates best practices in mental health into a biblical framework. Currently they offer resources in English, Spanish, French, and several other languages. Download free PDF copies, or order printed copies from the links below. Distributed by American Bible Society in the USA and by other partners worldwide. More resources for survivors, first responders, and churches are in development. *Caveat 09/28/2021: More information is needed to see whether there is research to support this method and to ensure that the practices are not counterproductive. I do not think a lay person should run this group. I do think the materials could be used by a licensed mental health professional who has extensive training in trauma and who understands how to avoid group practices that can be harmful to trauma survivors as well as who knows and understands the concept of the "window of tolerance." Otherwise, this material could be harmful. That being said, under the guidance of a licensed mental health professional this method could be very helpful. This is my educated opinion and not based on scientific study of this program. M. Arnold, PhD.*

## Secular support groups with evidenced-based support to which you can add a spiritual component

- [Caregiver Support Group](#) The Family Caregiver Resource Center, a nonprofit organization, is a trusted partner for Orange County Families coping with physical, emotional, and financial responsibilities of caregiving. The assistance is free for those who care for a frail adult over age sixty or care for an adult who has brain impairing conditions including: Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Lou Gehrig's disease, traumatic brain injury, Huntington's disease. Services include Family consultation, assessment and care planning, counseling, support groups, respite, and education.
- [Adoption, Kinship, & Foster Care Support Group](#) in English, for families raising kids from hard places (traumatic experiences). The Connection is a support group that uses Trust Based Relational Interventions (Texas Christian University) and biblical support. Developed by Saddleback Church whose leaders have offered to train Catholics who want to provide these support groups. OC United also uses the Trust Based Relational Intervention model. [OC United](#) provides resources and support for those who have intersected with the foster care system through a two program approach. Their RESPITE Program provides resources, education, and support to caregivers and interventions for trauma-sensitive environments. Their THRIVE Program provides housing, community, and support for former-foster and at-risk youth.
- [DBSA: Depression and Bipolar Support Group](#). DBSA offers in-person and online support groups for people living with a mood disorder as well as friends and family. English, Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese groups are available.
- [NAMI Family to Family](#) is a free, 12-class education program for **family** members of adults living with mental illness. In this program the term **family** is viewed from a broad perspective to include parents, siblings, spouses, adult sons and daughters, partners and significant others.
- [NAMI: Peer to Peer](#) is a free, eight-session educational program for adults with mental health conditions who are looking to better understand themselves and their recovery. Taught by trained leaders with lived experience, this program includes activities, discussions and informative videos.
- [NAMI Basics Class](#) is a 6-session education program for parents, caregivers and other family who provide care for youth (ages 22 and younger) who are experiencing mental health symptoms. This program is free to participants, 99% of whom say they would recommend the program to others.

## Book study series

- [Hope and Healing](#) A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of California on Caring for those who Suffer from Mental Illness Addressed to All Catholics and People of Goodwill. There is a [study guide](#) available that makes it easy to lead discussions and learn more about treasures of our faith that can be helpful for those suffering with mental illness and all those who love them.
- [Responding to suicide: A Pastoral Handbook for Catholic Leaders](#) Author: Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers, Edited by: Ed Shoener, Edited by: John P. Dolan, Foreword by: Most Rev. Kevin William Vann

- [When a Loved One Dies by Suicide: Comfort, Hope, and Healing for Grieving Catholics.](#)  
**Author:** Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers, **Edited by:** Ed Shoener, **Edited by:** John P. Dolan
- [Letter to a Suffering Church](#) by Bishop Robert Barron. From the [website](#): “The sexual abuse scandal has gripped the Catholic Church for the past thirty years and continues to wreak havoc even today. It's been a diabolical masterpiece, one that has compromised the work of the Church in every way and has left countless lives in ruin. Many Catholics are understandably asking, “Why should I stay? Why not abandon this sinking ship before it drags me or my children under?” In this stirring manifesto, Bishop Robert Barron, founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, explains why this is not the time to leave, but the time to stay and fight.” The following [resources](#) are available: Step-by-Step Parish Launch Plan, Small Group Discussion & Study Guide, FAQ Guide For Priests & Parish Leaders, Sample Parish Announcements, 5-Part Video Series from Bishop Barron to Email/Text Your Parish (via Flocknote), Video Announcement from Bishop Barron to Play at Your Parish