



Menu of Mental Health Support Options for Parishes

Start a Mental Health Ministry Team at your parish

- **A Parish team should ideally be a group of 3-5 people in the parish who can lead and facilitate the ministry.** The Diocese Office for Family Life can provide guidance and training for the team. Contact us at officeforfamilylife@rcbo.org. For more information, see
 - English [Mental Health Ministry Flyer](#)
 - Spanish [Ministerio de Salud Mental](#)

Join an international 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

- **[Novena for Mental Health](#):** The US Bishops' National Catholic Mental Health Campaign invites the People of God to join together to pray for men and women experiencing or impacted by mental health issues and those who accompany them through this 9-day prayer. While it can be prayed at any time of year, the Novena is offered especially from October 10 (World Mental Health Day) to October 18 (Feats of St. Luke, patron of healthcare).
- **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.
- **Promote National Suicide Prevention Month (September)** and the 988 suicide & crisis lifeline in your parish. 988 Day is September 8 and World Suicide Prevention Day is September 10. Find digital promotion materials and order physical materials at <https://988lifeline.org/promote-national-suicide-prevention-month/>

- **[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 healing 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/>
- **Host the Whole Hearted series for your parish.** The *Whole Hearted* series by Catholic Charities USA informs participants of the impact of mental health challenges and how one might begin to move forward, mentally and spiritually. There are 4 sessions that introduce how to demonstrate sensitivity to someone experiencing pain, how one can recognize and respond appropriately, and how to provide restorative spiritual and professional resources. Materials, including facilitator guide and participant journal, are available in English and Spanish for free online at <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/publications/whole-hearted/>.
- **Educate yourself** by reading ["Welcomed and Valued," a resource created by The National Catholic Partnership on Disability's Council on Mental Illness](#) : A booklet 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, and Vietnamese by displaying paper copies and linking to the [diocese's webpage on Behavioral Health](#).
- **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.
- **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 as they "walk the walk".

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. There are two versions: Adult MHFA for adults who work with adults and Youth MHFA for adults who work with ages 12-18.
- 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 clients 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://www.catholicmhm.org/mental-health-ministry-meetings> 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.

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, 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