



Welcome to Mental Health Ministry
*You are now joining a nation-wide movement of Catholics
who provide a healing presence to those living with a mental illness!*

[The Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers](#) began in 2019.

This movement has taken hold in California. The California Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued a Pastoral Letter on Hope and Healing in Mental Health. [Read the letter here.](#)

“As pastors and bishops, we understand that mental health is a critical component of wellbeing. Therefore, ministering to those who suffer from mental illness is an essential part of the pastoral care of the Church.”

What is a Mental Health Ministry?

- Awareness, Acceptance, and Accompaniment.
- A ministry of presence, service, and prayerful companionship in which persons with mental illnesses are seen as beloved & valued children of God.
- A link to help people get the support and services they need.
- An answer to the command to Love one another as *I have loved you*.
- A culture shift that identifies stigma and actively works to eliminate it.

What is NOT part of a Mental Health Ministry?

- Health Care, Diagnosis, Counseling or Therapy
- Prayers only (without valuing and connecting)
- A culture that identifies people as their illness (i.e. We want to say, “Fred has bipolar” instead of saying, “Fred is bipolar.”)

What are the Goals of Mental Health Ministry?

- To lower or eliminate stigma about mental illness in your church.
- To increase the likelihood that parishioners will reach out when they need help.
- To increase the likelihood that there will be a group of other parishioners who feel equipped to provide prayerful companionship, emotional and practical support, and links to mental health and other community resources.

How do I get trained?

Becoming a part of the mental health ministry means you are likely to be called upon for resources, advice, or support for someone with a mental illness. Therefore, we recommend that you take [this introductory training](#) right away. Within a year of joining the ministry, we ask that you take **[Mental Health First Aid \(MHFA\) \(8 hours\)](#)**. To request a free training for your parish, go all the way down to the bottom of this webpage <http://www.ocbhtc.org/> and click the lime green button "Learn More" under the heading "request a training for your group or organization." Don't click the first yellow button that says "register for a training".

How do I get involved?

1. If you haven't done so already, please complete our [short application form](#).
2. You will be signed up for monthly newsletters about our ministry to learn about what is happening around the county. You can unsubscribe at any time.
3. You will be connected to your parish mental health ministry, if there is a team there already. If there is not one yet in place, someone will contact you about either joining a nearby parish ministry or about starting one at your parish. [Click here to learn more about starting a new mental health ministry](#) at your parish.

Some other resources you should know about:

What is happening right now in our diocese and Mental Health Ministry? Check out our events page here: <https://catholicmhm.org/event?refer=orange>

Counselor Referral Network: Spirituality is an asset in recovery from mental illness, so is the comfort and fit you feel with the therapist. Therapists want you to find a good fit, so you should feel free to ask them questions before you make an appointment. One question you may want to ask is, "How will you incorporate my spiritual traditions into your assessment and treatment?" You will likely find a therapist through your insurance. If you are having difficulty finding a therapist who understands your values, please check with your pastor or the leaders of your mental health ministry. They have a list of therapists maintained by The Office for Family Life; all therapists on the list have promised to honor the faith of their Catholic clients.

Scriptures and Saints:

- [Hebrews 13:5](#) "...God has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'"
- [1 Corinthians 12:24-26](#) "God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it."
- [Some patron saints](#) for people with mental illness: St. Dymphna, St John of God

Behavioral Health Resources on the diocese's website:

<https://www.rcbo.org/resource/mental-health-2/>

"Whoever suffers from mental illness always bears God's image and likeness in himself, as does every human being. In addition, he always has the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such."
– Saint John Paul II, Address to the International Conference for Health Care Workers, on Illnesses of the Human Mind, 30 November 1997