



Archdiocese of Chicago Domestic Violence Outreach



Steps to Forming a Domestic Violence Ministry

Thank you for recognizing the important role that a parish ministry can have in building awareness and supporting those affected by domestic violence. To become more familiar with the issue of domestic violence and what your ministry can do to help:

1. If you have not already had a guest homilist to preach about domestic violence at all weekend Masses in your parish, ask your pastor to invite one. Set up an initial meeting for all those interested in learning more and perhaps developing a Domestic Violence Ministry in the parish. Publicize the meeting and purpose in your parish bulletin. Reach out personally to inform and invite good volunteers from your parish.
2. Read *“Developing a Parish Ministry for Victims of Domestic Violence: Background Reading”*, included in this packet. There are also many websites with good information on the issues surrounding domestic violence, but don’t feel that you must read everything available; too much information can be overwhelming. You will educate yourself and your ministry step by step, with guidance from your Parish Support Mentor.
3. Fr. Charles W. Dahm, O.P. (312-371-7752) or an archdiocese facilitator will help conduct the initial meeting and invite attendees to form a parish ministry. Note that an effective ministry can be started with even a few volunteers. If needed, contact the Parish Support Mentor Committee (Diane O’Brien, 708-824-1362) to have someone from the Archdiocesan Domestic Violence Outreach work with you.
4. Read *“Models of Parish Ministry Responses to Domestic Violence”*, included in this packet. Discuss which ministry model would be appropriate for your parish to start with, most likely Model #1 which focuses on building awareness about domestic violence.
5. After your initial meeting which assembles those interested in domestic violence, schedule your second meeting to actually form a ministry. Initially you should meet as frequently as every 2 weeks to get the ministry formed. Initially announce your meetings in the bulletin so others interested can still join you. Once the committee is going, less frequent meeting would probably be necessary. Begin and end meetings with a prayer.
6. In the next few ministry meetings, pray together and discuss initial ways in which you can
 - a. Raise awareness about domestic violence. Ideas for awareness building are on our website (archchicago.org, scroll down on right to domestic violence on home page), including prayers of the faithful, bulletin inserts, list of activities, videos, homily, etc.
 - b. Connect victims to services. Invite a representative from a domestic violence service providing agency to come and explain what they do. Inviting an officer to explain the work of local police on domestic violence will also be helpful at some point.
 - c. Obtain training (2, 4 or 6 hours) for the committee, parish staff and all others interested either from the Archdiocesan Domestic Violence Outreach Committee or a local domestic violence agency or Catholic Charities. **Please turn the page.**

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National Domestic Violence Hotline 24 Hour Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224
Visit www.usccb.org for the US Catholic Bishops’ Response to Domestic Violence – *When I Call for Help*

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- d. Organize among yourselves by dividing up tasks such as chairing meetings, taking minutes, developing member data base, contacting members who miss meetings, contacting parish staff and putting items in bulletin, etc. Eventually develop a timeline of activities and a budget.

Your Parish Support Mentor can assist with planning and developing a list of things the committee might do over time. Take a few steps at a time.

7. Be sure to contact your pastor and formally request his support for the creation of your domestic violence ministry. After several meetings and some initial actions, write a ministry mission statement based on your ministry model; samples are available. Choose a ministry name and consider giving a positive focus in naming your ministry. NOTE: Efforts are underway to develop a uniform name and logo for all Chicago Archdiocesan DV ministries.