

A Ten-Step Program toward a Congregational Health Ministry

Not every congregation will undergo exactly the same process in establishing a local health ministry—so much depends on the makeup of the congregation and on the needs of the members and the community. Below are ten steps that occur in one form or another during the typical process. Before beginning the process, review this sequence to assess what is most practical for your congregation.

1. The church staff commits to wellness under the guidance and encouragement of the district health advocate or other health consultant.
2. The pastor brings the health ministry concept to a sponsoring group, preferably the board of elders, to study the Scriptural grounding of the ministry, what the ministry is, its integration into the present life of the congregation and its needed leadership. Staff wellness practices are brought into the discussion. After study at two or more meetings, the chair asks the elders for their endorsement and their personal commitment to wellness practices. At this point, a health cabinet is appointed and given the mandate to undertake a survey and report its findings.
3. The health cabinet consists of people who have a strong and informed interest in health and welcome its pursuit as an expression of the Christian life. Provide the same orientation to health ministry as was given to the elders.
4. The cabinet undertakes a survey both quantitative (the need for health promotion) and qualitative (attitudes resistances/openness to health practices). The cabinet summarizes the survey results and identifies the entry point of a health ministry and sets the first year's outcomes for spirit, body, mind, relational and emotional health.
5. The cabinet reports to the congregation at its Sunday morning services in a special presentation preferably following worship. The pastor's sermon for the day could ground health ministry in the Gospel. The focus of the report is the needs of the congregation and how developing a health ministry could help address those needs in the name of the Christ.
6. The introduction of the health ministry is put to a vote at the next meeting of the governing body.
7. The cabinet appoints a parish nurse/health minister and arranges his/her placement in weekend services.
8. The parish nurse/health minister announces the first congregational health promotion, possibly for the placement Sunday.
9. The cabinet informs the district human care committee of the new health ministry and asks the names of the congregations with whom it can partner.
10. The cabinet evaluates the outcome targeted, every six months and revises, as necessary