

Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic
Woodland Park, New Jersey

2023 Annual Safe Environment In-Service Clergy Training Program

Part I: Presentation and review of particular concerns and topics regarding ongoing implementation of eparchial safe environment program.

Part II: Presentation Text:

“Ministry with Individuals Presenting with Mental Health Concerns”

Part III: Having reviewed Parts I & II please print and complete “2023 Annual Safe Environment Certification of Training Form” found under the “Clergy” tab of Safe Environment Website and please submit by U.S. Mail to:

Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic
445 Lackawanna Avenue
Woodland Park, New Jersey 07424

Please note: No cleric who has not complied with the annual safe environment program mandate for annual training is eligible for a Celebret or Letter of Good Standing.

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Woodland Park, New Jersey

Part I

2023 Annual Safe Environment In-Service Training

Review of Program and Current Updates

Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic
Woodland Park, New Jersey

2023 Safe Environment Clergy Continuing Education Program

1. Website – eparchypassaicse.com
2. Letters of Good Standing/Suitability & Celebrets
 - Always assume that a Letter of Good Standing/Suitability is required for any liturgy or event you are attending in any Diocese, Parish or Institution of the Catholic Church in the United States.
 - All required information is outlined on website under “Clergy”
 - Timeliness in requesting Letters of Good Standing
 - Letters of Good Standing for Weddings, Baptisms and Conferences should be submitted at least one month in advance of the event.
 - Letters for funerals will be accomplished immediately.
3. Visiting Clergy requirements
 - One time event/celebration/liturgy – Letter of Good Standing/Suitability from proper jurisdiction.
 - Regular or extended assistance in parish/activity – Comply with eparchial safe environment program mandates fully inclusive of Letter of Good Standing from proper jurisdiction, eparchial criminal background check, eparchial training
 - Priests within the Metropolitan Province of New Jersey - Celebret from local NJ diocese or Letter of Good Standing
 - Bi-Ritual Clergy - Must comply with eparchial safe environment program mandates fully.
4. Parish Audits must be timely or they are of no help. These parish statistical reports for the annual audit due in June are still being received as of today and are of no consequence as the audit has been submitted.

5. Ongoing training and renewal of criminal background checks of Volunteers & Clergy are required every five years in all parishes and programs of the eparchy.
6. Implementation of Children & Youth Training Curriculum
 - On website under “Training Texts” tab “Children’s Training Syllabus”.
7. Boundaries:
 - Relationship with parishioners must be pastoral not personal.
 - Physical touching of individuals is forbidden.
 - Acts of domestic violence by any clergy member of the Eparchy of Passaic are absolutely unacceptable and if required must be reported to local police and/or immigration authorities.
 - Avoid being engaged in interactions apart from the church or in less than public places; never alone.
 - Holy Confession should be carried out with a degree of privacy but in a way that assures confessors integrity and affords penitent personal safety.
8. Eparchial Properties use and rentals:
 - A Rectory residence is for the housing of clergy and immediate family only. Family guests may visit for a holiday/vacation visit for no longer than a two week period. Extended stay by others is permitted only with the knowledge and permission of the Bishop.
 - Temples are not to be places of accommodation or housing.
 - Camping on parish grounds is not appropriate or safe. Carpathian Village or commercial camp grounds are more appropriate.
 - The rental/lease of parish facilities or properties can only be accomplished in consultation with Mr. Thomas Duch, Esq., Civil Attorney for the Eparchy of Passaic who will provide an appropriate lease agreement that covers many serious concerns regarding such rentals/leases.
 - Vacant or extra rectory facilities are not to be considered places of accommodation (*hotels/B&B’s*) for clergy, their extended families or

friends who are on holiday/vacation in a particular area and may not be used as such.

- The Eparchy of Passaic cannot accept responsibility for the intentional and blatant disregard of any of its safe environment policies by any cleric, employee or parishioner. Flagrant disregard of these policies will make the individual who does so legally responsible for the outcome of their actions.

9. Legal matters:

- Report all accusations to the Bishop or Safe Environment Coordinator immediately.
- When contacted by any attorney regarding accusations, or other safe environment issue of a legal nature refer the attorney to our eparchial attorney, Mr. Duch. **Do not assume you can respond to such inquiries or issues.**
- Remember, we are mandated reporters in Pennsylvania and most states as regards accusations of abuse and are liable under law to insure that all accusations of sexual abuse of minors are reported.
- **Any accusation of impropriety with adults must be reported to the Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry immediately. A decision in the matter of reporting accusations is not within the prerogative of the local pastor.**

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic
Woodland Park, New Jersey

Part II

2023 Annual Safe Environment In-Service Training

Training Text

*“Ministry with Individuals
Presenting with Mental Health Concerns”*

Ministry with Individuals Presenting with Mental Health Concerns

Coming to an understanding of Mental Health:

- Mental health can be defined as a condition with regard to a person's psychological, emotional and social well-being.
- A Mental Illness is a medical condition that can disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood and ability to relate to others and daily functioning (1).
- The World Health Organizations offers as a definition of mental health as a "state of well-being in which a person realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively or fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

General Information on issues of Mental Health:

Research indicates that more than 50 million Americans struggle with mental illness (2).

- 1 in 5 young people (age 13-18) has or will develop mental illness in their lifetime (3).
- Most Americans lack access to adequate mental health treatment (4).
- Mental illness knows no limitations and can impact the lives of people of all ages, race, religion, or income (1).

Common signs of mental health issues can include things such as extreme mood swings, changes in eating habits, excessive worrying, and inappropriate response

(1) "What is Mental Health?" U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.

(2) "Mental Health America" Adult Data 2022.

(3) "Mental Health Facts: Children and Teens" National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2017.

to life situations, as well as, excessive worry, fear, difficulty concentrating and avoidance of social situations (4).

Recognizing the signs of Mental Health issues:

May clergymen in professional ministry have encountered difficult and challenging pastoral situations with persons who can defy reason and leave us baffled. No matter how hard you may try, it just isn't enough and you are being worn down and frustrated by such an experience. You also find yourself concerned for the overall health and well-being of other parishioners and the larger community due to the inappropriate, demanding or divisive impact of such an individual upon the parish (5).

Very often for persons struggling with mental health concerns and "going through a hard time" it may seem obvious. However, this is not always the case and discerning such concerns is not always so easy or cut and dry.

Certainly certain symptoms are common in particular mental health issues and may be exhibited uniquely in individuals meeting the challenge of this aspect of their health. Commonly, you might perceive certain behavioral issues within the individual. However, you also might simply think of them as "quirks."

However, in fact, there may be mood disorders; characterized by noticeable mood changes; going from 0 to 100 miles an hour in a heartbeat. Anxiety disorder may be exhibited in a person experiencing heightened and unusual level of anxiety. Personality disorders are manifested in ridged patterns of behavior which may

(4) "Knowing the Warning Signs" National Alliance of Mental Illness, 2018.

(5) "Mental Health in the Ministry" Wendy Kittlitz: ClergyCare.ca 2019.

(6) "Mental Health Issues in the Local Congregation" Daniel M. Forbes, EdD, Ministry Magazine.org 2017.

include frequent mood swings, angry outbursts, difficulty in relationships, need for instant gratification, poor impulse control and manipulative and controlling behaviors. There may also present with difficulties in social or work settings, irrational, extreme or inaccurate perceptions of situations within their life (6).

In the area of personality disorder there may be seen in (Type A) eccentric thoughts and behaviors, (Type B) unusually dramatic, emotional thoughts and behaviors, (Type C) a focus upon anxious and fearful thinking and behaviors. Recognizing possible mental health issue in an individual may be a matter of them chronically struggling and don't seem to get better, they have no relief (6).

So now, what do I do?

I'm the parish priest and I have come to perceive certain behaviors and attitudes within a parishioner that are extreme and can be very inappropriate. Do I assume by the grace of ministry that I can engage in a therapeutic relationship with this individual? Absolutely not!

The best possible way of rendering pastoral assistance in such a situation is to recognize who you are and what you are. You are their parish priest or deacon, you are a minister of the mercy and love of God that is present in the community of the Church that is Christ. Your pastoral role is one of proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in your preaching and teaching, to nourish His holy people in the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, and be a leader, a pastor, to a local community that is an expression of the Kingdom of God among us. This is your pastoral responsibility and it is a great and awesome duty.

However, despite what Saint Paul says, we cannot be all things to all people when we are engaged in the life of professional ministry. We must be comfortable with our role as a servant of the Lord's Church and know the importance of our service and the limits of that service. We must be comfortable in understanding that as minister to a community we do not necessarily have all the answers and

(6) Ibid. pg. 6.

sometimes the greatest gift of our ministry can be when, having a healthy understanding of our limitations, we can be able to be a good resource for the flock entrusted to our care.

So again, as a minister of the Church, the question is begged; “what do I do?” Very often you may well be the first to recognize that someone in your parish is displaying issues of concern with regard to their mental health and you may be an important opportunity to render sound and appropriate assistance to this individual (6). Also, for a priest, such assistance can only be rendered external to the Mystery of Holy Confession and never predicated upon the matter of any person’s confession.

Again, the question remains; “what do I do?” The answer is very clear and related to who we are as expressions of Christ’s love for His people.

- Be a calm reassuring presence.
- Provide a balanced and reasonable support for the individual which can encourage hope in their lives through appropriate ministry of the Church.
- Most importantly, encourage them to seek appropriate professional assistance.
- Assist them by offering referral to possible agencies such as Catholic Charities or community based mental health centers.
- Encourage them to find comfort and strength for their need in the gift of prayer and a healthy life of faith.
- Be able to responsibly, charitably and carefully confront a person when they are becoming disruptive to the life and function of the parish community (7).
- Know your limitations – you are minister of the parish community as priest or deacon and not a mental health clinician. Your role is different from a

(6) Ibid. pg. 6-7.

(7) Ibid. pg. 6-7.

professional behavioral health provider and you should not do a disservice to your parishioner by attempting to meet a need beyond your scope.

Referring those who may be presenting with mental health concerns:

Generally those in parish ministry are not necessarily trained or qualified to make decisions about the nature of a possible mental illness and the appropriate mode of therapy or counseling. Certainly, short term spiritual counseling or ordinary situational concerns might be appropriate in the ordinary course of parochial ministry, however, we should always be careful not to “get in above our heads.”

In our post Covid world where daily there are more and more pressures impacting the lives of people we are seeing a rise in the need for appropriate mental health services within society. Consequently, we may be experiencing the effect of such a rise in behavioral health needs within the parish. Even now there may be one or more persons within your parish community who are suffering with one or more mental health issues. Their behavior may at times seem different and even unusually odd. They do not perceive themselves as having any issues of concern as in their minds they see themselves as “normal” and it’s everyone else’s problem. They are one of the many people who are undiagnosed and consequently remain untreated. Again, your greatest service to such persons is to recognize their possible need and support them in accessing appropriate professional assistance (8).

Recognizing your role in ministry to such individuals it is best to be prepared to meet their unique need in the area of behavior health. Have a listing of behavior health providers, agencies and referral sources within your community that might be of service in addressing their need. In this regard, I would again recommend

(8) Philip S. Wang, Patricia A. Beglund, and Ronald C. Kessler, “Patterns and correlates of Contacting Clergy for Mental disorders in the United State,” Health Services Research 38, no. 2 April 2003.

(9) “Mental Health Issues in the Local Congregation,” Ministry Magazine 2017.

the services of the local diocesan Catholic Charities outreach or a community based mental health center. You should also recommend that they speak to their Primary Care Physician who would consider their entire health picture and be able to give a referral (9). The individual could also seek a recommendation from a trusted family member or friend. The most important thing is for your parishioner to get appropriate help from a properly licensed and trained mental health professional.

Let's wrap it up:

In the previous text we have reviewed much information as regards mental health and the appropriate care for individuals within our parochial setting who may be presenting with behavioral health concerns. As pastoral professionals it is important to remember our responsibilities toward the flock that Christ has entrusted to us. It is also most important, as the shepherd of Christ's local flock, to assure a safe and healthy environment in which ministry can be carried out. Through our pastoral leadership we should strive to the best of our ability, and in keeping with our vocation, to serve the needs of the community in such a way that maintains its balance and harmony.

Certain things are worth repeating:

1. It is our responsibility to assure a healthy and safe environment within our parishes that assures the well-being of all who make them their spiritual home; be they children, youth or adults.
2. As a ministerial professional we should exercise reality oriented good and reasonable judgment in the service of the people.
3. We must recognize the importance of our diaconal or priestly ministry as pastoral leaders within a worshipping community. In this capacity we are charged to tend to the flock with great attention to maintaining the overall health, balance and harmony of the parish.

4. We must recognize our limitations. No matter what our professional background may be, we are not there in the capacity of clinicians as social workers or psychologists. We are there as pastors to God's people and we must not confuse our role in the life of the community.
5. It is important to be respectful and clear in helping a person understand about the difference between spiritual support and professional care.
6. When individuals from within the parish may present with behavioral health needs we must be; understanding and supportive pastors who know how to guide them in securing necessary and appropriate professional care.
7. As regards referrals for appropriate professional assistance to individuals seeking such assistance it is important for the parish clergy to have an awareness of possible referral opportunities within their local community and be helpful in sharing that information with a person in need of such assistance.
8. Individuals who exhibit behavioral health issues must be treated in a clear, direct and supportive pastoral manner less their dysfunction bring disorder and disharmony to the community and ultimately are harmful to their own well-being.
9. Ongoing and unaddressed inappropriate behaviors engaged in by individuals are not healthy for the larger parish community and are certainly not in the best interest of the person engaging in such behaviors.
10. Should the behavior of any person within a parish become a source of unrelenting challenge for that community and become detrimental to the well-being and harmony of the parish it is the responsibility of the Pastor to address the issue and in a respectful, kind and professional manner.
11. Those who serve in any activity or ministry of the parish do so at the pleasure of the Pastor who is responsible for the ongoing life and ministry of the community. If behavior by any person becomes disruptive and unacceptable it is the right and responsibility of the Pastor to address that

issue. If necessary it is the Pastor's responsibility to ask that person to step away from any work or ministry of the parish in which they are involved until such time as they may again be ready to participate in the life of the parish in an acceptable, constructive and less disruptive manner.

12. Should issues of concern arise within the community that you may feel are beyond your competency contact the eparchial Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry.
13. Acceptance and socialization within a faith community can play an important role in the life of a person being challenged by behavior health concerns. Recognizing this fact it is important for the ministers of the church in their leadership role to strive to exercise understanding, patience and honesty as is reasonable and appropriate in dealing with such individuals for whom Christ came.
14. Ultimately we must remember our sacred duty as pastors to God's people and exercise our diaconal and priestly offices to build a community of the Church that is a clear and unmistakable sign of the Kingdom of God among His people.

May Christ Who is the Divine Physician of our souls and bodies be with us in our service to His people.

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div.

Coordinator

Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry

Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

22 September 2023