



## The Rush Center OF THE JOHNSON INSTITUTE

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Frequently Asked Questions About:

### **Faith Partners Congregational Alcohol and Other Drug Team Ministries**

#### WHAT IS THE FAITH PARTNERS TEAM MINISTRY?

The Faith Partners ministry consists of a small group of trained lay people who work together to provide alcohol and other drug awareness, education, and addiction recovery support to children, youth, and adults served by the congregation. The team creates a ministry of presence, available to those reaching out for help or needing information. They:

- Work closely with the clergy to develop a mission and plan for the ministry, fitting the needs of their congregation;
- Engage others in conversations about alcohol and other drug concerns;
- Teach prevention strategies, skills to interrupt the earliest symptoms, and other accurate information about addiction to individuals and/or in small group settings;
- Share their recovery experiences with others in worship and other settings in the congregation to cultivate a climate of openness and understanding; and,
- Build bridges of understanding between the faith community and community resources such as Twelve Step programs.

This ministry may have many levels of involvement depending on the time, talents, energy, and commitment of team members, from a simple act of providing literature on the subject to hosting an annual worship service in which addiction is addressed and recovery celebrated to an educational series or support group ministry.

## **WHY SHOULD CONGREGATIONS ADDRESS ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ABUSE?**

Many people served by congregations suffer directly or indirectly from addictions. Despite this, conversations about alcohol and other drug use, misuse, and addiction are rare and uncomfortable. Addiction damages people in many ways, but especially spiritually, affecting one's relationship with God, self and others. All congregations have a call from God to serve the spiritual needs of people. An informed clergy, supported by committed and trained members of the congregation can serve by offering hope to those who suffer through a recovery support ministry. All congregations can provide awareness, education, and early intervention strategies through a prevention ministry.

## **WHY IS THE FAITH PARTNERS' APPROACH EFFECTIVE?**

Over the last 15 years this approach has evolved and is being used in numerous congregations in several states. It is effective because:

- It builds on the strengths of the congregation by involving lay people with special expertise and a passion for this ministry;
- Clergy time, energy, and involvement is carefully utilized;
- Teams are trained in prevention, early intervention, referral assistance, and recovery support, choosing programs that meet the needs of the congregation;
- Teams network with other teams and utilize community resources, keeping their efforts focused on the congregation's mission;
- It is relevant to the whole congregation, young and old, individuals and families;
- It is not a short term program but an ongoing process that enables congregations to identify activities and programs that meet their changing needs; and,
- The ministry cultivates a compassionate response to all human problems, creating long-lasting change, making the congregation a safe and hospitable place.

## **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF CLERGY IN THIS MINISTRY?**

Starting a team normally requires active clergy support. Their role may diminish (it is their choice) after the first few months when the team begins to mature. To initiate a team ministry, clergy attend the leadership session and work closely with the team facilitator. The clergy role will include regular communication with the team facilitator, confidential referral to trained team members, interpretation of the team ministry to the congregation, and finding ways to incorporate issues and stories of prevention and recovery in teaching and preaching.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LAY LEADERSHIP IN THIS MINISTRY?

The most important factor in starting a team ministry is finding one or two key lay members to provide leadership. Frequently the person called and committed to this ministry is a person who is in recovery from addiction and/or is a professional in the field of alcohol and other drug use prevention. This person needs to be healthy, mature, and willing to commit his or her time to the development of the team ministry. This person must be respected and trusted by the clergy.

## WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN GETTING STARTED?

We know that it takes a careful and thoughtful process to start a new lay team ministry. Therefore, we offer a three-step process to start an effective team ministry to address the needs of the whole congregation.

To begin this congregational ministry we recommend:

1. **Build Congregational Support** - Order a Call to Action Kit to build support for this ministry early. Use the *Healing Places* book, *Faith Partners Journal*, video, step-by-step guide, and consultation services to introduce this ministry to clergy, potential team leaders and congregational leadership. Readiness and support are critical to success.
2. **Equip the Leadership** - Attend the six-hour Leadership Training for clergy, staff, and lay members. This day covers the role of the faith community in awareness, education, and support activities; important tips for clergy and team facilitators in initiating a team ministry; potential barriers to the ministry; and steps, tools, and strategies to assure success including on-going consultation.
3. **Develop the Ministry** – After Leadership Training, send a team of 3-10 team members to the two day Team Training, usually scheduled 3-4 months after Leadership Training, giving time to assess the needs of the congregation, identify opportunities for education and recruit team members. Team Training addresses specific prevention and recovery strategies, team functioning, connection to community resources, and plan of action.

## WHAT RESOURCES ARE NEEDED FROM THE CONGREGATION?

A congregational alcohol and other drug team ministry is carried out through prevention, early intervention, referral assistance, and recovery support. Teams will need the same communication system as other congregational programs: bulletin board, literature rack, library space, worship bulletin, newsletter space, and meeting space. This is not an expensive ministry. It requires the efforts of committed laity along with minimal costs for printing or purchase of educational materials. Many free or low cost resources – brochures, videos, and speakers – are available through community agencies.

## **HOW DOES A TEAM HELP THE CONGREGATION?**

A team ministry equips youth and adults with the information, skills, and support they need to avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse and to ask for help when there is a problem in the family. Effective ministries of prevention in the congregation combine the best science-based research practices with the strength of personal and corporate religious faith. Ministries of recovery put a “face” on addiction, reduce stigma and shame, and offer hope through stories of healing and support for recovery.

## **WHAT CAN A CONGREGATION DO THAT RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUPS DON'T ALREADY DO?**

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and other Twelve Step groups play a critical role in helping people recover from addictions. Their steps toward spiritual healing and growth are compatible with most religious teaching, yet they are not a substitute for congregational life, which includes worship and religious education. The founders of AA urged their members to attend both AA meetings and the congregation of their choice. The alcohol and other drug team ministry in a congregation “builds bridges” to persons in recovery as well as to professional counselors and agencies. The process of recovery from addictions takes time and multiple resources.

## **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE FAITH COMMUNITY TO DO PREVENTION?**

To be totally effective, prevention must be done in every segment of society. The most powerful influence in a child's life is the parent, so education must include adults. Research has shown that certain faith practices help decrease at-risk behaviors. Regular worship, youth programs, the parents' religiousness, prayer, and certain beliefs have a positive impact. Finally, congregations provide an intergenerational setting offering many opportunities for education, prevention activities, and support for children, youth and adults moving through life transitions.

## **WHERE ARE CONGREGATIONS CURRENTLY DOING THE FAITH PARTNERS TEAM MINISTRY?**

There are several strong efforts going on in congregations across the country - Minnesota; Ohio; Oklahoma; Texas; – just to name a few. New efforts have begun in Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. Several strong efforts are going on in Protestant and Roman Catholic congregations. Jewish and Muslim leaders are working to adapt this model to their faith traditions. To begin this in your congregation, contact the Rush Center at 1-888-451-9527

## **WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE RUSH CENTER?**

The Rush Center provides each Faith Partners team useful tools and strategies, educational materials, training and consultation for a team ministry that meets the needs of the whole congregation. These valuable resources, developed over years with many teams, are made available through fees and contracted services. The Rush Center provides the materials, tools, training and consultation, to initiate and sustain the team ministry. Area Coordination is encouraged and supported to help provide networking opportunities and connect teams to community resources.