Archdiocese of Boston

PARISH VISITORS TO THE SICK & HOMEBOUND

STEPS TO START & MAINTAIN A PROGRAM

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE MINISTRY

- Explore the theological/faith framework, grounded in Jesus’ healing ministry
- Inquire as to what other parishes are doing
- Examine how/why this fits into the context of parish life

STEP 2: IDENTIFY PERSONS TO BE VISITED

- Identify frail and homebound elderly
- Locate chronically ill and disabled
- Establish procedures for identifying parishioners recently released from hospitals as well as for those living in nursing homes and other health care facilities
- Work with Parish Nurses and local agencies where indicated/possible
- Determine any special needs of persons identified for visitation

STEP 3: RECRUIT, SELECT & PLACE VOLUNTEERS

- Develop a recruiting strategy:
  - parish bulletin
  - letter to indicated parishioners
  - presentation at Mass
  - personal invitation
  - word of mouth
  - other approaches
- Select/appoint a Coordinator for Sick and Homebound
- Interview and screen volunteers
- Determine if parish will submit CORI checks
- Consult Archdiocesan Office of Volunteer Resources as needed

STEP 4: PROVIDE FOR INITIAL TRAINING & ORIENTATION

- Participate in Archdiocesan training programs
- Consider participating in national training programs such as BeFriends or Stephen Ministries
- Develop a specific parish or cluster orientation program
- Provide additional training for Pastoral Visitors who will also be Eucharistic Ministers
- Commission Pastoral Visitors at a parish liturgy

* Indicates that supplemental material is included in the resource packet
**STEP 5: ESTABLISH PROCEDURES**

- Define procedures regarding emergencies, absences, reporting abuse, etc.
- Set special procedures for nursing home and hospital visits
- Establish record keeping procedures

**STEP 6: CONNECT WITH A VIABLE SUPPORT NETWORK**

- Coordinator participates in network groups and/or regional training and information sessions
- Coordinator provides opportunities for support
- Volunteers regularly participate in parish and/or regional support groups

**STEP 7: PROVIDE FOR ON-GOING TRAINING & FORMATION**

- Coordinator provides information about seminars, videos, print materials, etc. for volunteers
- Coordinator identifies opportunities for spiritual renewal, theological reflection and retreats

**STEP 8: CARRY OUT MINISTRY REVIEWS**

- Determine schedule for yearly review with Pastoral Visitors
- Use standard evaluation instrument
- Use review time as an opportunity to thank, confirm and celebrate the contribution of the volunteer(s)

**STEP 9: ADMINISTER THE PASTORAL VISITORS PROGRAM**

- Determine reporting structure: relationship to pastor, pastoral staff, parish council, health ministry, etc.
- Integrate Parish Visitors (structurally, organizationally) with other parish ministries
- Familiarize volunteers with local community resources, agencies and materials
- Provide a parish resource space for this ministry if available
- Set up office as appropriate: space, filing (secured, centralized), budget, phone network

- Indicates that supplemental material is included in the resource packet
Title: Parish Pastoral Visitor To The Sick and Homebound

Objective: To serve as a vital pastoral connection between the parish community and the sick and the homebound.

Duties and Responsibilities:
*Complete initial training program and take part in on-going formation.
*Regularly visit with the sick and homebound of the parish.
*Offer Eucharist and prayer where appropriate.
*Create a sense of presence through listening and drawing out the story of the person.
*Set limits and avoid problem solving.
*Observe the physical surroundings and the emotional and spiritual needs of the person.
*Follow established procedure for reporting concerns.
*Keep necessary visitation records.
*Attend regularly scheduled meetings.
*Honor and maintain confidentiality in all matters.

Qualifications:
*Person of faith and spirituality.
*People oriented.
*Empathic.
*Compassionate.
*Accepting of people as they are.
*Dependable.
*Emotionally stable.
*Comfortable with sick, elderly, and disabled.
*Responsible and accountable.

Supported By: Include the name of the coordinator of the Parish Pastoral Visitation Ministry.

Days and Time Needed: The commitment of time should appear here. It will vary according to the standards for the parish. An actual realistic time commitment should be stated. Don't cushion it - be up front about your expectations.

Length of Commitment: A statement of the minimum commitment set by your parish should appear here. An example -- A minimum commitment of three to six months with an extension if mutually agreeable. This sort of statement allows for an early review by the volunteer and the coordinator to see if all is well and the placement is right for the volunteer and the program.

Training: A statement like the following should be included here. Pre-training and on going opportunities for spiritual formation and continuing education will be provided. This lets potential volunteers know they won't visit before they are prepared. Suggestions for information to add to your training program can be found in the accompanying packet.
Archdiocese of Boston

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Title: Coordinator of Pastoral Visitors To The Sick and Homebound
Objective: To facilitate an effective pastoral ministry program for the sick and homebound of the parish community.

Duties and Responsibilities:
* Participate in training courses and on-going coordinator meetings at the local and regional or Archdiocesan levels.
* Meet regularly with the designated parish staff support person.
* Assess the needs of the sick and homebound.
* Recruit, screen, train, support, supervise, and evaluate Pastoral Visitors.
* Match appropriate Pastoral Visitor with the person to be visited.
* Provide opportunities for Pastoral Visitors to gather and reflect.
* Plan on-going recognition of Pastoral Visitors.
* Develop and maintain a record-keeping process that:
  - records pertinent information.
  - maintains a master list of volunteers, persons visited, and the visitation schedule.
  - establishes a referral process for Sacraments and other significant needs.
  - documents and tracks requests.
  - provides a reporting process for Pastoral Visitors.
* Act as a resource for training and enrichment opportunities.
* Be familiar with community support services.
* Honor and maintain confidentiality in all matters.

Qualifications:
* Person of faith and spirituality.
* Ability to collaborate with others.
* Meets responsibilities.
* Strong organizational and administrative skills.
* Empathic.
* Compassionate.
* Accepting of people as they are.
* Emotionally stable.
* Comfortable with sick, elderly, and disabled.
* Willing to learn new skills.

Supported By: Insert the name of the specific person to whom the coordinator will be accountable. Ideally, it would be the pastor or another staff member.

Days and Time Needed: The commitment of time should appear here. Don’t cushion it—be up front and realistic about your expectations.

Length of Commitment: One year is recommended with an extension if mutually agreeable.

Training: The coordinator will take part in the same training as Pastoral Visitors. In addition, the coordinator will receive orientation from the pastor and parish staff about the expectations for the Pastoral Visitation Program.
SUGGESTED WAYS TO INFORM THE PARISH COMMUNITY ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF PASTORAL VISITATION TO THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND

- Place frequent notices in the church bulletin.
- Make periodic pulpit announcements.
- Publish an information article in the parish newsletter.
- Submit an article for publication in the local newspaper.
- Take part in a program on the local cable station.
- Feature individual visitors and their experiences in parish newsletter or through witness talks.
- Participate in the parish Ministry Fair.
- Distribute handouts that inform parishioners about Visitation Ministry.
- Commission Pastoral Visitors at a parish Liturgy.
- Speak about the Ministry to various groups in the parish. (Members may also be able to identify folks to visit.)

SUGGESTED WAYS TO IDENTIFY THE SICK AND THE HOMEBOUND

- Use parish communication resources:
  - bulletin notices
  - pulpit
  - newsletter
- Urge people to contact the Coordinator of Pastoral Visitation To The Sick and Homebound with concerns about family members or neighbors in need of outreach.
- Check and update the parish census file.
- Collaborate with the local Council on Aging, Elder Services, Visiting Nurse Association, Meals on Wheels, and other agencies that serve the elder population.
- Connect with the administration at local nursing homes and assisted living facilities.
- Contact local hospital social workers/discharge planners/chaplains.
- Communicate with other faith communities in the area.
- Provide a place where friends and family of the homebound can leave the name, address, etc. of those to be visited.
- Distribute information cards or simple brochures about the Ministry to the various welfare agencies and institutions in the area.
- Communicate with the membership of parish organizations.
- List on the parish web page if available.
WAYS TO INVITE VOLUNTEERS
TO CONSIDER VISITATION MINISTRY

- Make announcements following Mass as well as at parish group meetings.
- Use bulletin announcements and parish bulletin inserts or newsletters.
- Consider personal invitations by the pastoral staff or other visitation volunteers as a particularly effective means of calling new volunteers.
- Schedule parish ministry "Fairs" to promote all volunteer opportunities.

Sample bulletin notices (to be adapted)

Pastoral visitation involves visiting "shut-in" parishioners who are unable to come to church. These parishioners are in private homes, elderly housing and nursing homes.

The Pastoral Visitors spend approximately one to two hours a month (or week if available) bringing the Lord's spiritual and healing comfort through their presence and by the Eucharist. As visitors spend time with the people they visit, they also receive personal spiritual enrichment. The pastor will meet with those who are not presently Eucharistic Ministers to discern their call.

Should you have a loved one or neighbor who might like to be visited by a Pastoral Visitor or if you feel you might be called to this ministry, please call ________.

(Parish) hopes to expand its visitation ministry to the Catholic residents of ___________ (name of nursing home or other facility). These men and women are now members of the parish community and we seek to provide a more comprehensive pastoral presence. Opportunities exist to serve as Friendly Visitors, Eucharistic Ministers or to lead groups such as Rosary, Bible Study or Spiritual Reflection. Please contact ________ to be part of this effort ____________ (phone number).
Parish Bulletin Insert or Letter

The concern that Christ showed for the bodily and spiritual welfare of those who are ill is continued by the Church in its ministry to the sick. This ministry is the common responsibility of all Christians, who should visit the sick, remember them in prayer, and celebrate the sacraments with them.

Pastoral Care of the Sick

Dear Friends and Parishioners,

I ask you to prayerfully reflect on the above passage. As baptized Christians, all of us are called by the Lord to various ministries within the Church.

God may be calling you to serve God's people as a Pastoral Visitor to the Sick and Homebound. Homebound Ministry involves visiting people in their homes and in nursing homes who are unable to attend church. There is a minimum commitment of one to two hours monthly.

You will receive training in visitation. Additional training will be provided to those whom I call from the community to be Extraordinary Ministers of Communion to the Sick. You will receive support throughout the year through occasional gatherings to share prayer and to reflect upon the ministry.

As a Pastoral Visitor, you will bring the spiritual and healing comfort of the Lord in the time that you spend with the people whom you visit. Through these visits, you will also receive personal spiritual enrichment.

I ask you to please pray for this ministry. If you feel that you might be called to it or would like additional information, please fill in the bottom part of this letter and mail it to our Coordinator of Pastoral Visitation or call ________. Through prayerful consideration of this request, I know that the Holy Spirit will guide you and bless you. Let us pray for one another.

Sincerely yours, signed by the Pastor

NAME:  
ADDRESS:  
DAYTIME PHONE:  
RETURN TO:  
NIGHT TIME PHONE:
Archdiocese of Boston

Parish Pastoral Visitor To The Sick And Homebound

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

First Name __________________________ Last Name __________________________ MI ________

Street Address __________________________

City __________________________ State ________ Zip Code __________________________

Telephone: Home __________________________ Work __________________________ E-mail __________________________

In an emergency notify __________________________ Relationship __________________________ Telephone __________________________

*Why do you want to volunteer in this ministry? __________________________

*Are there skills you have or previous experiences that you think might contribute to your work in this ministry?

Do you speak any language other than English? ________ What language? __________________________

Availability? __________________________

Additional Comments __________________________

The coordinator should talk to the candidate using the application information, the * questions, the interview guide questions, and the role description as the basis for the discussion. Be sure to ask if they have an interest in becoming a Eucharistic Minister in which case the volunteer's name would be submitted to the pastor for consideration in the process used for calling Eucharistic Ministers forth from the community. Discuss availability and give an overview of the program. Also, be sure you give the volunteer a copy of the role description.
For Office Use Only

Particular gifts:

Previous experiences:

Uncertainties/hesitations:

Willing to participate in training:

Particular learnings desired:

Willing to participate in on-going reflection and support group:

Visitation preferences:

_____homebound
_____nursing home
_____male
_____female
_____disabled

Volunteer's hopes:
Archdiocese of Boston

Interview Guide Questions

The information gathered from the following questions will help you decide if the potential volunteer is a good match for service in the ministry of pastoral visitation. There is a place on the back of the application to record the volunteer's responses. Be prudent in how you note the volunteer's answers - remember, all records are public information.

After the discussion with the potential volunteer, if you have serious concerns or reservations about the person as an appropriate visitor, please consult the pastoral staff.

1. What particular gifts do you bring to this ministry?

2. What previous experiences have you had that you think might contribute to your work in this ministry?

3. What uncertainties and hesitations do you have about visiting the sick and homebound?

4. Are you willing to participate in training?

5. Are there particular learnings you would like to experience to prepare you to serve in this ministry?

6. Would you be willing to participate in on-going ministry reflection/support groups?

7. What are your preferences regarding visitation?
   - [ ] homebound
   - [ ] nursing home
   - [ ] male
   - [ ] female
   - [ ] disabled

8. What would be your hopes for yourself as you serve in this ministry during the upcoming year?
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PASTORAL VISITOR/EUCARISTIC MINISTER
CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

As a volunteer Pastoral Visitor, I agree to honor and maintain confidentiality in all matters. I may only share information necessary to protect the well-being of the person visited with appropriate persons. Other information may be shared as permission is given by the individual visited.

I have been instructed that I must not share personal information about the visitee in casual conversation with other volunteers, parishioners, friends or family. I have read and understand the above statement.

__________________________________________  __________
Eucharistic Minister/Pastoral Visitor                  Date
Archdiocese of Boston
Parish Pastoral Visitor To The Sick And Homebound

VISITOR EVALUATION
(for use after the first six-months and annually thereafter)

Name __________________________________________ Date __________________________________________

Person(s) Visited/Nursing Home Visited
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Length of time serving in ministry
_____________________________________________________________________________________

1. In what ways is serving as a pastoral visitor a meaningful and life giving experience for you?
   __________________________________________________________________________________

2. Are there aspects of this ministry that frustrate or discourage you?
   __________________________________________________________________________________

3. What gifts and skills are you developing in this ministry?
   __________________________________________________________________________________

4. Is the support, on-going formation, and continuing education you receive sufficient?
   __________________________________________________________________________________

5. Do you have recommendations that would enhance the support process and help to make the
   program more effective?
   __________________________________________________________________________________

6. What further reflections on your ministry experience would you like to share?
   __________________________________________________________________________________

This evaluation, once completed, would be the basis of a conversation between the visitor and the
coordinator of the ministry.
Archdiocese of Boston

VISITOR EXIT INTERVIEW
(for use when ministry assignment is completed)

Name_________________________________ Date ______________________________

Person(s) Visited/Nursing Home Visited_____________________________________

Length of time serving in ministry

____________________________________

1. How did the initial training you received help prepare you to serve in this ministry?

2. How was the support, on-going formation, and continuing education helpful to you as you served in this ministry?

3. What recommendations do you have that would enhance the formation process and help to make the program more effective?

4. What recommendations do you have for continued service for the person(s) you have been visiting?

Please use the reverse side of this sheet to share further reflections on your ministry experience.

*Once completed, these questions would be the basis for an exit interview conversation between the visitor and the coordinator of the ministry.*
Archdiocese of Boston

Parish Pastoral Visitor To The Sick And Homebound

Supervision is the challenging and interactive process of helping volunteers function at their best. As the person who supports volunteers serving as visitors to the sick and homebound, your role includes helping the volunteer to be successful and responsible in their ministry. Involvement in the ministry should bring the volunteer closer to God and the parish community and enable them to fulfill their commitment to serve in a meaningful way.

HOW TO ENABLE VOLUNTEERS TO SUCCEED

As the coordinator:

- tell the volunteer how the ministry supports the mission of the parish and the Church.
- know the volunteers and understand their motivation for volunteering.
- respect the volunteer's time.
- maintain each volunteer's confidentiality.
- be available to the volunteer.
- provide encouragement, guidance, and direction.
- have patience, tolerance, and a sense of humor.
- appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of the volunteers.
- clearly state expectations.
- thoroughly explain procedures and standards.
- develop a sense of equal status by involving the volunteer in decision making.
- communicate openly and frequently.
- resolve conflicts in a timely fashion.
- show genuine appreciation - say thank you.
- evaluate and review with the volunteer on a regular schedule.
- give and receive feedback.
Archdiocese of Boston

Parish Pastoral Visitor To The Sick And Homebound

RECORD KEEPING SUGGESTIONS

*Remember, any records are public information. Please use appropriate language when recording information.*

General Data Base Information About The Person Visited
(coordinator inputs information after they have made initial visit to the homebound person)

- Name:
- Address:
- City, State, and Zip Code:
- Telephone:
- Next of Kin (Name and Relationship):
- Telephone:
- Nursing Home (if applicable):
- Zone (if those to be visited are clustered by street):
- Reason for being homebound:
- Name of Pastoral Visitor visiting regularly:
- Comments:
- Date of Death (if applicable) or Termination of Service:

Record Keeping for Pastoral Visitor's Use

It is suggested that the Pastoral Visitor keep a journal where, after each visit, the following information is recorded:

- How the visitee seemed physically, emotionally, etc.
- Anything that must be "followed-up" at the next visit.
- Request for a visit by a priest. *Note date and name of priest you contacted and date the visit was made.*
- Any concerns you need to discuss with the coordinator. *Note date of contact with coordinator.*

Coordinator's Summary Sheet

Record the following information about each person visited:

- Name of Person Visited:
- Visitor:
- Frequency of Visitation:
- Period of Visitation:

Please write a brief paragraph describing the person (include medical, emotional, and social information).

*This summary information would be a useful reference if a visitor goes on vacation or takes a leave from the ministry. It could easily be passed on to another volunteer assigned to visit the homebound person.*