

# Community Parish Nurse Program



## Purpose of the Program

The Community Parish Nurse Program was established in 1997 by The Carle Foundation to draw a closer link between the church and healthcare communities. Through the training of parish nurses, the community addresses both the physical and spiritual needs of the population served. The link returns the church to its central place in the community as healer of body, mind and spirit.

The Community Parish Nurse Program offers a basic preparation course based on a national curriculum for this specialty in nursing. Participants have a choice of receiving contact hours or taking the course for credit through the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) College of Nursing program.

## Role of the Parish Nurse in a Church Setting

The parish nurse is a professional response to the health care crisis in the country. By providing a congregationally-based source of primary preventative and restorative care, the parish nurse ministers holistically to individuals and families to promote wellness of body, mind and spirit.

The concept of parish nursing was introduced by Reverend Granger Westberg in 1984. His goal was to provide non-physical nursing services to church congregations. Parish nurses are not direct service providers; rather they are stewards of the congregation's health. This specialty in nursing is also referred to as Faith Community Nursing (FCN) and is recognized by the American Nurses Association (ANA) with formal scope and standards.

Faith Community Nurses may serve as members of the church staff and become a link between the assessed needs of individuals and congregations and the healthcare delivery systems in the community. The decision to add a parish nurse is made and supported by both the pastor and the congregational governing board and is often guided by a health and/or wellness committee within the church structure.

## The roles of the parish nurse include:

- **Integrator of Faith and Health** – help the congregants take their tenets of faith and bind them to concepts of health and wholeness.
- **Health Educator** – facilitate educational programs to the congregation such as health screenings, illness prevention and wellness promotion.
- **Health Counselor** – provide individual health counseling services in the home, assisted living or long-term care facility.
- **"Navigator"** – assist the congregation members in finding their way through healthcare systems.
- **Referral Agent** – make formal or informal referrals within the congregation to community services or to healthcare services.

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## Program Philosophy

Parish nursing embraces the spiritual dimension of the nursing practice in addition to the physical, psychological and social dimensions.

The parish nurse collaborates with the pastoral staff and health and wellness committees in congregations. Partnerships are formed with other community health resources and creative responses to health concerns are addressed.

Parish nursing services are designed to involve individuals, families and congregations as active partners in their personal health. Through this involvement, nurses help empower communities and foster an environment of understanding and support.

The parish nurse understands health to be a dynamic process. They promote the integration of physical, emotional and spiritual health in the individual.

## Program Goals

- Operate a resource center for parish nurses and conduct periodic continuing education and sharing of information.
- Promote the understanding and integration of body, mind and spirit in the health process.
- Publish needed articles and research to validate parish nursing as supportive in the continuum of health care.
- Statistical data gathering of health assessment information.
- Newsletter distributed 10 times/year
- Annual retreat for parish nurses

## Sponsorship

The Community Parish Nurse Program is an initiative funded by Carle to improve the health and well-being of the communities served by the Carle organizations.

## For More Information:

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This program welcomes nurses from all faith groups