

# ***In the beginning; suggestions and resources regarding the ministry of Parish Nursing, Diocese of Toronto***

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## **Preamble:**

Parish nursing is a health and healing ministry of faith communities which emphasizes the wholeness of body, mind and spirit. Rooted in the vision of Christ as Healer, this ministry grows out of the belief that all faith communities are places of health and healing and have a role in promoting wholeness through the integration of faith and health.

A parish nurse is a registered nurse with specialized knowledge, who is called to ministry and affirmed by a faith community to promote health, healing and wholeness within a congregation. Parish nurses demonstrate competence in a defined set of attitudes, knowledge and skills which are incorporated in the Standards of Practice and Core Competencies of The Canadian Association for Parish Nursing Ministry (CAPNM).

The informal Parish Nurse Network of the Diocese of Toronto enables all parish nurses working in the Diocese to link and meet for fellowship, education, sharing, advocacy and ministry development. The Parish Nurse Network also provides information and education for clergy, chaplains, deacons and those in lay ministries who are seeking to establish such a ministry within their congregation or who simply wish to learn about parish nursing ministry.

Parish nursing is a unique ministry which is relatively new to the Anglican Church and so must be established with care and consideration. This document hopes to assist congregations in the discernment required to initiate and formulate a parish nursing ministry.

## **How a Congregation Benefits from a Parish Nurse Ministry:**

- All faith traditions have a mission to ‘care for’ and ‘heal the sick’ – A parish nurse is an extension of that mission and works with the ministerial team to help those hurting with not only spiritual pain but with physical pain.
- The mission of the church is to care for all whom it encounters. Generally, a parish nurse’s clientele consists of those who are members of a congregation. However, a parish nurse ministry often extends into the community. The congregation, Incumbent and parish nurse must come to a common understanding of who constitutes the client base of a parish nurse ministry. Time, energy and resources will significantly define the client base. The nurse will assess the client to see what ministries of the church and/or community may be helpful to the needs of the member and his/her family. The goal is to achieve better health and better coping with life’s challenges and transitions.
- The church is a place of sanctuary. Members may feel uncomfortable going to the doctor or uncertain that their concern is worthy of sharing. A health ministry gives structure to the church community’s caring and concern which helps members to stay connected.
- Much of the clergy’s ministry is health related – Many contacts with the homebound, hospitalized, institutionalized, and other members include physical issues. A parish nurse with his/her nursing expertise can assist the clergy to care for these members.
- With increasing demands on our health care system, there are gaps in care and churches can help support those who are unable, or are face challenges accessing health care.
- The parish nurse can complement pastoral care with visitation, training volunteers, coordinating lay ministry and assessing members’ needs.

- In response to identified needs, the parish nurse can provide education, counselling, and small group programming e.g. coping with mental illness, bereavement, support for caregivers. Parish nurse can also facilitate accessing community resources on topics like end of life, dementia.
- Clergy and staff need advocates too – A parish nurse often monitors their health and well-being which keeps them healthier and better able to serve the church community.

**There are resources available to congregations who wish to learn more about this ministry.**

**They are:**

- The Parish Nursing Interest Group (PNIG) of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO)
  - <http://rnao.ca/connect/interest-groups/pnig>
  - [www.pnig.rnao.ca](http://www.pnig.rnao.ca)
- The Canadian Association for Parish Nursing Ministry
  - <http://www.capnm.ca/>
- Interchurch Health Ministries
  - <http://www.ichm.ca/>
- Foundations in Parish Nursing
  - <http://www.spicf.ca>
- The International Parish Nurse Resource Centre
  - <http://www.parishnurses.org/>
- A Guide to the Personal Health Protection Act, December 2004, <https://www.ipc.on.ca/images/Resources/hguide-e.pdf>
- Facts Sheets, Secure Destruction of Personal Information, Safeguarding Personal Health Information, Health Information Custodians Working for Non-Health Information Custodians, 2005 - facts sheets are published by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario available at [www.ipc.on.ca](http://www.ipc.on.ca)

**Who can be a parish nurse?**

- A nurse who practices according to the Scope and Standards of Practice of CAPNM, the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), and adheres to the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) Code of Ethic for Registered Nurses
- A registered nurse who practices holistic health by using his/her nursing knowledge and professionalism, centring on the spiritual dimension of caring.
- A licensed professional with knowledge of the health care field and specialized knowledge of the spiritual beliefs and practices of the faith community.
- A member of the parish ministry team and who collaborates with other church leaders and ministries

**The requirements for a nurse in this specialty practice includes the following:**

- Must be a registered nurse with a current license in the province of Ontario
- Preferably has a baccalaureate degree
- Has completed the parish nurse course material necessary to prepare for this specialty and understand the scope of practice of the parish nursing role.
- Has several years nursing experience prior to becoming a parish nurse.
- Reflects personal spiritual maturity in her practice.

## **Liability Insurance**

- Registered nurses practicing in Ontario must carry personal liability insurance which can be obtained through RNAO or directly from Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS)
- It is advisable for the church to carry liability insurance

## **Remuneration:**

Most parish nurses receive a stipend from the congregation as compensation for their expertise in parish nurse ministry. Stipends can be determined through consultations with other congregations who support parish nurse ministries and what the congregation itself can afford.

*Please note: The qualifications and requirements regarding parish nurse ministries as noted above are required whether the position of a parish nurse is paid or volunteered.*

## **Significant areas to consider in beginning a parish nursing ministry.**

- **Contract, Letter of Agreement or job description:**  
A comprehensive job description, contract or letter of agreement which establishes expectations of the congregation and to whom the parish nurse is accountable in its structure is absolutely vital. The job description should also outline a probationary period, performance review and scope of ministry, and reporting requirement of activities. The nature of position, staff or contract, salaried or volunteer should be determined. Compensation can be hourly or otherwise, and be based on market rate for RN, and/or parish nurses.
- **Scope of ministry:**  
Appropriate boundaries around the ministry of parish nursing need to be understood by the parish nurse, administration, and congregation, otherwise the demands and needs of this ministry may very soon exceed the resources of the nurse. The scope of practice can set priorities and limits as to services provided and to whom the ministry is available.
- **Health Council or Committee:**  
The formation of a Health Council or Committee is essential for supporting and advising the parish nurse and church's ministry. Members of this committee should be representative members of the congregation bringing different perspectives. Especially when starting a new program, they can educate the congregation about the goals of the program and its importance.
- **Personal Health Information, Confidentiality and Documentation:**  
Essential to all parish nurse ministries is the appropriate and secure gathering and maintenance of client/patient/parishioner information. The practice standards of the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) mandate that *"Nurses have ethical and legal responsibilities to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of client health information while providing care."*

Parish nurses and congregations are guided by the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA), 2004, the CNO Practice Standard: Confidentiality and Privacy of Personal Health Information, 2009, and guidelines regarding consent as outlined by the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

Important considerations include:

- While it is the responsibility of the parish nurse to determine the type and extent of personal health information gathered, methodologies of obtaining informed consent, the broad parameters of information gathered and how records are maintained and secured should be discussed with the parish ensuring all parties involved in this ministry have a shared awareness of processes used.
- Processes of appropriate supervision, accountability, appropriate and timely information sharing and statistical reporting between the parish nurse and the incumbent.
- How parish ministries will be concluded and where client records are kept after the conclusion or termination of a parish nurse ministry.

### **Summary**

This brief introduction only begins to identify the building stones necessary for effective parish nurse ministry. Most importantly, if a parish wishes to explore the opportunities and challenges of parish nursing, the most effective first step would be contacting a parish nurse who can assist a parish in exploring the merits of such a ministry. The office of the Coordinator of Chaplaincy Services can facilitate such a process.

For resources, examples of documentation and assistance please contact:

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