

Understanding and responding to the opioid crisis in your parish:

Plus, suggested next steps for pastors, clergy and other parish leaders

Introduction:

The diocesan Opioid Task Force was formed by Bishop Persico in October of 2017 to put relevant and useful pastoral resources into the hands of pastors and others to address some of the suffering that is occurring in parishes and communities. Bishop Persico said, *“We need to provide a pastoral response to those overwhelmed by the effects of addiction and accompany families in their suffering. We need to help them understand that God has not abandoned them or their loved ones; that he is rich in mercy and is with us to assist us in the darkness, despite any grief or sorrow they may have caused, or that they may be feeling.”*

Recommended next steps for priests

The task force recommends, first, that pastors review the resources made available on the [diocesan opioid web page](#).

The task force also recommends that priests:

- Form an action team with members of their pastoral staff or trusted parish advisors.
- Consider hosting an information and discussion session with the parish action team.

Please see suggested agenda on following page

Suggested Agenda for Parish Action Team Meeting:

A. Review your county's data found on the [PA Department of Health website](#)

- a. Discuss your findings w/ questions to ponder:
 - i. How has this crisis impacted our parish and/or local community?
 - ii. How should we respond as a parish family to this epidemic?
- b. Review available resources found on website and discuss.
 - i. Do we have an understanding of our individual role?
- *Pastor can clarify if necessary*
 - ii. Do I know how and when to make a referral?
 - iii. What additional questions do we have about this?

B. Discuss pastoral resources made available from diocese

ask: [The Office for Divine Worship](#) which of these resources are we willing and able to utilize in our parish?

- a. Prayer booklet & Bishop's letter (how and when to distribute)
- b. Intercessory prayers for liturgies
- c. Prayer services (review options in resource packet)
 - i. Parish-specific option
 - ii. Ecumenical/community-specific options
- d. Prayer card: "prayer for help"

C. Support Groups available for persons in recovery or families in need

*ask: are we interested in more information about these groups? Are we willing to consider hosting a support group at our parish? Are we willing to provide info on these groups in our bulletins, newsletters, or websites?

- a. [Celebrate Recovery](#)
- b. [Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- c. [Narcotics Anonymous](#)
- d. [Six Steps to SANITY* \(a family-centered support group\)](#)

D. Conclude the meeting by inviting comments, questions by those in attendance. Review realistic next steps. Close with prayer for persons with addictions and their families. Set next meeting date, if applicable.