Understanding and Responding to the Opioid Crisis in your Parish:

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. As Bishop Persico said at the recent Opioid in-service: “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 website: [www.erieRCD.org](http://www.erieRCD.org).

*note: additional resources, including prayers and video of the opioid in-service will be available for on-line viewing in April, 2018.

The Task Force also recommends that priests:

- Review the video from the diocesan in-service from 2/22/18.
- Discuss their findings with other priests or deacons in their parish.
- Form an action team with members of their pastoral staff or trusted parish advisors.
- Consider hosting an information & discussion session with the parish action team.

*Please see suggested agenda on following page*
Suggested Agenda for Parish Action Team Meeting:

A. Review the data found on website from your county.
   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*?

*Catholic Charities will answer questions if needed

B. Discuss pastoral resources made available from diocese
   *ask: 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”

*Office of Worship available for guidance

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?
      b. AA: https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/find-aa-resources
      c. NA: https://www.na.org/
      d. Six Steps to SANITY* (a family-centered support group)

*visit diocesan website for additional information (April)

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.