



Archdiocese of Indianapolis - Catholic Charities
Introduction to
Parish Social Ministry

VIII. How to Start a PSM Team from Scratch

If your parish is starting fresh or from scratch in starting an social outreach program, below are some steps to assist you along the way. (**)

***** Important!!** Before the official process of introducing PSM to the parish, it is absolutely key that the Pastor or PLC is on board with moving forward in establishing a PSM team within the parish. Invite the pastor or PLC to be a part of the process, as much as their time permits. Reassure them that part of the PSM process is having a well-established communication system in place between the PSM Team, the pastor/ PLC, and the parish council. **When speaking to the parish priest and council, speak to the purpose of PSM and how it reinforces other facets of parish life.**

To Begin:

- Find 3-5 parishioners who have a similar desire to establish a PSM Team. Research the process. Don't hesitate to reach out to the Archdiocesan Social Concerns office for resources to begin the process.
- READ the USCCB document, *Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish* (visit www.usccb.org and search Communities of Salt and Light for a downloadable version)
- Meet and discuss what model of PSM would work best for your parish setting. If you are a small parish and wonder if your parish is large enough to sustain a PSM Team, explore the option of teaming up or pairing up with another parish within your area.
- Discuss what PSM IS and IS NOT. Clarify PSM Team structure and purpose.
- Reach out to the Archdiocesan Director of Social Concerns to inform them that your parish is exploring a PSM Team. The Director of Social Concerns will provide you with a Parish Assessment to help you determine what are your parish strengths and possible areas of growth.
- Invite/ recruit additional parishioners to be members of the PSM Team. A PSM Team has an average of 8 to 12 members.
- Develop a PSM Mission Statement. The mission statement should only be a one or two sentences that reflect "who we are," "what we do," "what we stand for," and "why we do it."
- Ongoing Spiritual Formation of the PSM Team is critical to the success and sustainability of the team. Each member must have a clear understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and its relevance to their faith journey.
- Develop an Annual Plan or objectives for the year. Have an evaluation process in place to measure what has worked, what has not worked or what could have been done differently.

Importance of a Mission Statement

Parish Social Ministry Teams should have a mission statement. A mission statement briefly communicates the essence of the PSM Team to the parish community. A good starting point is to read the mission statement of your parish. A mission statement should be no more than 1 to 2 sentences and state: who we are, what we do, what we stand for, and why we do it.

Importance of a Chairperson

Meetings tend to go more smoothly if there is a designated Chairperson. But their job is more than just calling the meeting to order. Please keep in mind; it is best if a Chairperson is not heading a PSM sub-committee while acting as the Chairperson.

Below is a sample job description for a Chairperson.

- To build relationships with the pastor and key leaders of the parish. Ex: parish council, school principal, parish staff, diocesan social concerns office, ecumenical connections.
- To recruit more leaders.
- To be responsible for assisting the sub-committees to work together and create a vision for the PSM Team and that all people of the parish are included, especially the easily overlooked parish population. Ex: elderly, homebound, young families, different ethnicities/minorities, new converts
- To Help create a paper trail so there is accountability.

Importance of an Annual Plan

An Annual Plan will provide the PSM Team with focus and objectives for the year. That doesn't mean that items can not be added to the annual plan as new issues or emergencies (humanitarian or natural) take place within the local communities or around the world.

An Annual Plan will also help keep the PSM Team keep in mind important liturgical events, or days/months where the Catholic Church has designated as a special time to focus on a social issue.

Ex: January is national Poverty Month.
February 8th is the Feast Day for St. Josephine Bakhita, patron saint of human trafficking victims.
Lent there is a focus on the global church through the CRS Rice Bowl.
June is Refugee Month.
October is Respect Life Month.
November is the national Catholic Campaign for Human Development 2nd collection.