



Faith Community Health

Helping people reach optimal health by integrating faith communities with healthcare



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What is Faith Community Health?

Faith Community Health is a branch of the Faith in Action Initiatives through the Office of Mission and Ministry at Baylor Scott & White Health (BSWH).

Our Mission

Our program empowers local faith communities to foster health and wellness. By providing more effective patient navigation, education and support, we hope to build healthier communities. We are committed to serving people of all faiths and those of none—regardless of race, religion or creed.

How can this benefit your faith community?

Congregational wellness: Encourage the faith community toward restoration of the body, mind and spirit rather than focusing on the absence of disease alone. Efforts can be tailored for individual needs or desires of the faith community.

Community engagement: Engage the surrounding community by providing health ministry activities, assisting with resource navigation and/or providing qualified patients with a trained faith community caregiver.

A two-pronged approach to health

Our program works on two fronts:

- Empower faith communities to improve the health of their own congregation and the surrounding community through health ministries
- Train congregational members to be faith community caregiver volunteers who provide a ministry of presence and resource connection to isolated patients

Health ministry

Faith Community Health works by empowering faith communities to:

- Identify a Faith Community Health liaison or health ministry leader
- Develop a health ministry team that takes the lead in assessing needs and offering various levels of involvement for the congregation and the surrounding community

Faith community caregivers

These volunteers come with passion and compassion, and we provide structure and tools to assist them in their calling. Volunteers act as a ministry of presence and spend one hour per week with lonely and isolated patients. During these visits, volunteers provide social support, assist with resource connection and encourage adherence to medical plans.

Health ministry

What is a health ministry?

A health ministry is an organized effort within a faith community, beyond the scope of normal worship and fellowship gatherings, that actively promotes the health needs of the congregation and surrounding area.

Faith Community Health collaborates with congregations to bring awareness to assets and resources already available within the congregation and community. The goal of a health ministry is to develop opportunities that promote health using the identified assets and resources to improve health.

What does a health ministry look like?

A health ministry is usually composed of a health ministry leader and an organized team who help address the needs of the congregation.

Examples of health ministries can include but are not limited to:

- Movement classes
- Monthly health screenings
- Educational health fairs
- Cooking classes
- English as a second language (ESL) classes



What do faith community caregivers do?

- Make home visits to provide social and spiritual support (one hour per week)
- Provide occasional transportation to local medical appointments
- Serve as an advocate/health translator at appointments
- Locate needs within home environment
- Encourage patients to adhere to their medical plan of care, medication regimen and follow-up appointments

The four principles of Faith Community Health

Faith community caregivers provide a ministry of presence and act on four principles:

- **Right door:** Providing education for patients on the most appropriate healthcare treatment location
- **Right time:** Educating and equipping individuals with preventive information to help them recognize issues early
- **Ready to be treated:** Helping people prepare to share concerning symptoms, medication and home remedies with their healthcare provider
- **Reassured (not alone):** Treating people with compassionate care that eases fear and offers them a ministry of presence

What a faith community caregiver is:

- A compassionate caregiver who offers companionship to those suffering from loneliness for one hour per week
- A trained volunteer who looks for potential hazards in the home and assesses for enhancements that may improve quality of life

- A resource navigator who assesses the patients' needs and utilizes local congregations, as well as community resources, to meet those needs—from mowing the lawn to building a wheelchair ramp to laundry services and much more
- A health advocate who assists the patients in following their plan of care as prescribed by their healthcare professional

What a faith community caregiver is not:

- These volunteers are **not** home health providers and cannot do any medical assessments or interventions.
- If the patient has a constant transportation need or the only need is transportation, this is **not** the best fit.
- Volunteers can assist patients with light grocery shopping and occasional light meal preparation, but they are **not** a meal service and cannot provide cooking and cleaning on a regular basis.

Qualifying patient criteria

A person who exhibits one or more of the following is a candidate for this program:

- Lonely and/or isolated
- In need of social, emotional and/or spiritual support
- Needs support following plan of care from a non-medical perspective
- Undergoing a crisis individually or in his or her family
- Must desire a non-medical volunteer
- No behavioral issues

Faith community caregiver training

Why is faith community caregiver training important?

Faith community caregiver training provides congregations another opportunity for outreach to lonely and isolated community members. Faith Community Health provides structure and tools to assist volunteers in their calling to serve the community.

What does the training entail?

- Learning the four principles of Faith Community Health
- Communication and listening skills
- Boundaries
- How to have a productive and safe home visit
- Care cards (situation-specific reference cards)

How long is the training?

The training session is approximately two to three hours.

Faith Community Health in action

Saving lives through health ministries

Health ministries allow local faith communities to provide invaluable access to health education and screenings. At Meadowbrook Baptist in Central Texas, the health ministry team has been offering health screenings for over four years. The team is stationed in the foyer of the sanctuary and conducts blood glucose and blood pressure checks the second Sunday of each month.

Recently, one of the nurses identified a woman with an extremely elevated blood pressure and suggested that she go to the doctor immediately. The woman went to an urgent care center and was eventually sent to the emergency room at a local hospital. After further testing, it was found that she had a blockage of the renal arteries that was causing the elevated blood pressure.

A procedure called renal angioplasty was performed, and her blood pressure returned to normal. She is very grateful for the nurse, as well as the entire church health ministry team, who identified her elevated blood pressure. ▼



Through a Faith Community Health fair, a pastor in North Texas was made aware of the importance of prostate screening, and he encouraged his father to attend. There, the pastor's father was tested, and his results came back positive. Thankfully, it was detected and treated early, and he has been declared free of prostate cancer. Now, the pastor plans to take a group of his male church members to the health fair yearly. ▼

These stories, along with countless others, show the lifesaving efforts that health ministries can provide.



Providing a ministry of presence through faith community caregivers

When a patient in Central Texas named L.W. was first contacted on behalf of the program, he was told that a faith community caregiver could help him with connecting to the resources he needed to be healthy. L.W. was very interested, as he had been admitted to the hospital several times over the past year for out of control diabetes. L.W. occasionally needed a ride to the Veteran's Affairs (VA) Medical Center and various other medical appointments.

L.W. was connected to a faith community caregiver named Louis who began to drive him to his appointments. After several trips to the doctor, Louis discovered that L.W. was embarrassed over the loss of his teeth and encouraged him to utilize the VA's dental benefits. L.W. was unaware that he qualified for the benefits and revealed to Louis that he was unable to read the forms necessary to obtain them. Louis helped L.W. complete the forms and helped him receive the benefits he needed to confidently smile again.

Louis also helped L.W. get connected to the local bus route. A few weeks later, he called Louis and told him, "I got my teeth, and I got my ride. Go help someone else now!" Since L.W. was paired with a faith community caregiver and is now connected to the resources he needs, he has not returned to the hospital. ▼

A patient in North Texas was referred to Faith Community Health because she had no family in the area and lacked support. The senior assisted home that she lived in had planned events for resident interaction, but she never went to them. Her feelings of isolation had made it difficult to attend social events that were out of her comfort zone.

The faith community liaison and the assigned volunteer decided it would be beneficial for the volunteer to attend some of those events with the patient so she would feel more comfortable. By providing a volunteer who extended encouragement, we helped a patient get reconnected to the community that was already surrounding her. ▼



The one-on-one connections created by trained volunteers allow faith communities to impact the lives their neighbors for the better. Through volunteers like the ones in these stories, countless other faith communities have found a new way to minister to others.

Questions?

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