

Parish Nursing Fact Sheet

1. What is a parish nurse (faith community nurse)? A parish nurse (PN) is a registered nurse with a minimum of 2 years experience that works in a faith community to address health issues of its members as well as those in the broader community or neighborhood. The experience the nurse has gathered working in other medical areas / specialties aids the nurse with assessment of health status, health needs, and collaboration with health agencies. What makes this specialty different is the conscious partnering of health issues with the faith of the client and client's family. The core to this practice is the intentional care of the spirit of those the PN assists.



2. What does a parish nurse do? A parish nurse seeks to foster physical, emotional, spiritual, and social harmony leading to healthy and healing relationships with God, family, faith communities, culture and creation. They have several roles:

- **H** – Health advisor
- **E** – Educator on health issues
- **A** – Advocate/resource person
- **L** – Liaison to faith & community resources
- **T** – Teacher of volunteers & developer of support groups.
- **H** – Healer of body, mind, spirit, and community.

(Canadian Association for Parish Nursing Ministry – 2005)

3. Who can be a parish nurse? Registered nurses with a minimum of two years experience, a current license in the state where the faith community is located, and who have completed a parish nurse foundations course for this specialty practice, which is recognized by the American Nurses Association.
4. How did parish nursing start? The Rev. Dr. Granger Westberg began parish nursing in the mid-1980's in Chicago, as a reincarnation of the faith community nursing outreach done by religious orders, such as the "Parish Deaconesses" in Europe and America in the 1800's.

Earlier, Westberg had helped to launch several "Wholistic Health Centers" in local congregations to provide a team approach to both wellness and illness care in local congregations, using clergy, physicians, nurses, and social workers. Rev. Westberg observed that nurses provided a vital link between health systems and congregations. He urged his hospital to launch a program in area congregations to provide "parish nurses" who would reach out into the community to build bridges of healing and hope.

5. What about the name? In the traditional sense of the word, “parish” includes the whole neighborhood, so this specialty nurse practice derives its name from serving a congregation and the wider community. More generally it is known as faith community nursing with a set of scope and standards that state each faith community can use terminology that is congruent with that faith such as church nursing, congregational nursing, or other title.
6. Is this only available to Christian congregations? No – there are Jewish Congregational Nurses, Muslim Crescent Nurses, and registered nurses serving in similar capacities within other faith traditions as well.
7. What is the training for a parish nurse? There are several curricula, but most parish nurses have used the curriculum developed by a panel of nursing faculty which is offered in partnership with the International Parish Nurse Resource Center (IPNRC) at more than 130 nursing schools and health systems around the US and abroad.
8. Are there parish nurses in other states? There are parish nurses in all 50 states. Contact the IPNRC for locations and coordinators of programs.
9. How many parish nurses are there? There are approximately 15,000 parish nurses in the United States of which about 35% are compensated for their ministry.
10. Are there parish nurses in other countries? Parish nursing is growing rapidly around the world. Currently, there are parish nurses in Australia, the Bahamas, Canada, England, Ghana, India, Kenya, Korea, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Palestine, Pakistan, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Swaziland, Ukraine, Wales, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
11. How can one connect with other parish nurses? The International Parish Nurse Resource Center (IPNRC) connects with several hundred parish nurse faculty and coordinators, who work with thousands of parish nurses worldwide. In addition, many parish nurses attend the Westberg Parish Nurse Symposium which is the annual professional meeting for parish nurses held each fall in St. Louis. For more information on the upcoming symposium, visit the “Events” section of the IPNRC website www.parishnurses.org.
12. How can I learn more? Visit the website of the International Parish Nurse Resource Center at www.parishnurses.org or call (314) 918-2527. The IPNRC has a number of web-based, print, and DVD resources available.