

# Ten Actions Every Parish Can Take to Reach Out to Persons with Mental Illness and their Families

1. Listen with compassion
2. Believe in Recovery and support it
3. Visit at home, in the hospital and in jail
4. Include in prayers of the faithful
5. Specifically include mental illness when inviting parishioners to a healing service.
6. Invite parish groups to have speakers on mental illness at their meetings especially consider Peer Support Specialists if available
7. Invite persons with mental illness who live in group homes or apartments near your parish to worship and social events and have a plan to make all feel welcomed.
8. Learn about local mental health systems , invite someone from there to speak to the parish staff or group of churches.
9. Include parents, siblings, spouses and children in your pastoral care, they are hurting too
10. Learn how and where to make a referral for help.

# Ten Facts Parish Leaders Should Know About Mental Illness

1. Mental Illness is a disease of the brain and is not a moral issue
2. One in four families are directly affected by mental illness If you don't encounter persons or families dealing with mental illness in your parish then, they are either hiding (often in plain sight) or feel unwelcome. What you see is often the tip of the iceberg
3. Stigma isolates people, and sometimes kills both body and soul
4. The symptoms of mental illness vary in intensity and over time and so should support. Each situation is unique.
5. The public mental health system is at or above capacity, this is why it's important to help people find help.
6. Many persons with serious and persistent mental illness do not know they are sick and think their behavior and beliefs are normal
7. Persons with mental illness are more likely to be harmed than to do harm.
8. Mental illness is often linked with alcoholism and substance abuse
9. Poverty and underemployment is pervasive among persons with mental illness. Many of the problems of persons with serious mental illness has more to do with their poverty than their disease
10. Understand the importance of making and keeping good boundaries