

CHARTER OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR CATHOLIC MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY (ACMHM)

MISSION OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR CATHOLIC MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY

The Association for Catholic Mental Health Ministry (ACMHM) is a Lay Association of the Christian Faithful whose members are called to be a healing presence in the lives of people with mental illness. Members of the ACMHM see Christ in those who live with a mental illness. Members practice a ministry of service and presence; like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), they do not look the other way or walk past those living with a mental illness but instead pour the oil and wine of the Gospel into their lives. Members walk with people living with a mental illness to help them find the support and services that they need.

Members of the ACMHM are inspired by Saint Pope John Paul II who wrote:

“Christ took all human suffering on himself; even mental illness . . . whoever suffers from mental illness "always" bears God's image and likeness in himself, as does every human being. In addition, he "always" has the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such.”

“It is everyone's duty to make an active response: our actions must show that mental illness does not create insurmountable distances, nor prevent relations of true Christian charity with those who are its victims. Indeed, it should inspire a particularly attentive attitude towards these people who are fully entitled to belong to the category of the poor to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs (cf. Mt 5:3).”

We entrust our mission to Our Lady. Our Lady of Lourdes is a special patroness for healing. May Our Lady guide us so that those who live with a mental illness will know that they are surrounded by her and her Son's healing presence and remember that they are never alone.

AIMS OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR CATHOLIC MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY

ACMHM members see persons living with a mental illness as unique individuals who are not defined by their illness. They have much to offer the Church and the community because living with an illness gives them unique insights into suffering, humility, compassion, friendship and love. ACMHM members work to eliminate the stigma and discrimination that people living with a mental illness encounter in the Church and in human society.

Members of the ACMHM work to make mental health ministry an integral ministry in the Church that is available in every Catholic parish and community throughout the world:

1. To people living with a mental illness, members provide spiritual support to people living with a mental illness to assist them to live in holiness. Members encourage actions to prevent any discrimination that would prevent them from full participation in the life of the Church. Members of the ACMHM do not provide diagnosis, counseling, treatment, medical assistance or behavioral health support, but instead may provide assistance in helping people living with a mental illness find treatment and medical services in their community.
2. To the parents, family members and friends of people living with a mental illness, ACMHM members provide spiritual support and comfort in their efforts to care for and help their loved ones. Members of the ACMHM do not provide diagnosis, counseling, treatment, medical assistance or behavioral health support, but instead they may provide assistance in helping find additional educational and other support services to aid in their understanding of mental illness.
3. To clergy and other ministers in the Church, the ACMHM provides the tools, methods and insights that allow them to confidently minister to people with a mental illness without fear or prejudice.
4. To the wider Church, the ACMHM educates and informs people about the issues, struggles and joys that can be found in people living with a mental illness. The ACMHM will witness to a strong and authentic communion with the pope and the local bishop and will operate and participate in the Church's apostolic goals, with a particular focus on those goals directed towards ministering to people living with a mental illness.

MEANS OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR CATHOLIC MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY

1. Support a network of mental health ministries in order to provide leadership, guidance and support to members. Ministry networks are developed on the national, diocesan and parish levels.
2. Develop tools, processes, documents, worship aids and other methods to support members in their efforts to offer a spiritual mental health ministry.
3. Organize and provide training and education for members of the ACMHM.
4. Organize conferences to disseminate information and support the development of a sense of community among mental health ministries.
5. Disseminate information via a web page, email and other methods of communication to promote unity among members and greater awareness and understanding in the Church and in the broader community about ministering to people who live with a mental illness.

ORGANIZATION

SECTION 1 - NAME

The name of this association of the faithful shall be the Association for Catholic Mental Health Ministry (ACMHM). The ACMHM is formed as a lay association of the Christian faithful in accordance with the Catholic Church Code of Canon Law and is governed by all applicable canons of the *1983 Code of Canon Law*.

SECTION 2 - MEMBERSHIP

There are three types of membership: the active (full) member, the associate member, and the contributing member.

A. Active (full) members are those who are directly involved in ministering to people who live with a mental illness through participation in a mental health ministry team or who participate in other mental health ministries focused on serving people living with a mental illness, such as Catholic Social Services or a Mental Health Commission. An active (full) member belongs to the Catholic Church. Only active (full) members hold office in the organization.

The names of persons proposed for active membership are to be submitted to the president of the diocesan mental health ministry chapter. The president will provide information concerning the recommended person to the chapter council. If approved, the candidate will be admitted as a member. If there is no diocesan mental health ministry the national board can accept new full members.

B. Associate members include those who are committed to the mission of the ACMHM but may or may not belong to the Catholic Church and may or may not participate on a mental health ministry team or engage in the works of the ACMHM on a regular basis. Examples of an associate member are members of religious communities or pastors or leaders in other non-Catholic faith communities who engage directly in some facet of mental health ministry.

Associate members are kept informed of the developments and activities of their chapter, as well as the general progress of the ACMHM, particularly in the local area or diocese. They are invited to attend the general conferences, training programs and special observances of the ACMHM and to participate in its activities.

An individual may become an associate member with the approval of the diocesan mental health ministry chapter council. Associate members are those affiliated with the ACMHM by formal action of a diocesan mental health ministry chapter with which the member will be joined. If there is no

diocesan mental health ministry chapter or parish mental health ministry team, the national board can accept new associate members.

C. Contributing members are those who regularly or in a substantial way provide in-kind or financial support but who do not engage directly in mental health ministry. These members also are invited to the ACMHM conferences, training programs and other activities.

An individual may become a contributing member with the approval of the diocesan mental health ministry chapter. Contributing members are those affiliated with the ACMHM by formal action of a diocesan mental health ministry chapter with which the member will be joined. If there is no diocesan mental health ministry chapter or parish mental health ministry team, the national board can accept new associate members.

D. Leaving the Association

The National Board establishes policies and procedures for the termination or suspension of members. The Board of Directors determines, by consensus vote, cases of termination or suspension of members. If a consensus cannot be reached, a simple majority of directors present and voting shall govern.

If there is a diocesan mental health ministry chapter, it will be the responsible body for determining suspension or termination of its members with appropriate communication of its actions to the national board. If not, the activities will fall to the national board.

Members who are terminated or suspended have the right of appeal to the national board.

SECTION 3 – CATHOLIC MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY CHAPTER

The purpose of a Chapter of the ACMHM is to provide unity, training, resources and communication to ACMHM members and to encourage and support the development of parish based mental health ministry teams (see Section 4).

A mental health ministry Chapter territory will be a geographic diocese. How Chapters interact with and support mental health ministry team members is based on the structure of the diocese and its relationship to the teams. Where the diocese has a formalized agency or area to support the teams the Chapter works with the agency or area to implement the Ways and Means of the ACMHM for its members. Where there is no formalized diocesan support the Chapter works directly with the team members at the parish or local entity level.

The Chapter can be formed by members who participate in parish mental health ministry teams located within a diocese and/or by ACMHM members who participate in other mental health ministries

focused on serving people living with a mental illness, such Catholic Social Services or a Mental Health Commission.

All active full members of the ACMHM who are members of the Chapter will elect the officers of the Chapter. Only active (full) members can hold office in the organization. The officers for each Chapter will be a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer. These officers will serve two-year terms. Election shall be accomplished by a simple majority of the votes of those voting members present for meetings. In addition, the chairperson of each parish mental health ministry team within the Chapter territory will be members of the Chapter.

The Chapter should meet quarterly, but at a minimum annually, to coordinate the activities of ministry teams, plan and implement training programs, support Chapter wide activities to educate people on the mental illness and to review the effectiveness of the mental health ministry of the Chapter.

Each meeting must at a minimum include the following agenda items:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Review and accept minutes prepared by the secretary from the previous meeting.
3. Review and accept the financial report prepared by the treasurer.
4. Old Business
5. Review and approval of members to the ACMHM that reside within the geographic boundaries of the Chapter. Between meetings the chairperson may provisionally accept new members until their final acceptance is voted on at the next meeting. Once new members are accepted the ACMHM national board is notified.
6. Review correspondence and announcements from the ACMHM national board.
7. Establish an annual strategic plan for the Chapter and at each meeting review the progress and issues associated with meeting the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.
8. New Business
9. Closing Prayer

Once per year each Chapter will plan, develop, coordinate and hold a conference for all ACMHM members that reside within the geographic boundary of the Chapter to provide spiritual support, networking opportunities, education and information on resources to support mental health ministries.

SECTION 4 – MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY TEAMS

A mental health ministry team is the fundamental organizing unit of the ACMHM. The purpose of the team is to minister at the parish community level in accordance with the Aims and Means of the ACMHM.

A team is formed in a parish (or some other similar local entity, such as a Neumann Center on a college campus) as a parish ministry. A mental health ministry team must have a chairperson who is approved by the pastor of the parish and who will also serve as the parish's point of contact and representative to the ACMHM Chapter. A team is a ministry that is being offered by a parish and is subject to the authority of the parish and the diocese in which the team is located. A team is made up of a minimum of three persons with a team leader and two other members.

A mental health ministry team serves as "prayerful companions" for fellow parishioners experiencing mental illness in accordance with the Aims of the ACMHM and provides parish-wide education on the subject of mental illness.

The mental health ministry team should meet quarterly, but at a minimum annually, to coordinate the activities and to review the effectiveness of the mental health ministry team. A member of the team should agree to serve as the secretary for the purpose of keeping minutes of the parish team meetings.

Each meeting must at a minimum include the following agenda items:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Review and accept minutes from the previous meeting.
3. Review and accept the financial report.
4. Old Business
5. Review and recommend members to the diocesan chapter who resides within the geographic boundaries of the parish.
6. Review correspondence and announcements from the diocesan chapter and national board.
7. Establish an annual strategic plan for the parish and at each meeting review the progress and issues associated with meeting the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.
8. New Business
9. Closing Prayer

SECTION 5 – ASSOCIATION FOR CATHOLIC MENTAL HEALTH MINISTRY NATIONAL BOARD

The national board is made up of chairpersons from each diocesan chapter. Additional Board members from entities such as religious orders, academic institutions or other organizations whose goals align with the ACMHM may be appointed by the national board if a seventy-five percent of the national board members approve the appointment. Additional board members are considered active (full) members of the ACMHM.

The chairperson (moderator) of the national board will serve for a two-year term and will be elected by the representatives from the diocesan chapters. Election shall require a simple majority of the votes of those voting members present. A secretary and treasurer will also be elected by the board and each

will serve for a two-year term. Election shall require a simple majority of the votes of those voting members present. The terms may be renewed by a vote of the board.

The board will chose a chaplain to provide spiritual advise and counseling to the ACMHM.

The purpose of the national board is to provide unity among the diocesan chapters develop policies and procedures as deemed appropriate, support the development of the ACMHM web page and other communications and to be liaison to other organizations involved with mental health ministry.

The national board shall have the authority to set fees for memberships in the ACMHM.

The board will develop financial policies and procedures for the ACMHM. The Treasurer will responsible for developing and recommending for Board approval the annual budget and financial reports and for completion of an annual financial audit or review.

The national board will meet quarterly. Members can participate in person or via video/telephone conferencing.

Each meeting must at a minimum include the following agenda items:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Review and accept minutes from the previous meeting.
3. Old Business
4. Review significant correspondence and announcements from liaison organizations.
5. Review significant correspondence and announcements from diocesan chapters.
6. Establish an annual strategic plan for the ACMHM and at each meeting review the progress and issues associated with meeting the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.
7. New Business
8. Closing Prayer

SECTION 6 - ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACMHM

A. In the civil law of the United States of America, the ACMHM is incorporated in the State of Pennsylvania and enjoys a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

B. Under canon law, ACMHM is a private association of the faithful whose financial assets are governed by all applicable canons of the *1983 Code of Canon Law* and the ACMHM's approved Statutes.

C. Donations given to the ACMHM may be given to support general operations of the ACMHM or they may be made as a restricted gift that are to be used for the purpose of supporting a chapter or team. Donations to support individual team or chapters may also be given as a restricted gift to the parish or diocese where the team or chapter is located. Individual teams or chapters shall not accept donations

directly. All donations must be made to either the ACMHM or to a diocese or a parish in which a mental health ministry exists. The ACMHM or the diocese or the parish are responsible for the accounting and expenditure of all donations and funds that they receive.

SECTION 7 - SEAT OF THE ACMHM

For the purposes of canon law, the seat of the ACMHM shall be understood to be in the Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania.

SECTION 8 – AMENDING THE CHARTER OF THE ACMHM

Should the need arise; it is for the national board to propose changes, amendments, etc. to this charter of the ACMHM. Any member may suggest changes, amendments, etc. for the national board's consideration. Such changes shall be made to the diocesan chapters, and require a two-thirds majority vote of the Chapters to be accepted.

SECTION 9 - DISSOLUTION OF THE ACMHM

It is for the national board to recognize if and when the ACMHM needs to be dissolved. The national board shall propose such action to the Chapters. A two-thirds majority vote of the Chapters is necessary for the action to pass and the ACMHM to be dissolved. It is the responsibility of the national board to determine the actions that need to be taken should the ACMHM be dissolved.

SECTION 10 – PROVISIONS RELATED TO US IRS 501(c)(3) NON-PROFIT CODE

A. No part of the net earnings of the ACMHM corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes of the ACMHM. No substantial part of the activities of the ACMHM shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation (commonly known as lobbying), and the corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

B. Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the ACMHM shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

C. Upon the dissolution of the ACMHM corporation, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding

section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

D. The ACMHM is incorporated under the Nonprofit Corporation law of 1988 for the following purpose or purposes. Said corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code. Purposes shall include, but not be limited to, mental health ministry and any related activities.

The Charter and Organization of the Association for Catholic Mental Health Ministry was adopted by the Founding Board of Directors on October 9, 2019.

Margery Arnold, Diocese of Orange, California

Deacon Tom Lambert, Archdiocese of Chicago, Illinois

Deacon Adam Michele, Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut

Deacon Ed Shoener, Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania

Barbara Zahner, St. Francis Parish, Diocese of San Jose, California

Chaplain – Most Rev. John Dolan, Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of San Diego, California