**A Step-by-Step Strategy for Creating Mental Health Ministry in Congregations**

**CRAWL**

Crawl steps do not require much money, extravagant resources, or paid staff. They are beginner steps for creating your mental health ministry.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Have a designated Mental Health Advocate (MHA) in your congregation | The MHA participates in MHA group each month, receiving guidance and support. |  |  |  |  |
| The MHA helps build a mental health ministry (MHM) team in your congregation with the support of the pastor and church leadership. | Invite someone from each of your key ministry teams. Consider members who are health care professionals, teachers, counselors, social workers, interior decorators, and those with lived experience and their families. Name your group. |  |  |  |  |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Conduct the Congregational Mental and Behavioral Health Needs Assessment within your congregation. | Distribute the link to the assessment via church email, newsletter, website, etc. This assessment could be distributed in hard copy form at the end of worship service, in a Bible class setting, etc. |  |  |  |  |
| Create a simple plan of action based on the assessment results. | Review the survey data with you and help guide your next steps in planning ed. activities and trainings to best meet expressed needs. |  |  |  |  |
| Create a mental health resource display area. Utilize the faith-based mental health resources on Look Up Indiana in worship, Bible study, and various ministry settings. | The display area could be a table or counter in the church lobby/narthex or a bulletin board. Highlight resources in bulletin inserts, newsletter, social media, etc. Receive and share ideas in the MHA monthly meetings and on the MHA Facebook Group. |  |  |  |  |
| Participate in Companionship Training and QPR Suicide Prevention. | These trainings are ideal for your MH team, elders, greeters, etc. |  |  |  |  |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Invite people living with mental illness to share their story during adult Bible study class to help bring awareness to the importance and need for an intentional mental health ministry in your church. | Consider hosting the free presentation “Bridges of Hope” by NAMI at your church to help reduce the stigma of mental illness. |  |  |  |  |
| Share the “Resource Guide” with your pastor, church staff, and members | Have copies of the Resource Guide (accessible on the MHA Private Resource Page) available in the church office and in your mental health ministry display area. |  |  |  |  |
| Provide free space for NAMI support groups to meet in your church. | Contact your local NAMI to let them know. |  |  |  |  |
| Pray for people who are living with mental illness and their families in worship services and privately. | Use the prayers in The Mental Health Toolkit. Consider having a designated prayer room, prayer garden, or other space available for prayer. |  |  |  |  |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Give hope to people who are mentally ill by providing encouragement. | Phone calls, texts, emails, letters, in-person conversations, meals, quilts, etc. |  |  |  |  |
| Plan to attend the 2025 Look Up Conference on May 6, 2025 | Encourage the pastor and several others from the congregation to attend including the congregation’s MHA, members of the congregation’s mental health team, and others. |  |  |  |  |

**Walk**

Walk steps require some training and minimal financial support. There is a greater level of commitment, but most churches can take these steps.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Ask pastor to preach on mental illness related topics from time to time. | Refer to some of the sermon starter ideas in The Mental Health Toolkit. |  |  |  |  |
| Build a mental health library with books and other resources. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Conduct a Bible study on a mental health topic. | Refer to the Look Up Indiana faith-based resources and The Mental Health Toolkit for ideas. |  |  |  |  |
| Invite more people to join your MHM team. | Personal invitations work best. |  |  |  |  |
| Equip your mental health ministry team with the Hope for Mental Health Ministry Starter Kit from Saddleback Church. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Train more people in Companionship, QPR, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA), etc. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Train volunteers in Stephen Ministry and/or provide for their continuing education. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hold quarterly educational workshops/trainings at your church on various mental health topics. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Regularly connect your church members with opportunities to serve those with mental illness. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Communicate about your mental health ministry on a regular basis. | Include articles in a mental health section of your church’s newsletter, announce events in the bulletin and social media posts, have a tab on the church’s website, etc. |  |  |  |  |

**Run**

Run steps require a higher level of commitment, more extensive training, financial support, and some trained church staff.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Provide church staff and mental health ministry team members with more advanced mental health care training. | MHFA, YMHFA, QPR, ASSIST, Living Works Faith, Spiritual First Aid, etc. |  |  |  |  |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Start mental and behavioral health support groups. | For example: Grace Groups or Thrive Groups through Grace Alliance, Celebrate Recovery, etc. |  |  |  |  |
| Create care teams who will commit to help with basic needs of families impacted. | Help with household tasks, babysitting, transportation to doctor visits, basic home repairs, etc. |  |  |  |  |
| Establish serving opportunities for people living with severe mental illness. | Mentors would be needed to walk alongside them as they serve. |  |  |  |  |
| Have people in your congregation trained to be the trainer of various mental health workshops. | QPR, Mental Health First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Companionship, etc. |  |  |  |  |
| Host a mental health fair introducing your congregation and neighborhood to resources in the community/host a one-day mental health conference. | Contact local resources in the community: Parkview Behavioral Health, Park Center, Lutheran Social Services of Indiana, Cross Connections, the county health department, MHA to provide resources. |  |  |  |  |
| **Action** | **Ideas** | **People Involved** | **Target Date** | **Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Create a new full-time or part-time staff position at your church that includes mental health ministry. | Deaconess, Parish Nurse, Director of Care Ministry, etc. Consider implementing this step as early as possible in the Run stage. |  |  |  |  |
| Become a model of what every church can do about mental illness by being a reliable source of information about mental illness. | Share your knowledge with other congregations to assist them in their mental health ministry initiatives. Collaborate with other congregations. |  |  |  |  |

*\*Note: This checklist has been adapted from “A Church-Initiated Mental Health Strategy” from Saddleback’s Hope for Mental Health.*