

BUILDING A SUPPORT NETWORK FOR RESPONDING TO SUBSTANCE USE ISSUES

This brief action guide suggests concrete steps for clergy and lay leaders looking to expand the network of support they can access for individuals and families affected by substance use issues. Building this support network is a key step for all faith leaders.



IDENTIFY KEY PEOPLE, SUPPORT SERVICES, AND NETWORKS IN THE COMMUNITY

Identify and connect with trusted faith leaders who have local experience in responding to substance use issues.

- **Reach out** for a quick call or a meeting over breakfast or lunch.
- **Ask for recommendations** of others to connect with, especially:
 - Other **local faith leaders** with similar interests.
 - **Trusted counselors and therapists** in the community.
 - **Other leaders in the community** (law enforcement, public health professionals, members of a local task force) who are responding to substance use issues locally.

Identify mental health and substance use clinicians, clinics, and crisis services in your area, including any local community hospitals.

- **Make a list of key contacts** (e.g., head of mental health services, head of the Emergency Department, etc.).
- **Make a list of substance use treatment clinics**, including those that offer medication-assisted treatment (MAT).

Educate yourself on the **publicly-funded mental health system** and **points of access** for particular groups of people. Each state uses different language for some of these systems; in North Carolina, there are Local Management Entities (LMEs), in Virginia, Community Services Boards (CSBs), etc. Veterans' Affairs (VA) clinics and tribal resources are also key points of access.

Identify substance use support groups in the community, including Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Celebrate Recovery, Al-Anon, etc.

- Find out the names and **contact information of group leaders**.
- Keep a record of **when and where** each group meets.

Learn about any faith-based mental health or substance use support networks in your community. *For example, in NC's Research Triangle, this is Faith Connection on Mental Illness.*

Explore faith-based resources that are available **in your state**.

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BUILD A REFERRAL GUIDE AND GROW YOUR NETWORK

Record and store key information including names, locations, contact information, and types of services provided by those you identify in your community.

- Consider utilizing the "[Churches Promoting Recovery Network of Support Contact Form](#)" to keep track of new contacts.

Compile your contacts to store digitally, or print and **store in a referral guide** to keep at your church.

Share what you find with the colleagues you connect with in the process of identifying resources. **Email or give them a printed copy of your referral guide.**

Stay connected. Consider hosting a breakfast, lunch, or dinner gathering with some of the key people or organizations you meet in this process. This could be smaller and informal, or a larger, community-wide event.

- Refer to the [CPR Action Guide: Considerations for Planning and Hosting Community Events](#)

Relationships are key when building your support network.