

# UMC Health Ministry Network



## Needs Assessment for Congregations

### Why Conduct a Congregational Needs Assessment?

In order to better address your congregation's health ministry needs, you must first understand their perspective. If you are a parish/faith community nurse or other health professional, what you perceive as the most important health-related needs of a congregation are often influenced by your professional knowledge. The same can be said of a clergy person. Thus, the only way to actually know what the members of your congregation consider important and interesting enough to support and participate in is to ask them! Their responses may be very different from yours and that's good because the success of health ministry depends on having a wholistic\* view of the congregation's needs and possible solutions.

### Purpose—To discover:

- The make-up (demographics) of your congregation
- What your congregation is already doing in terms of wholistic\* health
- What health-related needs, interests and concerns are important to them
- Who is supportive, interested and available to assist with health ministry
- What is the timeframe of service

### Guidelines for Using a Needs Assessment Tool

- Use check boxes and short, open-ended questions
- Limit the length to five-10 initial questions and one-two pages maximum
- Provide the Needs Assessment Tool at all services, Sunday School classes, group/committee meetings for a two-week period
- Deliver a survey to shut-ins
- Provide a way to access or request the survey for radio, TV and Internet audiences
- Distribute the Needs Assessment Tool at the beginning of the service or other activity, and explain that it should be completed and returned before leaving the church
- Enlist clergy and lay leadership to announce and promote the survey; provide time during the service for completion (before the collection), and have attendees return the survey in the offering plates (be sure the pastor and ushers complete the survey, too)
- Place an announcement in the newsletter and bulletin starting two weeks before the survey explaining the purpose, the procedures and when results will be reported to the congregation
- If your church has a website, post an announcement about the survey there; also consider creating an online survey through a free survey site, such as [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)
- Be sure to include all age groups
- Be specific with your questions and use common terms

\* **Wholistic**—“**W**holistic” is not a misspelled version of “holistic.” In health ministry, the linguistic terms “**w**holistic” and “holistic” are not interchangeable—they each have distinct meanings. When speaking of health ministry and parish/faith community nursing, the “**W**” *should be used*. The Rev. Dr. Granger Westberg first advocated the use of the term “**w**holistic” rather than “holistic,” to more closely relate the term to wholeness and to avoid confusion with the term “holistic” that connotes non-religious alternative health care practices.

## Information to Gather Before the Survey Distribution

- What size is your congregation? (average weekly attendance)
- Who attends? (singles, families)
- How would you describe your community? (rural, urban, inner city, commuter community<sup>1</sup>, aging, professionals, blue collar, other)
- How would you describe your congregation? (rural, urban, inner city, commuter community<sup>1</sup>, aging, professionals, blue collar, other)
- What are the ethnicities in your community?
- What are the ethnicities in your congregation?
- What does your church already offer that is related to health and healthy lifestyle? (meals, visiting shut-ins, hospital visits, prayer chain, prayer shawl ministry, support groups, health fairs, hand sanitizer available, blood pressure screening, other)
- What is your church's mission statement?
- What does the group conducting the Needs Assessment survey consider to be the most important health-related needs of the congregation?
- Who will benefit from the health ministry services being developed—members, the community, or both?

For assistance with creating a customized Needs Assessment Tool for your congregation or additional assessment samples and resources, visit the [UMC Health Ministry Network](#) or e-mail [UMCHMadvisor@umcor.org](mailto:UMCHMadvisor@umcor.org).

## Sample Health Ministry Needs Assessment for Congregations

1. Snapshot of the congregation:  
Your age:  1-12  13-17  18-30  31-50  51-68  69-80  81+  
Your gender:  Male  Female
2. Do you or a family member currently have health-related issues?  Yes  No  
If **yes**, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Please check or circle the topics of interest to you:  
(Insert topics of interest specific to your community, such as health concerns, support groups, activities, etc.)
4. When is the most convenient time/day for you to participate in health-related activities (*please check one*)?  
 Before 8:00 a.m.  8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  1:00-5:00 p.m.  5:00-7:00 p.m.  Evening (after 7:00 p.m.)  
Indicate the day you prefer (Monday through Sunday) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prefer online or teleconference participation  
 Home-bound; would need an alternative means of participation?  Yes  No
5. Are you interested in using your skills and talents to work in health ministry?  
If so, please describe your professional skills, personal interests and other ways you would like to participate.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Commuter community: lives in one area, but stays in another area during the work week