



Faith Communities Responding to Depression

COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City — Grantor
Mental Health Association of the Heartland — Grantee
Center for Practical Bioethics — Grantee
St. Paul School of Theology
Central Baptist Theological Seminary
Nazarene Theological Seminary
Sabbaths of Hope Advisory Council — Representing persons from various cultural, ethnic, and sexual orientations; local and state government officials; clergy and faith community leaders, social service administrators and personnel; area mental health center administrators and personnel; local health department, physicians, nurses, and hospital personnel; and consumer organizations.
Sabbaths of Hope Cohort Congregations — Representing various area faith traditions.

OBJECTIVE

Sabbaths of Hope is a project that enables clergy and other faith leaders to recognize types and symptoms of depression, provide referral and linkage to treatment options, and offer more effective support to congregants suffering from depression. Faith community participants will receive training and resources to enable them to conduct educational events for congregants and colleagues. All depression related activities will culminate on a regionally designated Sabbaths of Hope weekend in May of each year.

DESCRIPTION

Sabbaths of Hope addresses racial/ethnic disparity issues in depressive disorders by placing particular emphasis on securing involvement of faith communities of high minority membership. In addition, educational events, resources, and workshop modules for faith community leaders include sensitivity to issues particularly relevant to minority populations in the symptomatology, treatment, and understanding of depression. The Mental Health Association of the Heartland and the Center for Practical Bioethics facilitate a

volunteer Advisory Council of more than twenty professionals working in four project areas to launch annual observances of Sabbaths of Hope: Conferencing — A "kick-off" event February 12, 2007, at Saint Paul School of Theology provided plenary and breakout sessions for approximately 180 participants from diverse faith communities. The conference featured national and local experts on depression and "testimonials" from religious leaders who have experienced depression. Liturgical resources were provided to participants along with training in the use of depression screening tools, symptom recognition, treatment options, available medications, and effective intervention and referral.

Workshop Modules — A curriculum was adapted and developed for use at the "kick-off" and a future "best practices" conference. This curriculum has been made available for ongoing use in seminaries, religious education classes, clergy groups, and denominational meetings. An online option will enable even wider access to depression education particular to the needs of religious leaders and faith communities.

Depression Response Kit — For training and reference, a response kit was developed to provide clergy with screening tools, a list of signs and symptoms of depression, medication information, intervention and referral guidelines, and referral options. Suicide prevention center and crisis hotline numbers were included along with clinical inpatient and outpatient resources. NIMH research materials served as the basis for many of the adapted tools for clergy use.

Interfaith Worship Resources — On one or more of the four available weekends in May 2007 and 2008, at least 25 faith communities in year one and 50 in year two will observe Sabbaths of Hope. It is anticipated that this observance will become an annual event in Greater Kansas City. Religious education, meditation, preaching, and worship themes will raise awareness of depression and treatment options while lowering depression stigma. Liturgical resources are available now for Christian

and Jewish faith communities, but ultimately will include scriptural stories and readings from diverse faith traditions. Templates for sermons, homily texts, interfaith prayers, litanies, and musical selections are provided for clergy. Bulletin inserts, prayer cards, and suggested scripture readings are also included.

RESULTS

On February 12, 2007, the first Sabbaths of Hope conference was held in Kansas City, Missouri with more than 180 faith community leaders in attendance, most of them either clergy or lay leaders of diverse communities of faith. Of those individuals who completed the evaluation process 73 percent reported an increase in knowledge, and 82 percent reported their intent to use information within their faith community/congregation. A cohort of two dozen clergy and congregations are committed to observing a Sabbath of Hope in May. Leaders have completed a preliminary questionnaire to establish a baseline of current familiarity with depression and hopeful, helpful responses. Follow up for assessment of outcomes is planned for summer 2007 in preparation for year two of the project and a "best practices" conference and expanded resource manual in 2008.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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