

Texas Model for Health Ministry: Texas Health Ministries Network

The model created in Texas brings together Faith Community Nurses (FCNs), health ministry leaders and state public health resources, all serving Texans with health care needs (Pattillo 2002). In fall 1996, the commissioner of the Texas Department of Health (TDH) through its Volunteer Health Corp identified parish nursing/health ministry as a means to expand the mission of the health department. Representatives of TDH began working with the Central Texas Health Ministry Coalition, which interacted with many parish nurses and health ministers. As a result of the coalition, nine central Texas organizations, including TDH, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate in the health ministry movement. The MOU continues to be signed by the health department and the Texas Health Ministries Network (THMN). The Central Texas Health Ministry Coalition has expanded to become the THMN, which supports FCNs and health ministers throughout Texas. THMN membership is available to any Texan interested in promoting health ministry. In 2002, the Texas Chapter of the national Health Ministries Association (HMA) was organized. In November 2009, a 501(c)(3) organization, the Texas Health Ministries Network (THMN), was formed

TDH, now titled Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), provides office space and access to computers for two unpaid FCNs. These two collaborate with DSHS staff to disseminate current health information and resources. The FCNs promote health education for individuals interested in health ministry, respond to questions, and have developed a data base to disseminate vital health information. A free online newsletter called *The Spirit of Texas* is edited quarterly with contributions from FCNs/health ministers and includes timely health information from DSHS. Approximately 500 subscribers receive this newsletter.

Through the DSHS library, a comprehensive bibliography of health ministry resources was created, including a calendar of educational activities. This is accessible at: dshs.texas.gov/library/nursing.shtm. In consideration of the vastness of Texas, THMN membership decided to meet three times per year in these areas of the state: Houston/Beaumont, Austin/San Antonio and Dallas/Ft Worth. Membership has met virtually during the pandemic. Topics applicable to health ministry are presented by local experts.

Dorothy Chesley, PhD, Retired RN

Rita Carlson, MSN, Retired RN

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