

Getting Started: Help For the New Health Ministries Leader

Congratulations!

Being elected health ministries leader for your church is an honor. You've accepted the position, but chances are you have mixed feelings. You are happy because you know how relevant health is. You hear government leaders talking about healthcare. You see special features on television and in magazines about health, and you are hoping that under your leadership your church can make a difference. At the same time you are apprehensive. You may not be exactly sure what to do. Here are some steps to follow that will help you be more effective in promoting health ministries work.

Step 1: Pray that God will direct your planning and give your church a special health ministry.

The health message is the right arm of the gospel message. God will direct the health work to reach individuals who could not be reached in any other way, if we rely on His guidance.

Step 2: Read through the remaining chapters in this handbook in order to be aware of the information that is available.

Step 3: Look for supplies.

Probably you will find a lot of health ministries supplies stashed away at your church. Find your predecessor and ask if there are any supplies, good books, films, videos, or magazines available. What programs did he/she organize? Did he/she have an activities calendar for the year? It would be beneficial to see what was done and to know which programs were successful before planning your program for the year.

It is important to have a file cabinet to keep your supplies and information organized. Periodically the conference, union, and other organizations send excellent resource materials

to your church. You may not need them right now, but if you file them away, you will have them when you need them. Many churches have a file cabinet for the health ministries leader. If your church doesn't, ask the pastor and the board to purchase a good filing cabinet. It will help to keep you organized and it will be a wonderful treasure chest of knowledge for the person who succeeds you. A file with a good lock will help you keep your videos and slides in a safe place. It is best to keep these church materials in a safe and accessible place at the church, rather than in your home.

Step 4: Find out what resources are available to you.

Start by reading the resource chapter of this handbook. The North American Division (NAD) and many of the conferences have supplies that they can lend (e.g., films and videos from their libraries). They might also be willing to conduct training programs.

Ask the pastor for the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your conference health ministries directors. If you have a specific question about your role as a health ministries leader, call your conference.

For all other information, the North American Division maintains a "help desk" for local leaders at **Adventist PlusLine, 800-732-7587**. PlusLine is committed to providing live ministry phone support to active church leaders, and pastors throughout North America. If you have a question that needs answering, call them. NAD also has a 24-hour **FaxPlus** service that you can call toll free: (800) 474-4732. Follow the verbal instructions to find what health information is available to be faxed to you. This information is changed periodically, so this is a good service to check on a regular basis. Fill in the blanks below:

My conference is:

My conference health ministries director:

Office phone:

Those on the internet should check the health ministries web page frequently: NAD Adventist.org/HM.

Step 5: Order current health catalogs.

Although you may already have health resource catalogs in your file, new material is constantly becoming available. Be sure you have current copies of the following catalogs: The free *Health Connection Catalog*, published at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, contains drug prevention and health promotional teaching materials. Call (800) 548-8700 and ask for the Adventist edition. Also a number of catalogs containing a wide variety of resources for the local leaders are available from AdventSource by calling (800) 328-0525.

Step 6: Write a mission statement, goals, and a job description.

A clear mission statement, goals, and a job description will increase your effectiveness. To guide you in developing these, see the mission statement and goals for North America, and the job descriptions for the conference and local church health ministries leaders in Chapter 3. You may want to adopt or modify these for your use.

Step 7: Form a health ministries committee.

If your church does not already have a health ministries committee you will want to establish one. Your committee should include the pastor, the local elder, the church ministries leader, the communication leader, and one or more health professionals. A small working committee of individuals interested in health promotion is more productive than a large uninvolved group;

yet the more people you involve in planning, the more ownership they will take in supporting your health ministries activities. If there is any question about your mission statement, goals, and job description, make that the first item on your agenda. It is good to plan at one sitting the health ministries activities you want to have for the entire year. You will need to have additional meetings to complete specific planning.

Step 8: Determine the health needs of your church and community.

You may want to do a survey to find out what you can about the population of the area you serve. When the information is gathered and analyzed it may give you some idea as to how to best plan your activities. For instance, you may want to find out the health status and health knowledge of your own local congregation. If you do any community outreach, you may want to survey the community to assess its needs. Is it a healthy community? Do they prefer a program on AIDS rather than a stop smoking program? Would more people come to an activity in the morning or at night? On which days of the week are they most likely to attend? Surveys can yield very useful data if properly planned.

You can design your own or modify those included in Chapter 5. Make sure you scratch where people itch!

Step 9: Use special health days to build awareness.

The Church Calendar

The North American Division has set aside **two important** annual Health ministries promotion days.

1. *Temperance Emphasis Day* (sometime in January / February). This day is set aside to create an awareness of our Temperance journals: *The Winner*, a drug prevention magazine for children and *Listen* for teens. Church members should be encouraged to subscribe to these publications for their own children and grandchildren and to fund gift subscriptions for SDA children in both church schools and public schools.

2. *Health Education Emphasis Week* (second

week of October). Keeping church members aware of the importance of health and educating new members on the current Health ministries topics are two of the major responsibilities of a local leader. This responsibility should be carried out at every opportunity, but the second week of October is a special time for emphasis. This is a unique opportunity to increase the level of awareness and the practice of health principles in your local church. Health emphasis week usually begins the first Sabbath of October and ends with the following Sabbath. This is the time to promote the importance of getting a Vibrant Life subscription for every family in the church, and for members to give gift subscriptions as a witness to friends, neighbors, and leaders in the community. Vibrant Life is the official outreach health journal published by the church for nonprofessionals. It provides informative material on health and the Adventist lifestyle in a way that makes it attractive to non-Adventists.

Ask your pastor if a sermon on health can be preached and plan something special in conjunction with these events. Hundreds of churches throughout the North American Division will be participating with you. This is an excellent opportunity to network with another church in your area, especially in large cities. Many churches working together can put on an attractive program.

National or World Health Days

In addition to the health emphasis events on the NAD church calendar, you may want to observe national or world health emphasis days. You can get the U.S. National Health Observances Calendar by calling the National Health Information Center at (800) 336-4797 or (301) 565-4167. Either wait on the line for an information specialist or indicate that you are interested in publications. (www.health.gov/nhic)

Decide which dates you will observe. Rarely will you be able to observe all of the dates. It is better to have a smaller number and place strong emphasis on them. Choose your dates and then send for materials from the organizations that sponsor them. Here are some important days or

events you may want to observe: The American Association for World Health (202) 466-5883 has information and ideas for celebrating three events. (www.aawhworldhealth.org)

- World Health Day: April 7
- World No Tobacco Day: May 31
- World AIDS Day: December 1

Red Ribbon Week (alcohol awareness encouraging young people to take a stand against alcohol) is observed in October. Contact the sponsoring organization, National Family Partnership, 11159 B. So. Town Square, St. Louis, MO 63123, (314) 845-1933 for materials and the Red Ribbon booklet. Clear the dates you plan to observe with your pastor to make sure the emphasis will meet church board approval. To be successful you need the support of your church.

Step 10: Start Networking.

A network is a person-to-person or group-to-group connection. It helps you find and share information. Networking is reaching out and joining hands with people with similar goals and interests. Networking means adding your strength to someone else's, rather than working alone.

Identify all of the health professionals who belong to your church. Do you have nurses, physicians, dentists, dietitians, physical therapists, or people with public health degrees? These will be people that you can call on to help promote and participate in your programs. They can be speakers, and additional hands, arms, and resources for you. Start networking with them now.

Identify others in your community that can help you. The yellow pages of your phone book may help. Almost every community has a Heart Association, a Cancer Society, a Lung Association, etc. They can help you on your big activity days. Usually they have qualified speakers who can give presentations for your health promotion programs, for special AY (Adventist Youth), Friday night vespers, Wednesday night prayer meetings, or even Sabbath morning. Many groups have slides or video programs, and various screenings that they do free of charge. Is there a hospital close by? Is there a university

with a nutrition department or a medical school? All of these have potential speakers. Join hands and network with them.

Step 11: Read the NAD Health Ministries newsletter.

Several years ago, the North American Division Health Ministries Department began publishing a newsletter, *H&T Update*. This eight-page newsletter had a calendar of events, helpful articles, news and information, profiles of health professionals, and resources you can use. The newsletter name has now been changed to *HealthWorks* and it is a four-page.

HealthWorks is usually published every two months. If you are not receiving the newsletter call *AdventSource* (800) 328-0525 and ask to be put on the mailing list.

Step 12: Consider sponsoring new member programs.

Review suggestions made at the end of chapter 3. Your objective is to introduce every new member to the Adventist lifestyle and to get them active in some form of health ministry.

Introduction to a Healthy Diet: To encourage new members to have a healthful diet, you might provide the following:

- Acquaint them with vegetarian cookbooks. (See the Health Connection Catalog.)
- Ask a dietitian or trained nutrition instructor to hold cooking classes for the new members once a year. The conference health ministries director may be able to refer you to a qualified instructor.
- A special effort should be made to invite new members to established Adventist homes for representative vegetarian meals and fellowship.

Step 13: Consider certification.

The North American Division has prepared a Lifestyle Certification program to empower church members to be more effective health promoters. There are three levels: Consultant, Specialist, and Trainer. The requirements for certification cover the basic aspects of health edu-

cation. When you are finished with Level 1 you will know how to take personal responsibility for your health and share simple health principles with your church and family. In Level 2 you take training in specialty areas, such as stress management, smoking cessation, or vegetarian cooking instruction. Level 3 is a training course and apprenticeship for those wishing to teach certification courses. The full description of the Lifestyle Certification program can be found in Chapter 22. With the completion of certification you and other committed lay persons and professionals will be equipped to meet people's needs and share your faith as you share the health message.

Step 14: Marketing the Adventist health message

Dr. Ben Carson summed up what Ellen White once said about seizing the moment with two succinct words: "THINK BIG!" The point was that when opportunities for ministry present themselves, you should not be satisfied with ordinary attainments.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe we have "the health message." Unfortunately, we have not succeeded in getting this message out as effectively as possible. In most of our churches, the typical pattern followed for health outreach is to find someone who can do a cooking school, advertise it in the bulletin, and then pray some non-Adventists will show up. While this may have worked in the past, most will acknowledge that it no longer does. Instead of relying on out-dated methods, we need to follow the example of successful corporations and businesses and market what we have to offer.

Typically, corporations spend more money marketing their products than they do on the products themselves. Nothing is left to chance. Millions of dollars are spent on research and analysis targeting potential consumers. When it comes to finding our potential audiences we most often fail to do our homework. If your church would like to think big in its health ministry, consider the following suggestions:

Community Research

- Check with the YMCA/YWCA and area health clubs. What are they doing? Coordinate with their services and assist them in programming.
- Contact local hospitals. What are local hospitals doing for community health education? Plan so your programs can complement their programs.
- Network with church members. Make a list of the large companies and corporations where your members work. See if doors can be opened for your church to assist with corporate health programs.
- Visit elementary and high schools. Ask school authorities if you can provide assistance in the areas of substance abuse, healthful home economics, or even provide an occasional noon meal.
- Go to the Chamber of Commerce. Get to know the receptionist. You'll be surprised how much local information they can provide. Offer to speak or do health screenings at the chamber breakfast or luncheon meetings. Network with chamber members.
- Survey local sporting goods stores. See if they will co-sponsor some of your programs (perhaps a race or walk or sports team with donated prizes).
- Contact local clubs and organizations. Make your services available to area Lions and Rotary Clubs, etc.
- Participate in annual holiday parades and health fairs. Consider building a float or booth that depicts health concepts. Health Expo booth materials can be ordered from The Health Connection.
- Contact area physicians. Place complimentary literature in doctors' offices and key community areas.
- Visit wellness groups in your community. Go to their programs and exchange ideas. Many benefits can come from this kind of networking.
- Newspaper: Contact your local newspaper and find out what the rates and schedules are. Get to know the general editor as well as the religious and community events editor. Often they will accept well-written articles for publication without cost that will advertise your programs more effectively than a purchased ad.
- Flyers and posters: Have a group of church members help distribute your fliers and posters.
- Personal invitations: Invite the mayor and fire and police chiefs to your programs. With their permission, get photos of them at the programs for future public relations campaigns.
- Radio and TV: Provide area stations with Public Service Announcement spots. Offer to do interviews and/or demonstrations.
- Radio call-in programs: If there are physicians in your church, work to get them on radio or TV for an information/call-in program prior to your event.
- Editorials: Write a column on health for the local paper.
- Signs and billboards: Make sure your signs are readable and attractive. You may consider tying helium balloons to them for added attraction and pizzazz. Billboard rental companies, as well as those who handle bus cards and signs in subways, usually donate a certain amount of space each year to non-profit, charitable organizations. Your only cost is the production of the signs. You are not likely to be considered if you contact them in the name of the church. Use the name of the denomination's separately-incorporated charitable agency, Adventist Community Services (ACS).

Advertising Strategies

Now you have enough information to get started, it's time to get busy. Remember that God said, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health" (3 John 2). He wants your church to be healthy and to reach out to the community through health. Health programs break down prejudice and begin the process through which the Holy Spirit can work to bring the community into a relationship with your church.

Have a healthy year!