

Best Practices Report – Diocese of Manchester

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The Diocese of Manchester, through the efforts of its Secretariat for Community Services and New Hampshire Catholic Charities, has expanded its ministries and services to include ministry to its changing multicultural population. The diocese collected data about newcomers to the diocese, trained diocesan and parish staff to develop welcoming offices and parishes, developed a Task Force for Education and Formation that was oriented to “Welcoming the Stranger”, and worked to remove obstacles to serving the “strangers” in its midst. The diocese also developed and implemented new outreach programs to the Brazilian population in response to the tremendous increase in immigration of this group within the diocese. Great strides have been made to respond to the dramatic increase in Brazilian immigration to the diocese. In the face of financial setbacks, the diocese put multicultural issues in the forefront when making decisions about how to restructure diocesan services and parish mergers and closings.

THE APPROACH

Methods or activities the diocese has taken to address the needs outlined in the diocese’s needs assessment:

The Diocese of Manchester, through the efforts of its Secretariat of Community Services and New Hampshire Catholic Charities, is presently undertaking – or has already undertaken - the following activities to meet the needs of immigrants and multiculturally diverse faith communities:

- Conducting a diocesan-wide needs assessment to determine where new immigrants are concentrated and to identify their primary needs;
- Focusing efforts on the Brazilian community, (the largest group of new immigrants to the Manchester Diocese), such as hiring a pastoral minister from Brazil and providing targeted ministry for Brazilians in three parishes;
- Locating Mexican Sisters to serve the Hispanic population;
- Coordinating with Worcester and Springfield Dioceses to provide ministry to African immigrants, refugees, and asylees and providing targeted workshops on welcoming for parishes likely to receive large numbers of newcomers from Africa;
- Conducting training workshops for parish staff, parish councils, and Catholic Charities staff so “gatekeepers” who have first contact with newcomers will be aware of the needs of newcomers and will provide a sense of welcome when processing newcomers for intake into services or parish life;
- Implementing practices that make hiring culturally diverse personnel a goal, especially when hiring Parish Outreach Coordinators and Counselors;
- Including highlights of diocesan multicultural ministry as part of the regular content of a new web page.

Challenges or obstacles the diocese has faced in its approach and specific actions the diocese has taken (is taking) to overcome these challenges in order to achieve objectives:

The diocese has experienced financial challenges, which have had a direct impact on providing services for newcomers. The Executive Director for the Secretariat for Community Services, Sr. Peggy Crosby, has worked to integrate multicultural awareness into the entire restructuring process, allowing data about newcomers to help determine which offices would pick up tasks they had not previously handled and which parishes could be expected to be able to receive newcomers with greater facility. Offices actively seek grants to enable the diocese to carry out other work it would no longer have the ability to achieve through its own resources.

Implementation of the “Protecting God’s Children” workshop series delayed some multicultural training, and the

broader scandal has created an attitude of mistrust among many people toward the Church hierarchy, which has been reflected in unwillingness to cooperate with diocesan projects and initiatives. However, use of communication to raise consciousness to the particular needs of refugees, immigrants, and asylees alleviated some of that tension and helped people to be receptive to programs to help them know how to provide for those needs.

OUTCOME-BASED OBJECTIVES		
<i>The following is a list of the primary objectives of the diocesan action plan and indicators of success for each objective, as well as a list of activities the diocese has employed towards accomplishing each objective:</i>		
Objectives	Measurements of Success for Each Objective	Milestones / Activities involved in accomplishing the objective
“That the diocese addresses the issue of welcoming new people...so that the Church will be inclusive and respecting of as well as celebrating differences.”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personnel were hired to provide pastoral ministry to Vietnamese, Brazilian, Hispanic, and African communities. 2. Leaders have emerged from multicultural communities and taken on responsibility for meeting the needs of others within their communities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training sessions offered to diocesan, Catholic Charities, and parish staff. 2. Task Force for Education and Formation focuses on integration of multicultural concerns in catechesis, evangelization, schools, youth ministry, etc.
“That each department develop ways to reach out to the parish issues of welcoming so that there is a consistent action on the part of the diocese to share the message.”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parishes have requested and received help in increasing their capacity to provide welcoming to newcomers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diocesan monthly newsletter includes highlights of activities “Welcoming the Stranger” in the diocese. 2. Secretariat for Community Services provides Public Policy information for inserts in parish bulletins. 3. Secretariat for Community Services includes online highlights of multicultural ministry activities.
“That NH Catholic Charities continue its study of how to be culturally diverse in services as well as workplace.”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initial research has already led to policy changes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interns from St. Anselm College prepared needs assessments of multicultural groups across the diocese. 2. Implementation of multicultural hiring policy.

EVALUATION OF HOW NEEDS HAVE BEEN MET:

Difference this initiative has made in the lives of those whom it is intended to serve:

Members of the African, Brazilian, Hispanic, and Vietnamese communities have received pastoral services responsive to the needs of their communities. Some of the members of these communities have emerged as leaders in their own right to provide for the needs of those communities. Training by the diocese encouraged integration of pastoral care, immigration and refugee services, and public policy advocacy efforts to serve the comprehensive set of needs of various newcomers.

Ways in which the project has contributed to increasing the welcoming capacity of the diocese:

The diocese was previously unable to meet the needs of the African, Brazilian, Hispanic, and Vietnamese communities. Becoming aware of the specific groups of newcomers and their needs was a first step to increasing the welcoming capacity of the diocese. Making welcoming newcomers a key factor in the process of making decisions about how to allocate resources in the face of budget shortfalls contributed directly to orienting the diocese toward serving those it knew were in its midst and the strangers present as well.

Ways in which the diocese plans to build up the work in the future:

A task force has been formed to focus on specific means of increasing the diocesan capacity to respond to the needs of newcomers, taking its primary concern to be implementation of “Welcoming the Stranger” through planning the ‘how to’ of providing hospitality, pastoral care, immigration services, counseling, outreach, and advocacy. In the long-term, New Hampshire Catholic Charities intends to develop multi-cultural centers in various areas of the state to provide central locations to provide services and oversee the needs of various peoples, especially opportunities to find support in a multi-lingual environment with a strong focus on multicultural education and education for inculturation to the New Hampshire area (and American culture generally).

CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information about this project and best practices associated with it, please contact:

Sr. Peggy Crosby, SNDdeN
Executive Director, Secretariat for Community Services
Diocese of Manchester
153 Ash Street
Manchester, NH 03105-0310
(603) 669-3100 x148
(603) 669-0377 (FAX)
[**pcrosby@rcbm.org**](mailto:pcrosby@rcbm.org)