

BUILDING A PARISH CORE TEAM

Once a parish leader has been selected, your parish can begin to build its core team. The core team will meet together throughout the Year of Service and complete various tasks, including the parish inventory, assessment, and response planning and implementation. Members of the core team should understand the purpose and vision of the Year of Service and act as ambassadors of the initiative in the parish. While the entire parish community is invited and encouraged to participate in Walking with Moms in Need, the core team helps to organize and plan these broader parish efforts. The following information includes a number of tips, recommendations, and considerations to assist you in building a core team in your parish.

Remember that these suggestions are only a framework to help you get started. While many of these recommendations mention “ideals,” we also recognize that what is ideal in one parish isn’t ideal in another. You may be facing specific challenges and feel like your circumstances are very different. Don’t be discouraged! You may be surprised by what the Lord will do through your parish with your simple “yes.”

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE ASSEMBLING A CORE TEAM

1. Size

From the outset you should consider how large you might want your core team to be. We recommend somewhere between five and ten people. Think about the core team like other committees within your parish. You may even inquire from other parish committees or ministries what size they have found to be most effective for leadership teams.

The size of your core team will likely be influenced by the size of your parish, but not necessarily. What works for one parish, may not be a good model for another. Ideally, you want a core team small enough that you can work together closely and in a manner in which everyone has the opportunity to share their opinions and insight, without creating never-ending meetings. However, you also want your core team large enough to represent the breadth of your parish community.



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Some parishes may have difficulty pulling enough people together for a core team. Others may need to set limits and encourage additional volunteers to get involved by joining the larger parish support network. Keep in mind that while it’s good to consider the size of your core team *before* getting started, this is only to give you an idea. It’s possible that your core team may start off small and grow as the work progresses and new leaders are inspired to join. Let the Holy Spirit guide you, and don’t worry if your team is smaller or larger than you anticipated.

2. Diversity

The Catholic Church and its parishes are blessed with incredible diversity among parishioners. Ideally, your core team will represent some of this diversity. When considering who to invite to your core team, think about varieties of age, gender, background, ethnicity, and professional, personal, and volunteer experience. Everyone brings something unique to the table. Assembling a diverse core team will help ensure that your efforts to reach pregnant women in need will be successful. We also encourage you to think about the diversity of your core team reflecting the diversity of potential women in need in the surrounding area. Consider how you can involve and represent your parish's multiple ethnic communities within the core team.

Perhaps you know of someone at your parish who herself was a pregnant mother in need; this firsthand experience can be invaluable as your parish moves forward. Maybe a parishioner works as a professional social worker and has in-depth knowledge of local resources already. Or, a young adult may bring special energy, enthusiasm, and passion to the core team. A retired parishioner may volunteer as a counselor at a local pregnancy center and have invaluable experience to share.

Don't feel pressured to try and hit every diversity point within your core team. This is just to make you aware of the breadth of unique perspectives and gifts that may be available in your parish. While you want the core team to be representative of your parish community, it won't be perfect. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you and discern with your pastor how you can best represent the wonderful diversity of your local community and the diversity of those you hope to serve.



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3. Interpersonal Skills

As you begin to consider candidates for the core team, it's also important to keep in mind the interpersonal skills and competencies of those being considered. Every group will likely have its share of conflicts and differences of opinion. What's important is that each member of the core team understands this and can maturely navigate these challenges with respect for all others on the team. As you build your team, keep in mind that everyone needs to be able to work well with others.

All of this is not to say that only the saintliest among us are fit to serve as core team members. Because we're all sinners, we all have occasions in which we treat others in a less-than-virtuous manner. God created some of us with stronger personalities that can sometimes prove challenging. Someone with a so-called "difficult personality" still has something invaluable to offer to the core team. You may discern that such a person is very much needed on your team. This is just a reminder to think about these group dynamics ahead of time. The parish leader or pastor may at times be needed to help manage some conflict; however, all members of the core team should be expected to treat others respectfully at all times.

4. Prayer and Discernment

As you prepare to assemble your core team, the most important thing to remember is to take everything to prayer. Ask God what He desires of you and your parish and how He wants you to accomplish His desires. Throughout the *Year of Service* you will be discerning what God is asking of your parish and how your parish can respond. Create a habit of praying about these decisions, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide everything that you do.

Pray for the future members of your core team, that they may be willing to accept God's call. Pray for your parish, that it may truly embody a spirit of welcome and assistance to mothers in need. Pray for your pastor, that he may be attentive to the Holy Spirit and faithfully guide your team throughout the next year. Bring all your intentions and concerns to God, surrendering all your efforts to Him.

THE PERSONAL INVITATION

Once you have taken the time to consider everything previously mentioned and spent time in prayer, you'll be ready to begin inviting members to join your core team. The most effective invitation is a *personal invitation*. Nothing can replace this one-on-one exchange, whether it be in person, over email, or on the phone. A personal invite demonstrates that you specifically value that individual and their unique gifts. This individual recognition encourages those invited to see their own gifts and encourages them to put them in the service of Christ and His Church.

Depending on your particular situation, your parish may decide that it would like to put an open invitation in the bulletin or in an email to specific ministry leaders. This can be an effective way of finding volunteers and gauging interest among parishioners. Perhaps this is how your parish has decided to begin assembling a team. After allowing time for an initial response, we would encourage you to follow-up this broader invitation with personal invitations to specific individuals.

