

COMPLETING THE PARISH INVENTORY

The Year of Service begins by completing your own parish inventory of pregnancy resources in your local area. The purpose of the inventory is to find out what resources are currently available and allow you to assess these resources and identify gaps. The provided [inventory form](#) will help you catalog the resources in your local area. With the help of your core team, we suggest trying to complete the inventory by August 2020. The following instructions are provided to help you begin the inventory process. Keep in mind that these are recommendations and can easily be adapted to fit the needs of your parish and diocese.

SIMPLE STEPS

1. Connect with your diocesan Respect Life office.

Before beginning your parish inventory, we recommend contacting your local diocesan Respect Life [office](#). Many pregnancy resources are appropriately coordinated at the diocesan or regional level. Your diocesan office may already have completed its own diocesan inventory and be able to provide you with a list of recommended resources. This list will be a great help as you complete your parish inventory.

2. Gather your core team and review the inventory tool and process.

Gather with your core team to review and discuss the inventory process and instructions. Discuss how your team would like to work together to complete the inventory. It may be helpful to split up some of the tasks, allowing each team member to research specific resource types and report back to the group. It can help to break up the inventory into manageable pieces so no one person feels overwhelmed.

3. Do the research, make the visits and compile all information.

Now is the time to get busy! Begin compiling the information you'll need to complete the inventory. Complete your online research, make phone calls, schedule visits, and begin building relationships with those providing assistance in your local area. Once you have gathered your information, both individually and as a group, compile everything into the inventory form. Not only will this allow you to have all your information in one place, it will also help you to see the bigger picture and begin identifying gaps in resources.

4. Share all results with the core team.

Once all the information has been gathered and compiled, gather as a team to share the results of your efforts. If you split up tasks and gathered information individually, have each team member present their findings and discuss the results together. In future phases of the *Year of Service* it will be helpful for all members of the core team to have an understanding of these results.

5. Share your results with your pastor and diocesan Respect Life office.

When your parish inventory is completed, set up a time to share the results with your pastor. With the pastor's approval, also share the completed inventory with the diocesan Respect Life office to assist their efforts at the diocesan level. While a listing of resources at the diocesan or regional level may already exist, they will certainly appreciate knowing what additional resources you may have found at the local level.

RESOURCES FROM YOUR DIOCESE

Before beginning your parish inventory, we recommend contacting your local diocesan Respect Life [office](#). Many pregnancy resources are appropriately coordinated at the diocesan or regional level. Your diocesan office may already have completed its own diocesan inventory and be able to provide you with a list of recommended resources. This list will be a great help as you complete your parish inventory. Diocesan-provided resource listings are often vetted by the diocese which can provide added confidence in referring mothers in need to other social service organizations.

Each diocese will be very different. Some dioceses sponsor and run their own pregnancy centers. Others may partner with local organizations that are outside the diocesan structure. Still others provide pregnancy counseling and support through the local Catholic Charities office. Diocesan-provided listings are a very helpful starting point and may already reveal gaps in resources. For example, if you are in a large diocese, many resources may be centered around a metro center; however, if you are in a rural part of the diocese you may desire to find other options that don't require such extensive travel. You may know of a food bank in your local area that will better serve those in your specific parish community.

THE INVENTORY TOOL

In the inventory tool, each parish is asked to identify the local pregnancy help resources in their community that are currently available to a woman facing a difficult pregnancy. The needs of pregnant and parenting moms can be overwhelming, and the sources for help may not be apparent to those most needing support. By completing the inventory, your parish will come to better understand what it is like for a mother in need to navigate these resources during what is often an extremely emotional and challenging time.

The inventory tool helps parish leaders identify local resources for pregnancy assistance such as pregnancy help centers, maternity homes, social service agencies, hospitals and especially Catholic programs and resources. It also asks parishes to begin thinking about how these resources are communicated and advertised to those who are most in need of support.

An electronic version of the parish [inventory tool](#) is available for download. The inventory tool provides a framework and structure to help guide parishes through the process of gathering important information about local resources.

The inventory divides the list of resources into three areas: pregnancy help, general help and help available from the parish. This allows parishes with a limited capacity to focus on the resources that will be *most foundational* to assisting mothers in need. The inventory asks you to cast a wide net in order to get a sense of what resources are out there, but it's okay if you are unable to complete every listing. Many entries on your parish inventory may be left blank. Part of the goal of the inventory process is to identify these gaps, so any fields left empty will help you do just that.



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The inventory tool provides a simple form in which to compile the information you collect from site visits, phone calls, and research. Individual sections of the electronic version will expand to accommodate the information that you add. Remember to save copies of the inventory as you continue to add information to the form.

The completed inventory form is just the first step in a larger process. The information you compile in the inventory is not meant to be the final resource for parish referrals. It is meant to be a working tool for your parish. In later stages, there will be time to assess the results of the inventory and further instructions on discerning what resources are most appropriate and helpful for your particular community.

THE INVENTORY PROCESS

To get started, gather with your core team to review the inventory process. Take time to review the listing of resources that may have been identified by the diocese. Invite the input of those who may already have experience working with low-income women and families in your community.

One of the most important aspects of parishes completing the inventory process is determining the specific needs and challenges of mothers in your local community. As a group, the core team should take time to put themselves in the shoes of a pregnant woman facing difficulties and imagine what challenges and obstacles she might encounter.

A woman facing an unexpected pregnancy may feel alone, scared, ashamed, and anxious. She may worry about how to tell her friends and family, fearing rejection or condemnation. She may wonder how she will support her child, providing even the most basic food, shelter, and clothing necessary. She may fear how she will be able to finish school or keep working once her child is born. *How will I do this alone? How will I afford to take care of this child? Food? Clothing? Daycare? Where will we live? What if I lose my job? How will I finish school? Who will help me?*

In many ways, by completing the inventory process, you will be stepping into the shoes of a mother facing a very difficult situation or even in desperate need; however, you will have the benefit of a team joining you in this search for resources. Throughout the process, keep in mind the mothers and children in need, and remind your team to stay in prayerful solidarity with them.

As a core team, you can think of the particular challenges in your local area. Perhaps quality medical care is quite a distance away and transportation is an issue. Or, maybe your parish is located in an inner-city area and housing is unaffordable and hard-to-find. Try to identify what your particular local challenges may be.

The inventory divides the list of resources into three areas: pregnancy help, general help and help available from the parish. Discuss how your team would like to work together to complete the inventory. It may be helpful to split up some of the tasks, allowing each team member to research specific resource types and report back to the group. It can help to break up the inventory into manageable pieces so no one team member feels overwhelmed.

Keep in mind that the goal of the *Year of Service* is not to turn parishes into pregnancy resource centers or social service organizations. The goal is that when any pregnant woman in need contacts your parish for assistance, you are ready and able to refer them to the best resources in your local area. Through our combined efforts, we can move closer to the day when every pregnant woman in need knows where to turn, and abortion is simply unthinkable.

DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS

1. Complete the inventory section on Pregnancy Help-Related Resources.

Pregnancy help-related resources are those most directly related to a woman's pregnancy. Depending on your parish's own capacity, you may only be able to complete this section of the inventory, and *that is okay*. Specifically focusing on these foundational resources is a great place to start.

Don't try to reinvent the wheel. Start with the pregnancy help-related resources that have already been identified by your diocese, such as a pregnancy help center, your local Catholic charities or Catholic social services agency, or another pro-life organization. As previously noted, your diocese may have already compiled a similar list of resources at the regional level. That list can be a great starting point as it may highlight resources in your parish area.

Contact your nearest pro-life pregnancy help center (again, a diocesan list may help with this). Even if the pregnancy help center is some distance from your parish, they can be a great resource for referrals to other agencies or programs in your area. Set a time to meet with the staff at the pregnancy help center and let them know about your efforts to walk with moms in need. They will likely be delighted to hear about them.

As your research may take you to some secular or public agencies and health care providers, be aware that they may not share the Church's beautiful vision for marriage, sexuality, and human life. Be prepared to ask questions about their policies on providing or making referrals for abortion, sterilization, and contraception.

Keep in mind that completing the inventory is more than looking up website information or copying someone else's list. It's about making personal connections, building relationships, and having confidence in where your parish might refer a pregnant mother in need. During a time of crisis, you want to avoid sending a mother on a fruitless search for a resource that only leads to a dead end. You are helping to pave the way for her to find the resources that she needs.

2. Complete the inventory section on General Help-Related Resources.

If your parish has the capacity, begin inventorying the general help-related resources available in your local area. You may have the capacity to inventory some of these resources, but not all of them. *Do the best that you can*. Even if you can't complete the full inventory, just reviewing the resource types can help you to better understand the scope of assistance that a woman facing a challenging pregnancy may be in need of.

Again, avoid reinventing the wheel. Start with the general help-related resources that have already been identified by your diocese, such as your Catholic charities or Catholic social services agency, a pregnancy help center, or other pro-life organization. If your diocese has already compiled a similar list of resources at the regional level, use this as a starting point to identify resources in your parish area.

Contact your diocesan Catholic charities or Catholic social services agency (again, a diocesan list may help with this). Even if the agency is some distance from your parish, they can be a great resource for referrals to other agencies or programs in your area. Set a time to meet with the staff at the Catholic charities or Catholic social services agency and let them know about your efforts to walk with moms in need. Not only will they be delighted to hear about your efforts, they will also likely be excited to share about the services they offer.



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Again, your research may take you to secular or public agencies and health care providers that they may not share the Church's beautiful vision for marriage, sexuality, and human life. Be sure to ask questions about their policies on providing or making referrals for abortion, sterilization, and contraception.

Again, completing the inventory is about making personal connections, building relationships, and having confidence in where your parish might refer a pregnant mother in need. Your efforts are helping to pave the way for a mother to find the resources that she desperately needs.

3. Complete the inventory section on Help Available from the Parish.

Your parish core team will have the best sense for the resources that are already available from the parish, whether pregnancy-related or general help resources. If such help is not available from the parish, that's okay. Depending on your parish's own capacity, more help may be available than is generally known. Your parish staff will likely be a very helpful in determining what is currently offered.

Parish-based help can be direct assistance, including: baby showers, diaper drives, clothing drives, food pantry collections, friendship, accompaniment, mentoring, and more. Parishes may also help by providing donations to supporting agencies through efforts such as poor box collections, baby bottle campaigns, pregnancy care center fundraisers, or other efforts. Some parishes have volunteer-based ministries in which mothers and families are accompanied with spiritual, emotional, and practical support.

4. Complete the inventory sections on Communicating Pregnancy Help-Resources.

The core team will also have the best sense for how help is communicated by the parish, local agencies, and the diocese. If such help is not available, or if it is available but not well-known, that is very important to note. Even the best resources available can't help anyone if no one knows about them. Continue to place yourself in the shoes of a pregnant woman in need and think about how you would find this information.

5. Complete the inventory section on Additional Resources.

While assessing the findings of the parish inventory will occur more formally in Phase 3, the core team may want to flag particular gaps in services for later consideration. Making notes early on will assist you as you complete later phases.

6. Discuss the inventory findings.

As the core team, compile all the inventory findings. Again, place yourself in the shoes of a pregnant woman facing difficulties and talk about the level of help that is currently available and how well it is communicated to those in need. Prepare to share these findings with your pastor.

7. Share the inventory findings.

Share the inventory findings with your pastor and seek his advice on sharing the inventory results with other parish leaders, such as the parish council. With his approval, also share a copy of the completed inventory with the diocesan Respect Life office to assist their efforts at the diocesan level. While a great deal of wonderful services may well be provided, sharing and communicating those resource can substantially improve their effectiveness.

THANK YOU! AND NEXT STEPS:

Thank you for investing the effort to walk in the shoes of a pregnant woman in need, and for documenting the local services that are currently available. Your early reflections on what resources may still be needed and your ideas for better communicating to moms in need will be of great assistance to the parish's efforts in the fall. In September, the findings will be shared with the broader parish community, which lays the foundation for Phase 3: "Share Inventory Results and Begin Assessment and Planning."



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