

DIOCESE OF KOOTENAY

	This Item	Replaces
File:	5.6.17	5.6.17
Date:	Feb 02	Jan 97

Origin: Diocesan Council
Status: Policy
Distribution: All Parishes
Subject: Employee Assistance Program

BACKGROUND

The bishop, clergy and people of the diocese are aware that the majority of human problems can be successfully resolved if identified in the early stages and appropriate treatment is sought. This is true whether the problem is one of physical, mental, spiritual or emotional illness, financial, marital or family distress, drug abuse, alcoholism, legal situations or other concerns. These problems can have serious impact on the working and social lives of the clergy and church employees to say nothing of the life of the parish community. The bishop and synod are committed to offering help to clergy and their families with personal problems as a response to the gospel for the benefit of the individuals and of the church as a whole.

The Diocesan Council at its June 1996 meeting approved a clergy/employee and family assistance plan for the diocese. This plan will cover the licensed clergy of the diocese who are being paid through the diocesan central pay system and the lay employees of the synod office and their families. This coverage will be provided by the service of an outside counseling agency.

FUNDING

The program will be funded through the diocesan family budget and funds at the bishop's discretion.

SUPERVISION

The bishop and the clergy stipend and benefits committee together will monitor the use and effectiveness of the program and make recommendations re: policy and procedures. They will also determine training, needs arising, and how they can be approached, ensure information about the program is communicated to the clergy/employees and their families, ensure maintenance of absolute confidentiality and provide a representative for consultation with other users and counseling services when requested.

THE SERVICE

At the present time PPC Canada (formerly Interlock), a not-for-profit society providing employee and family assistance services to over 200 organizations in the province, has been engaged.

PPC Canada shall, according to the terms set out in contract:

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- a: be readily available to serve as a diagnostic and assessment resource to interview the cleric/employee or family member, make preliminary assessment of the problem(s), arrange appropriate treatment by another agency where necessary, and maintain ongoing contact and follow up with the cleric/employee or family member and the treatment agency;
- b: provide counseling of a short term nature;
- c: provide reports to the clergy stipend and benefits committee and the bishop concerning the usage of the program as requested but safeguarding any personal confidentiality;
- d: provide orientation/training as required by the stipend and benefits committee;
- e: develop personal contact and be familiar with admission procedures of all available diagnostic and treatment resources;
- f: act as consultant to the stipend and benefits committee in its administration of the program;
- g: maintain absolute confidentiality with respect to clergy/employees and family members involved in the program. No one within the church organization will know who is using the program or why unless the client signs a release allowing information to be shared. PPC Canada will not maintain confidentiality where the law requires disclosure, the court orders information, or there is a threat of harm to the individual or to another;
- h: attend informal meetings at the request of the clergy stipend and benefits committee; and
- i: provide updated informational material to the stipend and benefits committee.

ACCESSING THE SERVICE

Those clergy/employees of the diocese and their families who are eligible may gain access to the program by:

- 1: on their own initiative, calling 1-800-663-9099 during working hours or for emergencies after hours. The individual contacts PPC Canada and receives assistance as he/she requires.
- 2: a suggested referral. Often an individual under stress will share his or her concern with another perhaps seeking advice or suggestions for help. A helpful friend or colleague can suggest using the clergy/employee and family assistance. The individual may or may not choose to follow the suggestion. Ultimately it is his or her decision. Since it is the individual's decision, if a concerned person called Interlock to discover if the suggestion

was taken up, he or she would not be given any information. This is to preserve confidentiality.

- 3: a formal referral. In situations where behavior puts a person's position in jeopardy, it is the bishop's prerogative how best to respond to the situation. Under the clergy/employee assistance plan he may choose to make a formal referral. Formal referrals may be made only by the bishop, or in the bishop's absence, the bishop's commissary or a person appointed by either. Before a formal referral can be made, the clergy person's job must be in jeopardy. Prior to a formal referral, one or more suggested referrals should have been made as the problem progressed except in cases such as abuse of a child, which constitutes immediate job jeopardy. Should the bishop choose this route the formal referral procedure is outlined below.

Note: If long-term counseling is required, the additional cost will be the responsibility of the individual. Should this prove a hardship, the individual may make a request to the bishop for some financial help.

PROCEDURE FOR A FORMAL REFERRAL

- 1: The bishop or if absent the bishop's commissary or one appointed by the bishop or commissary will first contact an Interlock counselor for consultation on how to proceed.
- 2: The PPC Canada counselor will call a meeting between the bishop, commissary, or the bishop's appointee and the most appropriate advocate, (representative, perhaps a regional dean) to discuss the plan for the referral and provide help and support for an effective referral.
- 3: The bishop (or the commissary or the bishop's appointee) and the employee representative will meet with the cleric/employee to discuss the situation and offer the referral option. The PPC Canada counselor may sometimes be present. The cleric/employee representative must be present to advise the cleric/employee of his/her rights.
- 4: The formal referral is confirmed in writing after this meeting with a copy of the letter to PPC Canada and the cleric/employee representative
- 5: The number of individuals involved must be kept to a bare minimum to preserve the employee's privacy. Three as above is ideal.

6: The bishop (or in the bishop's absence, the commissary) will not terminate the employee as long as a treatment is progressing satisfactorily.