

Acceptance Ambassadors Program

Helping pastoral leaders understand mental illness

Developed & Presented by Hakeem Rahim, Ed.M, M.A.

Fact Sheet

Program Overview

The purpose of the *Acceptance Ambassadors Faith Based Leaders Program* is to **help faith based leaders increase their understanding of mental illness for them to better serve their congregants**. To increase understanding of mental illness, pastoral leaders must be able to know what is mental illness, its definitions, general signs, statistics and myths. By gaining a better understanding of mental illness pastoral leaders will have specific language to be able to describe, discuss and identify mental illness.

Program Goals

The goal of the Program is to increase the leaders' **comfort level** when confronted by a congregant who is actively dealing with mental illness or who has a loved one with a mental illness. In addition to being able to **identify general signs** of mental illness, they will learn how to **approach a struggling parishioner** and how to **discuss mental illness** with their congregants. Faith based leaders will also be able to **identify local and national resources** and services for their congregants.

Program Components

- Hakeem Rahim One-hour presentation to Faith Leaders
- Round-table Discussion
- Pastoral Discussion Guide:
 - Recognizing the Signs
 - Discussion Topics
 - Address Parents of Child
 - A Parishioner
 - Mental Health Community Resources

The time for awareness and transforming stigma around mental illness is here. Hakeem Rahim along with your organization can partner in this movement together!

Promotional Brochure

Why do we help pastoral leaders understand mental illness?

Live Breathe, LLC developed the Acceptance Ambassadors Pastoral Leaders Program to help pastoral leaders serve congregants compassionately, comprehensively and safely and to maintain and increase trust between parishioners and pastoral leadership.

For Instance

Congregant comes in - *Pastor, I am not sure why I have been so sad, I have not been able to get out of bed and some Sundays, I just don't want to come to church and you know I love my church.*

Pastor, my heart beats really fast at work, and I get nauseous and extremely nervous when I go certain places, like I can't breathe; I thought it was a heart attack, but my doctor says I am healthy. I am unsure of what to do.

Pastors who are unaware of mental illness may lean on what they know which is prayer and spiritual counsel; have the best intentions, but do not have the language to inform.

After Taking this Program

Faith Leaders Will:

- ✓ Be Confident in what language to use, how to approach a struggling parishioner and how to discuss mental illness
- ✓ Understand the Importance of referring congregants in need of services
- ✓ Be Aware of key mental health resources and services

| Program Elements | |
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| <p><i>The Program is focused on three Key Messages:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It's Okay to Talk about What You are Going Through2. There is No Shame in Seeking Help3. There is Hope | |
| <p><i>Awareness & Education Themes:</i></p> <p>You are more than your label You are your experiences Mental illness is an illness like any other</p> | <p><i>Advocacy Components:</i></p> <p>Peer Support Education to reduce stigma Medication</p> |
| <p><i>Treatment Needs Addressed:</i></p> <p>Medication Doctors Therapist</p> | <p><i>Coping Skills Addressed:</i></p> <p>Exercise Diet Spirituality Mindfulness</p> |
| Mission & Purpose: Wellness | |

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