

National Church Residences Conversation 2.25.22

Present: Jim Zippay, Michelle (new regional chaplain), JoAnna Freeman, Beth HK, Susan Hoskins

Project: Volunteer chaplains serving PA NCR housing communities

NCR manages/owns 340 communities in the US, 17 in PA. Needing to pivot during the pandemic, they focused on creating a hotline which is run by a disabled chaplain, daily devotionals, an old-school prayer box, visitation, celebrations of life, communion and services. Many of these are done by paid clergy but they now have 85-100 volunteer chaplains (all Black).

What worked: they did 4 virtual training sessions for 90 volunteers, hired a regional coordinator to oversee the program, and enjoyed on-site staff collaboration in some of the communities. During the pandemic, focus turned to supporting staff and families who were providing support to residents. Birthday celebrations were greatly appreciated.

What did not work: Covid hit all of the communities and made it hard to find staff and volunteers. The first regional coordinator left, but a new one has been hired. They bought Fire tablets, but didn't realize that many residents didn't have access to internet service. The vaccine policy of NCR also made it impossible to recruit volunteers who would not vaccinate.

DEI efforts: all chaplains have gone through SAGE training, and they have established a DEI office and antiracism task force.

Efforts going forward will focus on increasing awareness and doing a resident survey. They have reached out to other funders to keep the program going, and will use their own fund raising.

NCR is very grateful for FFA support, without which this program would not have been possible. There are sufficient funds left (from the gap in regional coordinator position) to continue in 2022, so no further proposal will be submitted.

SWH