



Faith Leaders Gain Addiction Skills to Support Congregations

Northeast Delta hosts January Faith Partnership Initiative leadership training to help develop congregational substance abuse, addiction and recovery ministries

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monroe, LA -- Northeast Delta Human Services Authority will host a day-long Faith Partnership Initiative leadership training on January 26 at North Monroe Baptist Church, 210 Finks Hideaway Rd, Monroe, LA 71203.

The training is the first of four 2019 trainings, part of the agency's effort to educate and equip faith leaders to address substance abuse prevention, support and recovery needs in their congregations. Leadership training is for pastoral and lay leaders from various faith traditions.

"Our region is facing challenging issues around various addictions and mental health, and we must pull together to identify where there are needs and how to best address those needs," said Dr. Monteic A. Sizer, executive director of NE Delta HSA. "The faith community is a tremendous resource connected to our communities in so many ways. We are partnering with all interested houses of faith to fight these issues. This leadership training is an important next step."

The Saturday program is another in a series of training events to help northeastern Louisiana faith leaders in the agency's 12-parish region. On October 25, dozens of faith leaders gathered in Monroe, Louisiana, for readiness training, the first in the series. The fall program equipped faith leaders with skills to better serve those in their congregations and communities struggling with alcohol, drug and other addictions. The training included a "messaging exercise" during which the participants helped develop communication methods to engage their specific faith traditions to help grow this faith-focused initiative. One message was simply "We need to talk," noting that these subjects are often ignored or avoided because of stigma and shame.

January's leadership training will be facilitated by Sizer and Drew Brooks, a nationally recognized faith-based prevention and treatment specialist. Sizer leads Northeast Delta from a headquarters office in Monroe, providing a safety net of services, working with partner agencies and organizations. Brooks serves as the executive director of Faith Partners, an organization that has successfully utilized an evidence-based intervention approach to equip 350 different church congregations from over 20 different faith traditions.

"To be successful, all sectors of society must be informed and work intentionally. Only by working together can we truly transform the lives of individuals, our region and our state," added Sizer. "Our objective is to help our faith leaders better understand the science and complexities of those battling mental illness and addiction so that comprehensive solutions can become more evident."

“The upcoming training will help leaders, staff and laity lead team ministries as they effectively address substance use disorders and other issues,” added Brooks. “The training will provide participants with practical information, tools, and strategies to help initiate addiction team ministries.”

Participants in the January 26 training will:

- help leaders understand the church role with substance abuse prevention and recovery
- explain and envision the work of a prevention and recovery ministry team in their congregation
- help with the recognition of barriers to starting these ministries
- identify the role of leadership
- demonstrate specific steps to initiate faith teams

“We know faith leaders are committed to serving the least among us and those who need help,” he added. “What we’re doing is based on their faith traditions. We know faith values require them to help, and that they are determined to help. We’re here to help them know how to help.”

The leadership training is scheduled to begin promptly at 9 a.m. in the North Monroe Baptist chapel. Attendance is free. To register for the training, or to get more information, contact Northeast Delta Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Andrew Koetsier at Andrew.Koetsier@la.gov or 318-362-4237.

Additional training will be offered in April, May and June. Team training will be provided April 5-6. Clergy-specific training will be held May 17-18. General skills training will be hosted June 22.

About Northeast Delta Human Services Authority (NE Delta HSA)

Northeast Delta Human Service Authority manages the operation of community-based programs to improve the quality of life for individuals with major mental illness, developmental disabilities and addictive disorders. NE Delta HSA accomplishes this by utilizing a nationally-recognized and integrative approach that identifies and addresses behavioral and primary health care needs.

Our agency operates through collaboration with regional partners in business, prevention, education and care in 12 parishes (Caldwell, East Carroll, West Carroll, Ouachita, Lincoln, Madison, Franklin, Morehouse, Jackson, Tensas, Richland and Union). NE Delta HSA is devoted to delivering programs and services that encourage citizens of Northeast Louisiana to reach their full human potential. Three tenets guide these efforts: excellent customer service, greater access to services and competent, quality care.

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