

The St. Ephraim Center

St. Ephraim House of Healing

Pastoral Care Institute

Our Mission:

To support and strengthen the Orthodox Church through education and effective, Christ-centered addictions treatment for Orthodox clergy, other church workers and their families.

Our Core Principles:

St. Ephraim Center is guided by these principles:

- Christ must be the center of everything we do, and all healing is possible only through Him.
- The Church on Earth is greatly affected by the health and spiritual wellness of its clergy, who are both its leaders and its servants.
- Orthodox clergy, other church workers and their families have specific pastoral, spiritual, cultural, social and practical concerns that must be addressed if addiction treatment is to be effective.
- Transformative healing from addiction emerges from holistic treatment that includes conscientious attention to spiritual, psychological and biochemical needs.
- Addiction is a disease of the whole person, not a sin or moral failing, and should be spoken of openly without stigma, shame or fear.
- Our treatment methods must be chosen based on consistency with the Orthodox faith and proven effectiveness, and now include cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, nutritional therapy, psycho-education and the 12-step program.
- Pornography is the fastest growing addiction in the U.S., and is characterized by brain chemistry, behaviors and treatment needs similar to those of substance dependence and abuse.
- Orthodox clergy, other church workers and their families benefit greatly from being in a treatment community of peers, who understand their specific life contexts, stressors, needs and experiences.
- The Church requires accurate knowledge if it is to respond effectively to addiction among its clergy, other church workers and their families.

Our Work:

The St. Ephraim Center was organized for exclusively religious, charitable and educational purposes, and was incorporated in January 2012 under the Religious Corporation Laws of the State of Colorado. Specifically, the mission of the Center is to support and strengthen the Orthodox Church through education and effective, Christ-centered addiction treatment for Orthodox clergy, other church workers and their families. The program scope includes substance dependence and abuse as well as pornography and other non-violent sexual addictions. The Center is organized into two divisions: The St. Ephraim House of Healing for outpatient treatment programs, and the Pastoral Care Institute for educational programs.

St. Ephraim House of Healing. In 2010, an estimated 8.7 percent of the population met the criteria for substance dependence or abuse. Although statistics are lacking for the Orthodox Church specifically, these averages suggest that more than 250 members of the clergy plus unknown numbers of other church workers and family members may be struggling with alcohol or drug addiction. In addition, pornography and other non-violent sexual addictions have been shown to be on the rise among the general American population, including among its clergy. Current research indicates that pornography addictions are characterized by brain chemistry, behaviors and treatment needs similar to those of substance dependence and abuse.

Although Orthodox clergy, other church workers and their families present similar needs for addiction treatment as the general population, they are now almost entirely un-served. Of the several treatment programs in the contiguous United States that provide any clergy-specific services, none are within the Orthodox Church. Yet Orthodox clergy, other church workers and their families face specific and concrete barriers that prevent them from seeking and receiving appropriate treatment, including stigma, confidentiality concerns, financial barriers and a lack of supply (or substitute) clergy to temporarily take their places in their parishes. They also present distinctive pastoral, theological, spiritual and cultural concerns—as well as specific stressors and experiences—that are best addressed by care that is tailored to their needs within a community of Orthodox peers.

The aim of the St. Ephraim House of Healing is to provide effective, spiritually relevant addiction treatment specifically tailored to the perspectives and needs of Orthodox clergy, other church workers and their families. To do this, starting in 2015, the Center's executive director, clinical director and program director will lead up to six on-site, outpatient addiction treatment programs per year, with each six-week program specifically tailored to either clergy (including monastic clergy), other church workers (including readers, sub-deacons and choir directors) or members of these groups' households. Spouses and children of participants will be included during the final week of the program.

Participants will be referred by family members or members of the Orthodox Church hierarchy; self-referral will also be accepted. Staff may also provide assessments, interventions or other support for potential participants by phone, online in other locations across the country, as needed. A confidential, thorough assessment will be performed by a member of staff prior to all participants' admittance.

All on-site programs are initially planned to be offered in the Denver metro area in Colorado; appropriate, convenient lodging for participants will be coordinated or provided by the Center. The Center may later expand to provide on-site programs in other locations or distance-based addiction treatment, as appropriate and needed.

The treatment programs will feature conscientious attention to spiritual, psychology and biochemical needs. Treatment modalities will be chosen based on consistency with the Orthodox faith and proven effectiveness, and will include cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, nutritional therapy, psycho-education and the 12-step program. The Center's Pastoral Director will support this holistic,

integrated treatment by providing participants with Orthodox pastoral and spiritual care.

In addition, the House of Healing will provide aftercare to treatment program participants. Because Orthodox clergy, church workers and family members will be coming from across the country to access the treatment program, aftercare will be provided online and by telephone. Referrals will also be made to local resources to support ongoing recovery.

One unique feature of the St. Ephraim House of Healing is that it will work to overcome some of the practical barriers to treatment that Orthodox clergy now face. One key obstacle is the lack of Orthodox supply (or substitute) clergy to serve parishes during their priests' extended absence. The House of Healing will recruit a cadre of supply priests and fund their travel and living expenses while the parish priest is in treatment; we will also provide a liaison between each supply priest and parish council to help parishes with the logistics of this process.

Other staff activities of the House of Healing will include curriculum development, acquisition and management of facilities and equipment for on-site treatment and aftercare, and outreach to and collaboration with other addiction treatment centers, including those Orthodox facilities that serve Alaska.

From 2012 through 2014, planning and development for the House of Healing treatment programs will constitute approximately 25 percent of the organization's total staff time. Starting in 2015, or when the treatment program is fully implemented, this will increase to approximately 75 percent of the organization's total staff time.

Pastoral Care Institute. Although knowledge about addictions and effective treatments is slowly growing in the Orthodox Church, a significant unmet need still exists. Systematic addiction education for Orthodox clergy in the U.S. is now mostly limited to a senior pastoral theology course and a seminar—neither of which existed prior to 2005—at just one of several seminaries, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. Clergy who were trained outside the U.S. often have had even less exposure to up-to-date information about addiction and effective treatment. In addition, much of what clergy education does exist focuses on working with addiction in parish communities, not on clergy wellness.

Due to the resulting knowledge gap, the ability of the Orthodox Church to respond appropriately and effectively to addiction among its clergy and their families is limited. This is reflected in that the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America has no current formal responsibilities, endorsed organizations or agencies that address clergy wellness generally, let alone clergy addiction specifically. Further, too many Orthodox clergy and hierarchs still view addiction as a sin or moral failing that can and should be overcome through willpower and prayer—rather than as a disease of the whole person to which clergy, other church workers and their families are as susceptible as anyone else—which creates yet another obstacle to accessing effective, evidence-based treatment.

The Pastoral Care Institute will work to systematically increase knowledge in the Orthodox Church about the realities of addiction and effective treatment. Relevant activities will include:

³⁵₁₇ Targeted, spiritually and culturally relevant outreach to the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church, including in-person visits to key bishops and other hierarchs, not least so these leaders can effectively support priests, other church workers and members of their households who are in need, and refer them to appropriate treatment.

³⁵₁₇ Production and active dissemination throughout the Orthodox community of educational and outreach materials, including a website.

³⁵₁₇ Ongoing coordination with Orthodox seminaries in the United States—including St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Holy Cross School of Theology and St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary—to reciprocally improve education and assessment materials for Orthodox

clergy concerning addiction.

³⁵₁₇ Educational and outreach events at Orthodox seminaries, in parishes and in other contexts that will help raise awareness within the Orthodox Church about addiction and effective treatment.

³⁵₁₇ Expert consultation, as appropriate and requested.

All staff members will participate in these educational and outreach activities, primarily under the guidance of the Executive Director, the Pastoral Director and the Director of Development and Outreach. These activities will start immediately, based at the Center's offices in the Denver metro area in Colorado. From 2012 through 2014, activities of the Pastoral Care Institute will constitute approximately 75 percent of the organization's total staff time. Starting in 2015, or when the treatment program is fully implemented, this will decrease to approximately 25 percent of the organization's total staff time.

At this time, all St. Ephraim Center activities are provided by volunteer staff members, for no compensation. Staff members may be compensated as appropriate to their duties, and as financial resources permit, in future.

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