

Supporting the Mission of the NCPD Council on Mental Illness

Following Jesus who embraced all, we resolve to assist the Catholic Community in reaching out to and accompanying our brothers and sisters with mental illness and their families, acknowledging their gifts and the value of their presence, and assuring their rightful place in the Church and society. These brothers and sisters in Christ find that their experience of serious mental illness can raise profound questions of faith.

We believe that the Church can and should be a source of hope, unconditional love, support and outreach to people who often find themselves disenfranchised from church and society. Yet we are often at a loss as to how to address these needs.

We believe that God's unconditional love can be experienced in the love we extend to one another and that the Church is called to witness the healing presence of Christ through its proactive outreach to people with mental illness and their families. We believe that the Church is also called to address the systemic injustice that currently exists in society in the treatment and care of people with mental illness.

We affirm the dignity of people with mental illness as stated in Pope John Paul II's 1997 message that "Whoever suffers from mental illness 'always' bears God's image and likeness in [themselves], as does every human being. In addition, [people with mental illness] 'always' have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such."

We decry the fact that the stigma of mental illness pushes people to the margins of our Church and our society. We acknowledge that the need for the Church's commitment is great, recognizing that one in four families is affected by mental illness.

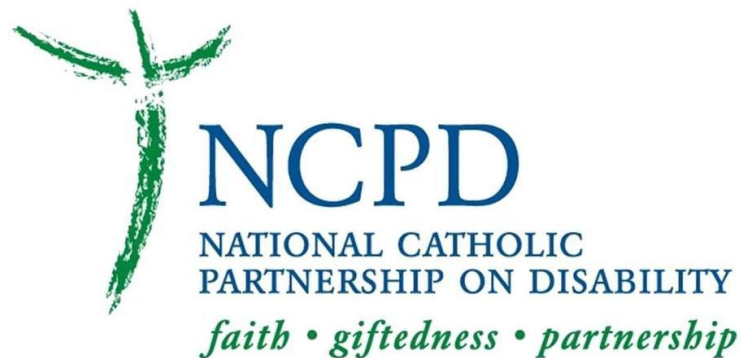
We also recognize the systemic problems that exist throughout the country in the quality and availability of treatment options and supportive situations. These vary widely in appropriateness and effectiveness resulting in people with mental illness and their families experiencing continuous cycles of crisis.

We affirm the mission of the Church to fully include people with mental illness and their families in the life of the Church and to support them as they seek justice in our society. We embrace Pope Benedict XVI's message for the 2006 World Day of the Sick "I therefore encourage the efforts of those who strive to ensure that all [people with mental illness] are given access to necessary forms of care and treatment...I commend pastoral workers and voluntary associations and organizations to support in practical ways and through concrete initiatives, those families who have [people with mental illness] dependent upon them. I hope that the culture of acceptance and sharing will grow and spread...Every Christian, according to [their] specific duty and responsibility,

is called to make [their] contribution so that the dignity of these brothers and sisters may be recognized, respected and promoted.”

Therefore, we, the Governance Board of Directors of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD), resolve to actively support and fund the work of the NCPD Council on Mental Illness in carrying out its mission.

Approved by NCPD Board of Directors
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