**Facilitator’s guide for leading a classis workshop (RCA version)**

We have prepared this brief leader’s guide to assist you in making a presentation at your classis meeting on the **Guide for a Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons**. We thank you for agreeing to provide this training, and we hope that this guide will give you the necessary resources, materials, and ideas to lead this presentation with confidence. The person leading does not need to be an expert on mental health, although some understanding would be helpful. We have provided suggested resources for clergy mental healthcare at the end of the Guide for a Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons. We are also available if you have questions about matters not included in this guide. Please contact the Rev. Terry DeYoung, RCA coordinator for Disability Concerns (616-541-0855; tdeyoung@rca.org) for more information.

The RCA and Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) Disability Concerns ministries collaborated to produce this guide and the supporting materials. The team—composed of people from Canada and the U.S. and from both denominations—included pastors, chaplains, therapists, members of CRC Pastor Church Resources, mental health service providers, and individuals who have experienced mental illness.

Addressing clergy mental health can cause discomfort. Raising this issue at a classis meeting may create intense feelings at the classis meeting itself; this happened during pilot testing. Also, you’ll want to remind your audience that the guide for a leave of absence likely will not address all needs that may arise. For example, if a pastor is given a leave of absence, congregational leaders may need both to address congregational education about mental health and to discuss aftercare for the pastor. For this reason, suggestions for additional resources are provided. As part of your preparation, be sure to pray and to ask others to pray that God will give guidance and direction as you present this matter to the classis.

We pray that the Lord will bless you and give you what is needed to provide this training session at your classis.

General tips to help you get started:

1. Preview all the materials provided for the presentation:
2. The document to be presented: Guide for a Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons (RCA version).
3. PowerPoint presentation slides with additional script information.
4. Case studies for discussion with guidelines to help facilitate the discussion.
5. This document (leader’s guide) with background rationale, learning goals, and discussion guidelines.
6. You are provided with options for leading presentations of 15, 45, or 90 minutes. Plan your agenda for the training based on the time you have been given:

**Presentations**

**15 minutes**—Introduce the Guide for a Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons (using the 15-minute PowerPoint presentation).

*Learning goals:*

* Participants are able to articulate an outline of the document and its importance for their church and pastor(s).
* Participants will bring the document back to their consistory for discussion.

**45 minutes**—Explore clergy mental health (using the 45-minute PowerPoint presentation).

*Learning goals:*

* Participants are able to articulate an outline of the document and its importance for their church and pastor(s).
* Participants will bring the document back to their consistory for discussion.
* Participants will have a better understanding and empathy for particular demands on pastors.
* Participants will know resources to turn to if they believe their pastor is experiencing difficulty with mental health.

**90 minutes**—Engage the topic with activities (using the 90-minute PowerPoint presentation).

*Learning goals:*

* Participants are able to articulate an outline of the document and its importance for their church and pastor(s).
* Participants will bring the document back to their consistory for discussion.
* Participants will have a better understanding and empathy for particular demands on pastors.
* Participants will know resources to turn to if they believe their pastor is experiencing difficulty with mental health.
* Participants will be able to articulate appropriate first steps if they believe their pastor is experiencing difficulty with mental health.
* Participants will be better equipped to provide practical help to a pastor or congregation member dealing with mental health issues.

1. Supplies needed

• Laptop with the presentation downloaded or Internet access.

• Projector and screen located at the front of the room.

• Blank wall at the front of the room.

• Sufficient handouts so that everyone has a copy of the Guide for a Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons.

• Sufficient handouts so that everyone has a copy of the case studies (for the 45- and 90-minute presentations).

• At least three large sheets of newsprint and three markers (for the 90-minute presentation).

1. Choose the appropriate PowerPoint presentation for your time frame. Review the slides and the script that are available to give you more information. Practice the presentation in advance to help the training go smoothly.