

Expectations for Lay Ecclesial Pastoral Associates (PA)

A PA is a professional minister who shares with the pastor or on-site pastoral team in the overall care of the Parish. He or she is a member of the parish staff, usually full-time, and is accountable to the pastor. The ministry of the PA relates to the aspects of parish life, with designated responsibilities, e.g., liturgy, faith formation and development, administration, pastoral care, or social outreach. The designated responsibilities of the PA are dependent upon the needs of the parish and the gifts of the PA as well as the gifts of the other members of the pastoral staff.

Specific Responsibilities:

The role of PA can vary significantly from parish to parish, making difficult the identification of specific expectations applicable to all PAs. Some PAs are true “generalists.” While others have more focused and specific responsibilities, which can vary widely from one PA to another. The following general expectations can apply to the actual role of the PA in all its diversity.

The PA, working with and being accountable to the pastor is expected to serve the pastoral needs of the parish. To do this effectively, the PA is expected to have:

- Love for God and those served, a deep faith in Christ and commitment to the Church, a spirit of hope, the habit of regular prayer, and a sense of call to ministry as coming from God and affirmed by the Church.
- Adequate initial and ongoing formation (in spiritual practice, academic study in theology or pastoral ministry skills, prior ministerial background, and life experience) to serve well in pastoral ministry, with particular expertise in those areas of ministry in which they are most directly involved.
- The administrative ability to handle multiple areas of pastoral responsibility, including the coordination of selected ministry efforts in the parish.
- The inter-personal and group communication and collaboration skills needed to foster a positive parish spirit and to work well with others in the ministry setting, including parishioners, co-workers on the parish staff, diocesan staff, and persons or groups in the wider community.
- The art and ability to help others discern God’s call in their lives and respond to that call with faith and commitment, supporting that response as needed with prayer, formation, advice, and encouragement.

Moreover, the PA can expect an opportunity to serve that attempts to match the PA’s gifts with community needs; just compensation with adequate benefits (cf. Canon 231 &2); fair and equitably administered human resources, policies and practices; and a healthy work culture.

Adapted from the **National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers**, by the National Association for Lay Ministry, the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, and National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry; 2003