

The Role of the Parish Mentor

A. Each Echo apprentice catechetical leader works with a parish mentor. A mentor is defined as a full-time parish catechetical leader who is presently certified at the host diocese's highest level of catechetical leader certification, has three or more years of service in parish catechetical leadership, and has been approved to serve as a mentor by the Diocesan Director or his or her delegate (and whose selection includes diocesan consultation with the Director or Associate Director of Echo at Notre Dame). The Echo Program reserves the right to participate in the selection of potential mentors.

B. Ordinarily the mentor is serving in a parish catechetical leadership staff position, but the mentor may be another qualified full-time parish staff person with sufficient background in parish catechesis. In keeping with the plan for on-site support, the mentor is a full-time parish staff person on-site (i.e., working out of the same parish campus as the apprentice) at the apprentice's assigned parish. Diocesan-provided on-site mentoring by a full-time staff person in each parish is a required element for diocesan participation.

C. While a mentor might possess a Master's degree in Theology, Catechesis, Religious Education or a related field of study, the mentor should have experience in a broad array of parish catechetical responsibilities. The mentor will be expected to assist the apprentice catechetical leader in his or her professional catechetical leadership on-site formation.

D. Mentor selection also includes, but is not limited to, consideration of the following factors:

- 1) Past mentor or mentoring-type experiences, number of years of experience in catechesis and related ministry, and academic background.
- 2) Breadth of responsibility in the parish and position in relation to others on the parish staff.
- 3) Willingness to meet weekly or, minimally, biweekly, with the apprentice for professional-ministerial development (in addition to routine interactions in the parish setting).

E. One or more staff members of Echo may visit potential partner dioceses to meet potential mentors in advance of formalizing parish assignments.

F. Parish mentors are expected to participate, along with the diocesan director for the Echo program, in a mentor formation weekend at Notre Dame (this event is conducted during July).

G. Diocesan-provided mentoring by a professionally-trained parish catechetical leader is crucial to the interaction between the partner diocese and Echo at Notre Dame and is a required element for diocesan participation.

H. At the beginning of their parish service, Echo apprentices, with the support and participation of their mentors, draft learning covenants that describe the nature of their prospective work and explain the skills that the apprentices hope to attain through the various professional ministerial experiences. The *Learning Covenant* also specifies some of the expectations that the mentor and apprentice have for the mentoring relationship. Based on those learning covenants, the Echo apprentices engage in numerous roles, gaining critical skills and capacities to serve as professional lay ecclesial ministers. The role of the mentor remains vital in the learning process as the Echo apprentices develop in their service to their respective parishes.

I. One essential dimension of the mentor's responsibility is that of enabling the apprentice to serve various aspects of the parish's catechetical programming, including those aspects for which other parish staff members may be responsible. As a result of the mentor's collaborative efforts with other parish staff members, the apprentice, over time, participates in diverse opportunities for serving catechesis in the parish. The mentor's role in this regard is often referred to as that of a "broker" or

“clearinghouse” on behalf of the apprentice.

J. For developing and strengthening a working relationship, the mentor should be available for informal conversation with the apprentice on a regular basis, supported by periodic meetings as program needs demand. The mentor will also need to be available for periodic conversation (as requested and as needed) with the Echo staff.