



The Purpose of the Help Team

The Arizona-California District Help Team will provide spiritual, emotional and material assistance to called workers and their families who leave the public ministry of the gospel prematurely for whatever reasons. The assistance may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Assistance in arranging for employment
- Financial counseling
- Spiritual, emotional, marriage and family counseling
- Facilitating and coordinating special financial assistance in cooperation with the district presidium
- Encouragement to the called workers of the WELS to show Christ-like love and compassion to these men and women and their families who are no longer serving in the public ministry of our church body

Leaving the ministry early may be the result of some difficulty or crisis in the life or ministry of called workers or their families. There may also be cases where church discipline has been applied. Relations with the former called worker and the district leaders may become strained. The district Help Team stands ready to provide love and support, not in place of other called workers and district leaders, but as "first responders" to this important need, and as examples for the rest of the called workers to follow.

Functioning of the Help Team

Structure

The district Help Team will consist of a chairman, who is an active parish pastor, plus one pastor or pastor emeritus and one teacher or teacher emeritus from each of the five conferences of the district: Apache, Black Canyon, California North, California South, and Gadsden. The chairman will be elected by the delegates at the district convention. His term of office is six (6) years, and he may succeed himself once. The rest of the pastors and teachers on the team will be elected at their respective conferences. Their terms are also six (6) years, and they may succeed themselves once.

Each pair of Help Team members within a conference will work together to build and maintain a list of resource people in their geographical area who are willing to work with called workers who leave the ministry, which would include, but not be limited to, at least one of each of the following: financial counselor, employment counselor, psychological counselor, and female teacher.

Funding for this program could be initiated through a portion of the offering from the opening service of the district convention at which the Help Team is authorized. Continued support will come from a portion of the yearly district assessment and will be administered by the district secretary and the district Help Team chairman.

Procedure

1. A member of the district presidium will notify the chairman of the Help Team committee whenever a called worker has resigned. (The Help Team should also monitor synod call reports and periodic reports of the district president to keep abreast of called workers leaving the ministry.) This notification will include whatever information the presidium considers necessary for the chairman to know.
2. The chairman of the committee will make the first contact with the called worker within 24 hours of this notification. This initial contact will normally be by phone call to the worker to arrange an initial face-to-face meeting. Initial contact should not be made using e-mail, texting, tweeting, Facebook, or other social media. The purpose of the first contact by the Help Team chairman will be to inform the workers and their families of the availability of professional and financial counseling and to determine the appropriate members of the district Help Team to assist the former worker with these issues.
3. Based on this contact, the chairman will assign further contacts to other team members and resource people as he deems necessary to the individual situation.
4. The chairman will report to the presidium within 48 hours of the first notification as to the progress of the case.

Other Functions of the district Help Team

Information

All called workers who are serving in the ministry of our district will be informed that the district Help Team is available and functioning, so that if they should find themselves in need of its assistance, they will be aware that this team exists and thus are not surprised by the initial contact.

The district may also be concerned that the Help Team not interfere in any scripturally-based disciplinary processes that may be in process. Clear and open information from the district Help Team itself about its work will assure their brothers and sisters that such interference will not take place.

To facilitate this education, the Help Team chairman will make these guidelines available to each circuit pastor of the district and offer to make detailed presentations at the district, conference, or circuit level.

Care and Concern

The Help Team will encourage all called workers to remember the love and fellowship they have shared with brothers who are no longer in the ministry and their families. Even if those workers or families have left due to sin or due to the severing of confessional fellowship with us, we are all still called to demonstrate the love of Christ to one another, as guided by the Holy Scriptures. The Help Team will encourage all called workers to demonstrate Christian love and concern by taking the initiative and reaching out to those people with whom they have shared those ties.

Pitfalls to be avoided

Interference with the appeals process

The synodical and district constitutions place the responsibility for dealing with appeals in the hands of the district or synodical Board of Appeals. The Arizona-California Help Team will not involve itself in any way in these activities.

Not mediators

The Help Team will not exist to serve as advocate or mediator with the district or synodical administrative structure. It will not represent pastors or other workers to mission boards, boards of control, or other committees or bodies.

The Eighth Commandment

In counseling, there is a difference between dealing with emotional and spiritual issues and engaging in gossip that violates the Eighth Commandment. The Help Team is not part of the disciplinary process of the synod or district. All members of the Help Team will avoid leading former workers into temptation by participating in discussions that slander others. In addition, members will always respect and honor the confidence of the workers and their families.

Secular Counseling

The Help Team is not a psychological or emotional counseling service. Its tools are law and gospel, shared in Christian love. If a former worker or a former worker's family needs professional counseling, the chairman of the Help Team will recommend that they pursue such counseling with a qualified counselor.