



For more information on vocation trends, statistics, and related resources, go to NRVC.net.

AT A GLANCE

Steps for leadership in effective vocation ministry

1. Prioritize vocation ministry and formation as essential to the growth of the community
2. Appoint highly capable people to vocation ministry
3. Provide your vocation director and team with education, resources, and accountability
4. Facilitate a corporate responsibility for promoting the future
5. Read and apply learnings from academic research about vocations to religious life

Key characteristics of new entrants to religious life

- **ENDLESS CALL:** Men and women continue to respond to the call to religious life
- **APPEAL:** Drawn by prayer, spirituality, charism, community life, and mission
- **ATTRIBUTES:** Culturally diverse; embrace intercultural and intergenerational living
- **LIFESTYLE:** Committed to living simply and in solidarity with the poor
- **OUTLOOK:** Filled with abundant hope for religious life amid changing demographics

Based on the 2020 Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life. Find the complete study and companion materials at NRVC.net (<https://nrvc.net/509/publication/9180-2020-study-on-recent-vocations-to-religious-life>)

ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP IN VOCATION MINISTRY

Religious life is a vivid narrative of transformation, accompaniment, and perseverance. While every vocation is grounded in a unique call and response, some general guidelines for successful vocation promotion can be gleaned from research, including the NRVC/CARA 2020 Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life. Based on its extensive research, NRVC recommends that those in religious leadership take the following steps.

1. Prioritize vocation ministry and formation as essential to the growth of the community

Religious institutes that make vocation ministry a priority and believe in their role in creating a future in their congregations attract and retain new members. Ways to do this include:

- **Have a deep commitment to inviting, incorporating and supporting new members in the congregation;** believe in the vitality of their institute's charism and a desire to instill this belief in their membership; recognize that the best way to nurture a vocation is to ensure that it is strengthened by a solid formation experience.
- **Stay abreast of current vocation statistics,** especially the fact that there are still significant numbers of women and men who are discerning and entering religious life. The majority of religious institutes promote vocations, accept new members, and have serious discerners.
- **Know, recognize, and celebrate major vocation promotion days:** World Day for Consecrated Life (February 2), World Day of Prayer for Vocations (Good Shepherd Sunday), National Vocation Awareness Week (first full week in November), National Catholic Sisters Week (March 8-14) and Religious Brothers Day (May 1).
- **Encourage professed members to participate in discernment events** to build relationships with inquirers to religious life. The example of members is more influential than the ministries of the institute in attracting new members. Likewise, 95 percent of new members report that meeting with members of the institute was the most helpful piece in discerning a call to religious life.

2. Appoint highly capable people to vocation ministry

Religious institutes with a full-time vocation director and support from clerical and communications personnel have a higher number of newer vocations.

- **Ensure that discerners receive the highest standard of care from capable people appointed to this important congregational ministry.** Vocation ministers are entrusted with the privileged and sacred responsibility of accompanying inquirers and assessing candidates as they discern their baptismal call.
- **Choose vocation team members who are outgoing, resilient, and responsible.** Women's institutes are more likely than men's to include a member of the leadership team or a council liaison on the vocation team.
- **Appoint perpetually professed members as vocation directors** as it can be difficult for someone who is still being evaluated in initial formation to be assessing the suitability of discerners. Naturally, those in temporary profession may be part of a vocation team and attend NRVC workshops.
- **Select a vocation director who focuses on possibilities not problems;** a collaborator not a competitor; and a person of prayer, both personally and communally. The average length of service for vocation directors is seven years.

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MORE ABOUT NRVC

NRVC Mission

The National Religious Vocation Conference has a vision to set the world ablaze with the fire of God's love through the prophetic, joyful witness of religious sisters, brothers, and priests as radical disciples of Jesus. Its mission is to serve as a catalyst for vocation discernment and the full flourishing of religious life for the ongoing transformation of the world.

NRVC awarding-winning resources

NRVC publishes HORIZON, a quarterly professional journal—essential for those in vocation ministry or related fields, and VISION Vocation Guide and VocationNetwork.org for those discerning a religious vocation. Find more about these premier publications at NRVC.net (<https://nrvc.net/publication/4459/article/7959-nrvc-periodicals>).

Not a member? Become one today!

Choose to become among the nearly 1,000 active NRVC members who receive professional development, support, and the many benefits of membership, including an annual subscription to our respected HORIZON journal and special ad rates for VISION Vocation Guide, our comprehensive discerner resource.

Financial assistance for membership and workshop fees is available through the NRVC Misericordia Scholarship fund. The NRVC provides leading-edge resources, education, and research to assist religious leadership, vocation directors, and all those who support vocations to religious life.

Learn more at NRVC.net (<https://nrvc.net/publication/4127/article/18446-membership-benefits-fees>).

Testimonials from major superiors

- *We appreciate the materials and conferences NRVC provides for both discerners and vocation personnel. Emphasis on multicultural aspects of community living is especially appreciated.*
- *NRVC is amazing!! They are most diligent in their service to us and needs of members.*
- *We appreciate all your publications, workshops, and training sessions that our vocation and formation personnel have received.*
- *We thank you for your ongoing support for religious as the future unfurls for all congregations.*
- *We value NRVC and appreciate its work, communications, and resources. Thank you!*
- *NRVC is an incredible organization that continues to enhance its services to members as well as adapt to the changing times.*

3. Provide your vocation director and team with education, resources, and accountability

Leadership teams who meet regularly with vocation directors have a higher correlation of newer members.

- **Ensure opportunities for peer supervision and spiritual direction for vocation directors/teams.** Vocation ministry requires continuous commitment to ethical and professional standards. Vocation directors who are given the resources they need to succeed remain in the ministry longer.
- **Encourage vocation ministers to tend to their own vocations,** further develop professional competencies, and participate in continuing education. As the only professional organization for vocation ministry for religious institutes of women and men in the United States, NRVC provides curriculum and opportunities for professional growth through its comprehensive workshops and resources.
- **Allocate adequate resources for vocation ministry,** including time, budget, clerical support, and a network of spiritual, emotional, and professional support. The average annual budget for vocations (excluding salaries) is \$34,000.
- **Outline a clear set of responsibilities for vocation ministers** written in a job description with established channels of accountability to religious leadership. A vocation minister should exhibit a responsible work ethic and be accountable for the resources and time provided for ministry. An annual performance review assists vocation ministers in outlining and achieving goals beyond simply the number of applicants.

4. Facilitate a corporate responsibility for promoting the future

All religious institutes with new members have vocation information on their website or a distinct website for vocations, use social media, and provide or participate in print materials to promote vocations.

- **Ask every member to promote vocations directly.** Women and men are twice as likely to consider a vocation to religious life when invited by another person. The effect is additive. People who are encouraged by three persons are five times more likely to consider a vocation than someone who was not encouraged by anyone.
- **Encourage vowed members to be present among youth and young adults.** The average age a person first considers religious life is 19 years of age. The average age of entrance to religious life is 28. Encouragement from members of their institutes was rated highest among new members when they first considered entering religious life.
- **Sponsor vocation discernment events.** Host discernment retreats, such as Come and Sees, online discernment experiences, and opportunities to meet discerners at prayer, meals, and community gatherings. Religious institutes that sponsor vocation discernment programs directed toward college students and young adults are more likely to have new members than those who do not sponsor programs for these age groups. Post events on NRVC's VISION Vocation Calendar at <https://vocationnetwork.org/en/events>.
- **Consider a team approach.** Expand a single NRVC membership to a license for up to five members so that all five members receive the HORIZON vocation journal, monthly newsletters and updates, and membership discounts on resources and workshops. Attend the biennial NRVC Convocation with your vocation team or send others to support the vocation director at NRVC Member Area events. Learn more at NRVC.net.

5. Read and apply learnings from academic research about vocations to religious life

Provide time on leadership agendas and congregational assembly days for vocation information.

- **Access all NRVC studies** on vocations to religious life and additional reports and analyses related to vocations to religious life at NRVC.net.
- **Download or purchase in bulk a compendium of the 2020 Study on Recent Vocations** along with other vocation resources online at [NRVC.net/store](https://nrvc.net/store).
- **Refer regularly to the NRVC's Vocation Directors Manual,** which contains over 700 articles on topics essential to vocation ministry. It can be accessed by NRVC members at https://nrvc.net/vocation_directors_manual.
- **View continuously updated VISION Vocation Network discerner demographics** and engagement statistics at https://vocationnetwork.org/en/statistics/response_statistics. NRVC's VISION Vocation Guide and VocationNetwork.org allow religious communities to connect with new discerners.

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