

AUTHORIZATION OF LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS

A CARA PROJECT FOR THE CANON LAW SOCIETY OF AMERICA
COLLEGEVILLE, MN
MAY 20-21, 2015



The purpose of this study is to further our understanding of how the AUTHORIZATION process for lay ecclesial ministry is implemented in arch/dioceses in the United States. The study focuses on the authorization relationship between the hierarchy and the lay ecclesial minister in the parish – lay ecclesial ministry positions at the diocesan level are not addressed by this study.

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BACKGROUND & METHODS



- Summer 2012 CLSA commissioned CARA to study how the authorization process for lay ecclesial ministry is implemented in dioceses across the United States
- CARA and CLSA designed a questionnaire, which CARA programmed and hosted online
- CLSA identified 75 potential respondents from CARA's database of lay ministry offices and lay formation programs that were deemed representative of all
- Bishops notified by letter from CLSA; survey fielded Sept-Oct 2012; achieved a 60 percent response

Very limited budget for this project

Non-random sample of less than half of all lay formation programs – nearly all were diocesan certificate programs

Not representative but still informative

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OFFICE OF LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY

RATIONALE AND STRUCTURE



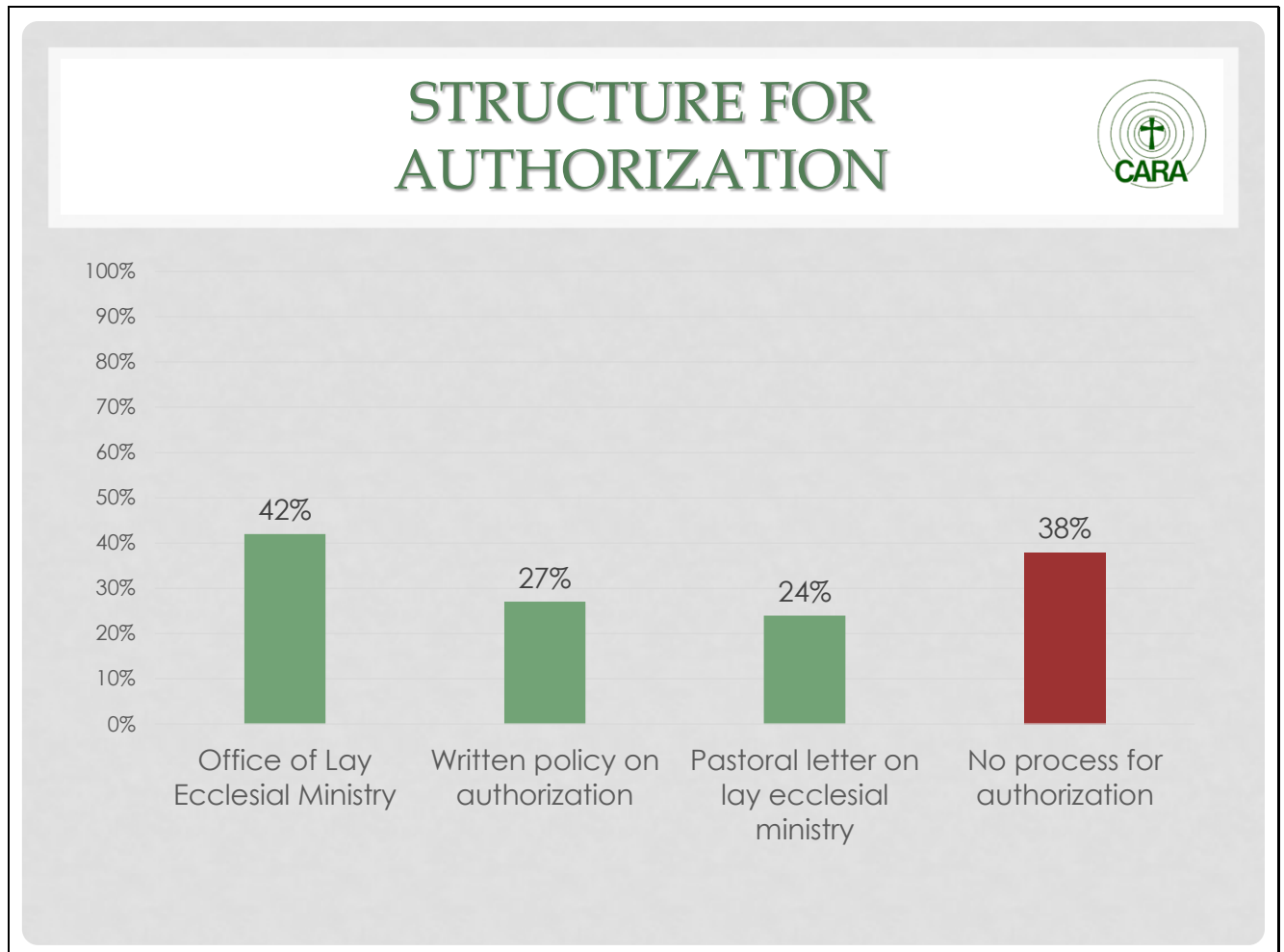
RATIONALE FOR AUTHORIZATION



At least 3 in 4 responding dioceses say these are at least “somewhat” important aspects of the authentication process:

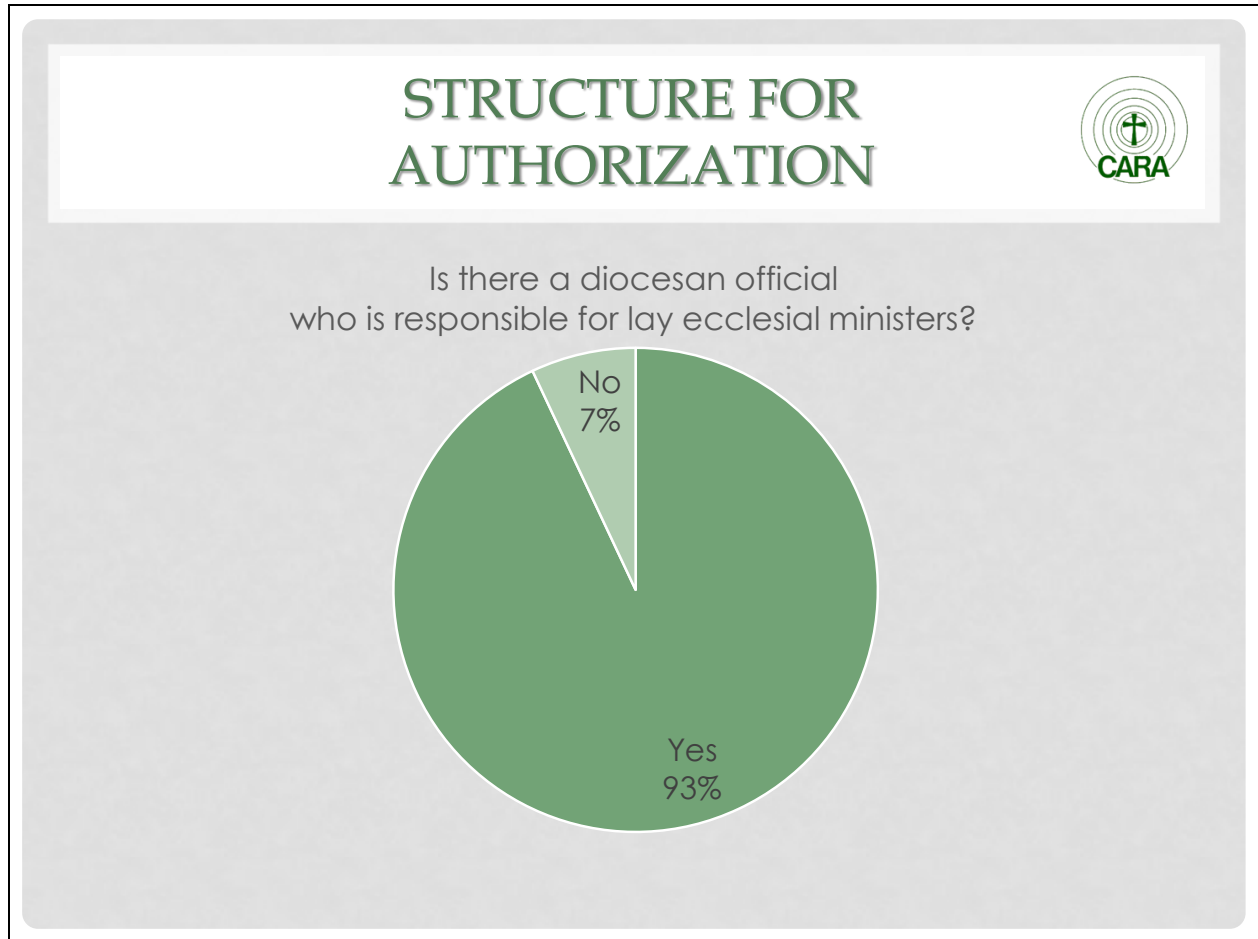
- Ensures adequate ecclesiastical oversight
- Assures proper training and formation
- Public validation and support for lay minister
- Grants the right to serve in public ministry
- Strengthens the bishop/minister relationship

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Which of these steps has your diocese established for structuring the authorization of lay ecclesial ministry?

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Dioceses that said they have no process for authorizing lay ecclesial ministry were excluded from this question.

AUTHORIZED LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRIES



Which of these are authorized lay ecclesial ministries in your arch/diocese?

Percentage responding among those who have a process for authorizing

Pastoral associate	51%
Religious education for children/youth	51
Youth ministry	47
Adult faith formation/RCIA	40
Liturgical and/or music ministry	36
Young adult ministry	33
Pastoral care of the sick	27
Bereavement ministry	24
Evangelization	20
Other	36

Others include campus minister, hospital chaplain, parish life coordinator, parish business administrator, etc.

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PLACEMENT OF LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS



In what ways does the arch/diocese assist in placement of lay ecclesial ministers in parish positions?

Percentage Responding

Recommends lay ecclesial ministers to pastors who inquire	67%
Maintains a list of authorized ministers for parishes	29
Responsible for all HR related to lay ecclesial ministry	20
Maintains a placement office for LEM openings	9
No involvement in placement	44

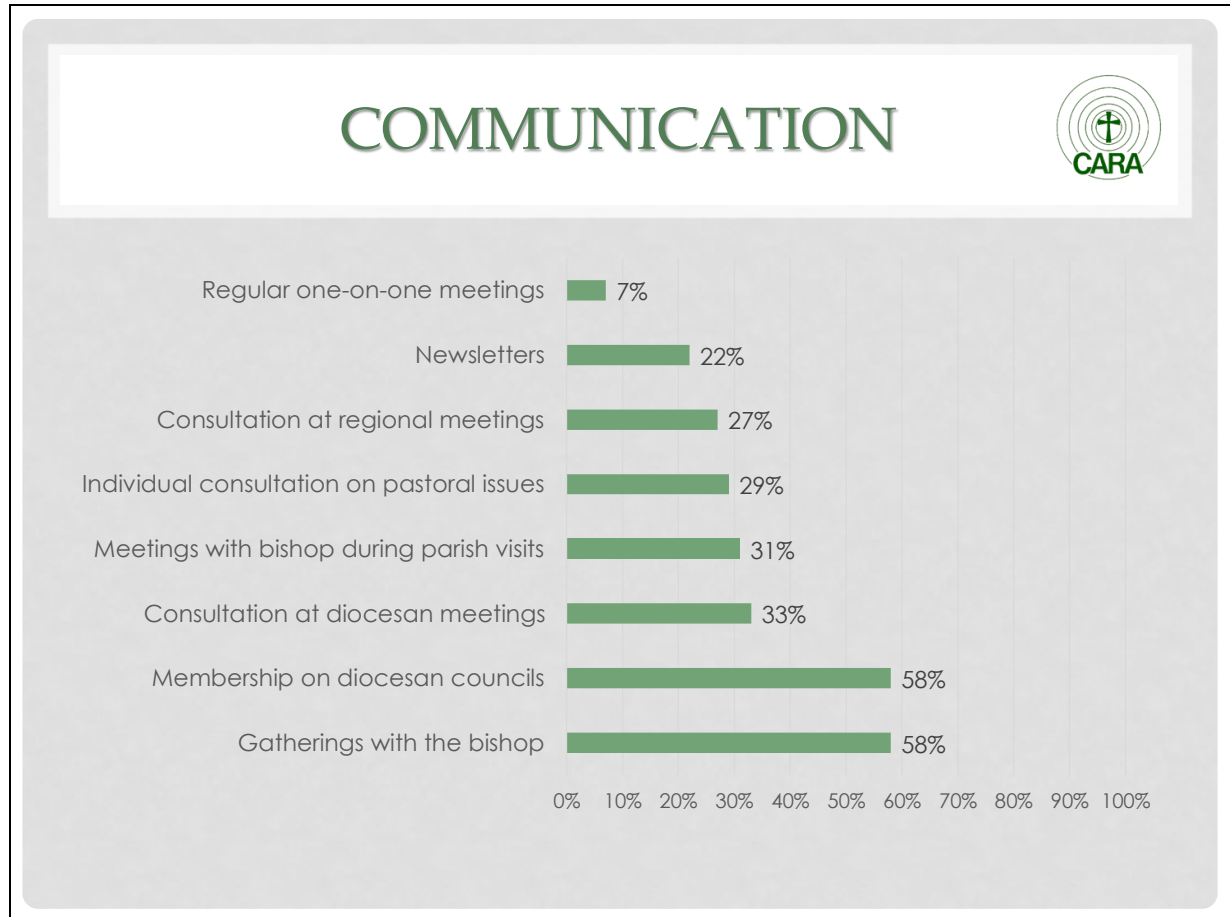
In addition:

Six in ten provide a grievance process for lay ecclesial ministers

Just over half provide a process for terminating a lay ecclesial minister

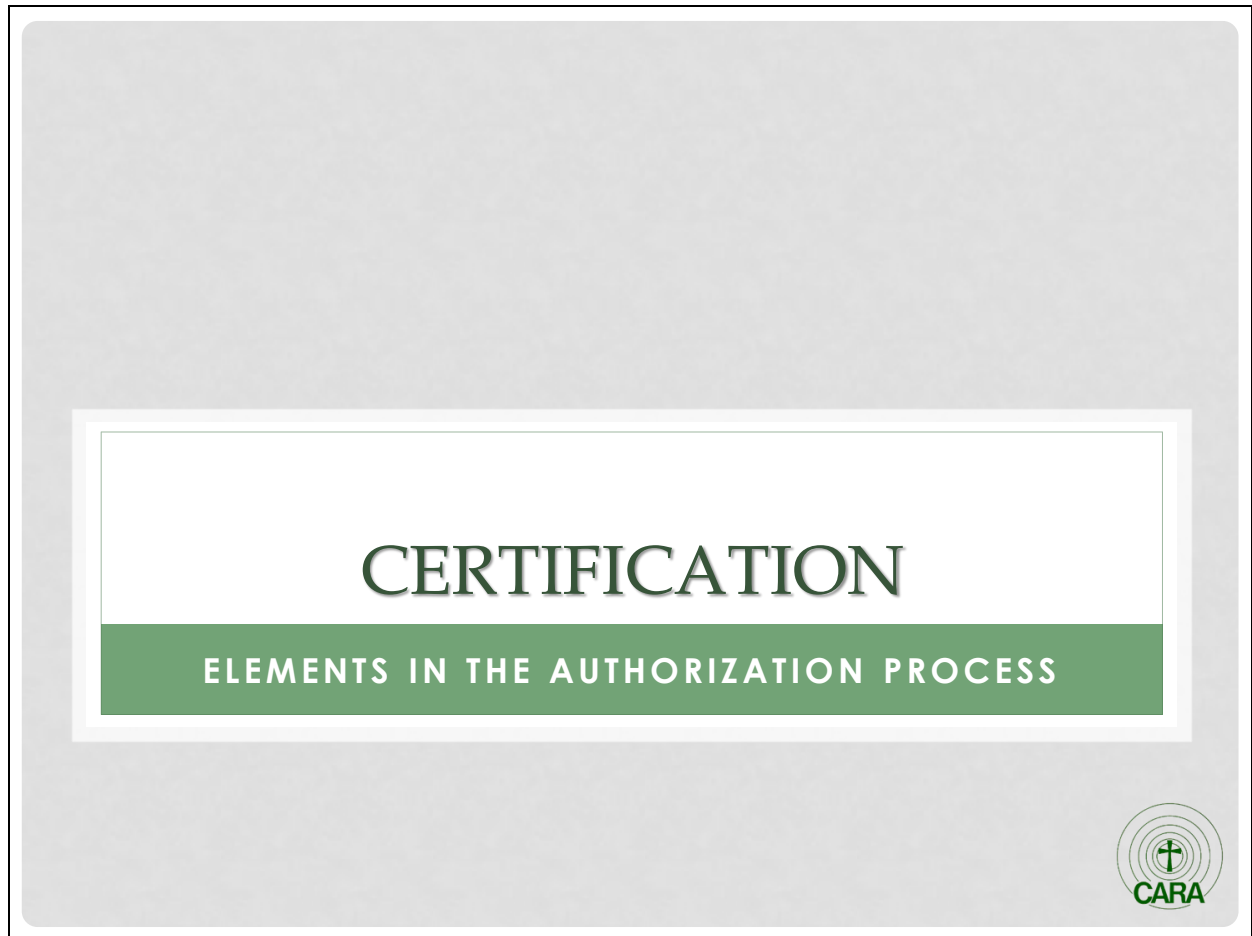
One in ten provide a process for transferring LEM from one parish to another

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Which of the following does the bishop use in his communication with lay ecclesial ministers?

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I. Certification is a process that documents the attainment of specific standards and competencies required for the fulfillment of a specialized ecclesial ministry. It requires a process for assessing that a given candidate has the education, formation, and professional skills necessary to serve in a particular role.

FORMATION PROGRAMS



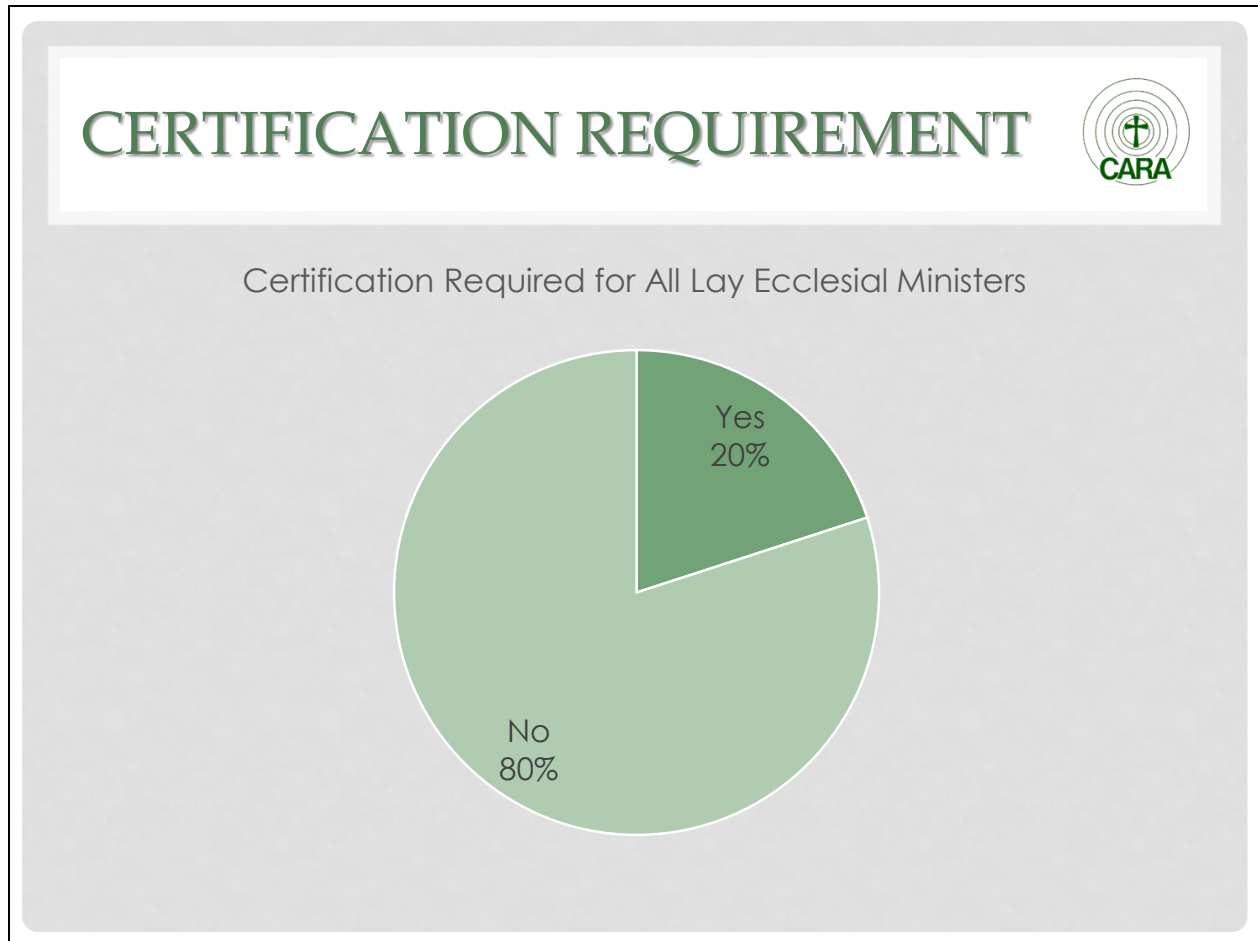
Type of Ministry Formation Program Offered

Percentage Responding

Diocesan sponsored certificate program; no degree offered	77%
Combined certificate/degree program	46
Degree program associated with a Catholic college/university	46
Degree program associated with a Catholic seminary or School of Theology	26

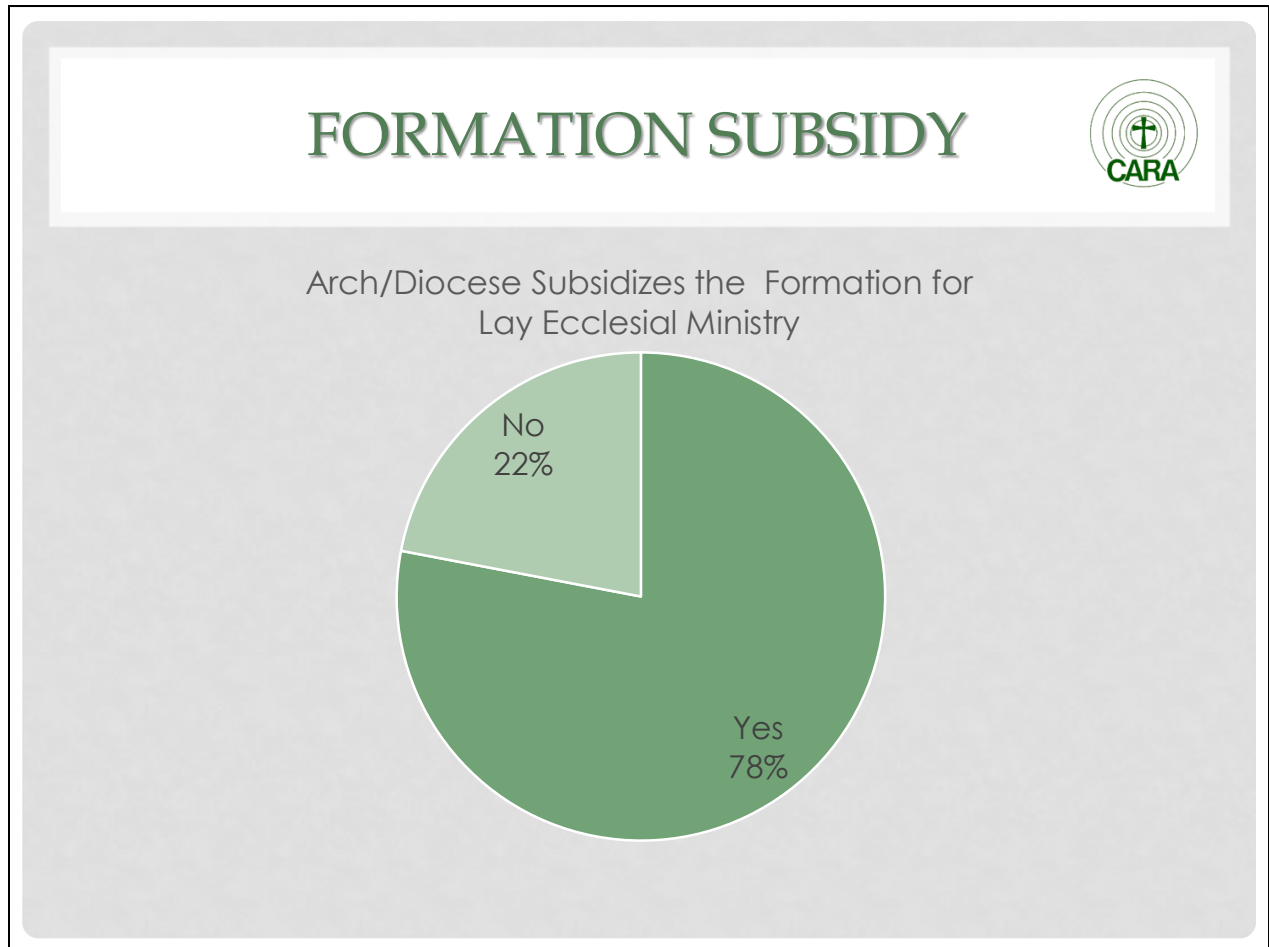
Almost 8 in 10 responding dioceses say they have their own formation program for lay ecclesial ministry.

Among these responding dioceses, almost half have a combined degree/certificate program.



Among the 20 percent that do require certification for all lay ministers

- Two in three waive the requirement for previous experience or other qualifications
- Four in ten waive it for service that predates the diocesan policy on certification
- One in three waive it for current enrollment, recommendation by the pastor, or pastoral need



A fifth of those that do subsidize say that the cost is divided three ways among the diocese, the parish, and the lay ministry

About a tenth say that the diocese pays half and the lay minister pays half

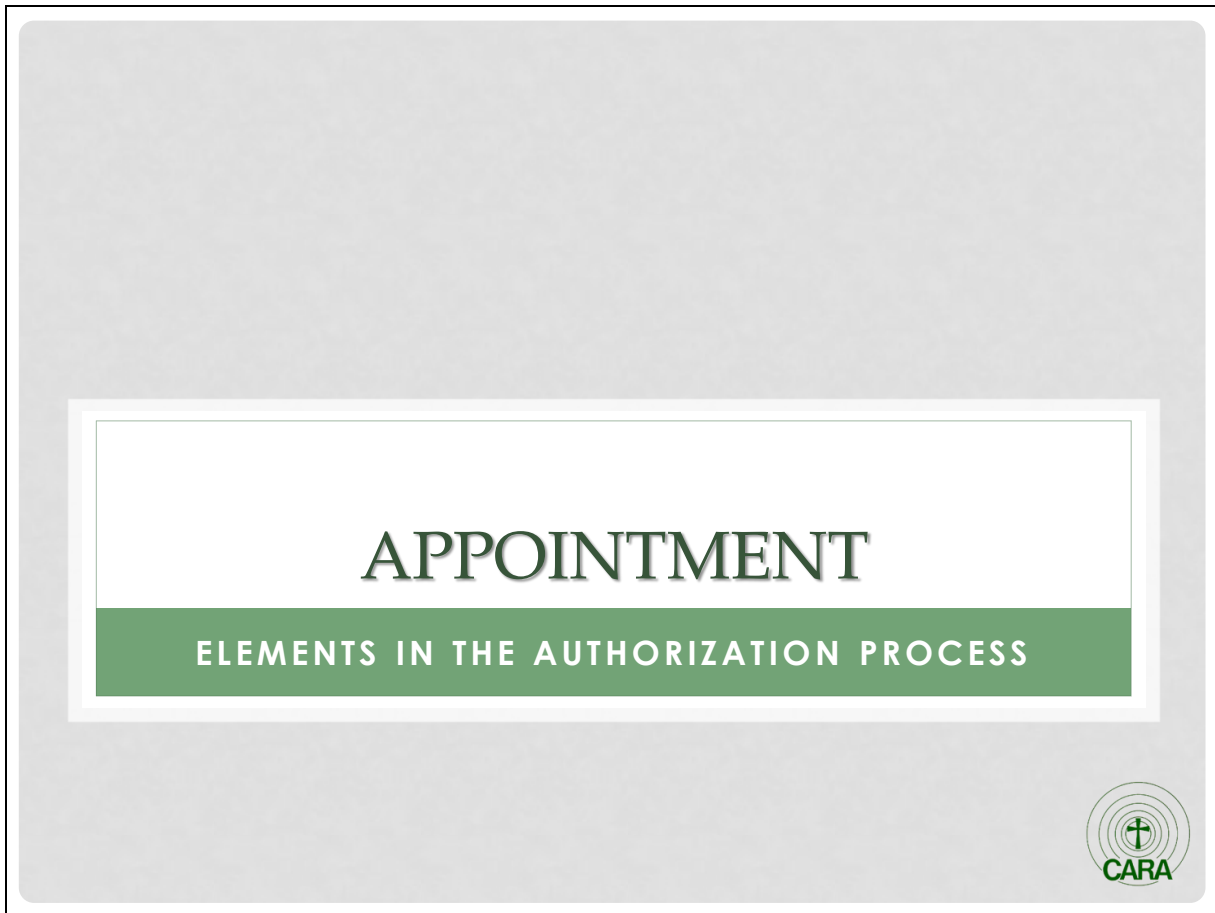
Some of the other alternatives mentioned include scholarships offered through the diocese or the parish, grants and loans, tuition reduction for demonstrated need, and subsidy for Spanish language program only

ASPECTS OF CERTIFICATION




Does your arch/diocese participate in a regional certification process for its lay ecclesial ministers (e.g. Minnesota Catholic Education Association Certification process)?	9%
Does your arch/diocese participate in a national certification process for its lay ecclesial ministers (e.g. The Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers)?	20
Does your arch/diocese accept a lay ecclesial minister who has a certification for lay ecclesial ministry from another arch/diocese?	83
Does your arch/diocese charge a fee for certification?	16
Does certification for lay ecclesial ministry expire after a given time period?	27
Does your arch/diocese <u>offer</u> ongoing formation for lay ecclesial ministers?	87
Does your arch/diocese <u>require</u> ongoing formation for lay ecclesial ministers?	42

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II. Appointment of an individual lay ecclesial minister for a specific ministerial role is also called “commissioning” in some dioceses. Appointment includes a delineation of the obligations, responsibilities, and authority of that position as well as the length of term, if specified.

ASPECTS OF APPOINTMENT		
		
What proportion of parish lay ecclesial ministers serving in the arch/diocese have:		
Percentage Responding		
	"Many (51 – 74 %)" or "Most or all (more than 75%)"	"Most or all (more than 75%)" Only
A written job description	51%	19%
A periodic, written evaluation of their ministry	21	2
A contract for their position	17	12
An official appointment to their position by the arch/bishop	8	5
A set term of appointment with provision for renewal	4	2

Half of responding dioceses say that at least half of their LEMs have a written job description.


Nearly nine in ten responding dioceses say that less than a quarter of their LEMs have an official appointment to their position by the bishop. Just 5 percent say that most or all of their LEMs have an appointment by the bishop.

One in five responding dioceses say that at least half of their LEMs have a contract for their position, but more than half say that less than a quarter of their LEMs operate under a contract.

HIRING		
What proportion of parish lay ecclesial ministers serving in the arch/diocese are:		
Percentage Responding		
	"Many (51 – 74 %)" or "Most or all (more than 75%)"	"Most or all (more than 75%)" Only
Hired by the pastor of the parish in which they serve	86%	67%
Hired by another arch/diocesan official	0	0
Hired by the arch/bishop	3	0
Serving as a lay ecclesial minister in a volunteer capacity	29	12
Serving in a part-time paid ministry position	19	0
Serving in a full-time paid ministry position	40	7

The most common practice is for the pastor to hire the LEMs. Two in three say that "most or all" of their LEMs were hired by the pastor. Very few are hired by the bishop or by another diocesan official.

In terms of employment, the most common practice is full-time employment. Four in ten respondents say that at least half of their LEMs are in full-time paid ministry positions. The second most common practice, though, is volunteer ministry. Three in ten respondents say that at least half of their LEMs are serving in a volunteer capacity. Less common is part-time paid ministry. A fifth of respondents say that at least half of their LEMs are in part-time paid ministry.

ASPECTS OF APPOINTMENT	
	
Which of these are included in the appointment process for parish lay ecclesial ministers?	
Percentage Responding	
Verification of safe environment training	91%
Criminal background check	89
Formal interview of the applicant by the pastor	80
Investigation of previous employment or contact with previous employers	67
Arch/diocesan review of the applicant's qualifications for the position	29
Formal interview of the applicant by the arch/bishop or his delegate	27
Formal letter of appointment from the arch/bishop or his delegate	20
Formal letter of appointment from the pastor	20
Oath or profession of faith	11
Letter from the pastor to the arch/bishop, proposing the lay ecclesial minister for authorization	9

The interview is most commonly conducted by the parish: 8 in 10 respondents say this is part of the appointment process. Just over a quarter include an interview by the bishop or his delegate.

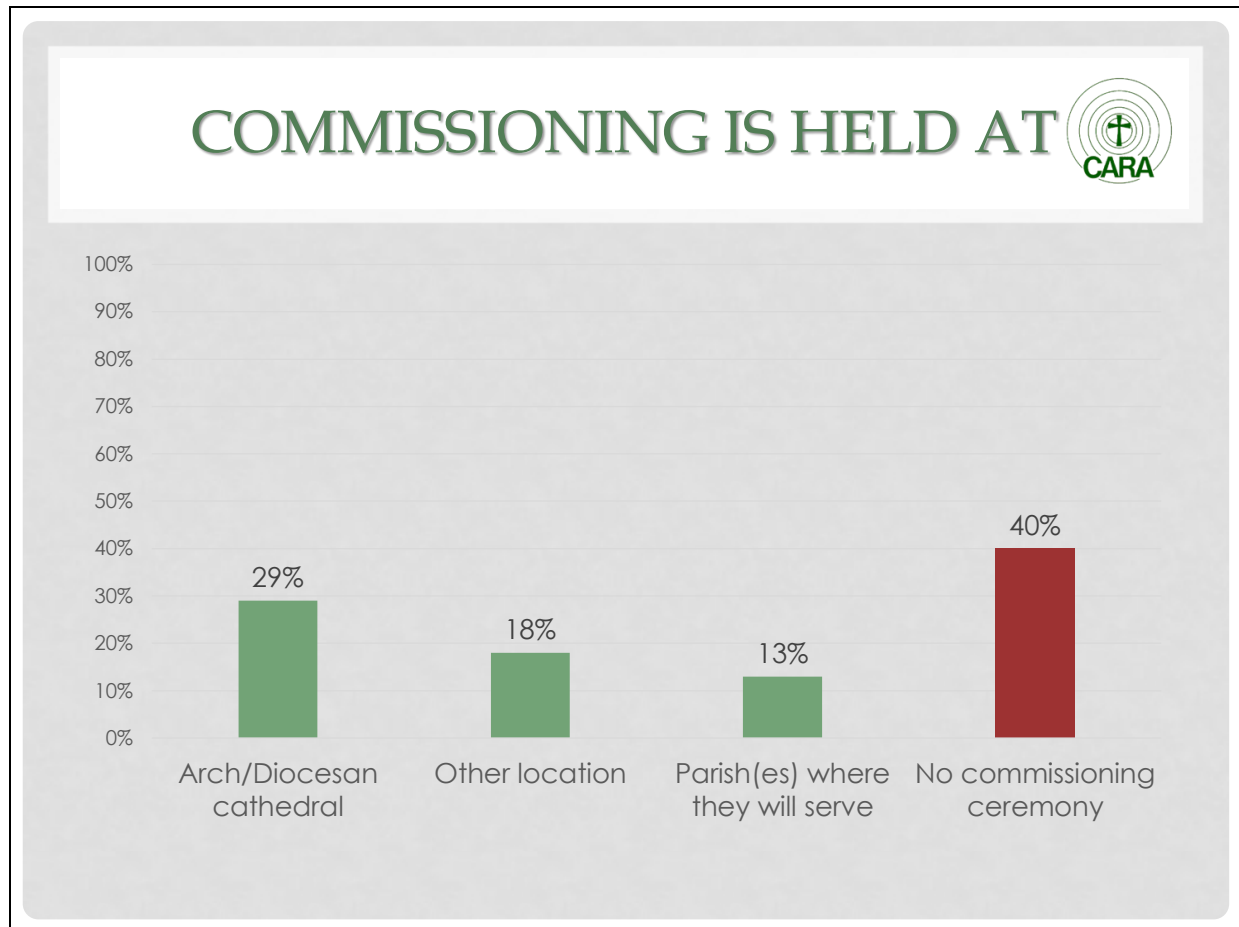
Nearly all do a criminal background check and a verification that the applicant has completed safe environment training.

Less common aspects:

One in five issue a formal letter of appointment, either from the pastor or from the bishop

One in ten require an oath or profession of faith

One in ten include a letter from the pastor to the bishop, proposing the LEM for authorization



Four in ten responding dioceses have no commissioning ceremony or public installation. Those that do have a commissioning ceremony most typically hold the commissioning at the cathedral. About one in seven hold the commissioning at the local parish(es) where the LEMs will serve and one in five hold it at some other location.

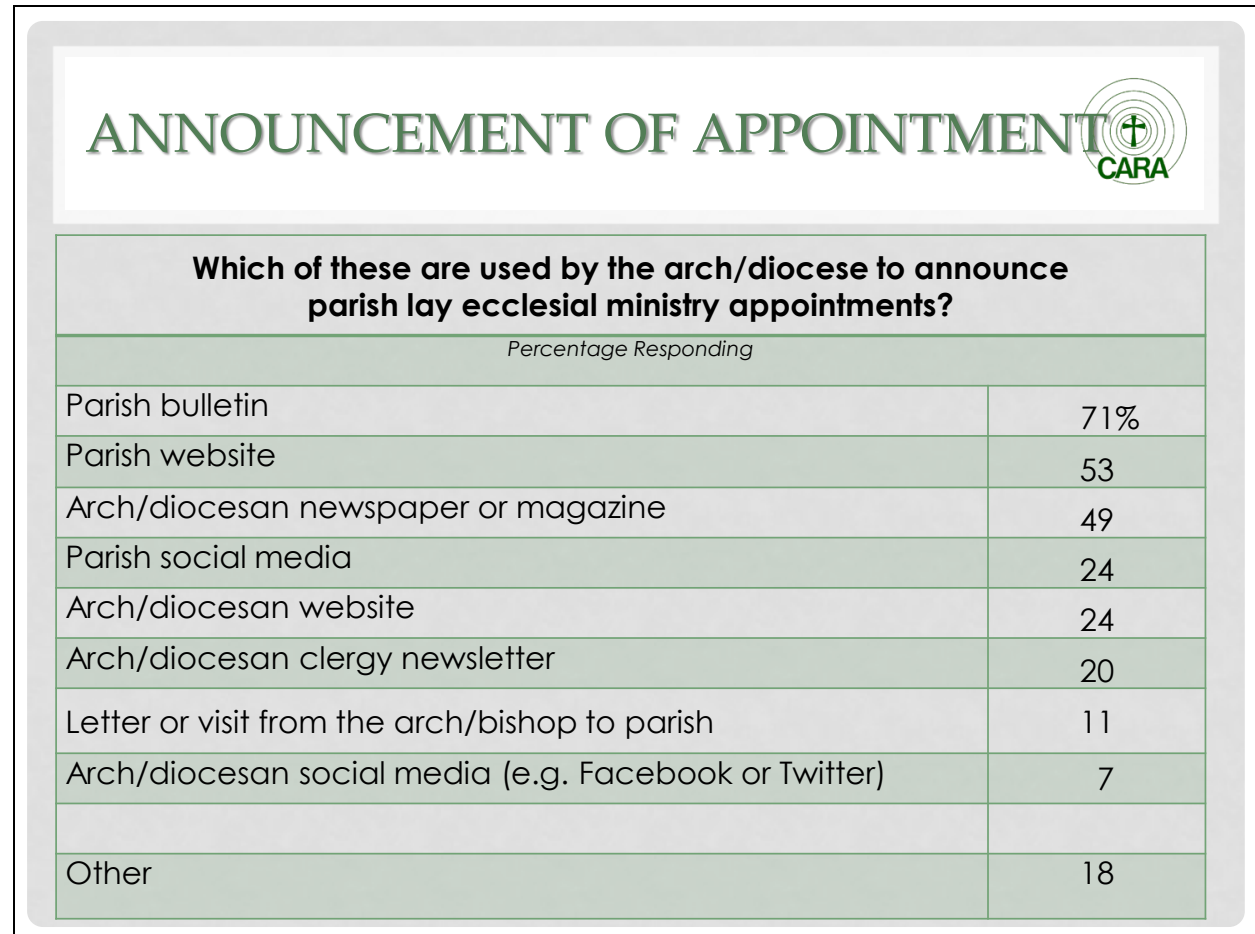
Among those that do have a formal commissioning ceremony or public installation, about a third say this takes place after certification of the LEM. The same proportion say that the commissioning is independent of hiring (typically it takes place at an annual commissioning ceremony for lay ecclesial ministers).

Just under half say the bishop presides at the commissioning ceremony. A fifth say it is the pastor who presides at a commissioning for lay ministers of the parish.

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III. Announcement is the means by which the community is informed of the lay ecclesial minister's authorization to serve. "The means used to announce an appointment to lay ecclesial ministry can follow the procedures used in announcing other similar personnel changes within the diocese." (*Co-Workers*, p. 58)



The announcement of new lay ministry appointments is most commonly made through the parish bulletin. About half announce new appointments through a parish website or the diocesan paper.

A quarter use parish social media and/or the diocesan website to announce appointments. A fifth announce these appointments in the diocesan clergy newsletter.

A letter or a visit from the bishop to the parish is a less common form of announcement. Very few use other diocesan social media to announce these appointments.

QUESTIONS?

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