



Sisters AGING WELL Together

A Privileged Ministry Within Ministry: A Practical Approach



A Geriatric Certificate Program for US Women Religious Congregations



A GERIATRIC CERTIFICATE PROGRAM FOR US WOMEN RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

It is essential for Community leaders and those responsible for elder care within their Communities to have the appropriate knowledge, information, and resources to support the culture of religious life and foster the continued well-being and growth of each elder in the context of both the current times and those of the future. What decisions are needed to support the culture and ensure long-term benefits for the entire Community?

It is the experience of The Avila Institute of Gerontology that religious Communities can benefit by coming together to collaborate, share, and discuss ways to support the culture of religious life and the well-being of sisters with great sensitivity to both elder members and the Community at large. This certificate program provides Communities with practical information that addresses our current lived reality and offers guidance to plan strategically, ensuring that Communities can continue to thrive. The four-day in-person program will address these issues.

See the topic descriptions on pages 4-6.

SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE

The scholarship, valued at \$2,000 per sister, covers the following:

In-Person Geriatric Certificate Program Training

An in-person Geriatric Certificate Program (GCP) for women religious congregations **over a four-day period**, including room and board (travel and local transportation are not included).

See available dates and locations on page 3.

Available One-Hour Virtual Discussion Every Other Month

Every other month, a one-hour virtual discussion on the following topics:

- Customized content based on participants' pressing needs to be identified throughout the discussions.
- Continued training on the AIG Care Transitions Assessment tool (CTA) and interpreting the results.

Access to the AIG Online Subscription Library

- Free access to all programs and Religious Community specific content for one year.

SCHOLARSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for a scholarship, applicants must commit to the following:

- Attend and actively participate at the four-day Geriatric Certificate program.
- Attend and actively participate in at least one of the every other month virtual discussions following GCP attendance.
- Implement at least one part of the CTA within their Community and report back on the results.
- Train at least five (5) other sisters and report back on the results.
- Complete and submit all pre/post-tests and surveys.
- Utilize the AIG online learning library.
- Complete and submit a reflection paper.



REGISTRATION AND SCHOLARSHIPS

***Thanks to the generosity of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
scholarships are available.***

Our objective is to distribute scholarships to sisters in as many Communities as possible.

If you would like to be considered for a scholarship, please complete and submit the online registration form (<https://forms.office.com/r/3XkP4ChBQW>) or print and complete the form on page 7.

- *Scholarship forms are to be completed and sent by each GCP Program Scholarship Deadline listed below.*
- All registrants will be notified whether they are receiving a scholarship within two weeks of registration form receipt.

If you plan to attend and are not seeking a scholarship, please complete the form on page 7 and send with your payment.

Space is limited, so please do not delay in submitting your registration form.

2025 DATE AND LOCATION

**Tuesday - Friday
July 8-11, 2025**

Bon Secours Retreat & Conference Center

1525 Marriottsville Rd., Marriottsville, MD 21104
www.rccbbonsecours.com

Scholarship deadline
May 2, 2025

Day One begins with lunch at 12:00 p.m. Day Four ends at 1:00 p.m.



CONFERENCE OVERVIEW AND SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

DAY 1

KEYNOTE – The Privilege of Being Called an Elder

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

Do we see being an “elder” as a privilege? Do we fear this term? In order to address one’s fears about aging, it is essential to first name those fears. This interactive session will allow us to come to terms with our own fears of aging and ascertain if we are prepared to answer those fears so we can minister to others.

Impact of Change and Stress as We Transition in Life and Ministry

Francis Battisti, Ph.D.

Helen E. Battisti, Ph.D., RDN, CDN

Routine and tradition are an important part of one’s identity. This is especially true for those who have lived Community Life for a large part of their adulthood. Many have been part of their Community for 60 or 70 years - and beyond!

Aging often brings about changes in people’s lives that require a transition into a new way of living and serving. These changes can be quite stressful because they necessitate leaving behind or altering certain actions, routines, and traditions.

In this session, we will discuss coping with change and how we can navigate the impact it has on the elders we serve. Strategies for combatting the stress associated with moving from independence to dependence will be discussed.

Discussion

Shane Cooney, BA

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

DAY 2

The Transformation of Aging – Understanding Normal Aging

Alfred Norwood, MBA, BS

As we age, we tend to experience changes in our physical and cognitive abilities. For many, this means a slowdown in some of our functions. Today, we view those near the age of 65 to be in the beginning stages of that slowdown, with gradual decline occurring in the years thereafter. But some people experience decline that is considered beyond normal aging, particularly with regard to the decline in cognitive skills associated with dementia.

In this session, we will discuss the differences between normal aging and abnormal aging, steps that we can take now to address risk factors for abnormal aging, and how Communities can develop a plan to provide the appropriate care for members as they age and continue to transform to their best selves.

Culture of Care

Clare L. Horn, LCSW

Person-centered care is a method of providing care for the person in alignment with her needs, preferences, history, and beliefs. A culture of care that accounts for all of these considerations for each individual member while maintaining the stability of the whole Community is an essential ingredient in the person-centered care recipe.

In this session, we will discuss the foundational principles of person-centered care in the context of religious life, methods for assessing the culture of care within a Community, and how to support Community Members as they age in continuing to build relationships with self, God, others, and all creation.

**DAY 2, continued****Being vs Doing: What Brings Meaning to My Life Now?****Clare L. Horn, LCSW**

As we age, changes in our bodies and mind can limit our abilities to serve in the ways that we are used to, which may mean that the ways in which we find our purpose must also change. Those who live very active lives can sometimes have a difficult time “winding down” and finding alternative ways to stay involved in religious life. Did my position define who I am? In this session, we will discuss how we can begin to discover the value in moving from “doing” to “being.”

Managing Conflict Within Community Life**Fr. Quinn R. Conners, O.Carm., PhD**

Those living in religious Community must be prepared at times to have difficult conversations with each other in order to bring forward the voices, opinions, feelings, and ideas to generate solutions that manage conflict, which is what we call our reaction to unmet needs.

In this session, we will explore the skills and approaches Community members need to effectively respond to conflict. A discussion of congregational culture, common sources of conflict, and practical tools for engaging in uncomfortable or difficult conversations is included.

**PRAISE for
Sisters Aging Well Together**

*Great Conference! Presents a holistic integration of concepts, skills, and resources to assist in caring for our elders.
Thank You!*

**Recognizing when Death is Near:
Preparing for Grief****Sr. Lois Wetzel, O.Carm., RN, BSN**

In “Recognizing Signs When Death Is Near,” participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of end-of-life care. The session will cover essential topics such as creating a comfortable environment for the dying, the importance of presence as a form of care, and effective communication strategies to support both the person and their loved ones during the death vigil.

The presentation will provide greater insight into the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services in end-of-life situations.

The Gift of the Moment and Self-Care**Francis Battisti, Ph.D.****Helen E. Battisti, Ph.D., RDN, CDN****DAY 3****Letting Go – Loss, Grief, Finding Meaning in Life, and Staying Connected****Francis Battisti, Ph.D.****Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.****Sr. Mary O’Donovan, O.Carm.**

As we age, it is expected that we will lose things – health, independence, loved ones and friends, and even meaning. These losses often produce grief as we remember and miss those things that once brought us joy and peace. Grief is a normal part of the aging process, but how we handle that grief plays a big part in our overall health and well-being. It is important to recognize and confront the emotions that we experience following a loss in a way that allows us to process grief, practice self-care, and continue moving forward on the journey.



In this session, we will discuss the experiences of loss, of grief, how to help others find meaning in life when one is grieving, and the importance of staying connected to those who have journeyed with you.

Discussion

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

**Is it Care-Giving or Care-Partnering?
Discussion**

Alfred Norwood, MBA, BS

Clare Horn, LCSW

Francis Battisti, Ph.D.

Helen E. Battisti, Ph.D., RDN, CDN

Shane Cooney, BA

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm

In our elder years, understanding the story of our lives more deeply can bring us comfort, peace, and wisdom. Having an awareness that one is on a journey – both internally and externally – and how that journey has brought us to the current day can help to alleviate the stress associated with age-related transitions.

In this session, we will discuss the importance of honoring one's story and the benefit of conducting a life review, so we transform from a caregiver to a care-partner. In this transformation, we begin to understand the importance of self-care as part of care-partnering.

Forming a Care Team

Alfred Norwood, MBA, BS

Shane Cooney, BA

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

A holistic approach of care requires a team that provides pastoral, spiritual, medical, social, physical, cognitive, and psychological care. This team can provide insights into the various needs of the individual and how the Community can respond to those needs. In this session, we will discuss how to form the care team, what areas of expertise are needed, and what actions the team must take to plan for future needs.

DAY 4

**An Assessment Tool Designed
for Care Transitions**

Shane Cooney, BA

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

Accurate assessment of the health and wellness needs of both individual members and the Community as a whole is an essential component in the sustainability of any religious Community.

In this session, we will discuss how to utilize the AIG Care Transitions tool, a dynamic measurement instrument that produces a snapshot of the entire Community at the time of assessment while also gathering data that will help the Community identify current and future issues related to care and transition. Knowing that each Community will have its own unique set of goals and challenges during transition, the material is organized in sections that are to be used when needed for specific situations.

**POST-CONFERENCE
VIRTUAL DISCUSSIONS**

Follow Up and Implementation

Discussion groups will take place every two months for a period of six months via video meeting. Discussions will be facilitated by members of the Avila Institute of Gerontology on topics that participants identified for further education.

Each meeting will be an interactive session that requires the participation of all program attendees in order to accurately identify ongoing educational needs.

In addition, members of the AIG Team will be available to help implement a system for assessing the needs of Communities and suggest various considerations and determinations that must be made to support the development of a strategic plan to help them achieve their goals.



REGISTRATION | GERIATRIC CERTIFICATE PROGRAM TRAINING

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please print clearly.

Date: _____

NAME (First and Last Name): _____

Badge Name: _____

Position / Title: _____

Congregation: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____ Sign me up for emails regarding future programs

Do you have any dietary restrictions we need to be aware of? No Yes _____

DIRECTIONS

Thoroughly complete this form and return with check (if applicable) to:

Avila Institute of Gerontology, Inc.
600 Woods Rd.
Germantown, NY 12526
tonys@avilainstitute.org
Or fax to: (518) 537-4725

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINES

Our objective is to distribute scholarships to sisters in as many Communities as possible.

To be considered for a scholarship, return this form by the scholarship deadline date listed for the GCP Four-Day Training you are planning to attend.

All registrants will be notified whether they are receiving a scholarship within two weeks of registration form receipt.

Payment Include a check for \$2,000 payable to the "Avila Institute of Gerontology, Inc."

Have questions?
Call Deacon Tony at
518-537-5000.

DATES AND LOCATIONS (SPACE IS LIMITED)

In-Person Geriatric Certificate Program (GCP) Training

Please indicate the date/location you would like to attend.

	Scholarship Deadline
July 8-11, 2025 Marriottsville, MD Bon Secours Retreat & Conference Center	May 2, 2025

SCHOLARSHIPS/ PAYMENT Thanks to the generosity of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, scholarships are available to cover the \$2,000 program costs which includes overnight accommodations, meals, and materials. (Travel and local transportation are not included.)

- I am interested in being considered for a scholarship
- I will attend and do not need a scholarship

SCHOLARSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for a scholarship, registrants must commit to the following:

- Attend and actively participate in one of the three four-day in-person GCPs.
- Attend and actively participate in at least one of the every other month virtual discussions following GCP attendance.
- Implement at least one part of the CTA within their Community and report back on the results.
- Train at least five (5) other sisters and report back on the results.
- Complete and submit all Pre/ Post-Tests and surveys.
- Utilize the AIG online learning library.
- Complete and submit a reflection paper.