

Phase I: Find Out More

Phase I includes initial contact between the applicant, the LDA, and the diaconal community. It is a time of discerning one's call to ministry and community, of assessing the attitudes, skills, and knowledge of the applicant, and of evaluating the LDA and diaconal community's resources for working with the applicant.

Initial Inquiry: Contact deacserv@valpo.edu or call (219) 464-6925 to have an initial conversation about the LDA's Education and Formation program. Most applicants need 3 to 12 months for discernment and application.

Discernment: We will send a discernment guide to help you reflect and pray about your next steps.

Spend time with a Deaconess or Deacon: If you apply, you will need a recommendation from a consecrated Deaconess or Deacon. We will connect you with someone who will spend some time with you discussing the LDA and our communities. They can help you discern whether this form of ministry and community might be a good fit for you.

Let us know your status: We will start an application file for you once you let us know you will be applying. We will email you the forms and recommendation requests. All can be completed online. You may email (preferred) or mail any part of your application at any time. The deadlines are November 1 or April 1. There are four parts to the application, described in detail below.

1) Application Form:

- a) Personal data
- b) Reflection essays
- c) Self-care history
- d) Background check—we will contact you with instructions when it is time for this step.

2) References (5 total):

- a) Congregation in which you are a member.
- b) Your congregation pastor. (If your pastor is also a member of your family, add an additional reference from someone in public ministry.)
- c) Two people who know you well. (Consider getting a reference from someone who knows about your academic ability, your work experience, or your volunteer activities. No family members, please.)
- d) LDA deaconess or deacon.

3) Vocational and Psychological assessment: You must take a specific battery of tests with a licensed psychologist who will send a report directly to the LDA. Psychological reports are kept confidential for use by the LDA Admissions Committee to determine acceptance into the process. This step can take several weeks. You can take the tests (online) with a provider contracted with the LDA or find someone near you who can administer the tests for you. Contact LDA for more information about tests and possible providers. Cost for LDA-contracted testing is \$700.

4) Application fee: Application fee is \$50. Make check payable to "LDA" and mail to 1304 LaPorte Ave, Valparaiso, IN 46383.

Review of admission packet: The LDA Admission Committee will review your application to determine admission.

Acceptance: Accepted students will begin by attending their first student seminar in Valparaiso. **Students must attend seminar every year they are a student.**

Phase II: Education/Formation

Once students are accepted and attend their first seminar, they are in Phase II. This phase includes developing and completing an individualized plan for formation (IFC), deepening involvement with the diaconal communities, completing necessary academic and theological components, testing ministry/work skills, and demonstrating the attitudes, knowledge, and skills required in the four areas of education/formation.

The LDA uses a competency-based curriculum. This means that students are measured for growth in skills, values, and attitudes around diaconal ministry rather than basing student assessment on academic standards. This aids the flexibility and adaptability of our program. However, there are specific tasks to complete to reach proficiency in competencies. These tasks must be completed in order to finish Phase II; the competency model means that we can adapt the student formation program to each student—taking more time, if necessary, sometimes shortening the length or necessity based on the student's previous experience.

Components of Phase II will be done in a variety of settings including Lutheran, secular, ecumenical, and the LDA itself. The length of Phase II varies for each student. The minimum time is two years and three student seminars. Students must attend a student seminar every year they are in formation. Students will also attend at least two Annual Meetings of their respective diaconal community.

While this process does not require any academic degree, and the LDA is not a degree-granting organization, students will be encouraged to work toward at least a bachelor's degree.

Experiences in Phase II:

Community	Work/ministry	Theology	Spiritual life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend area deaconess or deacon conferences Attend a minimum of two Annual Meetings of respective Deaconess/Deacon community. Meet regularly with assigned Deaconess/Deacon mentor Attend student seminar each year of formation (minimum of three) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete 100 volunteer hours of supervised fieldwork over a 9-month period to explore ministry and diaconal identity. Complete one unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE). Complete a year-long paid supervised internship of practical ministry to integrate work/ministry with diaconal identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete academic coursework or verify previous coursework. All courses must be taken at an undergraduate level or above. Old Testament New Testament Church History World Religions Lutheran Doctrine and Confessions Theology of Diaconal Ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice spiritual disciplines Appreciate Lutheran spiritual resources. Participate regularly in a worshipping community Keep a journal to reflect on spiritual, personal, and professional growth. Work with a counselor or spiritual director

Phase III: Sum It Up

Phase III includes a final retreat, portfolio preparation, final project, certification interview, and consecration. This phase focuses on reflection and evaluation of academic/theological issues, skills for work/ministry, spiritual readiness for diaconal ministry, and the relationship with the community.

Estimated Costs for Student Formation

Costs will vary for each student, depending on such things as previous coursework, CPE programs, travel, etc. In general, these are the costs to consider:

Item	Cost
Application Fee	\$50, non-refundable. Covers cost of background check.
Psychological Testing	\$700 if using LDA contractor. If using own provider, costs vary
Student Fees	First year \$7,500. Subsequent years \$2,500. Scholarships are available for up to half of each year's fees. LDA staff can help with ideas for funding of student fees.
Coursework	Varies depending on where taken (estimate at least \$500 each)
Clinical Pastoral Education	Varies depending on where taken (estimate at least \$1000)
Student Seminar	Students are required to attend this 7-day event each year they are in formation. Seminars are held at the LDA Center in

	Valparaiso, IN. Housing is often available with local deaconesses. Costs would be travel, some meals, and hotel if student chooses that option. Students have the choice of two different weeks for attending seminar.
LDC/CLD Annual Meeting	Students are required to attend at least two annual meetings of their respective community during formation. Costs would be travel, lodging, meals, and program fees. Some scholarship money is usually available for students. Annual meeting is held each year in different locations during the summer months.

New students are expected to pay a deposit of \$500 at their first student seminar (or before) as well as their fee for psychological testing (if applicable).

Scholarship money is often available from your congregation, your District or Synod, women's/men's organizations such as LWML, WELCA, LLL, or through fundraising. The LDA has lots of creative ideas on how to help with student fees! Don't let financial concerns keep you from applying – talk to us!