

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.

1. **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.
2. **Discernment process.** We will send a discernment guide to help you reflect and pray about your next steps.
3. **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.
4. **Let us know your status.** You can find the application online at www.thelda.org. We will start an application file for you once you let us know you will be applying. 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.
5. **Complete and submit the application.**
 - A. **APPLICATION:**
 - a. Personal data
 - b. Reflection essays
 - c. Self-care history
 - d. Background check—we will contact you when it is time for this step with instructions.
 - B. **REFERENCES:** Please have your references use the provided form in the application.
 - 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.
 - C. **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 at Valparaiso University or find someone near you who can administer the tests for you. Contact LDA for more information about tests and possible providers.
 - D. **APPLICATION FEE.** Application fee is \$50. Checks may be made to "LDA," and mailed to address above.
 - E. **REVIEW OF ADMISSION PACKET.** The LDA Admission Committee will review your application to determine admission. November applications are reviewed in December, and April applications are reviewed in May.
 - F. **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

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. 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. 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:

<u>COMMUNITY</u>	<u>WORK/MINISTRY</u>	<u>THEOLOGY</u>	<u>SPIRITUAL LIFE</u>
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	Complete 100 hours of supervised field work over a 9 month period to explore ministry and diaconal identity. Complete one unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE) or a semester of clinical education for ministry (CEM) at Valparaiso University. Complete a year-long paid supervised internship of practical ministry to integrate work/ministry with diaconal identity.	Complete academic coursework or verify previous coursework. Old Testament New Testament Church History World Religions Lutheran Doctrine and Confessions Theology of Diaconal Ministry Specialized ministry courses	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. Some students may also be rostered in their church body at this time. This phase focuses on reflection on and evaluation of academic/theological issues, skills for work/ministry, spiritual readiness for diaconal ministry, and the relationship with the community.

1. **Final retreat/seminar** to integrate growth and learning during the education/formation process.

2. **Portfolio**

A. FIVE ONE-PAGE ESSAYS, WRITTEN AFTER RETREAT.

- a. What is the heart of Lutheran theology?
- b. What does diaconal community mean for both the community and you?
- c. How has your spiritual life grown through this process? How will you continue to nurture it?
- d. How did your work/ministry experiences prepare you for diaconal ministry?
- e. Essay about your final project (see below)

B. FINAL PROJECT AND ESSAY

This project should be a reflection of how you integrate theology, spirituality, community, and work/ministry with your diaconal identity. Your project may be anything you choose; some examples include artwork, writing a liturgy, composing music, or designing a stole. Projects are presented to the Services and Renewal Committee at your final interview. Included will be a one-page essay about your project and how it shows your diaconal identity.

C. OUTLINE OF ACADEMIC WORK AND OTHER LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

- a. Verification of completed coursework through transcripts or course certificates.
- b. Competency paper on Lutheran Worship.
- c. Competency paper on church policy and resource list
- d. Competency paper on cultural differences/diversity
- e. Any relevant certifications related to your work/ministry
- f. Other relevant writings, homilies, or resources

D. PROFESSIONAL RESUME

E. FOUR LETTERS OF ENDORSEMENT

- a. Ask 3 people who are in professional ministry to write a letter of endorsement for you about your skills, diaconal identity, and readiness for ministry. Letters should be on letterhead, as they will be a part of your professional portfolio.
- b. Ask your diaconal mentor to write a letter of endorsement.

3. **Final interview**

The Deaconess Service and Renewal Committee will conduct a final interview with you and will make a recommendation for consecration to the LDA Board of Directors.

4. **Consecration**