

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: 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.

5. Complete and submit the application:

A. Application:

1. Personal data
2. Reflection essays
3. Self-care history
4. 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.

1. Congregation in which you are a member.
2. Your congregation pastor. (If your pastor is also a member of your family, add an additional reference from someone in public ministry.)
3. 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.)
4. 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. Make check payable to "LDA" and mail to 1304 LaPorte Ave, Valparaiso, IN 46383.

6. Review of admission packet: The LDA Admission Committee will review your application to determine admission. November applications are reviewed in December, April applications are reviewed in May.

7. 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:

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 	<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. • Old Testament • New Testament • Church History (as needed) • World Religions • Lutheran Doctrine and Confessions • Theology of Diaconal Ministry • Specialized ministry courses 	<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. Some students may also be rostered in their church body at this time. 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.