NACC chaplains are professionals who listen first to determine patient and family life situations and spiritual needs. The competencies required to be demonstrated for certification emphasize a ministry based in empathy and gospel values of human dignity, love for all people, and specific Catholic traditions when they fit the needs of the people to whom they minister.

Demonstrating these competencies to a team of NACC Certification Interviewers requires a degree of personal and professional integration of applicants’ emotions, their decisive thinking, their developed communication abilities and their caregiving skills.

The brief descriptions of each competency provided below are intended for your consideration as you compose your narrative. These suggestions are not limited to how you or your interview team interpret the competencies for further discussion within the certification interview.

302 Theory of Pastoral Care Competencies

Chaplaincy in professional settings requires a facility to talk clearly about the intertwining principles you have developed that guide your care in very complex situations.—This block of competencies provides the opportunity for you to present your understanding of why you do what you do.

302.1 Articulate a theology of spiritual care that is integrated with a theory of pastoral practice.

What is your theology of spiritual care, your primary held beliefs and principles of how the world is and your understanding of such fundamental human phenomena as transcendence, pain, suffering, loss and Christian ministry? How does your pastoral role fit into your theology of spiritual care?

302.2 Incorporate a working knowledge of psychological and sociological disciplines and religious beliefs and practices in the provision of pastoral care.

Psychology and sociology, ever seeking to better understand the human mystery in its individual and group makeup and functioning, can help a chaplain better comprehend spiritual needs. What are the psychological and sociological concepts most useful to you in your practice of ministry?

302.21 Demonstrate an understanding of Scripture, current theology, ecclesiology, sacramental theology, and Catholic Social Teaching.

The theological resources listed above are fundamental for serving effectively as a Catholic chaplain. Describe how they inform your practice of spiritual care. Be ready to bring perspectives from them in discussing your pastoral care and professional competencies.

302.3 Incorporate the spiritual and emotional dimensions of human development into the practice of pastoral care.
The stages of human development and the growth of emotional intelligence as described by various theorists suggest concepts useful in understanding how human lives unfold in interpersonal contexts. Diverse ways of understanding the spiritual aspect of humanity similarly affect how a given professional chaplain practices ministry to people in differing stages of life. How does your own theory of human and spiritual development ground your practice?

302.4 Incorporate a working knowledge of ethics appropriate to the pastoral context.

How do you understand the most commonly used principals of medical ethics? How have you used them to help patients, their families, and interdisciplinary teams address ethical dilemmas in health care or other helping situations?

302.41 Demonstrate an understanding of the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services

A working knowledge of the U.S. Bishops’ published Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services (commonly called the ERDs) is essential for a Catholic functioning in any setting. Describe your knowledge of their content and cite an example of using them in your ministry practice.

302.5 Articulate a conceptual understanding of group dynamics and organizational behavior.

What concepts and theories have been useful to you in understanding of how people interact in group settings and how they act in larger, organizational settings? How have these been useful to you in working with the various groups, teams, facilities, organizations and corporations that make up professional care systems?

303 Identity and Conduct Competencies

A professional identity is an overall ability to function consistently in a particular caregiving role. In chaplaincy, self awareness, self understanding and effective use of one’s own personality to care for people form the core of the following Identity and Conduct competencies.

303.1 Function pastorally in a manner that respects the physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries of others.

A professional chaplain comprehends the spiritual caregiving role and practices within it so as to respect the universal personal rights of all human beings. How do you understand the above named boundaries?

303.2 Use pastoral authority appropriately.

What is the authority that comes with your role as chaplain? How have you used it in spiritual care?

303.3 Identify one’s professional strengths and limitations in the provision of pastoral care.

Describe your personal and professional strengths in caring for the human spirits of people. What particular human traits, characteristics and abilities make you an excellent caregiver? What have you learned about your own particular personal and professional weaknesses that tend to inhibit the empathy and effectiveness of your professional caregiving relationships?

303.31 Demonstrate the ability to be self-reflective.

Ongoing reflection and self-awareness provides grounding and foster creativity for chaplains in their personal and professional functioning. How have you become and remained self-reflective? Who have been some people who have helped you develop accurate self-understanding?

303.4 Articulate ways in which one’s feelings, attitudes, values, and assumptions affect one’s pastoral care.
Spiritual care is most often a relationship about emotions of people who are in difficult life situations. A professional's own emotions are key to quickly initiating caregiving relationships based on listening personally and conveying empathy. Attitudes, (established tendencies of orienting oneself towards particular people or things) values (unique personal estimations of what is of importance or worth) and assumptions (what we tend to take for granted) can skew the relative objectivity necessary for solid professional functioning. What have you learned about your own feelings, attitudes, values and assumptions?

303.5 Advocate for the persons in one’s care.

Patients sometimes need an advocate. How have you advocated for someone in your ministry practice?

303.6 Function within the Common Code of Ethics for Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors, Pastoral Educators, and Students.

Standards of professional ethics have been established and agreed upon by the primary spiritual caregiving organizations of North America. What is some of the basic content of the Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals, (NACC Standards Part Two, Section 100)?

303.7 Attend to one’s own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

How do you refresh yourself and do your part in staying healthy?

303.71 Articulate a spirituality grounded in a relationship with God, self, and others.

A personal spirituality forms the basis for pastoral functioning. Describe your spirituality and how it grounds and animates your ministry.

303.8 Communicate effectively orally and in writing.

It is essential to communicate on a professional level in a professional setting. How you communicate with interdisciplinary staff, religious authorities, the interview team and the NACC organization gives indication of this competency. What are some features of adequate professional communication?

303.9 Present oneself in a manner that reflects professional behavior, including appropriate attire and personal hygiene.

A professional chaplain habitually inspires confidence in people by visual and behavioral self-presentation. How do you think people see you and would describe you in the ministry setting?

304 Pastoral Competencies

**Developed abilities and ways of relating to people that genuinely convey care for the depths of who they are include:**

304.1 Establish, deepen, and end pastoral relationships with sensitivity, openness, and respect.

A hallmark of ministry in public and church facilities is the relatively quick entry into the personal depths of people in very difficult life situations. What are your best ways of describing the essentials of effective pastoral relationships, focusing on how you initiate, deepen, and, acknowledge conclusion of them?

304.2 Provide effective pastoral support that contributes to the well-being of patients, their families, and staff.

How are you supportive in your care when that seems to be what is most needed at the time?
304.3 Provide pastoral care that respects diversity and differences including, but not limited to, culture, gender, sexual orientation and spiritual/religious practices.

How do you see your ministry as inclusive of the highly diverse people and cultures of the world?

304.4 Triage and manage crises in the practice of pastoral care.

There frequently occurs more spiritual need than can be provided. How do you triage and establish priorities in the face of complex and multiple crises? How do you manage pastoral events to provide the most effective care?

304.5 Provide pastoral care to persons experiencing loss and grief.

Major loss is a universal occurrence in every life. How do you understand the phenomenon of human grief? How do you attend to grief, mourning and bereavement needs in a variety of settings, both formal and informal?

304.6 Formulate and utilize spiritual assessments in order to contribute to plans of care.

Briefly and clearly articulate your framework of understanding spiritual needs. How do you use it to assess the spiritual needs of those in your care? How does spiritual assessment add value to the plan of care for the patients as well as to the interdisciplinary team?

304.7 Provide religious/spiritual resources appropriate to the care of patients, families and staff.

What are some of the religious/spiritual resources you find most effective in patient care?

304.8 Develop, coordinate and facilitate public worship/spiritual practices appropriate to diverse settings and needs.

How do you use liturgy, ritual and worship as resources in ministry to your communities?

304.9 Facilitate theological reflection in the practice of pastoral care.

How do you assist those in your care to reflect on the meaning of their situation and to employ their beliefs as resources to their healing?

305 Professional Competencies

Professional competencies are some of the primary perspectives and skills a professional chaplain uses in serving as a colleague among interdisciplinary professionals and other ministry providers.

305.1 Promote the integration of pastoral/spiritual care into the life and service of the institution in which it resides.

How do you understand and function within the life of the organization you serve? What do you do to integrate spiritual perspectives into the mission of the organization?

305.2 Establish and maintain professional and interdisciplinary relationships.

Chaplains often represent spiritual perspectives as one profession collaborating with interdisciplinary care teams. How do you foster peer relationships with interdisciplinary colleagues? How do you think interdisciplinary professionals in your ministry settings would describe your care? What have been some key events in the process of fashioning your identity as an interdisciplinary care giver?

305.21 Demonstrate the ability to build peer relationships for the purpose of collaboration and active participation in the creation and maintenance of a healthy work environment.
Functioning as an effective spiritual care colleague in any setting is vital for holistic provision of care. Describe how you form and maintain wholesome collaborative relationships with other spiritual care providers in your setting. How have you seen conflict and healing of strained spiritual care colleague relationships?

305.3 Articulate an understanding of institutional culture and systems and systemic relationships.

Different types of institutions, departments, and teams develop different types of cultures. What are some of the common features you see in the differing “systems of systems” in which you work? What are the stated “pillars” of the corporate culture in which you serve, and how do your role and your daily functions support and/or challenge these pillars?

305.4 Support, promote and encourage ethical decision-making and care.

What is your role and function in promoting ethical decision-making and care in your particular setting?

305.41 Demonstrate skill in facilitating decision-making based on an understanding of culture/ethnicity, gender, race, age, educational background and theological values, religious heritage, behavioral sciences, networking and systems thinking.

Numerous dynamics affect and contribute to the decisions faced by persons in your care. Cite an example of how you have facilitated decision-making with persons seeking your direction. Address some of the factors, listed above, that were at work in your examples.

305.5 Document one's contribution of care effectively in the appropriate records.

What are some of your convictions about documenting spiritual care in the medical record? Comment on the charting note used in your submitted verbatim.

305.6 Foster a collaborative relationship with community clergy and faith group leaders.

How do you function as a liaison between the organization you serve and local faith communities?