



Qualifications and Competencies for Certification and Renewal of Certification of Chaplains in Veterans Affairs

Approved by

**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service (CEMS)
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Qualifications and Competencies for Certification and Renewal of Certification of
Chaplains in Veterans Affairs

The following Qualifications and Competencies represent the Certification for Professional Spiritual Care Common Qualifications and Competencies (*approved by the Strategic Partners in Spiritual Care*), the NACC-Specific Catholic Qualifications and Competencies and the NACC-Specific Veterans Affairs Qualifications and Competencies (*approved by USCCB SCEMS*). Please note that the NACC-Specific Catholic Competencies and the NACC-Specific Veterans Affairs Competencies are those that are indented.

801 Qualifications of Professional Chaplaincy (QUA)

The candidate for certification must:

QUA1: Provide documentation of current endorsement by the Archdiocese of the Military.

QUA2: Be current in the payment of the annual fees as designated by one's professional association.

QUA3: Have completed a Bachelor's degree from a college, university, or theological school accredited by a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (www.chea.org); and a graduate-level theological degree from a college, university or theological school accredited by a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Equivalencies for the Bachelor's and/or graduate level theological degree will be granted by the individual professional organizations according to their own established guidelines.

***Graduate-level theological degree**

The NACC defines a graduate-level theological degree as a graduate degree in theology, divinity, religious studies, pastoral ministry, pastoral studies, or spirituality. Included among the acceptable degrees is the Bachelor of Sacred Theology (STB) degree plus one further year of theological studies of the Pontifical Universities and their affiliated institutions.

QUA4: Provide documentation of a minimum of four units (Levels I & II) of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) accredited or approved by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), by programs that were accredited by the former United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA), or the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC/ACSS). Equivalency for one unit of CPE (two units in CASC) may be considered.

QUA5: Be employed by a Veterans Affairs facility (full time, part time, fee basis, or contract basis) as a chaplain.

QUA6: Provide evidence of successful completion of VIRTUS or similar approved training.

802 Integration of Theory and Practice Competencies (ITP)

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

ITP1: Articulate an approach to spiritual care, rooted in one's faith/spiritual tradition that is integrated with a theory of professional practice.

- ITP1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of Vatican II and Post Vatican II documents of the Church, Systematic/Foundational Theology, Scripture, Theology of the Trinity, Christology, Ecclesiology, Sacramental Theology, Catholic Social Teaching, Canon Law, Ecumenical and Interreligious Practice.
- ITP1.2 Articulate an understanding of one's baptismal call and chaplaincy as a ministry of the church.
- ITP1.3 Recognize both the reality of personal and social sin and demonstrate the power of justice, mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation to heal persons and relationships.
- ITP2: Incorporate a working knowledge of psychological and sociological disciplines and religious beliefs and practices in the provision of spiritual care.
- ITP3: Incorporate the spiritual and emotional dimensions of human development into one's practice of care.
- ITP4: Incorporate a working knowledge of different ethical theories appropriate to one's professional context.
 - ITP4.1 Demonstrate an understanding of *The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*.
 - ITP4.2 Demonstrate an understanding of Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord.
 - ITP4.3 Demonstrate theoretical understanding of Just War Theory and Roman Catholic social teaching as it relates to war and conflict in our world.
- ITP5: Articulate a conceptual understanding of group dynamics and organizational behavior.
- ITP6: Articulate how primary research and research literature inform the profession of chaplaincy and one's spiritual care practice.

803 Professional Identity and Conduct Competencies (PIC)

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

- PIC1: Be self-reflective, including identifying one's professional strengths and limitations in the provision of care.
- PIC2: Articulate ways in which one's feelings, attitudes, values, and assumptions affect professional practice.
- PIC3: Attend to one's own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.
 - PIC3.1 Articulate a spirituality grounded in a relationship with God, self, and others.
 - PIC3.2 Demonstrate one's commitment to on-going faith development and spiritual growth.
 - PIC3.3 Demonstrate life-work balance skills, including time management.
- PIC4: Function in a manner that respects the physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual boundaries of others.
- PIC5: Use one's professional authority as a spiritual care provider appropriately.

PIC5.1 Articulate an understanding of the responsibility of the public nature of a chaplain's role.

PIC6 Advocate for the persons in one's care.

PIC7: Function within the Common Code of Ethics for Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors, Clinical Pastoral Educators, and Students.

PIC8: Communicate effectively orally and in writing.

PIC9: Present oneself in a manner that reflects professional behavior, including appropriate attire, and grooming.

804 Professional Practice Skills Competencies (PPS)

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

PPS1: Establish, deepen and conclude professional spiritual care relationships with sensitivity, openness, and respect.

PPS2: Provide effective spiritual support that contributes to well-being of the care recipients, their families, and staff.

PPS2.1 Possess an appropriate level of comfort and proficiency with contemporary communication technology and be able to employ it in spiritual care.

PPS3: Provide spiritual care that respects diversity and differences including, but not limited to culture, gender, sexual orientation, and spiritual/religious practices.

PPS3.1 Provide spiritual care to veterans with respect to their specific needs as they relate to military service, combat, and the different Eras in which they served.

PPS3.2 Provide spiritual care to veterans who suffer from PTSD, TBI, mental illness, substance abuse, military sexual trauma as well as other pains and sufferings of veterans.

PPS3.3 Provide spiritual care to veterans in special care settings such as palliative care and long-term care facilities.

PPS3.4 Provide competent spiritual care to veterans who experience a variety of emotions and deal with moral conflict/moral injury related to war and combat.

PPS4: Triage and manage crises in the practice of spiritual care.

PPS5: Provide spiritual care to persons experiencing loss and grief.

PPS6: Provide religious/spiritual resources appropriate to the care recipients, families, and staff.

PPS7: Develop, coordinate, and facilitate public worship/spiritual practices appropriate to diverse settings and needs.

PPS7.1 Demonstrate the ability to integrate sacred art, music, and space for liturgical celebrations and communal prayer.

PPS8: Facilitate theological/spiritual reflection for those in one's care practice.

PPS9: Facilitate group processes, such as family meetings, post trauma, staff debriefing, and support groups.

PPS10: Formulate and utilize spiritual assessments, interventions, outcomes, and care plans in order to contribute effectively to the well-being of the person receiving care.

PPS11: Document one's spiritual care effectively in the appropriate records.

805 Organizational Leadership Competencies (OL)

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

OL1: Promote the integration of spiritual care into the life and service of the institution in which one functions.

OL2: Establish and maintain professional and interdisciplinary relationships.

OL2.1 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.

OL2.2 Demonstrate skills in organization, conflict management, leadership, or supervision of others.

OL3: Understand and function within the institutional culture and systems, including utilizing business principles and practices appropriate to one's role in the organization.

OL4: Promote, facilitate, and support ethical decision-making in one's workplace.

OL4.1 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.

OL5: Foster a collaborative relationship with community clergy and faith group leaders.

806 Requirements for the Maintenance of Certification (MNT)

In order to maintain status as a Certified Chaplain, the chaplain must:

MNT1: Participate in a peer review process every fifth year.

MNT2: Document fifty (50) hours of annual continuing education as designated by one's professional association.

MNT3: Provide every fifth year documentation of current endorsement or of good standing in accordance with the requirements of his/her own faith tradition.

MNT4: Be current in the payment of the annual fees as designated by one's professional association.

MNT5: Adhere to the Common Code of Ethics for Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors, Clinical Pastoral Educators, and Students.

807 Appeals of Certification Decisions (ACD)

The individual seeking an appeal of a certification decision:

ACD1 Has a right to a timely and complete review of a negative recommendation.

ACD2 Has access to a certification appeals panel free from conflict of interest, and panel members shall not have participated in the original recommendation.

ACD3 Submits a written request for an appeal based on the grounds that such recommendation was an alleged violation of the Competencies and/or Procedures.

ACD4 Accepts the decision of the Certification Appeals Panel as final and binding for the association.