

CHAPLAIN COMPETENCY

HCMA is dedicated to upholding a high standard of professional and ethical conduct for its members. Certification for chaplains serving in healthcare ministry is grounded in rigorous competency standards and a Code of Ethics, developed to assess pastoral care skills and ethical integrity. HCMA members are held accountable to these standards, ensuring both professional excellence and ethical behavior.

The Professional Chaplain Competency Standards and Code of Ethics reflect HCMA's commitment to exceptional pastoral care and concern for the well-being of those served. These standards bolster public respect and trust in the work of professional chaplains, providing clear guidelines for conduct and accountability. In cases of ethical concerns, HCMA carefully reviews all perspectives and, if necessary, implements disciplinary actions with a focus on restoration.

Certification as an HCMA Board Certified Chaplain (BCC) or Certified Clinical Chaplain (CCC) requires meeting specific qualifications. A BCC, for example, must possess a seminary degree, ordination, ecclesiastical endorsement, four units of clinical pastoral education, and a 1,600-hour internship, along with a demonstration of core competencies through written and oral peer review.

These professional qualifications span four key competency areas:

1. Personal Identity and Conduct
2. Theology of Pastoral Care
3. Pastoral/Spiritual Care
4. Professional Skills

These competencies, along with the HCMA Code of Ethics, serve as the foundation for chaplain certification and uphold HCMA's standards for competent, ethical pastoral caregiving within healthcare settings.

Professional Chaplain Competency Standards

An HCMA-certified chaplain (BCC or CCC) demonstrates essential competencies in personal, theological, pastoral, and professional capacities required to deliver compassionate and effective spiritual care in healthcare environments.

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CHAPLAIN COMPETENCY (continued)

I. Personal Identity and Conduct Competencies

An HCMA chaplain demonstrates self-awareness and maturity through:

- Self-knowledge that informs pastoral care within personal strengths and limitations
- Emotional and spiritual maturity, enabling compassionate, respectful ministry
- Peer relationships that offer mutual support, guidance, and accountability
- Personal well-being, maintaining a balance of physical, emotional, and spiritual health
- Adherence to the HCMA Code of Ethics and integrity in all aspects of life

II. Theology of Pastoral/Spiritual Care Competencies

A certified chaplain is able to:

- Develop and articulate a practical theology of pastoral care
- Integrate spiritual formation for themselves and others
- Understand various theological, spiritual, and ethical beliefs affecting pastoral care
- Address bioethical issues relevant to spiritual care

III. Pastoral/Spiritual Care Competencies

Key abilities include:

- Initiating, deepening, and ending pastoral relationships with sensitivity
- Providing spiritual support for patients, families, and staff that enhances well-being
- Conducting spiritual assessments and planning care that respects diverse backgrounds
- Offering support to those experiencing grief and loss, and addressing crisis situations
- Leading worship and facilitating spiritual practices suitable for various settings

IV. Professional Competencies

As a healthcare chaplain, one must:

- Advocate for and integrate pastoral care within the healthcare institution's framework
- Communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing
- Establish interdisciplinary relationships that promote ethical decision-making
- Utilize referrals, documentation, and other tools to support patient care
- Develop relationships with community clergy and faith leaders for collaborative care

These competencies guide HCMA chaplains in their mission to provide spiritual care that is both biblically rooted and professionally accountable, fostering a healthcare ministry that meets the highest standards of compassion and integrity.

