

CHAPLAINCY CERTIFICATION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR PROTESTANT AND ORTHODOX CLERGY IN NEW YORK STATE

CERTIFICATION FROM THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IS EXPECTED BEFORE THE FOLLOWING NEW YORK STATE AGENCIES CAN CONSIDER AN APPLICATION FOR CHAPLAINCY AND CONDUCT INTERVIEWS:

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH
OFFICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

A. PREAMBLE

The New York State Council of Churches recognizes the need for and right of all persons in state institutions to an effective spiritual ministry. Guided by our sense of oneness in the Body of Christ, the New York State Council of Churches, cooperating with and on behalf of Protestant/Orthodox communions within New York State, affirms the following:

1. A person's relationship to God plays a vital role in the healing and rehabilitative process;
2. The chaplain's main function is to provide a spiritual ministry and habilitative, rehabilitative services and programs supportive of that ministry; and
3. Chaplains must be knowledgeable of the context of human services delivery systems, trained to perform specialized pastoral functions, and competent to serve as members of a professional team and to advocate for residents, patients, inmates and staff.
4. A chaplain should be skilled at drawing on the riches of his or her faith tradition while understanding they serve as a chaplain to all people regardless of their faith, race, nationality, or sexual orientation. Chaplains unable to work in these highly pluralistic work settings put the institutions they serve at legal risk for discriminatory practice.

B. CRITERIA FOR CERTIFICATION

In order to be interviewed by the Certification Committee, candidates must meet the following criteria:

1. Evidence of Ordination
Documentation that he/she has full ordination as a clergy person in accordance with the stated policy of his/her denomination and is authorized to perform all functions related to that office. Licensed clergy, ordained Deacons, and those awaiting full ordination do not fit this requirement. The denomination, without further documentation, just be listed in the YEARBOOK OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN CHURCHES. Under no circumstances will ordinations from mail order bodies be recognized as valid.
2. Ecclesiastical Endorsement
A letter from the denominational officer who represents a certifying body from a denomination listed in the YEARBOOK OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN CHURCHES or documented denominational body, who can clearly state that the candidate is a clergy person in good standing in the denomination (only denominations listed in the yearbook without further documentation) the body represents and has the power to withhold authorization should the denominations ethical or professional guidelines be breached.
Good standing means the ecclesiastical body recognizes the person is fully complying with the ethical guidelines set forth by the denomination and is recommended for chaplaincy in state institutional settings.

3. Formal Education
 - a. Graduation with a bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college.
 - b. Completion of Master of Divinity Degree from an accredited theological school
OR 96 hours of theological education over and above a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution or through a formalized course of study on the track towards full ordination in that denomination.

The candidate must provide documentation of education and training for ministry by requesting official transcripts sent to the New York State Council of Churches.

4. Pastoral Experience
Evidence of at least three (3) full years of experience in a pastoral setting after ordination.
5. Specialized Training
A candidate must have supervised in-service training in pastoral care by a qualified supervisor who will be required to submit to the committee an evaluation of the candidate's abilities.
 - a. Completion of one or more Clinical Pastoral Education units;
 - b. Supervised in-service training in pastoral counseling, in social case work, in guidance and counseling, or in ministry within a facility of the agency for which he/she is applying;
6. Committee Discretion
Any of the above criteria can be waived if, in the judgment of the Committee, a candidate demonstrates an extraordinary degree of maturity, spiritual understanding, worship skills, pastoral concern, and counseling competence, and ability to document appropriately.
7. Professional Competency
Candidates are expected to demonstrate throughout the certifying process a sense of calling to this ministry, good judgment, excellent sense of boundaries, flexibility, internalized and integrated training, problem-solving skills, a compassion for humanity and insight into his/her own character, an ability to work in highly pluralistic settings, and an appropriate respect for authority and procedure.

C. PROCEDURES FOR CERTIFICATION

1. Certification of ordination is to be provided by the candidate and should accompany the application. Ecclesiastical endorsement will be provided by the candidate's denomination at the request of the New York State Council of Churches. No interview will be arranged until these documents are received and approved.
2. Certification of "Professional Competency" will be done through the Certification Committee. The candidate will forward supporting documentation on education, training, pastoral experience, and references to the New York State Council of Churches for processing and review by the Committee. The Committee will then conduct an interview, notify the candidate of its action, and make recommendations for continued professional growth.
3. After certification the candidate is encouraged to
 - a. Join the New York State Association of Protestant Chaplains; attend one meeting/conference of Association annually.
 - b. Maintain good standing with their endorsing denomination,
 - c. Report to the New York State Council of Churches any changes in their approved status, ordination and/or changes in denominational affiliation.

D. RECERTIFICATION

Chaplains certified in one area must be recertified in order to qualify in another area. For example, Corrections to Mental Health, or vice versa.

E. APPEALS AND REVIEWS

1. In the event that a candidate is not satisfied with the decision of the interviewing committee, he/she may request a review of that decision. This request is to be addressed in writing to the Executive Director of the New York State Council of Churches. The cause for the appeal should be specified.
2. Certification is for three years. If a candidate is not employed by a New York State agency within three years of certification, he/she will be required to submit an updated application.
3. A chaplain's certification may be reviewed at any time by the New York State Council of Churches. Request for such a review may come from a chaplain, a facility, an agency, a denomination, or other concerned parties.
4. Certification may be revoked by the Commission on Chaplaincy Services of the New York State Council of Churches for sufficient cause.

F. Additional Information for DOCCS Candidates:

The following is a portion of the Directive from the New York State DOCCS regarding outside employment – employment by a private entity during off duty hours.

Employees who wish to obtain permission for outside employment shall be provided a copy of the complete directive and a request form by his or her personnel office.

Except for employees in the military reserves, or self-employed individuals, or those in a family business who do not receive a salary, no Department employee may engage in outside employment without written approval from the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee. Written permission must be obtained even for temporary, or one-day work, if the employee receives pay for such activity.

Chaplains serving in a DOCCS facility are expected to render worship service(s) on their religious day of service.