

Military Chaplaincy

The Chaplains Commission of the North American Mission Board, SBC endorses chaplains to the following categories: community services, corporate, corrections, disaster relief, healthcare, military, and public safety.

General Endorsement Requirements

When employing vocational or volunteer chaplains, each institutional agency and organization sets specific requirements for their hiring criteria. In addition, the Southern Baptist Convention has its own denominational requirements for endorsing chaplains. All chaplains endorsed by the SBC must meet these minimum requirements:

- Demonstrate the call, competence, and character for ministry as a chaplain.
 - The applicant must demonstrate a call to the ministry. This involves not only the written communication, but actions showing a personal commitment to Christian ministry.
 - The applicant must have proven character in line with his/her call to chaplain ministry. Chaplains are expected to live their personal and professional lives with the highest practice of integrity in accordance with the [Chaplaincy Code of Conduct](#). A chaplain's personal character must be consistent with the spiritual leadership required to work with people.
 - Background Check that includes credit, criminal, and sexual offenses.
- Be affiliated with the SBC for a minimum of one year and a member in good standing of a church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention for at least six months. All endorsed chaplains are expected to maintain membership in a Southern Baptist church and develop an accountability relationship with a Southern Baptist church. This accountability should relate to the chaplain's personal life as well as their exercise of ministry in their ministry context.
- References including one from applicant's SBC Pastor or Director of Missions.
- For vocational chaplains, be commissioned, licensed, or ordained by an SBC church or church of like faith recognized by the applicant's current church. This recognizes the role of the local church in affirming the ministry of the applicant.
- Have theological beliefs currently adopted by the SBC as represented in the [2000 Baptist Faith and Message](#). Additionally, applicants and endorsed chaplains are to affirm compliance and support of the following policies:
 - Divorced people will rarely, and only under unusual circumstances, be appointed, approved or endorsed for SBC mission service. Persons with a history of divorce will be evaluated with grace and mercy on an individual basis in accordance with NAMB policy.
 - Abstaining from the consumption of any alcoholic beverage or illegal drugs.
- Have a theological training consistent with their projected ministry assignment. A Master of Divinity degree is often required for vocational chaplains. However, all

chaplains are expected to have either some accredited theological education or to be currently in the process of pursuing a theological education or actively engaged in chaplain-specific training.

- Meet requirements of employing agency - The Chaplain Commission will not endorse a chaplain who does not meet the requirements of the employing agency.
- Approval by the Chaplains Commission

All chaplain endorsements are to a specific ministry position. Any change in that position will require an update or additional endorsement. It is the responsibility of the chaplain to initiate the process for updating an endorsement. After notifying the SBC Chaplaincy Team, at least four weeks should be allowed for the update endorsement process.

Any exception to these basic qualifications/requirements must be approved by the Chaplains Commission.

Military Chaplain

The United States Army, Navy, and Air Force have a corps of chaplains who provide chaplaincy ministry. These chaplain/staff officers serve on active duty or in a capacity as a Reserve or Guard chaplain. Some states also have an organized State Guard with an associated chaplaincy service. This area also includes the volunteer chaplains of the Civil Air Patrol, an Air Force auxiliary service.

Check with the Military Chaplain Recruiter of the particular Military Branch for the most current requirements, including age.

U.S. Army Chaplain Requirements (Active Duty, Army Reserve, Army Guard):

- Ordained Minister by or recognized by an SBC Church.
- Valid endorsement from the SBC Chaplains Commission.
- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution.
- Master of Divinity/Theology degree of at least 72 hours from an accredited institution.
- Citizen of the United States (Permanent residents can apply for US Army Reserve only).
- Pass the National Agency Check for a security clearance.
- Pass Armed Forces physical exam.
- Two years pastoral experience within a congregational setting after completion of the Master of Divinity or equivalent.

For Chaplain Candidate Program:

- Be a full-time graduate student at an accredited seminary or theological school.
- Be between 18-36 years of age at time of commissioning.
- Ordination is not required.

U.S. Air Force Chaplain Requirements (Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard):

- Ordained Minister by or recognized by an SBC Church.
- Valid endorsement from the SBC Chaplains Commission.
- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution.
- Master of Divinity/Theology degree of at least 72 hours from an accredited institution.
- Citizen of the United States.
- Pass the National Agency Check for a security clearance.
- Pass Armed Forces physical exam.

For Active Duty:

- Two years pastoral experience within a congregational setting after completion of the Master of Divinity or equivalent.

For Chaplain Candidate Program:

- Be a full-time graduate student at an accredited seminary or theological school.
- Less than 35 years of age at the time of appointment.
- Ordination is not required.

U.S. Navy Chaplain Requirements (Active Duty and Reserve):

- Ordained Minister by or recognized by an SBC Church.
- Valid endorsement from the SBC Chaplains Commission.
- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution.
- Master of Divinity/Theology degree of at least 72 hours from an accredited institution. Two-thirds of these hours should be resident.
- Citizen of the United States.
- Pass the National Agency Check for a security clearance.
- Pass Armed Forces physical exam.
- Pass a Navy physical fitness test.
- Two years pastoral experience within a congregational setting after completion of the Master of Divinity or equivalent.

For Chaplain Candidate Program:

- Be a full-time graduate student at an accredited seminary or theological school.
- Be 21 years of age and be able to complete 20 years.
- Ordination is not required.

Civil Air Patrol Chaplain Requirements:

- Ordained Minister by or recognized by an SBC Church.
- Valid endorsement from the SBC Chaplains Commission.
- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution.
- Master of Divinity/Theology degree of at least 72 hours from an accredited institution. Clergy without accredited graduate degree may ask for a waiver providing they have a minimum of 5 years full time pastoral experience.

- Two years pastoral experience within a congregation setting after completion of the Master of Divinity or equivalent.
- Meet CAP Senior Membership requirements.
- Fingerprint card and background check.
- Pay CAP national and wing dues.
- Contact your wing chaplain for an application (CAP Form 35).

Coast Guard Auxiliary Clergy Support:

The Auxiliary Clergy Support program supplements and supports Navy Chaplains serving with the Coast Guard by expanding Religious Ministry within the Coast Guard to better meet the needs of Coast Guard members and their families.

- Ordained Minister by or recognized by an SBC Church.
- Be a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.
- Must meet many of the same qualifications as members of the Navy Chaplain Corps.

Transfer of Endorsement

A chaplain can change ecclesiastical endorsement at any time for a variety of reasons. However, any transfer of endorsement to another religious ecclesiastical organization requires the chaplain to inform their current endorsing agent. The ecclesiastical endorsement process, requirements, and timeline differs among the various religious ecclesiastical organizations. As a general rule, SBC Chaplaincy provides a 30-day transition period for transfer of endorsement to another religious ecclesiastical body.

Withdrawal of Endorsement

Each applicant submitting an application for denominational endorsement by the Chaplains Commission signs the following agreement to assure the Chaplains Commission of the applicant's understanding, acceptance, and willingness to cooperate in carrying out the Commission's policies and purposes. The statement reads:

“In making this application, I recognize the Chaplains Commission, SBC, of the North American Mission Board, SBC, to be the agency designated by the Southern Baptist Convention to endorse chaplains and counselors in ministry to military and civilian agencies and agree to cooperate with the Chaplains Commission, SBC in carrying out its policies and programs. I also recognize that it is the responsibility of the Chaplains Commission, SBC, to grant and/or to withdraw denominational endorsement. Therefore, should I prove by temperament, disposition, attitude, conduct, or otherwise to be unsuited for endorsement in the opinion of the Chaplains Commission, SBC and should it decide that my denominational endorsement be withdrawn, I agree to abide by its decision.”

In the event that an endorsed chaplain violates a law (local, state, federal, including Uniform Code of Military Justice), agency policy, SBC general expectation, Chaplaincy Code of Conduct, personal or professional ethic, or should there be an embarrassment to the cause of SBC chaplaincy, disciplinary action may be in order. The Chaplains Commission desires that

justice, grace, and mercy be exercised in all situations with the goal being personal redemption and restoration. However, withdrawal of endorsement may result from any situation deemed by the Chaplains Commission to warrant such action.