

## **Healthcare Chaplain**

While hospital settings are the usual place for healthcare chaplaincy, Southern Baptists also have chaplains serving with hospice organizations, mental health facilities, special needs programs, nursing home and with the Department of Veterans Affairs. This area of service also includes an endorsement for Clinical Pastoral Education residency students.

In addition to SBC General Endorsement Requirements, healthcare chaplains usually have an accredited Master of Divinity degree and at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Care education (CPE). Staff chaplain positions normally require four units of CPE. Pastoral experience as required by the hiring healthcare organization. Specialized positions in healthcare require more training.

### **Veterans Affairs Chaplain Requirements**

- Valid SBC endorsement.
- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution.
- Master of Divinity or equivalent degree of at least 70 hours of graduate course including all of the following: 20 semester hours in pastoral ministry; 20 semester hours in any combination of theology, ethics and philosophy of religion; 20 semester hours in the study of sacred writings, including the study of languages in which sacred writings are/were written and 10 semester hours in religious history and/or world religions from an accredited institution.
- Citizen of the United States.
- Four Units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) from a Department of Education accredited CPE Program. The only two CPE Organizations which are accredited by the Department of Education (DOE) are the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) and the Institute of Clinical Pastoral Training (ICPT). There are no substitutions for the 4 DOE accredited CPE units. Board Certification as a Chaplain — being “BCC” from a 501(c)3 board certifying body which requires ecclesiastical endorsement is required for permanent employment as GS-11 Chaplain. (A person can be hired temporarily as a GS-9 without board certification, and the person has two years to become a board-certified chaplain. When becoming a board-certified chaplain, the person then becomes a permanent GS-11 Chaplain.) 501(c)3 organizations that currently require ecclesiastical endorsement are: Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) and National Association of VA Chaplains (NAVAC).

### **General Endorsement Requirements**

When using vocational or volunteer chaplains, each institution and organization sets specific requirements for their hiring criteria. Also, the Southern Baptist Convention has its 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, ministerial staff or Director of Missions/Associational Mission Strategist.
- For vocational chaplains, be licensed, commissioned 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 be assessed with grace and mercy on an individual basis in accordance with NAMB policy.<sup>1</sup>
  - › [Chaplaincy Code of Conduct](#).
- Vocational chaplains must have accredited theological training consistent with their projected ministry assignment. A Master of Divinity degree or equivalent is often required for vocational chaplains.
- Volunteer chaplains are expected to be 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.

### **Duration of Endorsements**

An endorsement is to a specific position. Any change in employment requires an update of endorsement. Some ministerial training programs have a specified duration. When the chaplain completes the training, the endorsement terminates. Some endorsements have a specified period of time for which they are valid. This termination date is usually stated on the endorsement and/or is expressed by the Institution's policy. If an endorsement is no longer required, the endorsement will be listed as "closed" until an update is requested. A

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<sup>1</sup> For specific details, see Chaplaincy Endorsement Manual, "Divorce and Remarriage," 32.

chaplain may request the withdrawal of endorsement at any time. The Chaplain Commission may request the withdrawal of endorsement at any time due to circumstances such as doctrinal stance, moral failure or other substantial issues.

All endorsements terminate when the chaplain is no longer affiliated with the organization to which they were endorsed and/or the chaplain no longer meets the SBC requirements for endorsement.

## **Endorsement Updates**

Periodically, the using agency will ask that the chaplain have an updated endorsement. It is the responsibility of the chaplain to initiate the process for updating an endorsement. A chaplain should contact the SBC Chaplaincy Team to request an endorsement update when their status or ministry location changes. Also, endorsement update requests can be made through the chaplain's portal ([myname.net](https://myname.net)). Chaplains are allowed to have more than one endorsement.

Chaplains can request an update by contacting the Chaplaincy Team or through the Chaplain portal at [myname.net](https://myname.net). Once initiated, the chaplain will need to complete an Endorsement Update Application and submit appropriate supporting documents. When a chaplain requests an update to a vocational endorsement from a volunteer endorsement, the basic requirements/guidelines for that chaplaincy category and status applies. At least four weeks should be allowed for the update endorsement process to be completed.

## **Transferring an Endorsement**

A chaplain can only be endorsed through one endorsing body. However, a chaplain can change ecclesiastical endorsement at any time for a variety of reasons. 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 90-day transition period for transfer of endorsement to another religious ecclesiastical body.

## **Oversight and Supervision**

Chaplains serve an institution at that institution's invitation and therefore are under the direct supervision of the institution's supervisory structure. Additionally, the Chaplains Commission, through the administrative actions and pastoral care of the SBC Chaplaincy Team, retains ecclesiastical oversight of the chaplain's work and life as a representative of the SBC. The SBC Chaplaincy Team members are available to respond to any questions or concerns.

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 of the North American Mission Board, SBC, to be the agency designated by the

Southern Baptist Convention to endorse chaplains to military and civilian agencies and agree to cooperate with the Chaplains Commission, SBC, in carrying out its policies and programs.<sup>2</sup>

### **Discipline and Withdrawal of an SBC Endorsement**

When 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 Christ, the SBC or 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Statement taken from current SBC Endorsement application.