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## Becoming A Professional Chaplain

The field of Chaplaincy can be confusing. Definitive standards and practices are not as common as one might expect. We hope the information we provide below gives you a clearer picture of the landscape.

Companies, organizations, and institutions vary greatly in their hiring requirements for Chaplains. When considering your future career it's important to research the hiring requirements at the kinds of places you'd like to work.

### **In order to be a professional chaplain, one generally needs to:**

- participate in a religious or spiritual tradition
- have endorsement from that community or tradition
- have a theological or ministry degree
- complete at least one CPE unit of on-site pastoral training

While each tradition, school or seminary, and apprenticeship varies, there are some consistent skills which all chaplains share.

### **The skill-sets of chaplains can be summarized into four distinct categories:**

- 1) Chaplain as a Religious or Theological representative;
- 2) Chaplain as Spiritual or Pastoral care provider;
- 3) Chaplain as Healer; and
- 4) Chaplain as Change-Agent.

# **Ecclesiastical Endorsements**

## **What Endorsement Is**

An ecclesiastical endorsement is a legal document that states that an ordained minister is spiritually, doctrinally, educationally, and professionally qualified to represent his/her church or faith community in a specialized setting (beyond the local congregation) ministering to all in a religiously diverse context. Simply stated, an endorsement is the document that makes a "general" minister a very specialized one — a "chaplain."

## **The Endorsement Process**

Before APDS will endorse a minister, he/she must complete a very thorough application process. All ministers must document their basic background information, education, professional experience, and a short testimony of their belief that they are being called to ministry. Applicants will be then interviewed in-person by a member or friend of All Paths Divinity School.

In addition to all of the above requirements, the prospective chaplain will be instructed that he/she must have a servant's heart and a willingness to minister to all people regardless of their ethnic, religious backgrounds, and moral values. This is quite a challenge to many clergy, but if a minister desires to be a chaplain he/she must agree, in writing, to be a servant to all, without discrimination.

## **The Significance of An Endorsement**

An endorsement is only good for a specific period of time, usually 12 to 24 months. Endorsement means that a minister is on temporary "loan" from their church to an organization. If the chaplain does not perform to the high standards of chaplaincy or is guilty of poor ethics or criminal activity, he/she is likely to find their endorsement revoked and non-renewed..

Ultimately, endorsement links all chaplains to their ordaining churches and faith communities in matters of accountability and spiritual oversight. Thus, chaplains are continuously accountable to their sponsoring church, ordaining authority, the endorsing agency, and to the institution of which they are a part. Since an endorsement is a very serious legal document, endorsing agencies are charged by God, the government, and various professional organizations to credential only their very finest clergy as

chaplains.

# Clinical Pastoral Education/Training

Our partner CPE/T program is accredited under the *Standards of The College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy* (“CPSP”) ([www.cpsp.org](http://www.cpsp.org)), a national and international covenanted community of lay and ordained persons, theologians, counselors, educators, psychotherapists and other allied health professionals, dedicated to the shared value of the “recovery of soul.” CPSP is one of the cognate groups recognized by the Congress on Ministry in Specialized Settings (“COMISS”), an organization that endorses professional certifying bodies for professional chaplaincy in the United States.

## Who Needs CPE Units?

Hospitals, medical centers, healthcare organizations, hospices, prisons, etc. usually require board certification for their pastoral caregivers. The completion of CPE/T units fulfills the requirements for board certification.

## What You’ll Learn

- Clinical knowledge and skills including verbal and nonverbal communication; developing the clinical eye; critical thinking, analysis and discernment; group relations dynamics; self awareness, self transformation and recovery of soul.
- Pastoral Counseling Competencies including establishing and tending to pastoral relationships and alliances; developing within the pastoral visit connection, discernment of the theological, personal, spiritual, moral and historical values; attending to transference behaviors; journeying with the patient, family and caregivers; liaising with other clergy and maintaining continuity of care.
- Clinical knowledge of pastoral diagnosis and assessment and collaboration with other professional members of the team; naming pastoral issues and concerns and providing clinical and pastoral interventions.
- Exploration of ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, justice and integrity.
- Exploration of legal and ethical issues surrounding patients’ rights, medical treatments and decisions.
- Exploration of pastoral, spiritual issues and needs with regard to grief, isolation,

alienation, aging, bereavement, death, fear, guilt, spiritual distress, purpose of life, closure, pain and vocation.