

# *Certification Handbook for NCVACC*



## *National Conference of VA Catholic Chaplains*

*2017*

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## **Introduction**

### **Section 1.0 Certification by the Organization or Association**

#### **1.1 Purpose of the Certification Handbook**

This handbook applies to those seeking Board Certification and Renewal of Certification by NCVACC. The handbook contains information about the eligibility requirements for applying for certification, the design of the process for their initial and renewal of certification and the standards and forms by which they will be assessed.

#### **1.2 NCVACC Policies Regarding Certification**

The NCVACC Certification Standards and related procedures were developed by the NCVACC Certification Committee and approved by the Board of Directors, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. NCVACC provides Board Certification to qualified Catholic Chaplains who are employed by the VA, under the auspices of the Military Archdiocese. Reciprocal Certification is available from cognate groups of NCVACC, including NACC and APC. NCVACC Certification depends on continuing endorsement by the Archdiocese of the Military and employment by the VA. NCVACC certification does not convey endorsement by any other diocese or archdiocese and reciprocal certification by a cognate group must be applied for and granted by those bodies.

#### **1.3 History and Mission of the Organization or Alliance of Organizations**

In a survey conducted in the fall of 1984, over fifty Catholic Chaplains in the VA expressed a desire to form a professional organization suited to their needs. Further support was received from the United States Catholic Conference/Commission on Certification and Accreditation and from the Military Archdiocese. The first officers were elected in February 1985. The purposes of the new professional body were to be: 1) to foster our fraternal relationship and 2) to help those who wish to become certified by the then USCC/Commission on Certification and Accreditation. A Constitution was ratified and an Annual Conference was organized. In March 1988 the National Conference of Veterans Affairs Catholic Chaplains announced Standards and Procedures approved by the then USCC/Commission on Certification and Accreditation to certify Chaplains that they endorsed. Another milestone was the appointment by the Military Archdiocese of an Episcopal Vicar for Veterans Affairs, who focuses his attention on the needs of VA Chaplains and Veterans. The Standards and Procedures were updated in 2009, and approved by the then USCC/Commission on Certification and Accreditation. With the approval of the new By Laws in 2012, Certification of Chaplains who were not seeking Board Certification has been discontinued. The only form of Certification now offered by NCVACC is Board Certification.

## **1.4 Relationship of NCVACC to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Subcommittee on Certification of Ecclesial Ministry and Service**

NCVACC is accredited to offer certification by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Subcommittee on Certification of Ecclesial Ministry and Service (Subcommittee). NCVACC's Certification standards reflect the four categories of competency gained through formation articulated in the USCCB document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. When Board Certification is conferred, NCVACC is the certification body. Neither the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Subcommittee on Certification of Ecclesial Ministry and Service (Subcommittee) nor the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) provide certification of Chaplains.

## **1.5 Periodic Review of the Certification Handbook**

The handbook is reviewed by the Subcommittee as part of the approval of the NCVACC certification standards and procedures. NCVACC will submit these standards and procedures to the Subcommittee every seven years making changes based on ongoing evaluation. Each review by NCVACC and the Subcommittee enables the Board of NCVACC and the Certification Committee to make revisions and additions to the certification standards and procedures as needed and as evaluations have suggested. NCVACC also submits annual reports to the Subcommittee that describe the developments and changes in certification standards and procedures and NCVACC changes as they have occurred during the calendar year.

The certification standards and procedures are also regularly reviewed and approved by the NCVACC Certification Committee and the NCVACC Board. The NCVACC Certification Committee meets annually, at the time of the NCVACC Annual Meeting. The NCVACC Certification Committee also meets with the leadership of cognate groups, including NACC and APC, to ensure that NCVACC Certification Standards and Procedures are harmonized with other groups who offer Board Certification for Chaplains.

## **Section 2.0 Benefits of Certification**

### **2.1 Benefits to the Catholic Church in the United States**

Board Certified Catholic Chaplains demonstrate an integration of theory and skills of pastoral care which embodies care as reemphasized in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (USCCB, 2005; hereafter cited as *Co-Workers*), which provided a vision for the provision of care as part of the mission of the Catholic Church.

### **2.2 Benefits to the Military Archdiocese**

While all Catholic Chaplains serving in the VA meet requirements for employment in the VA and in the provision of pastoral care, Board Certified Chaplains demonstrate specialized skills in pastoral care and in the care for Veterans.

## **2.3 Benefit to NCVACC and the VA**

Board Certification reinforces higher expectations on the part of all. Certified Catholic Chaplains are challenged to deliver quality service and sustained excellence as they fulfill their responsibilities. Agencies, institutions, and church communities have confidence that Board Certified Chaplains are responsible agents of the church and are qualified to serve in the specialized ministry for which they have been certified.

## **Section 3.0 Eligibility Requirements for Certification**

### **3.1 Verification of Endorsement by Military Archdiocese**

Candidates for Board Certification by NCVACC must be endorsed by the Military Archdiocese and be in good standing. Providing a copy of the candidate's listing in the VA National Chaplain Center Directory will be sufficient evidence of endorsement.

### **3.2 Assessment of Formal Education Requirements**

The VA National Chaplain Center reviews education requirements for VA Chaplaincy, which are the same as for Board Certification. This review is conducted prior to any Chaplain being offered a position in the VA. For the purposes of Board Certification, the submission of a transcript from the institution where the candidate completed a Masters of Divinity degree will be sufficient.

### **3.3 Assessment of CPE Requirements**

The Candidate will submit copies of CPE final evaluations for four units of CPE to the Certification Committee, for review by the Certification Chair. The CPE requirement is a minimum of four units (Levels I & II) of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) accredited or approved by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), by programs that were accredited by the former United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA), or the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC/ACSS). No Equivalency will be granted in lieu of CPE Unit

### **3.4 Assessment of Additional Required Education**

Candidates must provide documentation of completing the VIRTUS program or a similar program that informs participants of indicators of abuse and how to report alleged violations. The Certification Committee will determine that the program attended meets the requirements of the VIRTUS program.

### **3.5 Employment in VA Ministry**

Candidates must be currently employed by the VA to be eligible for NCVACC Board Certification. Providing a copy of the candidate's listing in the VA National Chaplain Center Directory will be sufficient evidence of the employment requirement.

### **3.6 Adherence to the NCVACC Code of Ethics**

Candidates, as all members of NCVACC, are required to conduct themselves according to the NCVACC Code of Ethics. The NCVACC Code of Ethics was adopted in 2009 by the vote of the NCVACC members. Members are required to sign a form acknowledging their understanding of the Code of Ethics and commitment to adhere to them upon joining NCVACC. Current membership in NCVACC will serve as proof of having made this commitment to the Code of Ethics of NCVACC.

### **3.7 Membership in NCVACC**

Only NCVACC general members in good standing are eligible for Board Certification by NCVACC. When applying for Board Certification the candidate will submit evidence from the NCVACC Treasurer of the following: payment of the current NCVACC membership dues; and payment of the current initial certification application fee and payment of the current fee for every time certification is renewed.

## **Section 4.0 Certification Standards**

### **4.1 NCVACC Certification Standards**

## **National Conference of Veteran Affairs Catholic Chaplains Qualifications and Competencies for Certification and Renewal of Certification of Chaplains**

The following Qualifications and Competencies incorporate the NACC standards for Catholic Chaplain, used in collaboration between NACC and NCVACC to harmonize standards. These standards represent the Common Qualifications and Competencies (*approved by the Cognate Groups*) and the NACC-Specific Qualifications and Competencies. The NCVACC-Specific Qualifications and Competencies have been incorporated for Veteran Affairs specific items.

#### **301 Qualifications of Professional Chaplaincy (QUA)**

The candidate for certification must:

QUA1: Be employed by a Veterans Affairs facility as a Chaplain and endorsed by the National Chaplain Center (VACO) on either a full time, part time, fee basis, or contract basis. Being in the National Chaplain Center Directory listing will suffice as evidence of endorsement and of employment in the VA.

QUA2: Be current in the payment of the annual fees as designated by one's professional association.

QUA3: Have completed a Bachelor's degree from a college, university, or theological school accredited by a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation ([www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)); and a Masters degree in

Divinity, Theology or Equivalent Studies from a college, university or theological school accredited by a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

QUA4: Provide documentation of a minimum of four units (Levels I & II) of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) accredited or approved by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), by programs that were accredited by the former United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA), or the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC/ACSS). No Equivalency will be granted in lieu of CPE Unit.

QUA5: Verification of VIRTUS or similar approved training completion.

### 302 Integration of Theory and Practice Competencies (ITP)

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

ITP1: Articulate an approach to spiritual care, rooted in one's faith/spiritual tradition that is integrated with a theory of professional practice.

ITP2: Incorporate a working knowledge of psychological and sociological disciplines and religious beliefs and practices in the provision of spiritual care.

ITP2.1 Demonstrate an understanding of Vatican II and Post Vatican II documents of the Church, Systematic/Foundational Theology, Scripture, Theology of the Trinity, Christology, Ecclesiology, Sacramental Theology, Catholic Social Teaching, Canon Law, Ecumenical and Interreligious Practice.

ITP2.2 Articulate an understanding of one's baptismal call and chaplaincy as a ministry of the church.

ITP3: Incorporate the spiritual and emotional dimensions of human development into one's practice of care.

ITP4: Incorporate a working knowledge of different ethical theories appropriate to one's professional context.

ITP 4.1 Demonstrate an understanding of *The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*.

ITP 4.2 Demonstrate an understanding of Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord

ITP 4.3 Demonstrate theoretical understanding of Just War Theory and Roman Catholic social teaching as it relates to war and conflict in our world.

ITP5: Articulate a conceptual understanding of group dynamics and organizational behavior.

ITP6: Articulate how primary research and research literature inform the profession of chaplaincy and one's spiritual care practice.

### 303 Professional Identity and Conduct Competencies (PIC)

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

PIC1: Be self-reflective, including identifying one's professional strengths and limitations in the provision of care.

PIC2: Articulate ways in which one's feelings, attitudes, values, and assumptions affect professional practice.

PIC3: Attend to one's own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

PIC 3.1 Articulate a spirituality grounded in a relationship with God, self, and others.



PIC 3.2 Demonstrate one's commitment to on-going faith development and spiritual growth.

PIC 3.3 Demonstrate life-work balance skills, including time management.

PIC4: Function in a manner that respects the physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual boundaries of others.

PIC5: Use one's professional authority as a spiritual care provider appropriately.

PIC5.1 Articulate an understanding of the responsibility of the public nature of a chaplain's role.

PIC6 Advocate for the persons in one's care.

PIC7: Function within the Common Code of Ethics for Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors, Clinical Pastoral Educators, and Students.

PIC8: Communicate effectively orally and in writing.

PIC9: Present oneself in a manner that reflects professional behavior, including appropriate attire, and grooming.

304 Professional Practice Skills Competencies (PPS)

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

PPS1: Establish, deepen and conclude professional spiritual care relationships with sensitivity, openness, and respect.

PPS2: Provide effective spiritual support that contributes to well-being of the care recipients, their families, and staff.

PPS3: Provide spiritual care that respects diversity and differences including, but not limited to culture, gender, sexual orientation, and spiritual/religious practices.

PPS3.1 Provide spiritual care to veterans with respect to their specific needs as they relate to military service, combat, and the different Eras in which they served.

PPS3.2 Provide spiritual care to veterans who suffer from PTSD, TBI, mental illness, substance abuse, military sexual trauma as well as other pains and sufferings of veterans.

PPS3.3 Provide spiritual care to veterans in special care settings such as palliative care and long-term care facilities.

PPS3.4 Provide competent spiritual care to veterans who experience a variety of emotions and deal with moral conflict/moral injury related to war and combat.

PPS4: Triage and manage crises in the practice of spiritual care.

PPS5: Provide spiritual care to persons experiencing loss and grief.

PPS6: Provide religious/spiritual resources appropriate to the care recipients, families, and staff.

PPS7: Develop, coordinate, and facilitate public worship/spiritual practices appropriate to diverse settings and needs.

PPS8: Facilitate theological/spiritual reflection for those in one's care practice.

PPS9: Facilitate group processes, such as family meetings, post trauma, staff debriefing, and support groups.

PPS10: Formulate and utilize spiritual assessments, interventions, outcomes, and care plans in order to contribute effectively to the well-being of the person receiving care.

PPS11: Document one's spiritual care effectively in CPRS.

### 305 Organizational Leadership Competencies (OL)

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

OL1: Promote the integration of spiritual care into the life and service of the institution in which one functions.

OL2: Establish and maintain professional and interdisciplinary relationships.

OL2.1 Demonstrate the ability to build peer relationships for the purpose of collaboration and active participation in the creation and maintenance of a healthy work environment.

OL2.2 Demonstrate skills in organization, conflict management, leadership, or supervision of others.

OL3: Understand and function within the institutional culture and systems, including utilizing business principles and practices appropriate to one's role in the organization.

OL4: Promote, facilitate, and support ethical decision-making in one's workplace.

OL4.1 Demonstrate skill in facilitating decision-making based on an understanding of culture/ethnicity, gender, race, age, educational background and theological values, religious heritage, behavioral sciences, networking, and systems thinking.

OL5: Foster a collaborative relationship with community clergy and faith group leaders.

### 306 Requirements for the Maintenance of Certification (MNT)

In order to maintain status as a Certified Chaplain, the chaplain must:

MNT1: Participate in a peer review process every fifth year.

MNT2: Document fifty (50) hours of annual continuing education as designated by one's professional association.

MNT3: Provide every fifth year a copy of the page in the current National Chaplain Center roster which shows that they are endorsed and employed by the VA (regardless of contract, fee basis or employee status).

MNT4: Be current in the payment of the NCVACC professional association's annual dues. Any Board Certified or Certified Member who doesn't pay their annual dues will be subject to having their certification revoked.

MNT5: Adhere to the Common Code of Ethics for Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors, Clinical Pastoral Educators, and Students.

### 307 Appeals of Certification Decisions (ACD)

The individual seeking an appeal of a certification decision:

ACD1 Has a right to a timely and complete review of a negative recommendation.

ACD2 Has access to a certification appeals panel free from conflict of interest, and panel members shall not have participated in the original recommendation.

ACD3 Submits a written request for an appeal based on the grounds that such recommendation was an alleged violation of the Competencies and/or Procedures.

ACD4 Accepts the decision of the Certification Appeals Panel as final and binding for the association.

## **Section 5.0 Process for Initial Certification**

### **5.1 Requesting and Completing an Application Form**

The Application form for Board Certification, both initial and renewal, may be found on the NCVACC website or requested from the Certification Committee Chair. Applications and complete application packets, with all written materials, must be received by the Certification Committee by July 1<sup>st</sup> for consideration in that year.

### **5.2 Meeting Eligibility Requirements**

To be eligible for Board Certification, an applicant must have the following qualifications:

- 1) Be employed by a Veterans Affairs facility as a Chaplain and endorsed by the National Chaplain Center (VACO) on either a full time, part time, fee basis, or contract basis. Being in the National Chaplain Center Directory listing will suffice as evidence of endorsement and of employment in the VA.
- 2) Be current in the payment of the annual fees as designated by one's professional association.
- 3) Have completed a Bachelor's degree from a college, university, or theological school accredited by a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation ([www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)); and a Masters degree in Divinity, Theology or Equivalent Studies from a college, university or theological school accredited by a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.
- 4) Provide documentation of a minimum of four units (Levels I & II) of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) accredited or approved by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), by programs that were accredited by the former United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA), or the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC/ACSS). No Equivalency will be granted in lieu of CPE Unit.
- 5) Verification of VIRTUS or similar approved training completion.

### **5.3 Meeting with Interviewers**

In the Board Certification interview, the Certification Panel is seeking to engage the applicant in conversation about pastoral care and the applicant's application of their learning/training in the provision of pastoral care. The Certification Panel will ask for examples of how the applicant demonstrates specific competencies in the care of Veterans, especially integrating the theories and practices that are the Certification Standards into pastoral care.

### **5.4 Consideration by the Certification Committee**

The Certification Committee Chair will convene a panel of Board Certified Chaplains to interview the applicant for Board Certification. The Certification Committee Chair will review the materials to ensure the applicant meets eligibility

requirements and has provided all requested written materials. After the interview is complete, the applicant will leave the room and the Certification Panel will deliberate. Usually, the applicant is called back to receive the Certification Panel's recommendation, usually about 15-20 minutes later. At that time, the applicant will be told whether the Certification Panel is recommending the applicant for Board Certification by the Board of NCVACC or not. The Certification Panel will also usually provide feedback about the strengths and growing edges of the applicant for their continued professional development. Board Certification is not granted until the next meeting of the NCVACC Board, when the Board will vote to either accept or reject the recommendation of the Certification Panel. The applicant will be notified after the Board meeting at which the vote takes place, usually within five days. Please see information about appealing a negative decision for the process of seeking an appeal.

## **5.5 Assessing the Documents and Competencies of Candidates**

The following documents must be submitted in order for a candidate's application materials to be complete:

- Autobiography (Max. 5 pages double spaced)
- Verification of 4 Clinical Pastoral Education Units by an Accredited ACPE or United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) or Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education (CAPPE/ACPEP)  
(For each CPE Unit, provide a copy of your final evaluation and your supervisor's final evaluation. No Equivalency will be granted in lieu of CPE Unit)
- Provide information about length of service within the VA and type of position: Fee Basis, Intermittent, Part-Time or Full Time. A Candidate may submit a copy of their listing in the National Chaplain Center Chaplain Directory as evidence of both this and endorsement by the Military Archdiocese.
- Verification of VIRTUS or similar approved training completion.
- Verification of a Masters degree in Divinity, Theology or Equivalent Studies. (A copy of a candidate's transcript is sufficient evidence.)
- A written response to NCVACC Standards Section on Integration of Theory and Practice (Max. 7 pages with vignettes double spaced) \*
- A written response to NCVACC Section on Professional Identity and Conduct (Max. 5 pages with vignettes double spaced) \*
- A written response to NCVACC Standards Section on Professional Practice Skills (Max. 5 pages with vignettes double spaced) \*
- A written response to NCVACC Standards Section on Organizational Leadership Competencies (Max. 5 pages with vignettes double spaced)\*
- Copy of Membership Dues receipt of payment (\$100 Annual dues) from the Treasurer.
- Copy of Board Certification application fee receipt of payment (\$275.00) from the Treasurer for initial certification.
- Provide a letter of recommendation from your immediate supervisor regarding your ministry and performance.
- Provide 2 verbatims.

The Certification Committee Chair will determine when a complete application packet has been submitted and then provide to the Certification Panel. The Certification Panel will

interview the applicant and evaluate whether the applicant demonstrates competence as determined by the NCVACC Certification Standards.

## **5.6 Participating in an Interview Process**

Certification Interviews may take place at the NCVACC Annual Meeting, or at a date, time and location more convenient for both the applicant and the Certification Committee. If an applicant cannot attend the annual meeting, or wishes to interview outside the dates of the meeting, the Certification Committee Chair will convene a Certification Panel to conduct the interview. Members of the Certification Panel may include Chaplains who are Board Certified by NCVACC or its cognate groups. Such an interview may take place at the location where the applicant serves, a VA nearby or via Video Teleconference. The applicant is expected to present examples of patient care that demonstrate competence in the areas of the Certification Standards and engage with the Certification Panel members in ways that demonstrate awareness of self and history that relate to ministry. The Certification Panel seeks to focus on the professional functioning of the applicant, and how the applicant's self and history affect pastoral care and professional functioning. The Certification Panel will shortly after the end of the interview inform the applicant whether Board Certification is being recommended or not, and areas of strength and growth for professional development.

## **5.7 Celebrating the Conferral of Initial Certification**

At the NCVACC Annual Conference, those who have been granted Board Certification in the prior year are recognized before all NCVACC members in attendance.

## **Section 6.0 Process for Renewal of Certification**

### **6.1 Notifying Candidates**

It is the responsibility of the Board Certified Chaplain to apply for re-certification in the fifth year since they were last granted Board Certification.

### **6.2 Applying for Renewal**

The Application form is available on the NCVACC website and the application packet must be submitted to the Certification Committee Chair by February 1st of that year. The application lists the written materials required. The evaluation of applications for re-certification are conducted by Peer Review panels.

### **6.3 Fulfilling Ongoing Requirements for Renewing Certification**

Board Certified Chaplains are expected to continue ongoing Continuing Education, at least 50 hours per year. The NCVACC Annual Conference provides significant opportunities for Continuing Education. VA Chaplains have Continuing Education that take place at the VA tracked in TMS and may enter training at outside education events

into TMS. A training history printed from TMS will demonstrate Continuing Education.

The other requirements for renewing Certification include maintaining: employment as a Chaplain at the VA, endorsement by the Military Archdioceses and membership in NCVACC (including both annual dues and Certification fees).

#### **6.4 Meeting with Interviewers/Peers Who Have Been Certified**

The Certification Committee Chair, upon receipt of a completed re-certification application packet, will convene a Peer Review panel either at a location convenient to the applicant or via Video Teleconference, at a date and time convenient for the applicant and Peer Review panel members.

#### **6.5 Consideration by the Certification Committee**

The Peer Review Panel will interview the applicant for re-certification, and inform the applicant shortly after the interview whether the Panel will recommend the applicant for re-certification or not. The recommendation will be sent to the NCVACC Board, and the Board will vote at the next meeting to accept or reject the recommendation and whether the Board confers a renewal of Certification. The applicant may appeal a negative decision using the Appeal process.

#### **6.6 Assessing Requirements and Competencies**

The Certification Committee Chair determines whether an application for renewal of Certification is complete or incomplete. Once a complete set of application materials has been submitted, the Certification Committee Chair will convene a Peer Review Panel. The Peer Review Panel will interview the applicant to determine if the applicant continues to demonstrate competence against the NCVACC Certification Standards.

#### **6.7 Recommending Candidates for Renewal of Certification**

The Peer Review Committee will convey their recommendation for or against renewal of Certification to the Certification Committee Chair. This recommendation will be forwarded to the NCVACC Board, the Board will then vote to accept or reject the recommendation and whether a renewal of Certification is granted or not at the next Board meeting.

#### **6.8 Celebrating the Renewal of Certification**

Those receiving a renewal of Certification will be recognized at the NCVACC Annual Meeting.

### **Section 7.0 Roles in Relationship to the Certification Process**

## **7.1 Certification Committee**

The NCVACC Certification Committee is a standing committee of NCVACC, per the by laws of NCVACC and functions under the auspices of the NCVACC Board of Directors. The Certification Committee is responsible for: establishing Certification Standards (which are then ratified by the Board), evaluating applicants for NCVACC Board Certification, by reviewing materials and the convening of Certification Panels and Peer Review panels, and making recommendations to the Board regarding Board Certification. Chaplain Andrew Sioleti is the current Certification Committee Chair.

## **7.2 Appeals Panel**

An Appeals Panel will be established by the Board of Directors when an applicant files an appeal of denial of initial Board Certification, denial of renewal of Board Certification or revocation of Board Certification. The members of the Appeals Panel may not include members involved in the Certification recommendation or revocation being reviewed or members of the Board.

## **7.3 Role of the Interviewers**

Interviewers for Certification Panels and Peer Review Panels may be Chaplains who are Board Certified by NCVACC or its cognate groups. Members are governed by the Code of Ethics of the body by which they are Certified.

## **Section 8.0 Withdrawal of Certification**

### **8.1 Criteria**

Board Certification may be revoked if the Chaplain no longer meets the basic eligibility requirements for Board Certification by NCVACC. This would include, but is not limited to, loss of endorsement by the Military Archdiocese, of employment by the VA, or of membership status in NCVACC.

### **8.2 Process**

Upon notice of loss of eligibility to the Certification Committee Chair, the Chair would make a recommendation to the Board of NCVACC. The Board would then vote on whether or not Board Certification is revoked. The Chaplain may appeal revocation using the Appeals Process.

## **Section 9.0 Appealing an Adverse Certification Decision**

An applicant for initial or renewal of Certification or a Chaplain whose Certification has been revoked, may appeal by submitting a letter requesting an appeal of a decision to the Board of NCVACC. The Board will then establish an Appeal Panel, and the Appeal Panel will review the

appeal request.

## **Section 10.0 Certification Records**

The Certification Committee Chair maintains records of Certification applications and recommendations, retaining the minimum necessary documentation. Records are maintained in either physical copies in a locked location or electronically with password restrictions. Once a Certification Panel or Peer Review Panel has interviewed the applicant and a recommendation is made, supporting documentation beyond the application is either returned to the applicant or destroyed. Applications, the records of the recommendation to the Board and of the Board decision will be maintained.



## Section 11.0 Appendices

### A. Sample Application Form for Initial/Renewal of Certification

#### *National Conference of Veterans Affairs Catholic Chaplains*

##### Request for Board Certification Application Form

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

                    Last Name                    First Name                    Middle Initial

VA Medical Center: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Ext. \_\_\_\_\_

You must be a Member of NCVACC in order to be eligible for Board Certification as a Chaplain. Board Certification is valid for 5 years. You must apply for Re-certification every 5 years. (Only items with \* required for Re-Certification.)

Applying for:  Board Certification                       Board Re-certification

Please provide each of the following documents and include them with this application form:

- Autobiography (Max. 5 pages double spaced)
- Verification of 4 Clinical Pastoral Education Units by an Accredited ACPE or United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) or Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education (CAPPE/ACPEP) 1.  2.  3.  4.

(For each CPE Unit, provide a copy of your final evaluation and your supervisor's final evaluation. No Equivalency will be granted in lieu of CPE Unit)

Indicate if you are Full Time  Part Time  Fee Basis  Contract

Time of Employment in Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy \_\_\_\_\_(years)\*

- Verification of VIRTUS or similar approved training completion \*
- Verification of a Masters degree in Divinity, Theology or Equivalent Studies
- Respond to NCVACC Standards Section on Integration of Theory and Practice (Max. 7 pages with vignettes double spaced) \*
- Respond to NCVACC Section on Professional Identity and Conduct (Max. 5 pages with vignettes double spaced) \*
- Respond to NCVACC Standards Section on Professional Practice Skills (Max. 5 pages with vignettes double spaced) \*

- Respond to NCVACC Standards Section on Organizational Leadership Competencies (Max. 5 pages with vignettes double spaced)\*
- Copy of Membership Dues receipt of payment (\$100 Annual dues) from the Treasurer.\*
- Copy of Board Certification application fee receipt of payment (\$275.00) from the Treasurer for initial certification.
- Copy of Certification fee receipt of payment (\$100.00) from the Treasurer for recertification.\*
- Provide a letter of recommendation from your immediate supervisor regarding your ministry and performance.
- Provide 2 verbatims.

Please submit three (3) copies of your materials.

---

Signature

Date

Mail all 3 copies of your materials to:

Chaplain Andrew Sioleti  
Chair of NCVACC Certification  
VA NYHHS  
423 East 23<sup>rd</sup> St. #125  
New York, NY 10010

All questions should be emailed to me at [Andrew.Sioleti@va.gov](mailto:Andrew.Sioleti@va.gov)

A complete application package (3 copies of your materials) for Board Certification must be received by July 1<sup>st</sup> for review at the NCVACC Annual Conference. For Re-Certification, a complete application package (3 copies of your materials) must be received by February 1<sup>st</sup> and the Certification Chair will convene a Peer Review panel.

## B. Sample Interview Assessment Form

### NCVACC Board Certification Interview Evaluation Form

Candidate Name:

Interview Date:

Interview Location:

Interview Panel:

Did the Candidate evidence the following during the interview process:

302 Integration of Theory and Practice Competencies (ITP)

strongly  adequately  inadequately

Comments:

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

ITP1: Articulate an approach to spiritual care, rooted in one's faith/spiritual tradition that is integrated with a theory of professional practice.

ITP2: Incorporate a working knowledge of psychological and sociological disciplines and religious beliefs and practices in the provision of spiritual care.

ITP2.1 Demonstrate an understanding of Vatican II and Post Vatican II documents of the Church, Systematic/Foundational Theology, Scripture, Theology of the Trinity, Christology, Ecclesiology, Sacramental Theology, Catholic Social Teaching, Canon Law, Ecumenical and Interreligious Practice.

ITP2.2 Articulate an understanding of one's baptismal call and chaplaincy as a ministry of the church.

ITP3: Incorporate the spiritual and emotional dimensions of human development into one's practice of care.

ITP4: Incorporate a working knowledge of different ethical theories appropriate to one's professional context.

ITP 4.1 Demonstrate an understanding of *The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*.

IIP 4.2 Demonstrate an understanding of Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord

IIP 4.3 Demonstrate theoretical understanding of Just War Theory and Roman Catholic social teaching as it relates to war and conflict in our world.

IIP5: Articulate a conceptual understanding of group dynamics and organizational behavior.

IIP6: Articulate how primary research and research literature inform the profession of chaplaincy and one's spiritual care practice.

303 Professional Identity and Conduct Competencies (PIC)

strongly  adequately  inadequately

Comments:

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

PIC1: Be self-reflective, including identifying one's professional strengths and limitations in the provision of care.

PIC2: Articulate ways in which one's feelings, attitudes, values, and assumptions affect professional practice.

PIC3: Attend to one's own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

PIC 3.1 Articulate a spirituality grounded in a relationship with God, self, and others.

PIC 3.2 Demonstrate one's commitment to on-going faith development and spiritual growth.

PIC 3.3 Demonstrate life-work balance skills, including time management.

PIC4: Function in a manner that respects the physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual boundaries of others.

PIC5: Use one's professional authority as a spiritual care provider appropriately.

PIC5.1 Articulate an understanding of the responsibility of the public nature of a chaplain's role.

PIC6 Advocate for the persons in one's care.

PIC7: Function within the Common Code of Ethics for Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors, Clinical Pastoral Educators, and Students.

PIC8: Communicate effectively orally and in writing.

PIC9: Present oneself in a manner that reflects professional behavior, including appropriate attire, and grooming.

304 Professional Practice Skills Competencies (PPS)

strongly  adequately  inadequately

Comments:

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

PPS1: Establish, deepen and conclude professional spiritual care relationships with sensitivity, openness, and respect.

PPS2: Provide effective spiritual support that contributes to well-being of the care recipients, their families, and staff.

PPS3: Provide spiritual care that respects diversity and differences including, but not limited to culture, gender, sexual orientation, and spiritual/religious practices.

PPS3.1 Provide spiritual care to veterans with respect to their specific needs as they relate to military service, combat, and the different Eras in which they served.

PPS3.2 Provide spiritual care to veterans who suffer from PTSD, TBI, mental illness, substance abuse, military sexual trauma as well as other pains and sufferings of veterans.

PPS3.3 Provide spiritual care to veterans in special care settings such as palliative care and long-term care facilities.

PPS3.4 Provide competent spiritual care to veterans who experience a variety of emotions and deal with moral conflict/moral injury related to war and combat.

PPS4: Triage and manage crises in the practice of spiritual care.

PPS5: Provide spiritual care to persons experiencing loss and grief.

PPS6: Provide religious/spiritual resources appropriate to the care recipients, families, and staff.

PPS7: Develop, coordinate, and facilitate public worship/spiritual practices appropriate to diverse settings and needs.

PPS8: Facilitate theological/spiritual reflection for those in one's care practice.

PPS9: Facilitate group processes, such as family meetings, post trauma, staff debriefing, and support groups.

PPS10: Formulate and utilize spiritual assessments, interventions, outcomes, and care plans in order to contribute effectively to the well-being of the person receiving care.

PPS11: Document one's spiritual care effectively in CPRS.

305 Organizational Leadership Competencies (OL)

strongly  adequately  inadequately

Comments:

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

OL1: Promote the integration of spiritual care into the life and service of the institution in which one functions.

OL2: Establish and maintain professional and interdisciplinary relationships.

OL2.1 Demonstrate the ability to build peer relationships for the purpose of collaboration and active participation in the creation and maintenance of a healthy work environment.

OL2.2 Demonstrate skills in organization, conflict management, leadership, or supervision of others.

OL3: Understand and function within the institutional culture and systems, including utilizing business principles and practices appropriate to one's role in the organization.

OL4: Promote, facilitate, and support ethical decision-making in one's workplace.

OL4.1 Demonstrate skill in facilitating decision-making based on an understanding of culture/ethnicity, gender, race, age, educational background and theological values, religious heritage, behavioral sciences, networking, and systems thinking.

OL5: Foster a collaborative relationship with community clergy and faith group leaders.

## C. NCVACC Code of Ethics

### National Conference of Veterans Affairs Catholic Chaplains Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care

101 The Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care:

- 101.1 gives expression to the basic values and standards of the profession;
- 101.2 guides decision-making and professional behavior;
- 101.3 provides a mechanism for professional accountability; and
- 101.4 informs the public as to what they should expect from Spiritual Care offered by VA Catholic Chaplains

102 Preamble

102.1 VA Catholic Chaplains are grounded in communities of faith and informed by professional education and training.

VA Catholic Chaplains:

102.11 Remain proficient by regularly updating themselves in theology, enhancing professional competence, and growing in personal spirituality.

102.12 Promote ethical and moral values by following The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services.

102.13 Respect the primacy of conscience in themselves and in those they serve.

102.2 They are called to nurture their personal health of mind, body, and spirit, and be responsible for their personal and professional conduct as they grow in their respect for all living beings and the natural environment.

102.3 When VA Catholic Chaplains behave in a manner congruent with the values of this Code of Ethics, they bring greater justice, compassion, and healing to our world.

102.4 VA Catholic Chaplains:

affirm the dignity and value of each individual;

102.411 Honor all persons as being created in the image and likeness of God.

102.42 respect the right of each faith group to hold to its values and traditions;

advocate for professional accountability that protects the public and advances the profession; and

respect the cultural, ethnic, gender, racial, sexual orientation, and religious diversity of other professionals and those served, and strive to eliminate discrimination.

102.441 Respect diversity of age, national origin, and physical ability.

102.442 Refrain from using their position, influence, knowledge, or professional affiliation for unfair advantage or for personal gain.

103 Ethical Principles in Relationships with Clients

VA Catholic Chaplains understand clients to be any counselees, patients, family members, students, or staff to whom they provide spiritual care. In relationships with clients, VA Catholic Chaplains uphold the following standards of professional ethics.

VA Catholic Chaplains:

103.1 Speak and act in ways that honor the dignity and value of every individual.

103.2 Provide care that is intended to promote the best interest of the client and to foster strength, integrity, and healing.

103.3 Demonstrate respect for the cultural and religious values of those they serve and refrain from imposing their own values and beliefs on those served.

103.4 Are mindful of the imbalance of power in the professional/client relationship and refrain from exploitation of that imbalance.

103.5 Maintain relationships with clients on a professional basis only.

103.6 Avoid or correct any conflicts of interest or appearance of conflicting interest(s).

103.7 Refrain from any form of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or sexual assault in relationships with clients.

103.8 Refrain from any form of harassment, coercion, intimidation, or otherwise abusive words or



actions in relationships with clients.

103.9 Safeguard the confidentiality of clients when using materials for educational purposes or written publication.

103.10 Respect the confidentiality of information entrusted to them by clients when communicating with family members or significant others, except when disclosure is required for necessary treatment and granted by client permission, for the safety of any person or when required by law.

103.11 Understand the limits of their individual expertise and make referrals to other professionals when appropriate.

#### 104 Ethical Principles in Relationships Between Supervisors/Educators and Students

VA Catholic Chaplains respect the integrity of students, using the power they have as supervisors/educators in responsible ways. VA Catholic Chaplains:

104.1 Maintain a healthy educational environment free of coercion or intimidation.

104.2 Maintain clear boundaries in the areas of self-disclosure, intimacy, and sexuality.

104.3 Provide clear expectations regarding responsibilities, work schedules, fees, and payments.

104.4 Provide adequate, timely, and constructive feedback to students.

104.5 Maintain a healthy respect for the personal growth of students, and provide appropriate professional referrals.

104.6 Maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding all information and knowledge gained in the course of supervision.

#### 105 Ethical Principles in Relationships with Faith Community

VA Catholic Chaplains are accountable to their faith communities, one another, and other organizations.

VA Catholic Chaplains:

105.1 Maintain good standing in their faith group.

105.2 Abide by the professional practice and/or teaching standards of the state/province, the community, and the institution in which they are employed. If for any reason a VA Catholic Chaplain is not free to practice or teach according to conscience, the VA Catholic Chaplain shall notify the employer, his or her professional organization, and faith group as appropriate.

105.3 Do not directly or by implication claim professional qualifications that exceed actual qualifications, or misrepresent an affiliation with any institution.

#### 106 Ethical Principles in Relationships with Other Professionals and the Community

VA Catholic Chaplains are accountable to the public, faith communities, employers, and professionals in all professional relationships. VA Catholic Chaplains:

106.1 Promote justice in relationships with others, in their institutions, and in society.

- 106.2 Represent accurately their professional qualifications and affiliations.
- 106.3 Exercise good stewardship of resources entrusted to their care, and employ sound financial practices.
- 106.4 Respect the opinions, beliefs, and professional endeavors of colleagues and other professionals.
- 106.5 Seek advice and counsel of other professionals whenever it is in the best interest of those being served, and make referrals when appropriate.
- 106.6 Provide expertise and counsel to other health professionals in advocating for best practices in care.
- 106.7 Seek to establish collaborative relationships with other community and health professionals.
- 106.8 Advocate for changes in their institutions that would honor spiritual values and promote healing.
- 106.9 Provide other professionals with chart notes where they are used that further the treatment of the clients or patients, obtaining consent when required.
- 106.10 Communicate sufficient information to other care team members while respecting the privacy of clients.
- 106.11 Ensure that private conduct does not impair the ability to fulfill professional responsibilities or bring dishonor to the profession.
- 106.12 Clearly distinguish between statements made or actions taken as a private individual and those made as a member or representative of one of the cognate organizations.

#### 107 Ethical Principles in Relationships with Colleagues

VA Catholic Chaplains engage in collegial relationships with peers, other chaplains, local clergy, and counselors, recognizing that perspective and judgment are maintained through consultative interactions rather than through isolation. VA Catholic Chaplains:

- 107.1 Honor all consultations, whether personal or client-related, with the highest professional regard and confidentiality.
- 107.2 Maintain sensitivity and professional protocol of the employing institution and/or the certifying organization when receiving or initiating referrals.
- 107.3 Exercise due caution when communicating through the internet or other electronic means.
- 107.4 Respect each other and support the integrity and well being of their colleagues.
- 107.5 Take collegial and responsible action when concerns about or direct knowledge of incompetence, impairment, misconduct, or violations against this Code arise.
- 107.6 Communicate sufficient information to other care team members while respecting the privacy of clients.

#### 108 Ethical Principles in Advertising

VA Catholic Chaplains engage in appropriate informational activities that educate the public about their professional qualifications and individual scopes of practice. VA Catholic Chaplains:

- 108.1 Represent their competencies, education, training, and experience relevant to their practice of pastoral care, education, and counseling in an accurate manner.
- 108.2 Do not use any professional identification (business cards, letterhead, Internet or telephone directory, etc.) if it is false, misleading, fraudulent, or deceptive.
- 108.3 List and claim as evidence only degrees and certifications that are earned from educational institutions and/or training programs recognized by the certifying organizations of VA Catholic Chaplains.
- 108.4 Ascertain that the qualifications of their employees, supervisees, and students are represented in a manner that is not false, misleading, fraudulent, or deceptive.
- 108.5 Represent themselves as providing specialized services only if they have the appropriate education, training, or supervised experience.

## 109 Ethical Principles in Research

VA Catholic Chaplains engaging in research follow guidelines and applicable laws that strive to protect the dignity, privacy, and well-being of all participants. VA Catholic Chaplains:

- 109.1 Engage only in research within the boundaries of their competence.
- 109.2 In research activities involving human participants, are aware of, and ensure that the research question, design, and implementation are in full compliance with ethical principles.
- 109.3 Adhere to informed consent, including a clear and understandable explanation of the procedures, a description of the risks and benefits, and the duration of the desired participation.
- 109.4 Inform all participants of the right to withdraw consent and to discontinue involvement at any time.
- 109.5 Engage in research while being sensitive to the cultural characteristics of participants.
- 109.6 Maintain the confidentiality of all research participants and inform participants of any limits of that confidentiality.
- 109.7 Use any information obtained through research for professional purposes only.
- 109.8 Exercise conscientiousness in attributing sources in their research and writing, thereby avoiding plagiarism.
- 109.9 Report research data and findings accurately.

## National Conference of Veterans Affairs Catholic Chaplains Principles for Processing Ethical Complaints

201 We as VA Catholic Chaplains recognize the infinite value of each person, and demonstrate respect for all living beings and the natural environment.

202 While our individual spiritual care organizations may configure specific procedures in different ways, we are all committed to accountability to the principles stated in this document. We strive toward the very best in our common calling as healers, as we steadfastly seek to confront ethical breaches as both challenge and opportunity. In so doing we seek to discover the true meaning of concepts like

“faithfulness” and “justice”.

203 The principles of restorative justice should inform the lens and questions by which situations are addressed within each organization’s process of addressing ethical concerns. Restorative justice asks: Who has been hurt? What are their needs? Whose obligations are these? (Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, 2002, p. 21)

204 It is with the above realization in mind that the following principles for ethical processes have been fashioned. They exist to serve two complementary purposes.

204.1 To provide our organizations and their members with procedures designed to support highly ethical behavior and a means to address breaches in the Code of Ethics.

204.2 To communicate clearly to the public at large the means by which we seek to fashion our ethical ideals into practical instruments of service.

## 205 Guiding Principles

Following is a general set of principles which should serve as the foundation for procedures for addressing ethical concerns.

205.1 Each process for ethical accountability shall be consistent with the adopted Code of Ethics.

205.2 Each organization shall administer its own procedures and impose sanctions, maintaining a commitment to respect for the dignity and well-being of each person involved in the process.

205.3 Each process should be based on transparency, and designed to encourage as much openness and communication as possible.

205.4 Each process will balance transparency and confidentiality. Maintenance of records will permit access to information and materials only in accordance with an organization’s policies.

## 206 Recommended Elements for Ethics Procedures

Each professional organization’s framework within which to process concerns about ethical behavior of members should include the following:

206.1 Use of an accountability statement (with renewal subject to the discretion of each organization, e.g. annual renewal when membership is renewed).

206.11.1 Every certified member is required to sign and submit the NCVACC Ethics Accountability Statement at the time of certification and at each renewal of certification.

206.2 Structure for processing an ethical complaint.

206.3 Optional procedures for intervention before a formal complaint is filed.

206.4 Guidelines for filing a written complaint.

- 206.5 Guidelines for investigating a complaint which include:
    - 206.50 Notice of allegations to the person purported to have violated the Code of Ethics.
    - 206.51 Opportunity for that person to be heard in responding to the allegations.
    - 206.52 By an impartial gatherer of facts.
  - 206.6 Guidelines for adjudicating a complaint after investigation, and a clear standard of review by which evidence will be evaluated by an impartial fact finder.
  - 206.7 Guidelines for determining remedies and sanctions.
  - 206.8 Guidelines for communicating a decision.
  - 206.9 Guidelines for appealing a decision on the limited grounds within an organization's policies.
  - 206.10 Guidelines for processing an appeal and rendering a final decision.
  - 206.11 Guidelines for monitoring and review of sanctions.
- Guidelines for recruiting, training, and providing resources for Commission members.

## D. Template for Appeal of an Adverse Decision Sample Letter and Application Form

Date

Name

Title

Address

City/State/Zip

Dear (*Name*):

I am writing to notify you of my request to review the decision of the NCVACC (*identify either Certification Committee or Board of Directors*) on (*date*) to deny or revoke my certification as a Board Certified Chaplain.

*State here:*

1. *A clear and adequate reason for the appeal, including substantiating evidence if necessary. Specifically clarify either that:*
  - *the decision was based on an incorrect or incomplete representation of your competence and why you believe this is so; or*
  - *the process was conducted in violation or disregard of specific procedures outlined in the arch/diocese's or organization's certification handbook.*
2. *Your desired resolution and willingness, if the committee would deem it beneficial, to appear before the commission for an interview.*

Thank you for your careful consideration of my request. I am aware that the decision of the Appeals Panel is final and binding.

Respectfully,

*Note: Candidates are strongly advised to keep a copy of their original appeal letter for their own personal records and use throughout the review process.*

## **Section 12.0 Acknowledging Subcommittee Approval for the Certification Handbook**

After the Subcommittee has granted initial approval of the organization's certification standards and procedures, appropriate office publications, including the certification handbook, shall state the statement of approval in the appropriate place. The statement of approval and logo can be found on the Parish or Institutional Group Community site after approval has been granted.