

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 homes, 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 should 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 depends on what is 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 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
- United States Citizenship
- Four Units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) from a Department of Education accredited CPE Program. 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.)

General Endorsement Requirements

When using 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 or 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 *NAMB Code of Conduct and Covenant of Support*. A chaplain's personal character must be consistent with the spiritual leadership required to work with people.
- The applicant must undergo a background check that includes credit, criminal, and sexual offenses.
- Be a member in good standing with an SBC church for a minimum of one year. 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 his or her exercise of ministry in his or her ministry context.
- Submit 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 SBC church. This recognizes the role of the local church in affirming the ministry of the applicant.
- Hold theological beliefs currently adopted by the SBC as represented in [*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*](#). Additionally, applicants and endorsed chaplains are to affirm compliance and support of the following policies:
 - If divorced, the applicant will be assessed with grace and mercy on an individual basis in accordance with NAMB policy.¹
 - The applicant must agree to the *NAMB Code of Conduct and Covenant of Support*.
- Vocational chaplains should 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, institution, or professional organization. The Chaplain Commission will not endorse a chaplain who does not meet the requirements of these agencies or organizations.
- Must receive approval from the Chaplains Commission.

Duration of Endorsements

An SBC Chaplaincy endorsement is to a specific chaplain ministry position. Any change in chaplain status or employment requires an update of endorsement. Some ministerial training programs, such as a clinical pastoral education residency, have a specified duration. When the chaplain completes the training, the endorsement terminates. Certain endorsements have a specified 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 terminate until an update is requested. A chaplain may request the withdrawal of endorsement at any time. A chaplain may lose his or her endorsement at any time due to circumstances such as doctrinal stance, moral failure, or other substantial issues.

¹ For specific details, see Chaplaincy Endorsement Manual, "Divorce and Remarriage," 31.

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

Endorsement Updates

Periodically, the institution will ask that the chaplain have an updated endorsement. It is the responsibility of the chaplain to initiate the process for updating an endorsement. Also, a chaplain should contact the SBC Chaplaincy Team to request an endorsement update when his or her status or ministry location changes. Endorsement update requests can be made through the chaplain's portal (mynamb.net).

Chaplains can have more than one endorsement if an individual is actively serving as a recognized chaplain in respective institutions.

Chaplains can request an update by contacting the SBC Chaplaincy Team or through the Chaplain portal at mynamb.net. Once started, the chaplain will need to complete an Endorsement Update Application and send proper supporting documents. When requesting an updated endorsement, chaplains are to ensure their current profile, SBC church membership, pastoral reference, and Quarterly Report is current. 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. Please allow up to six weeks for the endorsement update 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 differ among the various religious ecclesiastical organizations.

As a general rule, SBC Chaplaincy allows a 90-day transition period for transferring endorsements to another ecclesiastical body and will include either a with or without prejudice comment.

Oversight and Supervision

Chaplains typically serve in a secular institutional setting that authorize and hold them accountable. Chaplains are also sent to the field by faith groups that endorse them. A chaplain maintains his or her endorsement, and therefore employability, by staying in affiliation and good standing with his or her faith group. However, it is the secular institution that employs and authorizes chaplains as their religious leaders and official representatives.

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 Chaplaincy Team members are available to respond to any questions or concerns.

Each applicant for denominational endorsement by the Chaplains Commission is expected to understand, accept, and support the Commission's policies and purposes.

Discipline and Withdrawal of an SBC Endorsement

An SBC-endorsed chaplain may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including withdrawal of endorsement when he or she violates a law (local, state, federal, including the Uniform Code of Military Justice), agency policy, SBC general expectations as stated in [*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*](#), *NAMB Code of Conduct and Covenant of Support*, a personal or professional ethic that impacts his or her effectiveness, or is an embarrassment to the cause of Christ, Southern Baptists, NAMB, or sending SBC church.

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