

## REFLECTING ON MY FIVE YEARS OF MINISTRY AS A BCCi CHAPLAIN

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### 1. A Reflection on the Standards of Practice for Professional Chaplains

As a Board-Certified Chaplain, I have been improving, developing, and implementing my professional practices according to the APC™ Professional Standards. For the past five years of my Chaplain ministry, I have served in various environments. These include three hospitals: Baptist Health System in San Antonio, TX; San Antonio Military Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston, TX; and Baltimore VA Medical Center in Baltimore, MD, where I am currently. I have also been in the US Army Reserve and Active Units as Unit Chaplain of 7453 Medical Operational Readiness Unit for two years and Activated Home Mission Command Chaplain of US Army Garrison Fort Hood, Texas for one full year. Additionally, I have been Prison Chaplain at Arizona State Prison Tucson Complex for one full year. I believe that Chaplaincy care is grounded in initiating, developing, deepening, and closing a spiritual and empathic relationship with those receiving spiritual care. I am clearly aware of that the development of a genuine relationship is at the core of Chaplaincy care.

#### Section 1: Chaplaincy Care with Care Recipients

Standard 1, **Assessment**: I am aware that spiritual assessment is the pivotal part of spiritual care. I have been developing my own methods and ways of spiritual assessment while focusing on the care recipient's spiritual, religious, emotional, and relational needs and resources. The principle of my spiritual assessment is to open the recipient's heart as soon as I enter his/her space by bringing a positive and bright energy and making the best first impression as a Chaplain who is projecting the love and presence of God. The key things I need to prepare for this are a smile, a little bit of a high tone of voice and confident body language that overflows from my compassionate heart and servanthood attitude. Assessment also should be done by recipient-centered conversation and spontaneous responses.

Standard 2, **Delivery of Care**: I have been developing and implementing plans of care to promote the well-being/wellness of my patients and their families. For example, I always carry spiritual literatures such as Our Daily Bread, Guideposts, Living Faith (Roman Catholic Devotions), Portals of Prayer (Lutheran), Prayer Rosary, and some short literatures. These small free materials become a gate-opener and, many times, a kindle of conversation.

Standard 3, **Documentation of Care**: The appropriate documentation relevant to the care recipient's well-being as well as the communication with other care providers such as Chaplains, Doctors, and Nurses for continuity and improvement of the care. I always do the spell check first before saving the initial visit notes and the pastoral care notes.

Standard 4, **Teamwork and Collaboration**: Chaplaincy is teamwork. I am always clearly aware that I am part of a team. My discipline as a US Army Chaplain has given me ample opportunity to put the mission and the team first. I am prepared to cover my colleague's role and duty as it's needed, and I am available. I also know that I can rely on my coworkers in case I need their help.

Standard 5, **Ethical Practice**: As a professional Chaplain, I always adhere to the APC Code of Ethics and other codes of ethics such as the VA Code of Federal Regulations and the PRCC Code of Ethics.

Standard 6, **Confidentiality**: I, as a Chaplain, respect the confidentiality of information from all sources, including the care recipient, legal or organizational records, and other care providers in accordance with federal and state laws, regulations, and rules. I have been able to keep and protect the confidentiality of my care recipients throughout my Chaplaincy career thus far. I always inform my patients that I respect and keep the confidentiality of all the conversation and counseling. I also have been updating my HIPAA credential annually by completing trainings and tests for the certificate.

Standard 7, **Respect for Diversity**: I am to model and collaborate with other care providers in respecting and providing sensitive care regardless of diverse abilities, beliefs, cultures, or identities. I also have been actively sharing about my own culture and identity with others for their wellness and building better relationships with others. I offer spiritual care to recipients regardless of their faith or lack thereof, treat everyone with respect, and provide sensitive care without hesitation or prejudice.

## **Section 2: Chaplaincy Care for the Organization**

Standard 8 & 9, **Care for Employees, Affiliates, and the Organization**: As a Clinical Staff Chaplain assigned to VA Maryland Baltimore Downtown Medical Center, I provide Sunday Protestant Chapel services 1-2 times per month for Employees and Affiliates. I also have been involved in major annual events such as Vietnam War Memorial service, Employee Memorial Service, and Group Therapies for the organization's grieving staff/employees in ways consistent with the VA Health Care System's values and mission statement.

Standard 10, **Chaplain as Leader**: I provided leadership in the chaplain's professional setting and profession, particularly as a Military Chaplain among the Soldiers (until May 2022), as a Correctional/Prison Chaplain among the correctional officers and personnel (in 2021), and currently among the VA system and personnel. My personal motto in terms of Leadership is, "Leader as a learner!" I am to be a learner among my audience and followers before I lead them. I also want to be a servant leader among my colleagues and audience, based on the Word of Jesus Christ, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

## **Section 3: Maintaining Competent Chaplaincy Care**

Standard 11, **Continuous Quality Improvement**: I have been seeking and creating opportunities to enhance the quality of my Chaplaincy care practice as understood within the Chaplain's professional

setting. One of the examples is the Continuing Education (CE). I have completed every year's CE report to the APC to maintain my quality of Chaplaincy care practice and knowledge. I also earned the Certificate in Christian Education program from Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY in two years, graduating from the diploma program in May 2021.

Standard 12, **Research** & Standard 13, **Knowledge and Continuing Education**: I have been keeping up with relevant information and evidenced-based practices in Chaplaincy care through reading and reflecting on current studies, researching, and attending seminars and trainings, so that I can continue professional development and demonstrate a working knowledge of current theory and practice as appropriate to my professional setting. For instance, I have presented multiple times about the Clinical Pastoral Care to Correctional Chaplains who had no experience or CPE education but were involved in the Chaplaincy care at Hospice and Medical Units in correctional facilities in the State of Arizona.

Standard 14, **Technology** & Standard 15, **Business Acumen**: I want to be a learner to use technology appropriately, to enhance delivery of care, and to advance the work of the profession. I also value and utilize business principles, practices, and regulatory requirements appropriate to my role as a Chaplain in my organization.

## 2. **Significant Challenges, Strengths, and Growth over the Five Years**

I have experienced significant challenges over the five years. First challenge was the ministry opportunities that were apart from the hospital environment. I was activated to the US Army Active Duty (Contingent Active Duty Operational Support, CO-ADOS) Chaplain position at US Army Garrison Fort Hood, Texas in 2020, and in 2021, I was hired by the Arizona State Corrections System as a Correctional/Prison Chaplain. These work opportunities challenged me as I wanted to maintain my identity and professional skills as a Hospital/Clinical Chaplain. However, I was able to not only keep my identity and professional skills, but also to improve and implement my professional skills by approaching the full time Military Chaplaincy and the Correctional Chaplaincy with passion and a learner's attitude.

During the year-long Active Duty Chaplaincy at Fort Hood, TX, I was able to visit the Fort Hood Military Hospital (Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center) numerous times to see the behavioral health patients (mostly for suicide prevention purposes), and all other patients such as COVID-19 cohort groups for individual and group counseling. There were also a lot of opportunities of Suicide Prevention Trainings and Domestic Violence Prevention Trainings given to me as the Home Station Mission Command Chaplain during the CO-ADOS year.

Within my other year-long service as a Prison Chaplain at the Tucson AZ State Prison Complex in 2021, I was the only board-certified Chaplain among the eight Correctional Chaplains. I was assigned to a typical prison unit named "Whetstone Unit" where about 1,200 inmates (out of total 6,000 inmates in the complex), including 120 Military Veteran Inmates were imprisoned. I felt compassion for the Military Inmates, and I volunteered to go beyond my boundaries to offer pastoral/spiritual care to the hospitalized inmates at the Hospice Unit (about 30 inmates), general medical units (50 inmates), and the Mental Health Units (100 inmates in three different

levels). As Hospital/Clinical Chaplain I was very welcomed by the Staff and the Inmates. It was certainly meaningful and a huge privilege for me to support the dying and isolated Inmates.

I will never forget the “Lifer” Inmates who were dying in the locked-in clinic cells without any family presence or support. I did not know that there were “always” dying/fading prisoners in the prison, and it’s the most significant part of their lifelong punishment. Most of the Lifers welcomed Chaplains to attend their final days of life. Many of them were very appreciative to Chaplain visits and prayers for them and their families. Surely the yearlong prison Chaplaincy was a special furnace in which my God forged me as a more matured and humbler person, minister, and Chaplain. I believe these opportunities were significant challenges to me as well as great opportunities to grow, improve, and implement not only my professional skills and strengths as a Clinical/Board Certified Chaplain, but also as a humble human who reflects on himself, his life, and his vocation before God.

### **3. Contribution to Meeting Regulatory Standards**

Even though I have spent my first five years after the Board Certification on numerous endeavors such as patient-centered spiritual care, communication and staff care with cultural, ethnic, and spiritual sensitivity, ethics, managing complaints and/or resolving difficult cases, disaster preparation, and integration of an interdisciplinary team, I still see myself as a person and caregiver who has a lot of growing edges. I am going to strive for excellence of my professional skills and delight of the patients and their families, and the staff and all other colleagues.

### **4. What Areas Do You Envision in the Future?**

I would like to explore and pursue a Specialty Certification of Suicide Prevention, one of the six NAVAC Competency Certifications (HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE PAGE, DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADDICTIONS PAGE, POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER COUNSELING PAGE, MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALTY COMPETENCY CERTIFICATION, MORAL INJURY, and SUICIDE PREVENTION) so that I can make a contribution within my employing institution and the nationwide/worldwide Chaplain ministry. My goal is to complete the Suicide Prevention Certification/Specialty program in three years.

The reason why I envision the area of Suicide Prevention is that I know the seriousness of the suicide rate in the States, especially in the Military and Veteran society. I myself have lost several battle buddies who committed suicide, and whenever I conducted and participated in their funeral/memorial services, I committed myself again and again to strive against suicide by being a part of the suicide prevention work. I would like to be a confidant and holder of hope who offers awareness, insight, acceptance, and empathy a skilled companion and supportive presence to the persons who have suicidal ideation, so that they could be released from the tunnel visions and see the great hope of life.