

## **New York State Council of Churches Chaplaincy Certification Criteria and Procedures**

Chaplaincy certification by the New York State Council of Churches (NYSCOC) is expected for Protestant and Orthodox clergy prior to interviewing and or applying for the following New York State (NYS) agencies:

Department of Corrections and Community Services  
Office of Children and Family Services  
Office of Mental Health  
Office for People with Developmental Disabilities

### **Mission:**

The NYSCOC recognizes there are a multitude of paths to qualify for certification. We recognize the personal need and constitutional right of all persons within state institutions to effective spiritual ministry. Guided by our sense of unity in the Body of Christ, the NYSCOC, cooperating with and on behalf of Protestant and Orthodox communions within NYS we affirm the following:

1. An individual's relationship to God is vital in the healing and rehabilitative process.
2. The Chaplain's primary function is to provide spiritual ministry, assist in spiritual formation, and provide programs and worship services that assist and support redemptive and rehabilitative behavior.
3. Chaplains are to be knowledgeable of NYS institutions and their primary mission, be trained to perform specialized pastoral functions within them, be competent to serve as a valued member of a professional team, and be prepared to advocate on behalf of residents, patients, and staff.
4. Chaplains must be skilled in drawing from their own faith traditions while respecting and working with other clergy from other faiths.
5. Chaplains must be willing to serve and assist all people regardless of their faith, race, nationality, or sexual orientation. Chaplains unable to work within this highly pluralistic work environments expose themselves and the chaplaincy to legal risk for discriminatory practices. Chaplains need to be prepared to minister to the needs individuals vehemently opposed to their beliefs.

### **Criteria for Certification:**

Candidates for certification must meet the following criteria to be interviewed by the Certification Committee.

1. **Ordination:** Candidates will submit documentation that they have obtained ordination as a clergy person in accordance with the stated policy of their governing denomination and authorized to perform all functions ascribed to that office.

Or:

Be endorsed by such a religious body that does not recognize ordination in the traditional sense or may not ordain women. The religious body or denomination, without further documentation must be listed in the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches. Alternative documentation may include nondenominational churches with local

endorsements and a multi-year institutional track record of ministry to their community.

*\* Under no circumstances will ordinations from mail order or online unaccredited bodies be recognized as valid.*

2. **Ecclesiastical Endorsement:** A candidate will request a letter from their denominational officer, who can clearly state that the candidate is a clergy person in “Good Standing\*” in the denomination. The Ecclesiastical Endorsing Body has the authority to withhold or remove endorsement should their denomination ethical or professional guidelines be broken.

*\*Good Standing means the Ecclesiastical Endorsing Body recognizes the candidate is fully compliant with ethical and professional guidelines set forth by the denomination and is in their estimation professionally prepared to serve in the forementioned NYS institutions.*

3. **Formal Education:** The candidate must provide official documentation of all educational and certified training to the NYSCOC. This is to include but not limited to diplomas, training certificates, and/or histories of service.
  - a. Graduation with a bachelor’s degree from an accredited four-year college.
  - b. Completion of a Master of Divinity Degree from an accredited School of Theology, or 96 hours of theological education over and above a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution, or through a formalized course of study on the track towards full ordination in that denomination or can prove to the NYSCOC’s satisfaction 5 years of active church or institutional ministerial experience.
4. **Pastoral Experience:** Evidence of no less than 3 years of active congregational experience is required.
5. **Equivalent, Alternative Chaplaincy Certification Criteria:** The Committee may use equivalent, alternative criteria for certification when a candidate demonstrates an extraordinary degree of expertise, experience and capability for chaplaincy service, including, but not limited to professional maturity, spiritual understanding, pastoral skills, pastoral concern, competency in pastoral counseling and administrative aptitude. CPE, CISM, and other certification trainings are also seen as positive components of an applicant’s qualifications.
6. **Professional Competency:** Candidates are expected to demonstrate throughout the certifying process a sense of calling to this unique ministry, sound judgement, excellent sense of boundaries, flexibility, internalized and integrated training, problem solving skills, compassion for humanity, insight into their own character, an ability to work within highly pluralistic environment, appropriate respect for authority and the ability to follow procedures.

#### **Procedures for Certification:**

1. Certification of ordination is to be provided by the candidate and should accompany the application. Ecclesiastical endorsement will be provided by the candidate's denomination at the request of the New York State Council of Churches. No interview will be arranged until these documents are received and approved.
2. Certification of “Professional Competency” will be done through the Certification

Committee. The candidate will forward the supporting documentation on education, training, pastoral experience, and references to the New York State Council of Churches for processing and review by the Committee. Assuming documents have been received, the Committee will then conduct an interview and notify the candidate of its action.

3. After certification the candidate is encouraged to:
  - a. Join the New York State Association of Protestant Chaplains; attend one meeting/conference of Association annually.
  - b. Maintain good standing with their endorsing denomination and report to the New York State Council of Churches any changes in their approved status, ordination and/or changes in denominational affiliation.

### **APPEALS AND REVIEWS:**

In the event that a candidate is not satisfied with the decision of the interviewing committee, they may request a review of that decision. This request is to be addressed in writing to the Commission Chair and Executive Director of the New York State Council of Churches. The cause for the appeal should be specified. The Commission can certify an appealing application.

Certification is indefinite, however if a candidate is not employed by a New York State agency within three years of certification, they will be required to submit an updated application and account of ministerial activity.

A chaplain's certification may be reviewed at any time by the New York State Council of Churches. Requests for such a review may come from a chaplain, a facility, an agency, a denomination, or other concerned parties.

Certification may be revoked by the Commission on Chaplaincy Services of the New York State Council of Churches for sufficient cause.

### **Additional Information for DOCCS Candidates:**

The following is a portion of the Directive from the New York State DOCCS regarding outside employment – employment by a private entity during off duty hours.

*Employees who wish to obtain permission for outside employment shall be provided with a copy of the complete directive and a request form by his or her personnel office.*

*Except for employees in the military reserves, or self-employed individuals, or those in a family business who does not receive a salary, no Department employee may engage in outside employment without written approval from the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee. Written permission must be obtained even for temporary, or one-day work, if the employee receives pay for such activity.*

Chaplains serving in a DOCCS facility are expected to render worship service(s) on their religious day of service.