

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINS

The code of practice gives expression to the basic values and standards of those working as chaplains; guides decision making and professional behaviour; provides a mechanism for professional accountability; and informs the public as to what they should expect from chaplains and chaplaincy volunteers.

Introduction¹

Chaplains are grounded in communities of faith and informed by professional education and training. In their work, chaplains are called to nurture the health of mind, body and spirit of those they serve, and to be responsible for their personal and professional conduct.

Those who receive care from chaplains can expect them to affirm the dignity and value of each individual; 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.

The chaplains' approach to the various aspects of their work is set out in more detail below:

Relationships with patients and service users

Chaplains understand patients and service users to include patients, family members, students or staff or the team members to whom they provide spiritual care. In relationships with patients and service users, chaplains uphold the following standards of professional practice. Chaplains:

- 1.1 Speak and act in ways that affirm the dignity and value of every individual.
- 1.2 Provide care that is intended to promote the best interest of the patient and service user and to foster strength, integrity and healing.
- 1.3 Demonstrate respect for the cultural and religious values of those they serve and refrain from imposing their own values and beliefs on those served.
- 1.4 Are mindful of the imbalance of power in the professional/patient and service user relationship and refrain from exploitation of that imbalance.

¹ In all these papers, use of the word 'he' should be taken also to include 'she'. Similarly, use of the word chaplain should be taken to include spiritual care-giver

- 1.5 Maintain relationships with patient and service users on a professional basis² only.
- 1.6 Avoid or correct any conflicts of interest or appearance of conflicting interest(s), if necessary by ensuring referral of the patient to another chaplain.
- 1.7 Refrain from any form of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment or sexual assault in relationships with patient and service users.
- 1.8 Refrain from any form of harassment, coercion, intimidation or otherwise abusive words or actions in relationships with patient and service users.
- 1.9 Safeguard the confidentiality of patient and service users when using materials for educational purposes or written publication.
- 1.10 Respect the confidentiality of information entrusted to them by patient and service users when communicating with family members or significant others except when disclosure is required for necessary treatment, granted by patient and service user permission, for the safety of any person or when required by law³.
- 1.11 Understand the limits of their individual expertise and make referrals to other professionals when appropriate.
- 1.12 Ensure that their dress, appearance and personal hygiene is appropriate to the setting in which they work.
- 1.13 Ensure that they work in safety and follow advice on ways to achieve safe lone working as appropriate.

Relationships with students and others whom they teach

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

- 2.1 Maintain a healthy educational environment free of coercion or intimidation.
- 2.2 Maintain clear boundaries in the areas of self-disclosure, intimacy and sexuality.

² Chaplains do not use their professional position to establish or pursue an improper emotional relationship with a patient or someone close to them.

³ It is understood and accepted that some chaplains will regard confidentiality as absolute if disclosure is made in confession.

- 2.3 Provide clear expectations regarding responsibilities, work schedules, fees and payments.
- 2.4 Provide adequate, timely and constructive feedback to students.
- 2.5 Maintain a healthy respect for the personal growth of students and provide appropriate professional referrals.
- 2.6 Maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding all information and knowledge gained in the course of supervision.

Relationships with the Faith Community

Chaplains are accountable to their faith communities, one another and other people who share their faith. Chaplains:

- 3.1 Maintain good standing in their faith community.
- 3.2 Abide by the professional practice and other standards of the community, service provider and the institution in which they are employed.
- 3.3 Notify the employer, his or her professional organization and the faith community as appropriate if for any reason they are not free to practice or teach according to conscience.
- 3.4 Promote justice in relationships with others, in their institutions and in society.
- 3.5 Advocate for changes in their institutions that would sustain spiritual values and promote health and well-being.

Relationships with other professionals and their community

Chaplains are accountable to the public, employers and other professionals in all aspects of healthcare. Chaplains:

- 4.1 Represent accurately their professional qualifications and affiliations.
- 4.2 Exercise good stewardship of resources entrusted to their care and employ sound financial practices.
- 4.3 Respect the opinions, beliefs and professional endeavors of colleagues and other professionals.

- 4.4 Seek advice and counsel of other professionals whenever it is in the best interest of those being served and make referrals when appropriate.
- 4.5 Provide expertise and counsel to other health professionals in advocating for best practices in care.
- 4.6 Seek to establish collaborative relationships with other community and health professionals as part of the wider healthcare team.
- 4.7 Provide other professionals with patient records where they are used that further the treatment of the patient and service users, obtaining consent when required.
- 4.8 Ensure that private conduct does not impair the ability to fulfill professional responsibilities or bring dishonour to the profession.
- 4.9 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.

Relationships with colleagues

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

- 5.1 Treat all consultations, whether personal or patient and service user-related, with the highest professional regard and confidentiality.
- 5.2 Maintain sensitivity and professional protocol of the employing institution and/or the certifying organization when receiving or initiating referrals.
- 5.3 Communicate sufficient information to other care team members while respecting the privacy of patient and service users.
- 5.4 Exercise due caution when communicating through the Internet or other electronic means.
- 5.5 Respect each other and support the integrity and well being of their colleagues.
- 5.6 Take collegial and responsible action when concerns about or direct knowledge of incompetence, impairment, misconduct or violations against this code arise.
- 5.7 Communicate sufficient information to other care team members while respecting the privacy of patient and service users.

- 5.8 Provide appropriate information to ensure an informed handover of continuing care to another practitioner.

Chaplains and Advertising

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

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

Chaplains and Research

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

- 7.1 Engage only in research within the boundaries of their competence.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 Inform all participants of the right to withdraw consent and to discontinue involvement at any time.

- 7.5 Engage in research while being sensitive to the cultural characteristics of participants.
- 7.6 Maintain the confidentiality of all research participants and inform participants of any limits of that confidentiality.
- 7.7 Use any information obtained through research for professional purposes only.
- 7.8 Exercise conscientiousness in attributing sources in their research and writing thereby avoiding plagiarism.
- 7.9 Report research data and findings accurately.