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# Ecclesiastical Endorsement

STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES



THE  
**LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
MISSOURI SYNOD  
Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry

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# Introduction

## A. Overview

This document outlines the process and procedures for ecclesiastical endorsement within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) for ministries in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical education, by which the church body – specifically, the Office of National Mission – affirms and recognizes rostered church workers who attain the necessary levels of theological and ministerial competence. This ecclesiastical endorsement is different than the endorsement needed by military or VA chaplains; that endorsement is granted by LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces. All rostered church workers are eligible for ecclesiastical endorsement in LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry.

## B. Specialized Care, Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling and Clinical Education

Jesus gives life and forgiveness. All people in all circumstances need to hear this Good News, for there is no salvation outside of Jesus. LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry brings the Gospel to those who cannot or do not hear it in the normal course of a Sunday morning: people who are hospitalized, disabled, imprisoned, seniors and caregivers, the doctor on-call and the firefighter keeping watch.

In these “specialized” settings, usually outside the four walls of a church, Specialized Care workers extend their congregation’s Word and Sacrament ministry by providing spiritual care to the faithful and bearing witness to the unchurched.

Christ’s mercy to us begets mercy to our neighbors. Specialized Care workers, themselves recipients of Christ’s forgiveness, life and salvation, bring His love to those placed in their care.

### 1. Rooted in the Gospel

“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Heb. 13:20-21). The focus of Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry (Specialized Care) begins in the love of God in Jesus Christ and intersects with human need through the care of the soul. These ministries are auxiliary to the work of the congregation and are a part of the church’s witness and mercy outreach to the ill, the imprisoned, the elderly, the troubled, the conflicted, the weary, the tired and the afflicted.

### 2. Diverse, Scattered and Specialized

In touching lives at so many points of mission, specialized spiritual care workers are diverse, specially trained and geographically scattered. They extend into such settings as health

care, long-term care, mental health, corrections, pastoral counseling, clinical education, rehabilitation and physical medicine, hospice, substance abuse, developmental disability, emergency services and work-place ministry.

Specialized spiritual care workers assist and support the local congregation in caring for the souls of those entrusted to their care. It is essential that these workers establish a relationship with local clergy, exercising humility in all things (Col 3:12-13).

## C. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide:

- › Consistency and continuity with Lutheran doctrines of ministry and the authority of those who minister, as defined in ecclesiastical endorsement.
- › Policies, processes and procedures to assure and uphold the standards and criteria for ecclesiastical endorsement.
- › Qualifying criteria for call or appointment or other means of formal ecclesiastical relationships for positions of service in Specialized Care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling, and clinical education, including roles and responsibilities for accountability.
- › Guidance for seeking consultation for readiness to enter into specialized training to become a Specialized Care worker in the fields of institutions, emergency services, prisons, disaster response, as well as readiness to specialized training to become a pastoral counselor and/or clinical educator, or redirection in a field of specialized spiritual care ministry.
- › Addenda for criteria and procedures for ecclesiastical endorsement in regard to:
  - Evaluating educational preparation
  - Peer review and continuing education
  - Reinstatement
  - Selection of conveners and consultation committee members
  - Appealing Specialized Care consultation committee recommendations
  - Ecclesiastical Endorsement Tier Descriptions and Requirements
  - Specialized Care Code of Ethics
  - Board for National Mission Calls
  - LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry Annual Report Form

# I. Ecclesiastical Endorsement: Definition, Roles, Core Standards and Procedures

## A. Definition of Ecclesiastical Endorsement

### 1. Benefit of Ecclesiastical Endorsement

Ecclesiastical endorsement is the recognition by the LCMS that a rostered person has met LCMS Specialized Care standards for theological and ministerial competence to serve in ministries in specialized spiritual care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling and clinical pastoral education. It attests to the church body's assessment that an individual possesses the suitability, readiness, competence, humility, and aptitude to serve as its representative in a particular ministry. Ecclesiastical endorsement also signifies good standing on the church's roster of ordained and commissioned workers, and as such is subject to the ecclesiastical authority of the church body. The goal is to provide consultation both to districts and other calling entities in their consideration of call eligibility, and to individuals who are seeking recognition of their competence to serve in specialized spiritual care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling and clinical education.

Endorsement through Specialized Care is the approved means for the church body to provide the ecclesiastical endorsement required by professional certifying organizations, employment organizations and districts.

Ecclesiastical Specialized Care endorsement is a function of the church and therefore is distinguished from the certification and/or credentialing for competence granted by a professional organization. Ecclesiastical endorsement describes the Synod's and district's approval of an ordained or commissioned minister serving in non-congregational related specialized ministry settings.

In certain circumstances, ecclesiastically endorsed Specialized Care workers serving at non-LCMS institutions may be eligible for a call from the LCMS Board for National Mission (BNM). Please see Addendum VIII for more information.

### 2. Limits of Ecclesiastical Endorsement

Ecclesiastical endorsement does not guarantee that professional certification will be achieved or that a call to serve in specialized spiritual care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling or clinical education will be issued.

It does not establish an employment, agency or supervisory relationship between the Religious Endorser and the worker receiving the endorsement. It does not imply or assure that the endorsed person has undergone any background or reference checks, screening, psychological testing or evaluation as part of the ecclesiastical endorsement process, though these are all regarded as highly valuable and their use by districts is recommended.

The ecclesiastical endorsement process is not the same as, nor is it related to, the Colloquy Committee process. For information about the colloquy process, please contact your district office.

## B. Roles and Responsibilities: A Partnership Process

### 1. Role of the Specialized Care Consultation Committee

After receiving the completed Personal Data application form and other required written materials, the Specialized Care consultation committee meets with applicants seeking ecclesiastical endorsement at the Standard and Fellow levels. A Specialized Care consultation committee is not required at the Primary Endorsement level.

The overall role of the committee is to provide consultation to the applicant and applicant's district president, and to support the applicant in the achievement of his or her goals for service in specialized spiritual care. Committee members and applicant enter into dialogue regarding theological and ministerial readiness for Specialized Care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling or clinical education.

Each consultation committee has a convener who receives the required materials from the Specialized Care office and arranges for the consultation committee interview. The convener is also available to the applicant for personal consultation regarding the procedures or other matters of concern to the applicant about the process.

Formation and organization of the consultation committee is the responsibility of the convener with assistance from the Specialized Care office. The consultation committee is selected from a pool of persons who have expertise in Specialized Care. It normally consists of three to five members. The committee convener will invite a representative from the district to attend.

The consultation committee evaluates the individual's readiness to serve in Specialized Care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling or clinical pastoral education by assessing the applicant's integration of Lutheran theology, ministerial practice, personal maturity and the understanding of ministry identity. It also provides guidance and counsel on methods and resources for acquiring the necessary theological and ministerial competencies if they are not met.

On the basis of its assessment, the consultation committee makes a recommendation regarding ecclesiastical endorsement along with other recommendations pertaining to the applicant's ministerial growth and development. The convener is responsible for preparing the written report of the interview, with the consultation committee's recommendations regarding ecclesiastical endorsement, and sending it to the Specialized Care office. If the recommendation is to endorse, the Religious Endorser emails the district president and asks for his concurrence. Following the district president's concurrence, the Religious Endorser sends a formal letter of ecclesiastical endorsement and includes the Specialized Care Ecclesiastical Endorsement Certificate to be presented to the endorsee.

There are three types of endorsement an applicant may obtain. Each type of endorsement carries with it specific requirements for consultation committees. Additional details of each type of endorsement are outlined in Addendum VI of this manual.

### **1. Primary Specialized Care Endorsement:**

This endorsement is designed for rostered church workers to serve part-time in a specialized setting progress or as an initial endorsement where/with continued growth and development preferably leading the Specialized Care worker to standard endorsement.

### **2. Standard Specialized Care Endorsement:**

This endorsement is designed for rostered church workers serving full-time in a specialized setting.

### **3. Specialized Care Fellow Endorsement:**

This endorsement is reserved for select Specialized Care workers who have successfully achieved Standard Specialized Care endorsement and have attained highly developed skills in the art of spiritual care and have demonstrated multi-year leadership experience.

## **2. Role of District President**

Upon request from the applicant, the Specialized Care office sends an evaluation form to the applicant's district president and requests to have the completed form returned to the Specialized Care office within two weeks. The form addresses any concerns the district president may have, verifies the roster status of the applicant and confirms that the district president is the applicant's ecclesiastical supervisor. If the district president disagrees with the recommendation of either the consultation committee or the Specialized Care Religious Endorser, the district president and Specialized Care Religious Endorser will resolve the matter.

The district president is responsible for providing ongoing support and ecclesiastical supervision for ordained and commissioned workers serving in Specialized Care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling and clinical education.

## **3. Role of the Specialized Care Office**

The Specialized Care office is a program of the LCMS Office of National Mission. The Specialized Care office is responsible for the administration of the ecclesiastical endorsement process and for providing initial information and counsel to applicants. The Specialized Care staff develops and distributes the informational materials used by districts in interpreting the ecclesiastical endorsement process and procedures to applicants.

After receiving completed application materials, the Specialized Care office determines if the materials are complete and then assigns the applicant's materials to a convener and provides counsel and guidance as needed to the convener.

Following the applicant's interview with the consultation committee, the Specialized Care staff reviews the report and recommendations and provides a confidential summary to the applicant. In case of denial of ecclesiastical endorsement, the Specialized Care office informs the applicant in writing and offers support and encouragement. The Specialized Care office is responsible for transmitting ecclesiastical endorsement on behalf of the church body to external credentialing, certifying, or employing organizations, districts or other calling sources, at the request of either the endorsee or district.

## **4. Role of the Specialized Care Advisory Committee**

The LCMS Specialized Care Advisory Committee is comprised of members appointed by the Specialized Care staff. It serves to assist staff in the coordination of activities related to Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry. The advisory committee provides consultation for the ecclesiastical endorsement process and related matters.

## **C. Ecclesiastical Endorsement – Core Standards**

The core standards are considered basic requirements for ecclesiastical endorsement by the LCMS. Additional standards specifically related to Specialized Care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling and clinical education are included in Section II.

Specialized Care staff assesses and determines the completion of Core Standards A–D (page 3). Specialized Care staff, the convener, and the consultation committee have responsibility for the assessment of Core Standards E–F (page 4).

It should be noted that what is required for ecclesiastical endorsement in this section of the manual (Standards A–F) may be different from what is required by an employer or certifying organization. Before seeking employment or certification, the applicant is advised to research the expectations and qualifications of the certifying or employing organizations.

### **Standard A – Rostering**

All applicants for ecclesiastical endorsement must be rostered or are qualified and certified for placement.

### **Standard B – Congregational Service**

The expectation of years of congregational service varies between levels of endorsement. Please refer to Addendum VI for additional information for the required years of service in each area. If a calling entity seeks a seminary candidate for Specialized Care, a consultation will be encouraged between the appropriate representative of the educational institution and the respective district president. A representative of the ministry context may also be present. The Specialized Care office may be the initiator of this consultation. The decision of the district president and educational institution will be final.

### **Standard C – Education Preparation**

It is normative for applicants to have a graduate degree in theology from an LCMS seminary or university unless the applicant is rostered through one of the Synod's alternate routes. Alternate route candidates or candidates without a graduate degree in theology will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, as additional educational requirements may be needed.

In addition, the candidate must complete the required supervised training hours necessary for the type of endorsement being sought. The specific standards for each specialized ministry are noted under Addendum VI of this manual. Criteria for evaluating educational preparation are outlined in Section II and Addendum I.

### **Standard D – Professional Certification/Credentialing**

Endorsed specialized spiritual care workers are able to obtain certification by an appropriate professional organization. Although not required to retain endorsement in the LCMS, professional certification may be required for employment in some organizations.

## Standard E – Required Materials (as applicable)

For additional information and specific requirements, please refer to Addendum VI of this manual.

Materials should be submitted in the following order for all applicants:

1. **Specialized Care Personal Data Form** (Background check will be obtained by ONM using information provided on the Personal Data Form)
2. **Signed Letter of Recommendation** from applicant's district president
3. **Signed Specialized Care Code of Ethics**
4. **Documentation of the clinical and academic education** (e.g., name of college and/or seminary and copy of diploma) that serves as preparation for the ministry for which ecclesiastical endorsement is sought, including supervisory evaluations.
5. **Letter of Recommendation:**
  - *Primary Endorsement:* 2 letters from LCMS rostered church workers and 1 letter from applicant's employer or head elder
  - *Standard Endorsement:* 2 letters from LCMS rostered church workers and 1 letter from applicant's employer or head elder
  - *Fellow Endorsement:* 3 letters from LCMS rostered church workers and 2 letters from Specialized Care colleagues

## Standard F – Ministerial and Theological Competence

The Specialized Care Consultation Committee will use the following criteria to determine readiness for ecclesiastical endorsement. The candidate is invited to demonstrate readiness through the written materials, as well as when interacting with the committee. Although the Specialized Care Consultation Committee will be present to provide support, guidance and consultation, it is also charged with the task of assessing a candidate's level of theological and ministerial competence in the area of specialized ministry for which one is seeking endorsement. For candidates seeking standard or fellow levels of endorsement, additional requirements apply. Please refer to Addendum VIII for additional information.

### Criteria used for reviewing the candidate:

- › **Ministerial/Religious Identity**  
Develop a clear formation and integration of Lutheran identity with personal and ministerial functioning. Be prepared to identify what makes you uniquely Lutheran in your identity as a rostered church worker who is seeking to be formally recognized as a specialized spiritual care worker, and then how that identity impacts your service.
- › **Interpersonal Competence**  
Demonstrate the ability to form personal and spiritual care relationships that show respect to others, the ability to be empathetic and compassionate, emotionally available and sensitive to the joys and struggles of persons as vocationally appropriate.
- › **Theological Competence**  
Articulate and demonstrate particular Lutheran doctrines of faith that inform and guide your ministry. Be prepared to

show your ability to address spiritual care and ethical issues from a Lutheran perspective with attention to your context and setting.

- › **Self-Awareness**  
Demonstrate awareness of the influence of your history, catechesis, faith formation, and personality as you provide spiritual care. You should also be able to demonstrate an ability to critique yourself and establish healthy boundaries for relationships and well-being.
- › **Specialized Care Code of Ethics**  
Acknowledge understanding of, and adherence to, the Specialized Care Code of Ethics (Addendum VII).
- › **Authority and Leadership**  
Articulate and appropriately understand your professional and personal authority and leadership in service of the Gospel. Give evidence of your ability to respectfully engage in intervention or advocacy on behalf of others. Acknowledge the role of the specialized worker as one that supports and complements local LCMS Word and Sacrament ministry. Demonstrate a spirit of humility and service.
- › **Educational Competence**  
Demonstrate the ability to communicate as an educator and consultant in your area of expertise (Specialized Care specialty) with peers, fellow staff, community religious leaders and the community at large.
- › **Integrative Competence**  
Provide evidence of the integration of clinical knowledge and method with theological and ministerial understandings of the human condition (e.g., the way people may think, feel, behave in circumstances of crisis, suffering, trauma, etc.), and the way in which a specialized spiritual care worker might intervene.

## D. Steps in the Process of Obtaining Ecclesiastical Endorsement

1. The applicant requests an information packet from the LCMS Specialized Care office.
  - The applicant prepares required materials. (See Standard E and Addendum VI for a listing of the required materials.) The applicant should consult with the Specialized Care staff when questions or concerns arise.
  - The applicant requests that the district president write a letter to the Specialized Care office to confirm current roster status.
2. The applicant submits a completed copy of the required materials to the Specialized Care office.
3. The LCMS Specialized Care office reviews and processes the materials.
  - Specialized Care staff determines that the materials are complete, professionally written and that they adequately address core standards.
  - Specialized Care staff authorizes the convening of a consultation committee, dependent upon the level of endorsement the applicant is seeking. The original copy of the materials is kept for the applicant's personal file in

- the Specialized Care office until endorsement is finalized. The Specialized Care office sends a set of the materials to the convener and each committee member.
- Specialized Care staff informs the applicant that an LCMS convener has been contacted.
4. The convener contacts the applicant to establish a mutually suitable time for the consultation. The convener arranges a consultation committee meeting and selects committee members who are familiar with Specialized Care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling or clinical education ministry appropriate to the ministry specialty being considered. Committee members are to be rostered and ecclesiastically endorsed fellows. The convener shall invite a representative of the applicant's district. In most instances, the consultation committee consists of three to five members.
  5. The consultation is intended to be a collegial gathering where the applicant and committee members may process the applicant's materials or other topics raised by the applicant or committee members.
    - At all times, the conversation is guided by the competencies that need to be demonstrated by the applicant.
    - Feedback and counsel are provided concerning the applicant's competency in Lutheran theology, theological integration with one's service, identity and church relationship.
    - The consultation committee makes one of the following recommendations:
      - **Ecclesiastical Endorsement recommended.** (The applicant meets the standards and possesses adequate theological and ministerial competence in all areas assessed.)
      - **Ecclesiastical Endorsement not recommended.** (The applicant has not sufficiently met the standards. The specific area(s) that need further development and growth will be identified in the convener's report. The applicant shall provide to the Specialized Care office a plan for meeting endorsement standards and the committee's recommendations. The convener's report and applicant's plan shall be provided to subsequent consultation committee(s). At subsequent consultation committee meetings with the applicant, only the competencies that were not met receive the committee's focus.)
      - **Primary Endorsement recommended.** If the applicant is working towards Standard Endorsement, a Primary Endorsement (which is renewed every two years) may be granted while the applicant works to meet the necessary requirements.
    - The convener shall share the recommendation of the committee with the applicant at the conclusion of the meeting.
    - It is suggested that the committee offer assistance to the applicant in processing the committee's recommendation. If requested, additional recommendations and referrals will be made to assist in the processing of the Specialized Care consultation.
  6. The convener shall forward the recommendation of the consultation committee to the Specialized Care office within 10 business days.
    - The Specialized Care office sends an evaluation form regarding the consultation process to the applicant.
    - The Specialized Care office writes a confidential summary to the applicant within fourteen business days of receipt of the convener's report.
    - If the recommendation is to endorse, the Religious Endorser emails the district president and asks for his concurrence. Following the district president's concurrence, the Religious Endorser sends a formal letter of ecclesiastical endorsement and includes the Specialized Care Ecclesiastical Endorsement Certificate to be presented to the endorsee, preferably at a gathering of ministry peers.
    - If the applicant and/or the district president do not concur with the committee's recommendation, a second consultation may be requested. If the applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the consultation, an appeal may be initiated by the applicant. See Addendum V for additional information.
    - Specialized Care staff forwards an acknowledgement of ecclesiastical endorsement to appropriate certifying or employing organizations, other districts, or to other entities as requested by the applicant.

## E. Maintaining Ecclesiastical Endorsement

### 1. Requirements:

To maintain ecclesiastical endorsement, the following requirements must be met:

#### › Primary:

- Submit annual Specialized Care ministry report (see Addendum VIV for template)
- Complete 10 hours of continuing education contact hours annually
- Active involvement in a local congregation (e.g., worship, leadership, service, etc.) along with district involvement (e.g., circuit pastors meetings or comparable church professional gatherings, functions or conferences, etc.).
- Signed statement that within the last calendar year, the specialized worker has read (reread) the LCMS Specialized Care Code of Ethics (See Addendum VII for Code of Ethics).
- Renewal every two years. Renewing Primary Endorsement involves a renewal interview with the LCMS Specialized Care staff member. It is the responsibility of the specialized worker to initiate the scheduling of this interview.

#### › Standard:

- Submit annual Specialized Care ministry report (see Addendum VIV for template)
- Complete 20 hours of continuing education contact hours annually
- Complete a peer review every five years (see Addendum II for guidelines)

- Active involvement in a local congregation (e.g., worship, leadership, service, etc.) along with district involvement (e.g., circuit pastors meetings or comparable church professional gatherings, functions or conferences, etc.).
- Signed statement that within the last calendar year, the specialized worker has read (reread) the LCMS Specialized Care Code of Ethics (See Addendum VII).
- Renewal every two years. Renewing Standard Endorsement involves a renewal interview with the LCMS Specialized Care staff members. It is the responsibility of the specialized worker to initiate the scheduling of this interview.

➤ **Fellow:**

- Submit annual Specialized Care ministry report (see Addendum VIV for template)
- Complete 20 hours of continuing education contact hours annually
- Complete a peer review every five years (see Addendum II for peer review guidelines)
- Serve on a peer review committee at least once every five years
- Active involvement in a local congregation (e.g., worship, leadership, service, etc.) along with district involvement (e.g., circuit pastors meetings or comparable church professional gatherings, functions or conferences, etc.).
- Signed statement that within the last calendar year, the specialized worker has read (reread) the LCMS Specialized Care Code of Ethics (See Addendum VII).
- Renewal every three years. Renewing Fellow Endorsement involves a renewal interview with the LCMS Specialized Care staff members. It is the responsibility of the specialized worker to initiate the scheduling of this interview.

- **Retired:** If the minister holds the status of “Inactive: Emeritus” on the LCMS roster (see Bylaw 2.11.2 in the LCMS 2019 *Handbook*), the maintaining of endorsement consists of the following:

- Submit annual Specialized Care ministry report (see Addendum VIV for template)
- Complete 10 hours of continuing education contact hours annually
- Complete a peer review every ten years (see Addendum II for peer review guidelines)
- Active involvement in a local congregation (e.g., worship, leadership, service, etc.) along with district involvement (e.g., circuit pastors meetings or comparable church professional gatherings, functions or conferences, etc.).
- Signed statement that within the last calendar year, the specialized worker has read (reread) the LCMS Specialized Care Code of Ethics (See Addendum VII).
- Renewal every three years. Renewing this endorsement involves a renewal interview with the LCMS Specialized Care staff members. It is the responsibility of the specialized worker to initiate the scheduling of this interview.

## 2. Forwarding of Ecclesiastical Endorsement

Individuals needing a letter of ecclesiastical endorsement sent to a certifying or employing organization, or to a district, should request in writing confirmation of their ecclesiastical endorsement from the Specialized Care office.

## 3. Termination of Ecclesiastical Endorsement

Ecclesiastical endorsement is automatically terminated when a specialized worker is expelled from Synod for reasons noted in Article XIII of the Constitution of the LCMS, and Bylaw 2.14 (see LCMS 2019 *Handbook*) or resigns membership in the Synod.

Ecclesiastical endorsement may also be forfeited if one does not adequately maintain the requirements outlined in this manual for ecclesiastical endorsement.

If a specialized worker loses professional certification or license (where it is required), the minister must promptly report this to the Specialized Care office. The reasons for the loss of certification may lead to the loss of ecclesiastical endorsement.

# II. Standards and Criteria for Ecclesiastical Endorsement for Ministries in Specialized Care, Chaplaincy Roles, Pastoral Counseling and Clinical Education

## A. Service in Institutional Chaplaincy Roles

### 1. Description

Specialized Care is a service of the church that is auxiliary to local Word and Sacrament ministry in nature and is characterized contextually in a wide variety of diverse and specialized settings. This extension of service embodies the church's initiated care to people who are ill, traumatized, imprisoned, elderly, troubled, conflicted, afflicted, or addicted. Ecclesiastically endorsed LCMS workers offer a particular service to persons in pluralistic and

multi-cultural contexts that are characterized and undergirded by Lutheran theology and traditions. Such contexts include, but are not limited to, hospitals, care or senior communities, prisons and jails, work-place sites, hospice centers, etc.

### 2. Specific Criteria and Standards

- Articulate an understanding and integration of Lutheran theology that undergirds one's service in a specialized setting, and yet demonstrates a sensitivity to all faith groups.

- Articulate and demonstrate an ability to utilize the expressions of the Lutheran church in specialized spiritual care, i.e., prayer, sacraments, Scripture, rites and rituals.
- Demonstrate an ability to provide competent and faithful service in a pluralistic, multi-cultural and multi-disciplined environment.
- Demonstrate an ability to establish and maintain professional and interdisciplinary relationships.
- Develop and foster collaborative relationships with community clergy and faith group leaders.
- Consider participating in a module of Lutheran Spiritual Care Training Program
- Additional requirements are listed in Addendum VI under table 2.

## B. Service in Emergency Services Chaplaincy Roles

### 1. Description

Emergency services specialized spiritual care workers provide emotional and spiritual care and support to members of law enforcement, emergency medical services and fire services. Emergency services spiritual care workers may serve local, state and federal agencies. Expectations of the worker will vary from agency to agency. Because of the significant differences in culture between law enforcement and fire personnel, specific courses are required for each specialty.

### 2. Specific Criteria and Standards

- The same criteria for institutional chaplaincy roles applies.
- Related training and experience will be evaluated for CPE equivalency on a case-by-case basis. The equivalency request for one unit of CPE shall include at least 100 documented educational hours and 300 documented service hours. Further details on how these hours are counted are found in Addendum I.
- Additional requirements are listed under Addendum VI under table 2. For information regarding provisional endorsement, please contact LCMS Specialized Care at [SpecializedCare@lcms.org](mailto:SpecializedCare@lcms.org).

## C. Ministry in Pastoral Counseling

### 1. Description

Pastoral counseling is a service conducted by an authorized representative of the church who establishes a professional therapeutic role using both psychological and theological frames of reference to observe, understand, interpret and foster healing and wholeness in the process. There is a dual nature to the pastoral counselor's role-identity and expertise. The pastoral counselor participates fully in a pastoral/theological as well as a counseling/psychological process. As such, a pastoral counselor must be dually credentialed, both by the church body as a rostered minister and by a professional organization or by a government board recognized for certifying competence in counseling.

The roles and responsibilities of the pastoral counselor allow for a wide variety of ministry activities including individual, marriage, family and group counseling, as well as education in mental health, wellness, wholeness and family life. Pastoral counseling, rooted in the Word and Sacrament ministry of the church, is an intrinsic part of the health and healing ministry of the church, seeking to foster spiritual wholeness and mental health as a style of ministry integrated into the total mission of the church.

### 2. Specific Criteria and Standards

The worker applying for endorsement to serve as a pastoral counselor should be advised that identifying oneself and serving as a pastoral counselor outside of one's congregation may not be legal or ethical without appropriate certification from a recognized, professional counseling organization and/or state licensing board. Counseling certifying organizations include the following:

- American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC)
- American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT)
- American Psychological Association (APA)
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
- College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP)
- National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)

Written materials should relate the applicant's knowledge of contemporary mental health and psychotherapeutic issues, including systemic, social and community concerns, and concepts of health, healing, wellness and wholeness from a pastoral theological perspective.

## D. Ministry in Clinical Education

### 1. Description

The ministry of the clinical educator is to teach, guide and supervise those engaged in learning the art of spiritual care in chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical education. Such educators include certified supervisors/educators of the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), American Association for Pastoral Counseling (AAPC) and College of Psychotherapy and Pastoral Supervision (CPSP). Certified clinical educators are clinically trained, knowledgeable about learning theory, competent in program management and have learned the art of supervision through conceptual models from theology, education and the behavioral sciences. Clinical educators seek to help students convert experience into learning in integrative ways, to address issues of theological reflection and ministerial formation and to develop practical skills and tools for ministry. Clinical educators serve not only those preparing for full-time ministries in specialized settings, but also provide spiritual care for parish pastors, lay ministers, deaconesses, seminarian and deaconess students, and laypersons who seek greater competency in a congregation's ministry of visitation.

### 2. Specific Criteria and Standards

Written materials should demonstrate the applicant's competence and knowledge in educational and supervisory issues including personal and professional formation, theological reflection on

whole-person learning, group dynamics, education vs. therapy, basic understanding of an institution as a system and interfaith and multicultural ministry.

The relationship descriptions should reflect competence and skill in educational ministry and the ability to maintain one's identity and authority as an educator/supervisor.

An external certifying credential is required to maintain ecclesiastical endorsement as a clinical educator and may be obtained by a recognized professional organization such as:

- American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)
- Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE)
- College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP)

## E. Ministry in Prison

### 1. Description

Specialized Care in prison ministry is essential in caring for the spiritual needs of those who have been incarcerated. LCMS Synodical Resolution 6-10 (adopted at 1998 Synod convention) resolves to provide encouragement and resources to enable the

implementation of relevant Gospel ministry to prisoners, ex-offenders, their families, prison staff, and victims of crime.

### 2. Specific Criteria and Standards

- The same criteria for institutional chaplaincy roles applies.
- Additional requirements are listed in Addendum VI under table 2.

## F. Ministry in Disaster Response

### 1. Description

Disaster response Specialized Care workers are provided to help church workers affected by a community crisis through spiritual care rooted in the Gospel and provide guidance and resources to pastors and other church leaders as they seek to help others.

### 2. Specific Criteria and Standards

- The same criteria for institutional chaplaincy applies.
- Additional requirements are listed in Addendum VI under table 2.

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# Addendum I: Criteria for Evaluating Educational Preparation for Ecclesiastical Endorsement

## A. Supervised Lutheran Visitation Education Training, Clinical Pastoral Education, and Counseling Practicums

This category outlines the process by which it is normative for an applicant to meet the requirement of supervised spiritual education. The requirement of spiritual education preparation is based on the model of a CPE unit of 400 hours. In this type of educational preparation, both the hours of actual ministerial experience and the time involved in educational and supervisory activities are counted. This method of counting hours shall apply to other supervised clinical education programs and counseling caseload management. The required hours of clinical pastoral education for each specialized spiritual ministry are as follows:

- 1,600 hours for ministry in institutional or community chaplaincy for standard endorsement; 400 hours for primary endorsement
- 1,600 hours for clinical specialized spiritual care supervisory education
- 400 hours for pastoral counseling training

The Lutheran Visitation Education program is a practical educational model facilitated by the LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry. The program is designed to equip LCMS rostered church workers with spiritual caregiving skills, relying on the rich heritage of spiritual care in Lutheranism. One unit of the Lutheran Visitation Education program may be taken in lieu of CPE requirements for any level of Specialized Care Ecclesiastical Endorsement. Additionally, this training program may be recognized as an equivalent course for one unit of CPE at LCMS Recognized Service

Organizations. It should be noted that this training program does not qualify as an official CPE equivalent course for institutions such as The Association of Professional Chaplains (APC).

Although this spiritual education normally is beyond the M.Div. or other educational preparation requirements for certification for the LCMS roster, Lutheran Visitation Education or clinical pastoral education can be acquired in tandem with one's vicarage or internship.

## B. Formal Educational Events

Seminars, course work, academic programs, institutes, workshops and other formal educational events that are not part of a regular ongoing supervised practicum shall be counted on the basis of actual time at the event, hours of study, preparation of papers and consultations or presentations.

## C. Documentation

The documentation for educational experience in Categories A and B above should include a description of the program or event, self-evaluations and supervisory evaluations (where they apply). The materials should also identify the relevance of the educational program or event to one's chosen category of specialized spiritual care ministry (e.g., Specialized Care, chaplaincy role, pastoral counseling, clinical education).

## D. Procedures

Specialized Care staff reviews the documentation that is submitted by the applicant and has the responsibility for determining whether or not the applicant has met the requirements for educational preparation.

## Addendum II: Guidelines for Peer Review and Continuing Education

Quinquennial peer reviews are required for Standard/Fellow tiers to maintain ecclesiastical endorsement. What follows are guidelines. There are many acceptable and professionally responsible ways to satisfy this requirement.

Peer review is to include no fewer than two peers (three including oneself) in any or all categories of Specialized Care (Specialized Care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling and clinical education). It is required to have a peer review group that includes at least one other LCMS specialized worker. Although quinquennial peer review is required, more frequent meetings with one's peers contribute depth and richness to support and accountability.

Although face-to-face peer review is generally preferable, geographical separation may determine distance video conference call peer review to be the best option — at least on occasion. The duration of the peer review shall be approximately 90 minutes.

APC board certified Specialized Care workers hold the option to submit the results from their board certification peer review and participate in an abbreviated 45-minute peer review focusing on the integration of Lutheran theology within their practical ministry.

Examples of peer review written materials include the following:

- › Presentation of case material and self-evaluation from one's vocational service.
- › Presentation of oneself regarding a professional challenge or opportunity, or a personal need/struggle which is impacting ministry.
- › Presentation of theoretical material developed by the presenter and/or recently learned that has a significant influence on the way one is thinking and functioning.
- › A theological reflection presentation, in which the presenter discusses the following as it relates to spiritual care: baptized self (spiritual, emotional, physical, cognitive and relational), marriage/family, and vocational service.

Continuing one's education and professional development is an expectation of any professional. It is a requirement for maintaining ecclesiastical endorsement. The hours need to relate to one's specialty (Specialized Care, chaplaincy role, pastoral counseling and/or clinical education) and may be acquired through seminars/conferences, workshops, academic classes, reading (no more than five hours per year may be applied to continuing education requirements), individual or group supervision, therapy, etc.

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## Addendum III: Criteria and Procedures for Reinstatement of Ecclesiastical Endorsement

The following criteria and procedures shall be used for restoration of ecclesiastical endorsement:

1. If termination of ecclesiastical endorsement was due to loss of rostering (expulsion or resignation from membership in the Synod), the individual must be reinstated to rostered standing in the church body in order to apply for restoration of ecclesiastical endorsement. See LCMS 2019 *Handbook*, Bylaw 2.18.
2. If termination of ecclesiastical endorsement was due to inadequate maintenance of ecclesiastical endorsement (see I, E, 1 of this manual), in order to be restored to ecclesiastically endorsed status, one must apply to the Specialized Care office.
3. Application for restoration of ecclesiastical endorsement is accomplished by writing a detailed description of the process that resulted in termination of ecclesiastical endorsement and the rationale for desiring restoration. The application must include written support from the district president and then be sent to the Specialized Care office.
4. The Specialized Care Endorser will determine the necessity of a consultation committee meeting with the applicant who is requesting restoration of endorsement.
5. If the Specialized Care staff determines that a consultation committee meeting is not warranted, the Specialized Care Endorser will review the written application, consult with the applicant, with others when necessary, and with the applicant's district president regarding restoration of ecclesiastical endorsement.
6. If it is determined that a consultation committee meeting is warranted, the meeting with a consultation committee regarding restoration of ecclesiastical endorsement will address those issues that led to the loss of endorsement. The consultation committee will make its recommendation to the Specialized Care office.
7. A rostered minister may reapply for restoration of endorsement after 12 months of receiving a decision to have the worker's endorsement terminated.

## Addendum IV: Criteria for Selection of Conveners and Specialized Care Consultation Committees

### A. Conveners

The convener of all Specialized Care consultation committees shall be a Specialized Care fellow or LCMS Specialized Care staff member (manager, director, or Religious Endorser)

### B. Specialized Care Consultation Committees

Specialized Care Consultation Committees meet at the request of the Specialized Care office or the convener (often at the request of a rostered church worker who is seeking consultation).

- Consultation may be requested for the following reasons:
  - Ecclesiastical endorsement for service in Specialized Care, chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling or clinical education.
  - Readiness to enter training for specialized spiritual care ministry.
  - Consultation for changing or adding a specialized competency area
- Committee members will include no fewer than two additional specialized workers (with one holding ecclesiastical endorsement as a fellow) or other rostered church workers who are familiar with the ministry of specialized workers.
- Committee members will be LCMS.

- A worker requesting consultation may request the presence of a particular person or ministry specialty (such as community, institutional, emergency services, trauma/crisis, pastoral counselor or clinical educator). A candidate may also request a person of a specific gender and/or race/ethnicity. When possible and appropriate, the request will be honored.
- The committee members agree to read the materials presented by the applicant and engage the person collegially with respect, candor and with the intention to provide the consultation requested. The committee will provide feedback and recommendations to the candidate and to the Specialized Care office.
- A written report is sent to the Specialized Care office. Normally, this is written soon after the consultation appearance. The report will be written no later than ten business days from the date of the consultation meeting. The Specialized Care office will then send a summary of the report to the applicant.

The consultation provided by the committee is a service of the church and colleagues in the various specialized contexts. The expense incurred by the applicant or worker meeting with a consultation committee is the responsibility of the one making the request for consultation. However, effort will be made to minimize the expenses.

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## Addendum V: Appealing a Consultation Committee Recommendation

An applicant wishing to appeal a consultation committee recommendation regarding ecclesiastical endorsement must notify the LCMS Specialized Care office in writing within 30 calendar days of the applicant's consultation. The grounds upon which the appeal is based shall be presented in writing at that time.

Within 21 calendar days of receiving the appeal, the Specialized Care office will acknowledge reception of the written appeal and notify the convener and the appellant's district president of the appeal.

Within 30 days from the date the Specialized Care office sends acknowledgement to the appellant and notification to the convener and district president, the Specialized Care office shall assist the appellant in reviewing the recommendation of the consulta-

tion committee and in clarifying the grounds for the appeal as well as the LCMS Specialized Care Endorsement Standards and Procedures relevant to the appeal.

The appellant may request a new committee consultation. A new committee may be convened at the discretion of the LCMS Specialized Care office. If it is determined to be necessary, the Specialized Care office will establish a new convener and committee. The subsequent committee convener shall have access to the previous committee's report. The appellant's Specialized Care representative and district president or designee may attend the new committee meeting as observers to support the appellant.

The recommendation of the appeals process shall be final.

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## Addendum VI: Ecclesiastical Endorsement Tier Descriptions and Requirements

### Specialized Care Primary Endorsement

This endorsement is designed for rostered church workers desiring to serve part-time in a specialized setting. This level of endorsement allows the church worker to maintain their full-time position, but also serve their community in a chaplaincy role.

This level of endorsement allows the rostered church worker to be supported by LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry with respect to new resources, continuing education opportunities, network opportunities, professional conferences, and more.

## Specialized Care Standard Endorsement:

This endorsement is designed for rostered church workers serving full-time in a chaplaincy role in a specialized setting. Benefits of standard endorsement include additional resources, support, continuing education opportunities, and more for the rostered church worker. Additionally, application material for standard endorsement prepares the applicant well for board certification through The Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), should the applicant so desire. The language of the Autobiography and Spiritual Care Narrative sections are derived from APC standards<sup>1</sup> with minor adjustments. Applicants submitting this material for ecclesiastical endorsement are free to use the same material for APC Board Certification applications.

### Additional Application Materials:

#### ■ Autobiography:

Applicants shall submit an autobiographical sketch that highlights major events and themes of the applicant's life as they impact their practice of ministry. The autobiography should also include a brief description of the applicant's family of origin, major events within the applicant's life that have impacted the applicant's worldview and intersects with the practice of spiritual care in a distinctively Lutheran manner, a description of the various ministries that the applicant has served in, and how these opportunities have contributed to the applicant's growth as a spiritual care giver. This application should be no less than 9600 characters and no more than 16000 characters in length.

#### ■ Spiritual Care Contact Narrative:

Each narrative should demonstrate the applicant's current level of functioning and provide descriptive examples of the applicant's professional competency in spiritual care. The purpose of these narratives is significantly different from "verbatim" often used in education/CPE settings to teach skills and prompt personal growth. The applicant is required to provide encounters within the past 24 months that demonstrate a working knowledge of Lutheran theology and applying that theology practically in spiritual care, using distinctively Lutheran spiritual assessments to contribute to the practice of providing spiritual care, documenting visits in an appropriate and professional manner, and demonstrating respect yet faithfulness in caring for those who are different than the applicant (i.e. different gender, religion, ethnicity, etc.). The spiritual care contact narrative shall be no less than five pages single spaced and no more than twelve pages single spaced.

### Format of the Spiritual Care Contact Narrative:

- Part 1: Context, known facts, and personal observations
- Part 2: Encounter, word for word
  - Recount the chaplain spiritual care contact verbatim
- Part 3: Required analysis of chaplain spiritual care contact
  - Include self-evaluation, theological reflection, and identified ethical considerations
- Part 4: Spiritual assessment
- Part 5: Documentation
- Part 6: Further information if necessary

#### ■ Lutheran Spiritual Care Essay:

A 1,200 to 1,500-word essay of a Lutheran theology of spiritual care. This essay should address how the applicant understands spiritual care in a decidedly Lutheran manner. The essay should develop a Lutheran theological framework for specialized spiritual care ministry that addresses the applicant's understanding of the theology of the cross, spiritual diagnosis and intentional treatment, how a Lutheran spiritual care provider is formed, and the importance of self-awareness within visitation.

#### ■ Sample Sermon/Bible Study:

Manuscript or extensive notes of a recent sermon, devotion or Bible study.

## Specialized Care Fellows

The Fellow level of endorsement in Specialized Care is representative of leadership demonstrated over a long period of time and highly developed spiritual care skills. A Specialized Care Fellow embodies the core components of Specialized Care and carries with him/her a spirit of humility and a servant heart. There are several responsibilities of being a Fellow, including:

1. Eligibility to serve as a convener for Ecclesiastical Endorsement Committees
2. Eligibility to facilitate Specialized Care training initiatives
3. Eligibility to contribute scholarly work to be published as resources for the LCMS Specialized Care community

### Additional Application Materials:

#### ■ Lutheran Spiritual Care Essay:

The applicant will submit a 3,000–3,500-word essay on a topic of the applicant's choice that relates to Lutheran spiritual care in a specialized context. These submissions may be considered a part of future publications from LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry, with the applicant's consent.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.apchaplains.org/bcci-site/about-bcci/bcci-certification-manual/>

## Tier Descriptions and Requirements

|   | PRIMARY   | STANDARD   | FELLOW   |
|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Description</b>  | <b>Basic Specialized Care Endorsement</b><br><br>Part-time Specialized Care work such as volunteer fire/police/EMS chaplain, school chaplains, etc. | <b>Standard Specialized Care Endorsement</b><br><br>Full-time Specialized Care work such as hospital, prison, senior living community chaplain       | <b>Elite Specialized Care Endorsement</b><br><br>Reserved only for select Specialized Care workers who have successfully attained <i>Standard ecclesiastical endorsement</i> |
| <b>Signed Letter of Recommendation from District President</b>                        | X   | X  | X  |
| <b>Specialized Care Personal Data Form</b>  | X   | X  | X  |
| <b>Signed Specialized Care Code of Ethics</b>   | X   | X  | X  |
| <b>Supervisor Evaluations from CPE Units/Lutheran Spiritual Care Training Modules</b> | X   | X  | X  |
| <b>Professional Ministry Experience</b>   | 1 year  | 2 years  | 5 years (3 of which must be Specialized Care-related)  |
| <b>Supplemental Training</b>  | 1 Unit of CPE or<br>1 Unit of <i>Lutheran Visitation Education or Equivalent Training</i>   | 4 Units of CPE or<br>4 Units of <i>Lutheran Visitation Education</i>   | 4 Units of CPE or<br>4 Units of <i>Lutheran Visitation Education</i>   |
| <b>Letters of Recommendation</b>  | 2 letters from LCMS Rostered Church Workers<br><br>1 letter from Employer/Head Elder  | 2 letters from LCMS Professional Church Workers<br><br>1 letter from Employer/Head Elder   | 3 letters from LCMS Professional Church Workers<br><br>2 letters from Specialized Care colleagues  |
| <b>Interviews</b>   | Specialized Care Staff  | Specialized Care Staff<br><br>Specialized Care Director<br><br>Specialized Care Advisory Committee   | Specialized Care Staff<br><br>Specialized Care Director<br><br>Specialized Care Advisory Committee   |
| <b>Writing Materials</b>  | Brief statement of Lutheran Spiritual Care (500-1000 words)   | 1,200–1,500-word essay on Lutheran Spiritual Care<br><br>Autobiography<br><br>2 Spiritual Care Contact Narratives<br><br>1 Sample sermon/Bible study | 3,000–3,500-word essay on Lutheran Spiritual Care<br><br>1 Spiritual Care Contact Narrative<br><br>2 sample sermons/Bible studies  |
| <b>Renewal</b>  | Every 2 Years   | Every 2 Years  | Every 3 Years  |

## Spiritual Care Tracks

| EMERGENCY SERVICES   | INSTITUTIONAL  | PRISON  | DISASTER RESPONSE   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>LCMS Spiritual Care —<br/>Emergency Services Track</b>  | <b>LCMS Spiritual Care —<br/>Institutional Track</b>   | <b>LCMS Spiritual Care —<br/>Prison Ministry Track</b>                                | <b>Interview with Disaster<br/>Response Program Area</b>                              |
| CISM Course  |  |   | CISM Course   |
| 10 hours of documented<br>ESC experience (ride-alongs,<br>death notifications, memorial<br>services, etc.) | 10 hours of documented<br>volunteer hours primarily<br>spiritual care-related in an<br>institutional setting (hospital,<br>nursing home, etc.) |   | 5 years of congregational<br>experience or applicable<br>disaster-response experience |
| Completion of one ESC<br>Scenario (contact Specialized<br>Care Office for outline)                         |  |   | Expectation to attend<br>either Disaster Response or<br>Specialized Care Conference   |
| Letter of Recommendation<br>from agency being served   | Letter of Recommendation<br>from agency being served   | Letter of Recommendation<br>from agency being served                                  | LERT Training (current within<br>past 24 months)                                      |
| Letter of Understanding from<br>Church Worker's full-time<br>ministry (if applicable)                      | Letter of Understanding from<br>Church Worker's full-time<br>ministry (if applicable)  | Letter of Understanding from<br>Church Worker's full-time<br>ministry (if applicable) | Letter of Understanding from<br>Church Worker's full-time<br>ministry (if applicable) |

# Addendum VII: Code of Ethics

## A. Prologue

From the fall of humanity until the present, there have always been opportunities to care for the broken of the world. Throughout His ministry, Jesus modeled intentional and healing care of the person and directed His followers to do the same (Luke 10:36–37). Martin Luther, in his explanation to the Fifth Commandment, offered this reminder: “We should fear and love God so that we ... help and support [our neighbor] in every physical need.” C.F.W. Walther wrote in his *Pastorale* that “a preacher above all has concern for spiritual needs,” and also “the needs of the poor, the sick, widows, orphans, the infirm, the destitute, the aged, etc.”<sup>2</sup> Rostered church workers are privileged to join the company of Christians, redeemed by Jesus’ holy and precious blood, in reaching out with the love of God to all who are hurting and in need and give human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries.

## B. Expectations and Guidelines

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry, an integral part of the Office of National Mission, recognizes that these church workers are witnesses to the Gospel in a context of mercy. That is, these church workers share the Gospel of Jesus and live as ones who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb as they go about their duties. There are countless opportunities to serve the unchurched along with nurturing the faith of those within the Body of Christ. “Specialized” contexts are oftentimes pluralistic religious environments; thus, specialized church workers must exercise a keen sense of spiritual discretion and hold the utmost theological integrity.

Upon receiving ecclesiastical endorsement and/or accepting a call under Specialized Care, the ordained or commissioned minister by virtue of the endorsement and/or divine call is obligated to represent the LCMS with integrity and meet other expectations and requirements as outlined within the Specialized Care Ecclesiastical Endorsement Manual on the Specialized Care webpage at [lcms.org/specialized-care](http://lcms.org/specialized-care).

Ordained clergy, as ministers of mercy in service to the Gospel, will have opportunities in extreme circumstances to baptize and to hear confessions and grant absolution. These extraordinary circumstances call for careful judgment on the pastor’s part, whose theological foundation is in Holy Scripture and the Book of Concord. In the event of an extraordinary circumstance, ordained clergy are expected to consult with local LCMS clergy and establish a mutual agreement on how to administer care. For example, when extraordinary opportunities present themselves for church workers to baptize infants or adults, it is expected that the church worker will refer the baptized and their family (if applicable) to an LCMS congregation where they can be nurtured and brought up in the Christian faith and grow into disciples of Jesus. All church workers serving in specialized contexts are expected, when able, to be in communication with the local clergy and direct those whom they are serving to a local LCMS church for ongoing pastoral care. Communion of individuals in specialized contexts is to be administered by a local LCMS congregation.

Because these rostered church workers serve in a pluralistic context, it is assumed and expected that they will work alongside other faith groups without compromising their adherence to historic and confessional Lutheran theology. Thus, these church workers must be grounded in their Lutheran identity and confession.

As part of serving within a variety of contexts and institutions that may or may not be Christian in their mission, the specialized church worker may at times be asked to provide religious material (rites and resources) of other denominations and religions to those whom they serve. Holy Scripture describes the dangers of syncretism routinely in Israel’s journey in the Old Testament (Deut. 6:13–15). Furthermore, Christ Himself confesses that, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). When a situation arises where a specialized church worker is called upon to provide a rite and/or resource that is contrary to the faith (i.e. providing a Quran to a Muslim patient in a hospital), the church worker may extend the professional courtesy of coordinating with fellow chaplains or other clergy to ensure that the request is fulfilled.

## C. Worship and Ministry Privileges and Limitations

There may be times when specialized church workers are asked to lead a worship service or a Bible study in a specialized context. In these complex and diverse settings, worship is to be structured in a way that reflects the richness of the traditions that have been handed down to God’s people from the Early Church. Indeed, all pastors are to abide by St. Paul’s exhortation to preach Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:23). When an ordained clergy leads a worship service in a specialized context, it is expected that he will conduct the service in the Lutheran manner and utilize LCMS resources (hymnals, prayer books, etc.) (LCMS Constitution Article VI:4).

Church workers may be asked to conduct a service or rite that violates the confessional practice of the LCMS. If the conflict cannot be resolved, the worker shall respectfully clarify his or her reasons with one’s employment supervisor and offer to accommodate the ministry by other means. Should an employment supervisor and church worker not be able to resolve the conflict amicably, the church worker should contact his/her district president as his/her ecclesiastical supervisor in order to prepare options and seek counsel and discuss options. The LCMS Specialized Care staff will assist the specialized church worker and district president as they seek a satisfactory resolution to the conflict.

Our Lord instructs His people that He is a jealous God and will not tolerate worship or service to any other god besides Him (Ex. 20:5). Specialized church workers are encouraged to pray with Christians who boldly confess the name of Jesus, as He acts as our intercessor for our prayers to the Father (Rom. 8:34). Additionally, they are expected to pray for all people entrusted to their care, both Christians and non-Christians. However, specialized church workers shall refrain from participating in any type of joint prayer with non-Trinitarian and non-Christian religions (LCMS Constitution Article VI:2).

<sup>2</sup> C.F.W. Walther, *Pastorale*, (St. Louis: CPH, 1906).

## D. Ministry and Accountability

As an ordained or commissioned rostered member of the LCMS, the specialized church worker is under the ecclesiastical supervision of his or her district president. The specialized church worker is to be an active member of a local congregation. Specialized church workers should participate in official district conferences on an annual basis. If full participation is not possible because of agency or professional service demands, partial or occasional attendance is acceptable in accordance with policies established by their supervisory boards (LCMS *Handbook* 4.8.2.d.2). Clergy are strongly encouraged to participate in circuit meetings. In addition, the specialized church worker is to maintain his or her endorsement as outlined in Section I. E, and Addendum II of the endorsement manual.

The specific behaviors named below incorporate the code of ethics from the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education and the theological convictions from Holy Scripture. For additional study and clarification, the specialized church worker is advised to study the original documents. If there is ever a conflict between what is directed by one's professional organization and what is directed by the Specialized Care Code of Ethics, the specialized church worker is expected to uphold the LCMS code of ethics. If the specialized church worker finds his or her conscience in conflict with the LCMS, he or she should maintain integrity by seeking pastoral supervision and guidance from their district president and the Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry staff.

The hallmarks of Lutheran identity — prayer in Christ's name, reading from Holy Scripture, etc. — are essential to Lutheran spiritual care and are often actively sought by those in the Christian church. However, these acts will, at times, be defined by multi-faith institutions as proselytization. Specialized church workers serving in these contexts shall display proper discernment in the exercise of spiritual care, providing a non-anxious presence, actively listening and showing the love and compassion that is common to all regardless of faith, sinful lifestyle, etc. They shall uphold the vows made in their ordination or commissioning, promising to faithfully serve God's people in their respective offices in accordance with Holy Scripture and the Confessions (Col. 3:12–17).

### In relationship to those served, the specialized church worker:

- › Affirms and respects the human dignity and individual worth of each person throughout their entire God-given life span, as our Lord has formed and created all people (Ps. 139:13–14).
- › Does not discriminate against anyone who is in need of specialized spiritual care, recognizing that as Christians we are called to do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).
- › Respects the integrity and welfare of those served or supervised, refraining from disparagement and avoiding emotional, sexual or any other kind of exploitation (Gal. 5:19–21).
- › Approaches the religious convictions of a person, group and/or student with respect, as St. Paul approached the Athenians (Acts 17:22–24).

- › Respects confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, regulations or other applicable rules (including mandatory reporting), and refrains from gossiping about or slandering others (Prov. 11:13).

The ordination vows made by Ministers of Religion—Ordained are binding throughout their ministry and have greater authority than regulations and rules of other organizations. If a conflict occurs between ordination vows and other rules and regulations, it is expected that the Minister of Religion—Ordained shall uphold his ordination vows.

### In relationship to other groups, the specialized church worker:

- › Maintains good standing in his or her home church, local district and the Synod, and receives the Lord's gifts on a routine basis (Ex. 20:8).
- › Abides by the professional practice and/or teaching standards of the state, the community and the institution in which he or she is called/employed, recognizing the government is an institution with authority given by God (Rom. 13:1). If, for any reason, he or she is not free to practice or teach according to Lutheran doctrine, the worker shall notify the district president, employer and the Specialized Care office.
- › Maintains professional relationships with other persons in the institution in which he or she serves, as well as with the community and with the church body, bearing one another's burdens in Christ (Gal. 6:2).
- › Does not directly or by implication claim professional qualifications that exceed actual qualifications or misrepresent his or her affiliation with any institution, organization or individual; is responsible for correcting the misrepresentation or misunderstanding of his or her professional qualifications or affiliations (1 Pet. 5:6).

### In relationship to the LCMS, the specialized church worker:

- › Continues professional education and growth, including participation in the Synod, district and circuit affairs when possible (Prov. 4:2).
- › Intentionally serves within the bounds of LCMS doctrine and practice (1 Tim. 3:8–13).
- › Does not intentionally make false, misleading or incomplete statements about one's work or ethical or moral behavior when questioned by his or her colleagues or ecclesiastical supervisor, maintaining a good and salutary reputation among all (Eccl. 7:1).
- › Communicates with and works in concert with the ministry of the LCMS congregation in his/her locale, eager to maintain a bond of peace with one another (Eph. 4:3).

### In collegial relationships, the specialized church worker:

- › Respects the integrity and welfare of colleagues; maintains professional relationships on a professional basis, refraining from disparagement and avoiding emotional, sexual or any other kind of exploitation (2 Pet. 1:5–6).

- › Shall take collegial and responsible action when concerns about incompetence, impairment or misconduct arise, turning to our Lord to receive a clean heart and a right spirit (Ps. 51:10), yet also recognizing that there are consequences for sin and misconduct that the worker will be ready to accept.

**In the conduct of business matters, the specialized church worker:**

- › Carries out administrative responsibilities in a timely and professional manner (1 Cor. 14:40).
- › Implements sound fiscal practices, maintains accurate financial records and protects the integrity of funds entrusted to his or her care (1 Pet. 4:10).

- › Distinguishes their private opinions from those of the LCMS and the organization or institution to which he or she is called/employed in all publicity, public announcements, publications and social media. They may share their private opinions in a God-pleasing manner, centering always on love for one another (1 Pet. 4:8).

**In relationship with Christ — and by the power and care of the Holy Spirit — the specialized church worker:**

- › Relies on God's grace, remembers his or her baptismal identity in Christ, remains in the Word, receives Holy Absolution and the Lord's Supper, has the mind of a servant, repents from sin and lives in forgiveness (Col. 3:12–17).

# Addendum VIII: Board for National Mission (BNM) Calls

In accordance with Resolution 2-05B, the Board for National Mission “shall serve as a calling agency for institutional and agency chaplains and other non-foreign specialized ministers (such as Veterans Administration, prison and hospital chaplains) after consultation with the appropriate district president(s).”

## The Step-by-Step Process for Rostered Church Workers to Receive a BNM Call into Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry (Specialized Care)

1. When a Specialized Care endorsed worker expresses interest in receiving a call from the LCMS Board for National Mission (BNM) to serve in a specialized setting no less than 20 hours per week, the Specialized Care office will direct the worker to send a formal letter of request to the Specialized Care office.
2. The Specialized Care office will send a letter to the applicant that:
  - › Requests that the worker signs and returns a check list with appropriate attachments indicating that:
    1. The worker has completed and included the Personal Data Form.
    2. An updated photo of the worker
    3. The worker has read, understands and agrees to the Specialized Care Code of Ethics (enclosed with the letter).
    4. The worker understands and agrees that the call is location-specific and will not travel with the worker to a different location or call.
    5. The worker understands that there is no guarantee of future ministry, no insurance or retirement benefits from the BNM, and no other benefits that typically accompany a call to a parish — other than prayer support and encouragement from the BNM and Specialized Care office.
    6. The worker has obtained a letter of employment verification on official letterhead from the employer.
  - › States the deadline for all materials to be in the Specialized Care office (no later than eight weeks prior to the BNM meeting) in order to satisfy the board’s timeline requirements.
3. Upon receiving the materials provided by the applicant, the Specialized Care office will contact the worker’s district president and:
  - › Discuss the applicant’s written materials with the District President.
  - › Request a formal letter from the worker’s district president (representing the district in which the worker holds membership) requesting (1) confirmation that the worker is rostered and in good standing in the district and (2) a copy of the Personal Information Form and Self-Evaluation Tool or Commissioned Minister Information Form for the worker
4. Specialized Care staff will arrange a one-hour interview with the candidate no less than six weeks prior to the BNM meeting.
5. Upon receipt of the required information from the district president and the applying worker, the Specialized Care staff confirms that the person is qualified to be considered for a call from the BNM and compiles the following into a (PDF) application packet. The packet shall include:
  - › Confirmation that the applicant is rostered;
  - › Confirmation of ecclesiastical endorsement in Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry;
  - › Confirmation that ecclesiastical endorsement has been maintained;
  - › A completed Personal Data Form;
  - › Letter(s) of recommendation and support from the district president(s)
  - › Letter of recommendation from Specialized Care director
  - › A current or upcoming full-time (no fewer than 20 hours per week) ministry position in a Specialized Spiritual Care setting;
  - › A letter of employment verification from the employer;
  - › A signed statement indicating that:
    1. He/she understands the limits of the call — which include no guarantee of future ministry, no insurance or retirement benefits from the BNM (as the source of the call), and no other benefits that typically accompany a call to a parish — other than prayer support and encouragement from the BNM and the Specialized Care office
    2. He/she understands that the call from the BNM is context-specific and that the call does not travel with the specialized worker to a different location should accepting a different call become a reality; and
  - › An updated picture of the applicant
  - › A signed copy of the Specialized Care Code of Ethics.
6. When all of the documentation is in order — and no later than six weeks prior to the Board for National Mission meeting — the Specialized Care staff delivers the package, including a completed Diploma of Vocation and Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation, to the ONM Unit Executive for their final review/approval.

7. Four weeks prior to a BNM meeting, an electronic packet for each call being recommended will be delivered to each board member for consideration. The packet will include:
  - › The documentation listed in “5” above;
  - › The Diploma of Vocation;
  - › The Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation
8. When a divine call has been issued by the BNM and there are no changes to the Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation, a hard copy of the Diploma of Vocation and Supplement will be presented to the BNM chairman for his signature. During the BNM meeting, the Specialized Care director will be available during a 15-minute agenda timeslot to answer potential questions from the board. The exact time will be provided two weeks prior to board meeting to the director.
9. If there are changes in the Supplement, the Specialized Care staff will make any necessary changes to the Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation as directed by the executive director of ONM, obtain the signature of the BNM chairman, prepare a cover letter for the LCMS secretary’s signature and send the completed cover letter and call documents — via FedEx with a required signature of reception — to the worker receiving the call.
10. The Specialized Care staff will inform the worker’s district president in writing that the call has been sent.
11. The worker will notify the Specialized Care office and their district office in writing the acceptance or decline of the call. If the call is accepted, the worker will be encouraged to organize a Service of Installation with the requested assistance of the district president.

Questions? Please contact:

**The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry**

1333 S. Kirkwood Road  
St Louis, MO 63122

888-THE LCMS  
fax: 314-996-1124  
[lcms.org/specialized-care](http://lcms.org/specialized-care)  
[specializedcare@lcms.org](mailto:specializedcare@lcms.org)

# Addendum VIV: LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry Annual Report Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Ministry and Location (Include if you are full or part time, retired, etc):

In order to retain one’s ecclesiastical endorsement as a specialized worker within the LCMS, an annual report is to be submitted to the Specialized Care Office by the end of each calendar year. For those who are retired, see the adjusted requirements at the bottom of the second page. This form is late if it is not received by January 15th. What follows are the specific requirements:

- 1. **Peer Review (every five years):** There is a great deal of flexibility regarding what is presented. For guidance, see Addendum II of the Specialized Care Ecclesiastical Endorsement Manual (*lcms.org/specialized-care*). The third page of this packet provides a Peer Review Process Form.\*
- 2. **Continuing Education: Primary Endorsement:** 10 contact hours; **Standard/Fellow Endorsement:** 20 contact hours. See Addendum II for guidelines.\*

| DATE | HOURS | EDUCATIONAL EVENT | TOPIC/SUBJECT |
|------|-------|-------------------|---------------|
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*\*If peer review and/or continuing education requirements were fully or partially met through certification in a Specialized Care professional organization, give the name of the certifying organization and evidence that you are a member in good standing:*

**3. Active involvement in one's congregation as well as Synod, district, or circuit.**

Name and location of the congregation and district in which the specialized worker holds membership:

Optional (Nature of involvement in circuit/district/Synod):

**4. With my signature below,** I declare that I have read (reread) the Specialized Care Code of Ethics (located at [lcms.org/specialized-care](http://lcms.org/specialized-care) in the Specialized Care Ecclesiastical Endorsement Manual, Addendum VII) and acknowledge agreement with it.

**5. Optional:** Specialized workers are encouraged to share vignettes and “best practices” from their ministry so they may be used to promote the work of Specialized Care in Synod and district publications and communicated with the greater Specialized Care community. Please send examples of your ministry as an attachment to this form or send separately.

**6. Optional:** List any resources and/or suggestions you would like from LCMS Specialized Care.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

**For those who are retired:** If the minister holds the status of “Inactive: Emeritus” on the LCMS roster (see Bylaw 2.11.2 in the LCMS 2019 *Handbook*), the maintaining of endorsement consists of (a) submitting an annual report, (b) completing 10 contact hours of continuing education rather than the 20 hours expected of those fully employed in Specialized Care, (c) participating (presenting oneself) in a peer review once every ten years rather than the expected five year review of those engaged in full-time ministry, and (d) signing a statement that one has read and adheres to the Specialized Care Code of Ethics within the last calendar year. If a retired specialized worker decides not to keep up his/her endorsement and at a later date wants to re-enter a specialized spiritual care ministry that requires endorsement, the process will include an application and paper review of one's ministry experience and continuing education following retirement. **Please print and sign this form and return it to us before the January 15 deadline.** You may send it by mail to: LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 or via email to [SpecializedCare@lcms.org](mailto:SpecializedCare@lcms.org).

# Peer Review Report Form

### Instructions:

Peer review is to include no fewer than two peers (three including oneself) in any or all categories of Specialized Care (chaplaincy roles, pastoral counseling, and clinical education). It is required to have a peer review group that includes at least one other LCMS specialized worker. Although quinquennial peer review is required for Standard and Fellow Endorsements, more frequent meetings with one's peers contribute depth and richness to support and accountability.

APC board certified Specialized Care workers hold the option to submit the results from their board certification peer review and participate in an abbreviated 45-minute peer review focusing on the integration of Lutheran theology within their practical ministry.

Although face-to-face peer review is generally preferable, geographical separation may determine electronic peer review to be the best option — at least on occasions. Examples of peer review include the following:

1. **Presentation of case material** and self-evaluation from one's ministry.
2. **Presentation of oneself** regarding a professional challenge or opportunity, or a personal need/ struggle that is impacting ministry.
3. **Presentation of theoretical or theological material** developed by the presenter and/or recently learned that has a significant influence on the way one is thinking and functioning.
4. **A presentation of an overview** of the presenter's three covenant areas of responsibility: baptized self (spiritual, emotional, physical, cognitive, and relational aspects of life), marriage/family, and ministry.

Presenter (Print name): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Peers (printed name, denomination, and signature):

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please print and sign this form and return it to us before the January 15 deadline.** You may send it by mail to: Specialized Spiritual Care, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295, via fax to 314-996-1124 or via email to [SpecializedCare@lcms.org](mailto:SpecializedCare@lcms.org).



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