

April 18, 2016

As many of you learned by now, The HealthCare Chaplaincy Network (HCCN) President & CEO, Rev. Eric J. Hall, announced last Monday, April 11, the establishment of a new organization, Spiritual Care Association (SCA). Our collaborative response is below. If you have questions or comments, please contact your national office.

An open letter to all spiritual care providers,

People need quality spiritual care now more than ever. Professional chaplaincy and chaplaincy education play vital roles for health care facilities, public emergency responders, correctional institutions, military and other specialized settings.

Together, the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) and Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC) voice this unified message about the state of our profession. Individually and collectively, we work tirelessly and collaboratively to communicate the importance of our profession, support the spiritual care providers who serve day in and day out, advance research for evidence-based outcomes and advocate on the profession's behalf to ensure that those entrusted to us receive the best care possible.

We all share a common purpose and obligation to elevate the profession as a whole and anything that could potentially weaken the profession is a cause for concern.

Through our collective vision and mission, we have a Gold Standard for clinical pastoral education and chaplaincy certification through rigorous standards that are internationally recognized by chaplains, institutions, administrators and other disciplines. Why? Because people in need deserve nothing less than the best.

Collectively, it is our desire to see all chaplains not only become trained by clinical pastoral education that is accredited and recognized by the U.S. Department of Education but also certified by the highest professional standards. We remain committed to these processes to ensure every care recipient gets the best in spiritual care and that those in our profession continue to be respected for their valuable work. We stand for inclusion, diversity and collaboration in our education and certification programs to welcome and encourage all chaplains to become certified. However, we have not, and will not, water down the standards through a bottom-line-driven, one-size-fits all, multiple-choice approach to certification.

In fact, our organizations were among the founding members of the Council on Collaboration to define the Common Standards for Professional Chaplaincy. These standards are continually improved by exploring areas of common interest, including consistency in teaching as well as with a parallel process of certification of ACPE supervisors and board certification. As more and more chaplains become certified by our

organizations and strive for greater care, the standards will need to be elevated even higher. We are excited to keep raising the bar and will challenge those who try to dilute the Common Standards.

We will continue reaching out to other collaborative organizations who share these same high standards. In doing so, we can combine resources to connect all who provide spiritual care to benefit from the collective knowledge and training, wisdom and experience so that the various chaplaincy organizations can fulfill their individual and collective missions.

Any attempt to diminish the qualifications of becoming a Board Certified Chaplain will only become detrimental to the profession as a whole and to those we serve. We are united in our commitment to keep the Common Standards strong.

We are grateful for your investment and commitment. We are honored to share this journey with you.

Peace,

Margie Atkinson, President
Patricia F. Appelhans, CEO
Association of Professional Chaplains

Carlos Bell, President
Trace Haythorn, Executive Director/CEO
Association for Clinical Pastoral Education

Mary Lou O’Gorman, Board Chair
David Lichter, Executive Director
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Maurice Kaprow, President
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Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains