

Why and How Health Care Providers Should Hire Professional, Board Certified Chaplains

A professional board certified health care chaplain is one of the most cost-effective resources to facilitate communication, enhance patient experience, and increase family and staff satisfaction.

Professional chaplains are the spiritual care specialists on the health care team who, while doctors and nurses focus on the needs of the body, help patients, family, and staff identify and draw upon their source of spiritual strength to find meaning and comfort and to work towards healing.

When a person and their family are coping with illness, trauma, or grief, they may find themselves wrestling with issues of spiritual distress – a painful disruption in one's belief or values system. Spiritual distress presents itself both emotionally and physically, from rejection of care to chronic insomnia, and may or may not be grounded in religious belief or practice.

A professional board certified health care chaplain:

- Serves people of any religion or no religion.
- Does not proselytize or promote any particular faith tradition
- Is an objective mediator who helps defuse conflicts and crises by facilitating communication and cultural sensitivity

Professional chaplains working as members of the interdisciplinary health care team:

- Can lift HCAHPS scores by raising patient and family satisfaction because they help them address relevant emotional, spiritual, religious, and cultural needs.
- Facilitate goals of care discussions for patients that can influence end-of-life care, treatment compliance, hospice enrollment, and patient quality of life especially near death
- Liaison with community religious leaders

One becomes a professional health care chaplain when he or she is board certified by one of the professional associations. Requirements include graduate level study, 1600 hours of supervised clinical training, demonstration of competencies through a rigorous peer review process, adherence to a professional code of ethics, and continuing professional education.

Resources to help you hire a professional health care chaplain: The following professional associations all follow the Common Standards for Professional Chaplains and the Professional Code of Ethics. Contact them for information to assist administrators and to post job openings: Association of Professional Chaplains (<http://www.professionalchaplains.org>), National Association of Catholic Chaplains (<http://www.nacc.org>) and National Association of Jewish Chaplains (<http://www.najc.org>).

HealthCare Chaplaincy is pleased to provide this information as a service to the health care field. We are a leader in integrating spirituality within health care and the growing specialty of palliative care in order to improve patient care and its experience. You can learn more at www.healthcarechaplaincy.org or please contact Jess Geevarghese, Director, Clinical Practice and Academic Affairs Support Services at jgeevarghese@healthcarechaplaincy.org or (212) 644-1111, ext. 122