

DISASTER CHAPLAINS —

Providing Spiritual Care in Times of Disaster

OUR MISSION is to recruit, train, credential and deploy Disaster Chaplains as part of an integrated response team. We work in coordination with Nebraska Emergency Management, the six Behavioral Health Regions, Nebraska Public Health organizations, and other relief agencies to augment the provision of behavioral health services at the time of a disaster — providing spiritual care and emotional support.

PURPOSE

- To provide spiritual care for persons impacted by the effect of a disaster – *victims, rescue workers, families and friends of victims and rescue workers, volunteers and staff of relief organizations or agencies, the community at large.*
- To provide training for local congregations in ongoing response after NEDRN is no longer deployed.
- To make certain that leaders from a broad array of faith traditions have an opportunity to provide disaster ministry.
- To provide respite and support for local pastors, rabbis, imams, or other faith leaders.
- To accept individuals for service, based on their desire to provide spiritual care and their skill providing that ministry in the context of a broad array of experiences, rather than on credentialing criteria established by the faith tradition of any given Disaster Chaplain.
- To set standards whereby Disaster Chaplains will “do no harm” while they serve in this capacity.

DISASTER CHAPLAINS may do any of the following activities as they provide Spiritual First Aid:

- Listen to the stories of people’s disaster experience.
- Hear cries of distress.
- Promote a sense of safety and security.
- Provide a spiritual sense of healing and hope – a reminder of God’s presence.
- Help people find resources, in their efforts to find solutions for their individual situations.

CODE OF ETHICS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Disaster Chaplains:

- do not proselytize.
- maintain confidentiality.
- are volunteers.
- recognize their personal and professional limits.
- know their boundaries.
- remain flexible.
- demonstrate sensitivity to ALL faith traditions.
- avoid speculation.
- sensitive to the needs of ALL who are affected.
- follow the Incident Command Structure.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVICE AS A DISASTER CHAPLAIN

- Completion of the application.
- Agreement to follow the Code of Ethics and Guiding Principles.
- Agreement to follow the Scope of Practice for Disaster Chaplains.
- Active participation in a faith community.
- Letter of recommendation from a leader of that faith community.
- Letter of recommendation from someone with whom you work – specifically someone who supervises your work (boss, supervisor, district superintendent, bishop, etc.).
- At the discretion of the Interview Committee, provide the name and contact information of one other person who may be contacted as a reference.
- Desire to provide a ministry of presence – “water bottle ministry” – rather than “pastoral ministry” (willingness to be a chaplain rather than a pastor).
- Ability to work respectfully with people of all faith traditions or no expressed faith.
- Participate in on going training.
- List training and experiences on application that relate to work as a Disaster Chaplain.
- Participation in an interdisciplinary interview.
- Allow a background check.
- Participate in “response feedback” opportunities to hone personal skills, deal with trauma responses and continue to develop disaster ministry proficiency.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

If a disaster chaplain performs his or her duties in such a way that this scope of practice is violated, they will lose their credentials to participate in this ministry

STANDARDS OF CARE

- Whenever possible, Spiritual Care will be provided by someone within the faith tradition of the affected person.
- Personal and professional integrity: truthfulness, honesty, compassion and careful attention will be provided by disaster chaplains.
- The provision of objective, appropriate, holistic support and a comforting presence will be expected.
- Everything possible will be done to protect those who receive spiritual care from further harm.
- Support will be provided through advocacy for spiritual care and emotional health, including resources to strengthen lives, when requested.
- Consistent spiritual care will be provided that is appropriate and sensitive to the faith beliefs and tradition of the person being served.
- Those who are cared for will be provided freedom from unwanted gifts of religious literature or symbols, evangelistic and sermonizing speech, or forced acceptance of specific moral values and traditions.
- Out of respect for those who are served, confidentiality will be maintained.
- Reasonable and reputable referrals will be delivered with appropriate expertise and skill (so that the person feels empowered by the referral).

DEPLOYMENT

Disaster Chaplains will be deployed in conjunction with Behavioral Health Responders at the request of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. When NEMA declares that a disaster response requires the provision of emotional support, they will call the Regional Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator (RDBHC). The RDBHC will contact the Regional Disaster Chaplain Coordinator explaining how many chaplains are needed, where they are to report and how long the service of chaplains will be needed. The Regional Disaster Chaplain Coordinator will evaluate the number of chaplains needed for a response and will contact the Disaster Chaplains in their specific regions and schedule them for service for the disaster. The Regional Disaster Chaplain Coordinator will also call the NEDRN Coordinator so that all Regional Disaster Chaplain Coordinators can be informed of the response. Disaster Chaplains will usually serve in the Region where they are located. However, if the need in any Region overwhelms the capacity of that Region's Disaster Chaplains to respond, the Regional Disaster Chaplain Coordinator will contact Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska and ask for additional assistance. At that point, additional chaplains from another region will be asked to assist in serving the need.

CREDENTIALS

Identification credentials will be made available to chaplains after completing the application, interview and background check. These credentials will be provided by Nebraska Emergency Management and will indicate that the individual has completed all the requirements set forth by the Nebraska Ecumenical Disaster Response Network and is authorized to represent Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska. Response to a specific disaster may require that persons responding receive a local identification badge for that specific incident. It is anticipated that the NEDRN/IMN credential will facilitate the receipt of an incident specific badge.

When a Disaster Chaplain resigns or is terminated, he or she will surrender the Disaster Chaplain credentials that have been issued to the Regional Disaster Chaplain Coordinator or to the NEDRN Coordinator.

INTERDISCIPLINARY INTERVIEW PROCESS

- Prior to being accepted as a Disaster Chaplain, each person will need to participate in an interview.
- The interview team will consist, whenever possible, of representatives from Behavioral Health, Public Health, Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, the Regional Disaster Chaplain Coordinator and a CPE trained Hospital Chaplain.
- All members of the interview team will be encouraged to participate in asking questions and probing for additional information.
- Following the interview, each member of the interview team will comment on the strengths and concerns that each chaplain candidate presents.
- A person needs a 2/3 recommendation from the interview committee in order to be credentialed as a chaplain.

Following the interview and review of the applications, references and the background check, each chaplain candidate will be notified by mail about whether they have been accepted as a Disaster Chaplain.