

Emergency Services Chaplaincy Handbook



Procedures and Guidelines

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Introduction

The intention of this manual is to describe the policies and practices of Emergency Services Chaplaincy (ESC). It is to be used as a set of guidelines for the orientation of Chaplains coming into the ministry as new members of the team.

Mission and Governance

Mission of the Emergency Services Chaplaincy

- Provide pastoral care and counseling to employees and families of law enforcement, fire and emergency medical service agencies
- Comfort and provide resource information to victims of fire, crime, medical emergencies and natural/manmade disasters
- Assist the Coroner in notifying individuals who have lost a family member in an unexpected manner

The Senior Chaplain receives guidance from an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board is comprised of members representing the various agencies supported and the general public. This Advisory Board is responsible for providing guidance to the Senior Chaplain on policy and budget.

Scope and Role of the Ministry

ESC Chaplains bring comfort and consolation to all persons in need with special emphasis on those confronted with fire, death, accidents or natural/manmade disasters. The ministry includes the provision of pastoral care to members of law enforcement and emergency agencies. ESC Chaplains also provide guidance and counseling, survivor support, a jail ministry and ministry in the schools as needed. They may also assist individuals by referring them to other care providers or agencies.

The role of the ESC Chaplain is to be a representative of God bearing witness to His forgiving and redeeming power in accordance with 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

Ethics and Confidentiality

All chaplains are expected to demonstrate behavior consistent with the mission of Emergency Services Chaplaincy and the congregation they represent.

Any ethical concerns should be immediately addressed with the Senior Chaplain.

Emergency Services Chaplaincy is committed to treating all those whom they minister to with respect for their personal dignity, right to privacy and to protect the confidentiality of all personal information shared with the Chaplain. Confidentiality will be maintained within the limits of the law.

The Chaplain is **NOT** held to confidentiality in the event of current child abuse or neglect, intended suicide/homicide, the threat of bodily injury to self or danger to others. No promises of confidentiality shall be made of potentially serious situations noted above.

Qualifications and Requirements

Chaplains

1. Must be ordained or licensed as clergy in good standing or duly appointed as a Chaplain by their affiliated emergency service or law enforcement agency.
2. Must be able to pass a criminal background check.
3. Show a God-like compassion, understanding and love for others.
4. Maintain Biblical, ethical and moral standards.
5. Demonstrate maturity in judgment, emotional stability and personal flexibility.
6. Be tactful and considerate in approach, relating easily to all people.
7. Be familiar with and/or willing to learn the various helping agencies in the community.
8. Have a deep concern for the spiritual and emotional well being of emergency response personnel, their families and the victims of accidents and disasters.
9. Be willing to respond to any and all situations where the presence of a Chaplain is required.
10. Be willing to obtain training in Critical Incident Stress Management, Crisis Counseling and other related topics as available.
11. Possess valid South Carolina driver's license.
12. Network with other clergy, i.e. hospital and other area clergy.

Assistant Chaplains

1. Must be recommended by their pastor/clergy, ESC Chaplain or by their affiliated emergency service or law enforcement agency.
2. Must be able to pass a criminal background check.
3. Show a God-like compassion, understanding and love for others.
4. Maintain Biblical ethical and moral standards.
5. Demonstrate maturity in judgment, emotional stability and personal flexibility.
6. Be tactful and considerate in approach, relating easily to all people.
7. Be familiar with and or willing to learn the various helping agencies in the community.
8. Have a deep concern for the spiritual and emotional well being of emergency response personnel, their families and the victims of accidents and disasters.
9. Be willing to assist the Chaplain in carrying out his/her duties
10. Be willing to obtain training in Critical Incident Stress Management, Crisis Counseling and other related topics as available.
11. Possess a valid South Carolina driver's license.

Application and Selection of Chaplains and Assistant Chaplains

Individuals interested in serving as volunteer Chaplains/Assistant Chaplains, must complete a formal application and have the endorsement of their congregation. The Senior Chaplain will review all applications submitted, giving careful and prayerful consideration to each one. Once the application has been reviewed and the candidate is found to meet the basic requirements, a personal interview may be conducted by the Senior Chaplain and/or ESC Board Member(s).

Duties of a Chaplain

- Death notification
- Suicide threats, attempts and completions
- Deaths of children
- Fatal accidents or other disaster scenes
- Scenes of violent crimes against people
- Structure fire scenes
- Responding to hospital emergency rooms when emergency personnel are severely injured or have died while on duty
- Assist department officials in making line of duty death or injury notifications.
- Visit sick or injured emergency services, law enforcement or crisis personnel at home or in the hospital
- Attend and participate in funerals of active as well as retired members of law enforcement, fire department and EMS
- Plan and preside at memorial services when appropriate
- Go for regular ride alongs with law enforcement and EMS personnel
- Assist personnel in dealing with confused or emotionally distressed individuals
- Assist with domestic disputes where families indicate a willingness to accept counseling (short term crisis counseling) and refer to family's own pastor or appropriate agency
- Attend social or other important events at the various agencies

Ride Alongs

- Ride alongs may be arranged by the Senior Chaplain
- Arrive early
- Have clear objectives. Pre-arrange with the officer or crew that you will be riding with the extent of your involvement
- Your safety is now an additional responsibility of the officer or crew that you are riding with. FOLLOW THEIR GUIDANCE
- Do not talk while radio is transmitting or receiving
- Know the unit number in which you are riding
- Do not preach – you are a visitor in their office
- Be open and listen
- Each ride should be for a minimum of four hours

All chaplains are expected to participate in ride alongs on a monthly basis.

Critical Incident Stress Management

The influence of a Chaplain's initial handling of a critical incident can reduce the possibility of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Prompt initiation of a Critical Incident Defusing may eliminate the need for a much more involved debriefing. The definition of a critical incident varies from individual to individual.

We will define a critical incident as:

- the death or severe injury of a child
- the death or severe injury of a co-worker
- multiple casualties with death or severe trauma
- structure fire with entrapment

There may be events not mentioned here where the need for the Critical Incident Stress Management process may need to be implemented. What follows is a brief overview of the debriefing process (Mitchell model). This debriefing should occur within 48-72 hours following the critical incident and should consist of a homogenous group.

1. Introductory phase: Providing the structure and ground rules

- (a) Introduce the debriefing team. Explain who we are, why we are assembled and give some background on the team's experience.
- (b) Explain why we carry out debriefings, emphasizing that it is normal for people to have reactions after exposure to traumatic events.
- (c) Structure and ground rules:

- Make sure that the room is set up before participants arrive and that the after meeting refreshments will be in place when required
- No criticism of others' feelings or reactions
- No gallows humor
- Explain that the meeting is totally confidential and that no notes will be taken
- No one is obliged to speak and no one should try and speak for someone else
- Ask for names and connection with the event (i.e., John - fireman)
- Differentiate between CID and technical or operational debriefings
- Explain how other people have responded to similar situations in the past
- Explain that people may initially feel worse about things during the debrief, this is part of unloading and not bottling things up
- Explain that the debrief continues without a break from commencement and may take between two to three hours
- No journalists should be present
- Ask participants if there is anyone in the room to whom they object to being present
- Ensure that all of the participants receive suitable literature with contact details of individuals, groups or organizations who can offer help or support in the future

2. Fact phase Establishing what happened

Here the aim is to build up a comprehensive picture of what happened, asking each participant to contribute. The emphasis of this phase is on facts, what happened rather than on emotions which are dealt with later during the debriefing process. Ask participants to tell their part of what happened, **STICKING TO THE FACTS**. They should be asked to answer the following set of questions:

- What happened?
- What did you do?
- What did you see others do?
- How did the incident/event end?

Questions should be tailored according to the incident to obtain the following information:

- What happened from the participants point of view
- How they reacted
- How they related to others involved, if appropriate
- How the incident came to an end

The members of the group may have widely divergent views on the events at the incident scene due to personal perceptions.

3. Cognition phase: Discuss thoughts about what happened

- Ask participants to share their thoughts leading up to, during and after the incident.
- Ask them to tell why they did what they did (as discussed in the fact phase). This is important because people will often have baseless misgivings about what they could, should or would have liked to have done during an incident. There may be an element of the armchair expert syndrome involved here. We often hear of people not involved in an incident saying things such as 'If I had been there I would have done...'. Although these are often overly optimistic and rather expressions of what they hope they would do, the reality is somewhat different. This notwithstanding, statements such as this, stated as they usually are with great conviction, can have seriously detrimental effects on recently traumatized persons. Their sense of self-worth can be further undermined. The only effective counter to the armchair expert is the 'man on scene' principle. The only "expert" is the person who was there when it happened, and no one else! Even people who have survived other traumatic situations cannot claim to be experts on YOUR trauma.
- Ask participants what their impressions are now and compare them to their impressions at the time of the incident or shortly afterwards.

4. Reaction phase: Discuss emotions associated with what happened

This is usually the longest and most involved phase of the debriefing process. This phase deals with feelings and emotional reactions to what people experienced. You should include questions about impressions, what people saw, heard, felt and smelled. Great importance is placed on ensuring that the normalcy of reactions is understood. Be prepared to offer reassurance and to encourage reassurance and supportive comment from the floor.

5. Symptom phase: Review signs and symptoms of stress and PTSD

The important questions here focus on what did a person feel during the incident. If they experienced shaking legs ask them to say so, if they were paralyzed with fear, again ask them to get it out. Expect some reticence if debriefing a group with a strong macho image and culture, but explain that they are human beings - not robots! The aim of this phase is that people can understand that their reactions at the time and any continuing reactions dating from the event are normal and predictable under the conditions that they were facing, and again, this point must be emphasized throughout.

Common symptoms may include gastro-intestinal distress, frequent urination, loss of bowel and bladder control, loss of sexual interest, heart pounding, shortness of breath, muscle, back, neck and head ache, trembling, jumpiness and startle reactions.

Insomnia, bad dreams, intrusive memories, trouble concentrating, remembering details and irritability are also symptoms.

6. Educational phase: Emphasizing the normality of reactions plus information about useful coping strategies

This is another phase whose aim is cognitive understanding. We continue to emphasize the normalcy of reactions, and to prepare people for the possibility of any future reactions. During this phase possible coping strategies are also introduced and discussed. The debriefer should also look for any positive aspects arising from what happened.

7. Re-entry phase Summing up

This phase looks to the future, available support and allows time for any questions to be raised. The team leader gives a brief summary of the preceding session and ensures that team members have distributed informational leaflets. Any loose ends are dealt with now.

The refreshment gathering after the debriefing is officially brought to an end and should be considered **BY THE DEBRIEF TEAM ONLY** as a continuation of the normalization process. Some people benefit more from their interactions during this informal gathering and welcome the opportunities to talk without worrying about being under scrutiny and to discuss personal issues and concerns in more detail. Although this is not listed in any of the official literature that we have seen it is a very important point to bear in mind.

Death Notification

1. The coroner or medical examiner is absolutely responsible for determining the identity of the deceased.
2. Notify in person. Don't call. Do not take any possessions of the victim to the notification. If there is absolutely no alternative to a phone call, arrange for a professional, neighbor, or a friend to be with the next of kin when the call comes.
3. If a large group is to be notified, request additional chaplains.
4. Talk about your reactions to the death with your team member(s) before the notification to enable you to better focus on the family when you arrive.
5. Present credentials and ask to come in.
6. Sit down, ask them to sit down, and be sure you have the nearest next of kin (do not notify siblings before notifying parents or spouse). Never notify a child. Never use a child as a translator.
7. Use the victim's name... "Are you the parents of _____?"
8. Inform simply and directly with warmth and compassion.
9. Do not use expressions like "expired," "passed away," or "we've lost _____."
10. Sample script: "I'm afraid I have some very bad news for you." Pause a moment to allow them to "prepare." "Name has been involved in _____ and (s)he has died." Pause again. "I am so sorry." Adding your condolence is very important because it expresses feelings rather than facts, and invites them to express their own.
11. Continue to use the words "dead" or "died" through ongoing conversation. Continue to use the victim's name, not "body" or "the deceased."
12. Do not blame the victim in any way for what happened, even though he/she may have been fully or partially at fault.
13. Do not discount feelings, theirs or yours. Intense reactions are normal. Expect fight, flight, freezing, or other forms of regression. If someone goes into shock have them lie down, elevate their feet, keep them warm, monitor breathing and pulse, and call for medical assistance.
14. Join the survivors in their grief without being overwhelmed by it. Do not use cliches. Helpful remarks are simple, direct, validate, normalize, assure, empower, express concern. *Examples: "I am so sorry." "It's harder than people think." "Most people who*

have gone through this react similarly to what you are experiencing." "If I were in your situation, I'd feel very _____ too."

15. Answer all questions honestly (requires knowing the facts before you go). Do not give more detail than is asked for, but be honest in your answers.
16. Offer to make calls, arrange for child care, call clergy, relatives, employer. Provide them with a list of the calls you make as they will have difficulty remembering what you have told them.
17. When a child is killed and one parent is at home, notify that parent, then offer to take them to notify the other parent.
18. Do not speak to the media without the family's permission.
19. Determine if autopsy will be performed or if identification of the body is necessary. If identification is necessary, transport next of kin to and from morgue and help prepare them by giving a physical description of the morgue, and telling them that "Name" will look pale because blood settles to point of lowest gravity.
20. Do not leave survivors alone. Arrange for someone to come and wait until they arrive before leaving.
21. When leaving let him/her or them know you will check back the next day to see how they are doing and ask if there is anything else you can do for them.
22. Call and visit again the next day. If the family does not want you to come, spend some time on the phone and re-express willingness to answer all questions. They will probably have more questions than when they were first notified.
23. Ask the family if they are ready to receive "Name's" clothing, jewelry, etc. Honor their wishes. Possessions should be presented neatly in a box and not in a trash bag. Clothing should be dried thoroughly to eliminate bad odor. When the family receives the items, explain what the box contains and the condition of the items so they will know what to expect when they decide to open it.
24. If there is anything positive to say about the last moments, share them now. Give assurances such as "most people who are severely injured do not remember the direct assault and do not feel pain for some time." Do not say, "s(he) did not know what hit them" unless you are absolutely sure.
25. Let the survivor(s) know you care. The most beloved professionals and first responders are those who are willing to share the pain of the loss. Attend the funeral if possible. This will mean a great deal to the family and reinforces a positive image of your profession.

26. Know exactly how to access immediate medical or mental health care should family members experience a crisis reaction that is beyond your response capability.

27. Debrief your own personal reactions with another chaplain or member of your personal clergy on a frequent and regular basis - don't try to carry the emotional pain all by yourself, and don't let your emotions and the stress you naturally experience in empathizing with the bereaved build into a problem for you.

Motor Vehicle Accidents

- Park your vehicle away from accident scene and off roadway
- Report to Incident Commander
- Assist as requested by the IC
- In any situation where there is a possibility of bodily fluid contact, don appropriate protective clothing
- Do not hesitate to request additional Chaplains as needed
- In vehicle versus pedestrian situations, particular attention should be paid to vehicle operator
- Assist in transporting non-injured patients to homes or hospitals with permission of the IC
- In extended extrication situations, request permission of the IC to comfort patient (even if patient appears to be unconscious they may still hear your words of encouragement and hope)

Helpful Hints

- **PRAY**
- Always report to Incident Commander or Staging Officer on arrival at scene
- Keep stuffed animal toys for children
- Keep change of clothing available
- If difficulty in approaching an incident is due to roadblocks or emergency vehicles, contact dispatch and request an escort
- Wear reflective clothing in low light situations
- Always be easily identifiable on the scene
- Keep insect repellent, sunscreen, hat and raingear available for protracted events
- Remember there may not be restroom facilities at the incident scene
- Know your exact destination prior to departure
- Use caution in releasing personal information at the incident scene
- Prior to discussing any occurrence in your role as an ESC Chaplain with a lawyer, contact the Senior Chaplain
- Notify the Senior Chaplain of any negative encounters with Law Enforcement or Emergency Services personnel
- Notify Senior Chaplain if you are requested to write an incident or witness report
- Refer media to the Information Officer for comments
- Keep a list of agency numbers available
- **PRAY**