



FAQ FOR PROSPECTIVE CHAPLAINS in regard to CREDENTIALING, ECCLESIASTICAL ENDORSEMENT AND OTHER PROCESSES

A. What is an Ecclesiastical Endorsement?

An endorsement is a document (usually a specific form) or letter from a chaplain's/candidate's denomination indicating that a chaplain/prospective chaplain (a) has been granted a bona fide credential by the respective faith group; (b) is qualified and approved for a specific type of ministry; and (c) is in good standing with the denomination/faith group. An ecclesiastical endorsement is required by all military branches for service as a Chaplain (Army, Air National Guard, Air Force, Navy or any other branch of Service). An ecclesiastical endorsement is also required by agencies such as the Bureau of Prisons, Veterans Affairs, Hospice, Police departments and most hospitals when applying for positions as chaplains. Corporate chaplains are often required to be endorsed as well.

B. What is an Ecclesiastical Approval?

This is a term specifically for military Chaplain Candidates. An approval letter is addressed to military Chiefs of Chaplains for prospective military chaplain candidates who are applying for the Candidate Program.

C. How may I obtain an endorsement to serve as a chaplain in the military, the Bureau of Prisons, VA or other institutional agency?

1. The chaplain must first complete a ministerial credential with the EFCA. This credential must be a *License Leading to Ordination* and later the *Certificate of Ordination*. The *Certificate of Christian Ministry* is also available to those seeking non-military chaplaincy. (Please refer to EFCA Credentialing guidelines or *Steps to Credentialing* for further information regarding application for a specific credential.)
2. Successfully complete an Application for Ecclesiastical Endorsement to the Endorser of the EFCA.

D. Will an Ecclesiastical Endorsement guarantee acceptance into the military or the VA as a chaplain?

The Endorsement alone is not sufficient for obtaining chaplain positions. It is simply *one* requirement among many. The military has its own specific requirements as do healthcare agencies and other institutional organizations.

E. What are the requirements beyond an Ecclesiastical Endorsement to become an EFCA military chaplain?

Each branch varies somewhat in determining its own requirements. For military chaplains, the following general requirements are listed:

1. 120-hours (semester) undergraduate degree- (B.A. or B.S.)
2. 72 semester hours (minimum) of seminary from an accredited evangelical program. Graduate work must be in theology, Bible and practical ministry-related subjects. A person

may not combine degrees (or programs) in order to qualify for the 72-hour minimum. The EFCA recommends the 90-hour M.Div. program for military chaplain applicants.

3. Age restrictions will apply.
4. Physical and medical condition of the applicant will be important considerations.
5. Practical ministry (of not less than two years) within the local church setting following seminary. This means that the applicant has sufficient pastoral experience to function from the start as a chaplain to sailors, marines, soldiers and airmen. Some waivers may be granted for practical ministry outside of the local church context. Ministry prior to seminary or during seminary will be taken into consideration, but is not a guarantee of endorsement. If one is not applying for military active duty (and thus considering the Reserves or National Guard), practical experience is expected to parallel time spent as part of the Reserve forces.
6. Be a U.S. citizen.
7. Clean background check with no history of serious legal or moral misconduct.
8. Complete all requirements and receive a ministerial credential through the EFCA.
9. Normally, both the military and the EFCA will require separate interviews prior to the accession of a chaplain into the respective military chaplaincy program. These interviews attempt to assess emotional and spiritual maturity and whether the applicant has met other criteria expected of the military chaplain.
10. Satisfactory completion of the Application for Ecclesiastical Endorsement (with all forms) and submit the appropriate transcripts, references, testimony and other data.

F. What is the Military Chaplain Candidate Program?

Seminarians may apply for the Candidate program to the respective military branch if they have less than half of their degree program completed. Each branch has separate and specific requirements for its particular Candidate Program. The seminarian will also complete the forms and application for Ecclesiastical Endorsement/Approval from the EFCA Endorser.

Most programs will require that the chaplain candidate take the Basic School Chaplain training during (or immediately following) seminary training. Other short periods of training will be expected while the Chaplain Candidate attends seminary (e.g. summer active duty training). The prospective Chaplain Candidate, if accepted into the program, is commissioned as an officer, but not fully regarded as a bona fide 'chaplain' until seminary has been completed and the Candidate has obtained a credential through the denominational body to which he/she has obtained the ecclesiastical approval.

G. What is involved from the EFCA in obtaining an Ecclesiastical Approval Letter in order to become a military Chaplain Candidate?

The Application for Endorsement is on the website of the EFCA Chaplains. There are, however, other items that will be expected. Overall, the following items are expected:

1. Satisfactory completion of the Application for Ecclesiastical Endorsement with applicant's photo.
2. Letter of enrollment from the seminary applicant is attending/will attend.
3. Official undergraduate transcript indicating the 120 hours (min.) have been completed.
4. References from a colleague, a pastor and one additional leader. (Form provided.)
5. Testimony and Call to Ministry.
6. Fees for processing application.
7. Ethical Statement and agreement of alignment with chaplain policy guidelines.

8. Release of information statement which gives permission for the Endorser to speak with the Chief of Chaplains regarding the Candidate if necessary.
9. Interview of the prospective chaplain candidate with a senior EFCA chaplain.

H. What is required for Active Duty as a Military Chaplain?

This may vary somewhat but the following are expected.

1. Complete seminary training.
2. Complete credentialing. The chaplain must complete the License Leading to Ordination and then receive the Certificate of Ordination or the Certificate of Christian Ministry.
3. Two years (min.) of practical post-seminary ministry.
4. Completed Basic Officers Chaplain School. Exceptions made be made based on needs of the particular service branch.
5. Chaplain interview with the specific military branch and the EFCA Chaplains Commission and/or its representative.
6. Compilation of a practical ministry log sent to the Endorsing Agent.
7. Apply for Active Duty to the respective branch of the military and have received the updated DD2088 (Endorsement Form) for Extended Active Duty from the Endorsing Agent.

I. What are the expectations of the EFCA denomination of all EFCA credentialed chaplains serving in institutional or military chaplaincy?

All credentialed chaplains serving in non-parish ministries will be expected to comply with the following:

1. Reports on Chaplain Ministry. Semi-Annual Reports are expected for military chaplains. Annual Reports expected for institutional chaplains. Reports are sent to the National Office: Attn: Director of Biblical Theology and Credentialing, 901 E. 78th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55420 or to the Ecclesiastical Endorser. A form is provided for each of these two divisions of chaplain ministry.
2. Retain membership within a local EFCA Church.
3. Attend a District Conference, Theology Conference or the national EFCA One Conference once every other year (minimum).
4. Maintain contact through the District to which one is accountable as well as to the Endorsing Agent.
5. Remain faithful through the payment to the EFCA of annual dues for the respective chaplaincy discipline of which one is a part. A table of specific dues is available through the Endorsing Agent.

J. What are the basic requirements to eligible to apply for a healthcare (hospital) chaplain?

Qualifications for hospitals and hospice normally require the following:

1. Undergraduate Degree -- B.A./B.S. of 120 hours (min.)
2. Seminary Degree -- M.Div., Th.M. or equivalent (of not less than 72 semester hours).
3. Completed Credential from the EFCA. (see Credentialing Requirements, i.e. Certificate of Ordination, License Leading to Ordination, Certificate of Christian Ministry or Certificate of Ordination.)
4. Complete Clinical Pastoral Education (C.P.E.) of up to four units for most health care entry positions (1 year = 4 units of 400 hours each).
5. Application completed (with respective forms) for Ecclesiastical Endorsement and forwarded to the Endorser.

6. An Ecclesiastical Endorsement is normally sent to APCE, APC or, in some cases, directly to the hospital. (Association of Professional Chaplains)

K. Why must one complete the Certificate of Ordination prior to being eligible for Active Duty (Military Chaplains)?

History has indicated that military chaplains are subject to deployments and many unplanned requirements during their first tour of active duty. The very nature of military chaplaincy allows little time for additional study, travel and return to the District locale or preparation for the Council for completing the Ordination process. Chaplains are likely to be transferred to a different District when accepting accession to military orders which further complicates the Ordination process. The U.S. Army has written endorsers requesting that all chaplain credentialing be completed prior to Active Duty. For these reasons, the EFCA Chaplains Commission has recommended that all chaplains complete all credentialing steps prior to being endorsed for Active Duty.