

What is Clinical Pastoral Education?

EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Programs allow ministers, seminarians and other religiously-oriented persons to develop counseling skills, familiarity with a particular pastoral setting (usually within a hospital, parish, hospice, retirement home, etc.) and self-awareness as pastoral care-givers. Attention is given to enhancing the dignity of patients, family members, parishioners, staff and CPE students within this context.

The educational approach may be described as “action-reflection-action,” with students providing pastoral care on assigned areas and using their experiences for reflection and learning.

While seminary courses often provide an academic basis for the theology of pastoral care, CPE emphasizes learning by doing. Seminary field education experiences do not provide the same level of intensity of direct supervision, peer interaction, or accountability for one’s professional functioning as does CPE.

CPE Is:

1. Pastoral education in a clinical setting. Supervision is enhanced by the student’s relationships throughout the setting, since there is communication among the staff members.
2. Learning and practicing skills in listening and intervention.
3. Participating in the life of a small group dedicated to self-exploration for the purpose of developing pastoral identity and skills.
4. Offering to help people find their own inner spiritual resources.
5. Exploring the possibilities and limitations of pastoral care.
6. Developing skills in networking with other professions.

CPE is not:

1. Witnessing to one’s faith, no matter the religion or denomination. It is not about evangelizing or teaching.
2. Primarily about providing pastoral care to patients/clients/parishioners. It is an educational program that focuses on the student, although benefit also extends to the recipient of pastoral care.
3. A program to teach people to be chaplains. It is often required for employment in chaplaincy, but its scope is the much broader field of pastoral care in any setting.
4. Therapy. While there is an emphasis on learning to use the Self as a pastoral tool, it is not the purpose of CPE to mandate significant life change.

Curriculum

A typical CPE program follows the Standards set by its accrediting organization, normally providing for a minimum of 400 hours of supervised learning per unit of training. Students provide pastoral visits to patients, family members and staff as well as respond to referrals and pager calls. For evening and weekend on-call duty, students must be able to be on-site within 30 minutes of a pager call.

Typical Seminars

While each program enjoys some latitude in the specific seminars that are offered, the following are often included:

Theological Integration Seminars (10 to 20 hours)

This series has a focus on integrating theological insights with actual ministry events. Students are responsible for choosing and presenting theological concepts that are suggested by pastoral practice. No attempt is made to propose “correct” doctrine; rather, the intent is to encourage exploration of ideas.

Interpersonal Relations (20 to 30 hours)

This peer group learning experience has a dual focus. First, it provides opportunities for students to explore various personal and professional issues that may arise during their ministry. Second, it allows an experiential study of group formation and development, utilizing the group experience itself as an educational tool.

Verbatim Seminars (20 to 30 hours)

The purpose of this series of meetings is to allow for reviewing and critiquing verbatim reports of actual pastoral visits. Each student presents in turn, thus providing a wide variety of pastoral situations for group consideration. Prepared role plays may also be used as an educational mode during these seminars.

Didactic Presentations (15 to 30 hours)

Lectures and presentations are provided for the group’s learning. CPE Supervisors and interdisciplinary professionals present information on pastoral, ethical and health care concerns. A broader understanding of developmental processes, psychological growth and interrelationships among the many elements of a system is the goal of these seminars, with an intent to strengthen pastoral functioning.

Anecdotal Stories (10 to 20 hours)

Students and Supervisors take turns telling one another personal life stories, with two goals in mind. First, a deeper understanding of each individual may develop from the telling of stories, thus benefitting each person in the interactions within the group. Second, individual stories are usually reflective of group themes that are developing and are helpful in tracking the group’s process.

Joint/Individual Supervision (10 to 15 hours)

Students meet either one-on-one or in tandem with a Supervisor to review pastoral work, reflect on personal and professional growth and evaluate progress toward individual learning goals established at the beginning of each unit. Supervision via webcam is also an option.

Tuition

Tuition is paid to Frederick Health Hospital. Students are also responsible for textbooks. The cost of each 400 hour (1 unit) course is \$500.00.

Certification of Completion of Training

Upon completion of each Unit of 400 hours of supervised learning, students receive a certificate of the successful completion of that Unit. Records of completed units are kept at the CPE Center where training was completed.

Institutions typically require four Units of CPE for consideration as Staff Chaplain or equivalent professional pastoral care positions and may, at their discretion, require more.

Application Process

Applications for the CPE program may be submitted via email or postal mail. Please visit FrederickHealth.org and download the application under “Clinical Pastoral Education Program.” You may email the completed form to kpyles@frederick.health or print out and send a completed hard copy to:

**Frederick Health Hospital
Pastoral Care Department
Attention: Kim Pyles, Administrative Assistant
400 W 7th Street
Frederick, MD 21701**

If you have any questions about the program or the application process, you may telephone Kim Pyles at 240-566-4635.

