



CENTER for SPIRITUAL CARE & PASTORAL FORMATION

Certification Standards Excerpts: Pastoral Counselor/Spiritual Care Counselor (BCPC, BCSCC)

This certification level is for pastoral counselors/spiritual care counselors who are directly involved in providing pastoral care, spiritual care, and pastoral/spiritual counseling. Certification signifies competency to offer supportive and crisis-oriented pastoral counseling that is informed by training in clinical and cognitive understandings of the principles found in psychodynamic psychotherapy. These certified individuals are in ministry in community settings as well as behavioral health, nursing homes, military, prison, commercial, social justice, masjid, synagogue, church and other settings. These certified individuals contribute to the biophysical, psycho-spiritual, and socio-relational healing of individuals and community.

Issues of Certification and Licensure

Receipt of certification demonstrates competence in pastoral counseling per the Standards Excerpt of CSCP, based upon completion of academics, experience, and receiving a positive decision by the candidate's Practitioner Community Certification Review Board.

CSCP Board Certification as Pastoral Counselor/Spiritual Care Counselor does not signify competency to offer psychotherapy. Thus this certification is not a practice credential, but rather a professional credential, in that it does not give the holder permission to practice. That permission is given only by a governmentally sanctioned entity.

Board Certification by CSCP does not confer licensure to the counselor to practice in any state; it is not a license to practice. Each state has their own requirements for counselors to obtain licensure or certification. In some states, the M.Div. does not meet the Master's requirements for licensing.

For information on licensure relevant to clergy and pastoral counselors, contact your state's counselor licensing board directly. Please check with your state for its level of credentialing and licensing.

Certification Standards Common to All CSCP Categories

There are certification standards that apply to all categories of CSCP certification, and standards that are unique to each specific category. Some of the requirements are objective and other requirements are a matter of subjective judgment regarding a candidate's level of functioning. In general, it should be clearly understood that:

- The certification process always emphasizes a candidate's ability to demonstrate the kind of profound personal and professional competence essential for clinical work in interpersonal relationships.
- The completion of formal requirements is always seen in relation to such a demonstrated ability to function.
- Certification is always a matter of judgment of one's professional peers who are delegated representatives of CSCP.

Certification Requirements Common to All CSCPF Categories

To seek certification in CSCPF for any category, candidates shall demonstrate the following:

- Education consistent with the category of certification being sought.
- Clinical education and experience consistent with the category of certification being sought.
- Endorsement/ordination from the candidate's faith group for the certification being sought when such endorsement is required by the candidate's faith tradition to serve as a Chaplain.

General Requirements for Pastoral Counselor/Spiritual Care Counselor Category

The essential requirements to receive certification as a Clinical Chaplain/Spiritual Care Practitioner include an MDiv or MDiv equivalency, 4 units of CPE, affiliation with a faith group, active membership in CSCPF and a CSCPF Practitioner Community, requisite documentation/papers, successful completion of the Practitioner Community's Readiness Review, and a positive decision from the candidate's Certification Review Panel.

Specific Pastoral Counselor /Spiritual Care Counselor Certification Requirements

- Be an active member in good standing in both CSCPF and a CSCPF Practitioner Community.
- Completion of four units of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) including 1600 clinical hours from a CSCPF-affiliated Learning Center or from a CPE training center of a cognate group recognized by CSCPF.
- Evaluations from candidate's CPE supervisor for each unit of CPE education, or if all 4 units are completed under one supervisor, a Comprehensive Evaluation.
- Self-evaluation from the last unit of CPE, or candidate's Comprehensive Evaluation.
- Autobiographical statement and description of spiritual journey which demonstrates a mature level of self-awareness, honest and balanced self-reflection, and an integrative understanding of one's own psychodynamic and spiritual development.
- Written reflective commentary of the candidate's ongoing spiritual/contemplative practice, faith journey, or personal theology/spirituality.
- Two case studies that demonstrate knowledge and experience in providing professional level pastoral/spiritual care.
- One year of experience (1600 hours, may include CPE clinical hours) providing spiritual care in a ministry setting.
- Demonstration of CPE competencies.

- Positive decision in favor of certification by the Practitioner Community Certification Review Board consisting of at least three members, (certified at least at the candidate's desired certification category), plus a Commissioned Review Liaison and a Scribe (either physically or virtually present).

Pastoral Counselor/Spiritual Care Counselor Competencies

The candidate shall possess the ability to articulate and demonstrate CPE competencies/ learning objectives within a clinical or ministry context. Therefore, the Certification Review Board must be able to affirm that the candidate:

1. Demonstrates the ability to understand and make use of the clinical process and the clinical method of learning. This includes the ability to understand and formulate clinical data, the ability to receive and utilize feedback and consultation.
2. Demonstrates the ability to creatively utilize individual supervision for personal and professional growth and for developing the capacity to evaluate one's ministry.
3. Demonstrates the ability to provide a critical analysis of his or her particular religious or spiritual tradition.
4. Demonstrates the use of "the self" as a work in progress and as the principal tool in pastoral/spiritual care and counseling. This includes the ability to reflect on self and interpret one's own life story psychologically, theologically or spiritually.
5. Demonstrates knowledge, experience, and inclusion of integrative spiritual care in a clinical practice or ministerial setting.
6. Demonstrates basic care and counseling skills, which includes listening, empathy, and reflection, analysis of problems, conflict resolution, and theological, or spiritual reflection.
7. Demonstrates familiarity and ability to present sacred ceremonies, sacred rites and Holy days particular to one's own religious or spiritual tradition.
8. Demonstrates the ability to relate with high personal and professional proficiency with persons in crisis across cultural and faith boundaries and empower people to tell their story.
9. Demonstrates the ability to establish a pastoral/spiritual bond expressed as a calm, non-anxious presence with persons and groups in various life situations and crisis circumstances.
10. Demonstrates an understanding of the dynamics of group behavior, the variety of group experiences, and to utilize the support, confrontation and clarification of the peer group for the integration of personal attributes and pastoral/spiritual functioning.
11. Demonstrates the ability to articulate spiritual assessment tools utilized in a ministry or clinical context, including the ability to make an integrated and age-specific clinical/pastoral/spiritual assessment with special reference to understanding psychodynamics, the meaning and significance of religious symbols and spiritual values.

12. Demonstrates the ability to make a pastoral or spiritual assessment with special reference to the nature and quality of religious and spiritual values; to assess embedded theology/spiritual philosophy in relation to self and others.

13. Demonstrates familiarity with, and effective use of, core literature in clinical, behavioral sciences, theological and spiritual disciplines, including but not limited to: crisis intervention theory and practice; grief and loss; interdisciplinary and faith-based patient care; spiritual assessment; group and family systems theory and behavior; gender issues in pastoral/spiritual care; ethical issues; and personal/professional boundaries in the delivery of pastoral/spiritual care.

14. Demonstrates leadership ability and personal/pastoral authority.

15. Demonstrates the ability to work as a pastoral/spiritual care team member on an interdisciplinary team.

16. Demonstrates evidence of high ethical commitment, including absolute respect for the worth and rights of persons, and an understanding and assent to the CSCP Code of Ethics.

17. Demonstrates the ability to incorporate theological and spiritual insights into the nurturing and supportive development process that makes use of the traditions, beliefs, and resources of one's own particular faith community.

Certification Application Checklist

Before submitting an online Request for Certification, candidates should meet and/or have in hand ALL of the following:

- Be an active member in good standing in CSCP and a CSCP Practitioner Community.
- Have chosen a certification category for which they believe they meet the standards and requirements. This choice -- and related experience and documentation -- should be reviewed and affirmed in discussion with the candidate's Practitioner Community.
- Have the full contact information for the candidate's Practitioner Community Certification Representative.
- Know the dates, locations, and CPE supervisor(s) of all required/completed units of CPE.
- Know the dates, locations and site supervisor(s) of one full year of experience providing clinical spiritual care (may include CPE clinical hours).
- Have in PDF form all CPE evaluations, or Comprehensive Evaluation.
- Have in PDF form a self-evaluation of the last unit of CPE, or Comprehensive Evaluation.
- Have in PDF form an autobiographical statement and description of spiritual journey which demonstrates a mature level of self-awareness, honest and balanced self-reflection, and an integrative understanding of one's own psychodynamic and spiritual development.

- ❑ Have in PDF form a written description and reflective commentary of the candidate's ongoing spiritual/contemplative practice, faith journey, or personal theology.
- ❑ Have in PDF form two case studies that demonstrate knowledge and experience in providing professional level pastoral/spiritual care.