

Healthcare Chaplains Ministry Association

Code of Ethics

The Healthcare Chaplains Ministry Association (HCMA) is a professional chaplaincy organization for the clinical pastoral training and professional certification of Healthcare Chaplains and Teaching Chaplains who participate in the caring mission of the Lord Jesus Christ to the sick, suffering and dying. HCMA provides clinical pastoral education, professional competency standards, professional certification and professional development for its members.

HCMA recognizes that the role definition and work settings of its members include a wide variety of ministry settings, academic disciplines and levels of life preparation. This diversity reflects the breadth of HCMA's interest and influence. It also poses challenging complexities in efforts to set standards for the performance of members, for the desired requisite preparation of practice, and for supporting spiritual and ethical controls.

The conduct of HCMA members, both public and private, has the potential to inspire people or to demoralize them. The specification of ethical standards enables HCMA to clarify to its members, as well as those served, the nature of the ethical responsibilities held in common by its members. These ethical responsibilities address the behavior of members in both their professional relationships and personal behavior.

This Code does not presume to provide answers to ethical questions. What it does establish is a set of professional standards that will help members to articulate values and to delineate boundaries by which ethical questions can be discussed and evaluated.

The HCMA Code of Ethics gives expression to the basic values and standards of professional chaplaincy, guides decision-making and professional behavior, provides a mechanism for professional accountability, and informs the public as to what they can expect from professional HCMA Board Certified Chaplains.

A

HCMA Ethical Principles as a Professional Chaplaincy Organization

As a professional chaplaincy organization, HCMA embodies responsibility, integrity and competence. HCMA:

1. Is responsive to the unique needs of its individual members while keeping in focus the needs common to the membership as a whole.
2. Treats its members with dignity and justice. It respects due process in all matters.
3. Is a good steward of the material and monetary resources entrusted to it. It uses sound fiscal practices and maintains accurate financial records.
4. Embodies integrity in all marketing practices.
5. Avoids all conflicts of interest, including even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

6. Respects the age, culture, diagnosis, disability, economic status, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, and social and religious diversity of all persons and strives to eliminate discrimination. HCMA respects the right of each faith group to hold to its values and traditions.
7. Advocates for professional accountability that protects the public and advances professional chaplaincy.

B

HCMA Ethical Principles for Chaplains in Relationships with Clients

HCMA Chaplains understand clients to be any counselees, patients, residents, their loved ones, students, or staff to whom they provide spiritual care. In relationships with clients, HCMA Chaplains uphold the following standards of professional ethics. HCMA Chaplains:

8. Speak and act in ways that respect and honor the dignity, integrity, value and freedom of conscience of every individual, without compromising their own beliefs.
9. Provide pastoral care that is intended to promote the best interest of the client and to foster strength, integrity, hope and healing of the whole person.
10. Demonstrate respect and sensitivity for the cultural and religious values of those they serve and refrain from imposing their own values and beliefs on those served.
11. Do not practice, condone or collaborate in any form of unjust discrimination against a person with regard to age, culture, diagnosis, disability, economic status, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, social status or religion.
12. Are mindful of the imbalance of power in the professional/client relationship and refrain from exploitation of that imbalance.
13. Maintain relationships with clients on a professional basis only.
14. Avoid or correct any conflicts of interest or appearance of conflicting interest(s).
15. Refrain from any form of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment or sexual assault in relationships with clients.
16. Refrain from any form of harassment, coercion, intimidation or otherwise abusive words or actions in relationships with clients.
17. Safeguard the confidentiality of clients when using materials for educational purposes or written publication.
18. Safeguard the confidentiality of information entrusted to them by clients when communicating with family members or significant others except when disclosure is required for necessary treatment, granted by client permission, for the safety of any person, or required by law.
19. Understand the limits of their individual expertise and make referrals to other professionals when appropriate.

C

HCMA Ethical Principles for Chaplains in Relationships with their Faith Community

HCMA Chaplains are accountable to their faith communities, one another and other organizations. HCMA Chaplains:

20. Maintain good standing in their faith group, including ecclesiastical endorsement of their ministry.
21. Abide by the professional practice and/or teaching standards of the state/province, the community and the institution in which they serve. If for any reason an HCMA Chaplain is not free to practice or teach according to conscience, the HCMA Chaplain will notify the healthcare administration, HCMA, and his/her faith group as appropriate.
22. Do not directly or by implication claim professional qualifications that exceed actual qualifications or misrepresent an affiliation with any institution.

D

HCMA Ethical Principles for Chaplains in Relationships with Other Professionals and the Community

HCMA Chaplains are accountable to the public, faith communities, employers and professionals in all professional relationships. HCMA Chaplains:

23. Promote justice and compassion in relationships with others, institutions and society.
24. Represent accurately their professional qualifications and affiliations.
25. Exercise good stewardship of resources entrusted to their care and employ sound financial practices.
26. Respect the opinions, beliefs and professional endeavors of colleagues and other professionals.
27. Seek advice and counsel of other professionals whenever it is in the best interest of those being served and make referrals when appropriate.
28. Provide expertise and counsel to other healthcare professionals in advocating for best practices in care.
29. Seek to establish collaborative relationships with other community and health professionals.
30. Advocate for changes in their institutions that honor spiritual values and promote healing.
31. Provide other professionals with chart notes where they are used to further treatment of the clients, obtaining consent when required.
32. Communicate sufficient information to other healthcare team members while respecting the privacy of clients.
33. Ensure that private conduct does not impair the ability to fulfill professional responsibilities or bring dishonor to chaplaincy as a profession.

34. Clearly distinguish between statements made or actions taken as a private individual and those made as a member or representative of HCMA.

E

HCMA Ethical Principles for Chaplains in Relationships with Colleagues

HCMA Chaplains engage in collegial relationships with peers, other Chaplains, local clergy and counselors, recognizing that perspective and judgment are maintained through consultative interactions rather than through isolation. HCMA Chaplains:

35. Honor all consultations, whether personal or client-related, with the highest professional regard and confidentiality.
36. Maintain sensitivity and professional protocol of the healthcare institution and/or HCMA when receiving or initiating referrals.
37. Exercise due caution when communicating through the internet or other electronic means.
38. Respect each other and support the integrity and well-being of their colleagues.
39. Take collegial and responsible action when concerns about or direct knowledge of incompetence, impairment, misconduct or violations against this code of ethics arise.
40. Communicate sufficient information to other healthcare team members while respecting the privacy of clients.

F

HCMA Ethical Principles for Relationships Between Teaching Chaplains/Supervisors/Educators and Students/Trainees/Interns

HCMA Chaplains respect the integrity of students/trainees/interns using the power they have as Teaching Chaplains/Supervisors/Educators in responsible ways. HCMA Teaching Chaplains:

41. Maintain a healthy educational environment free of coercion or intimidation.
42. Maintain clear professional boundaries in the areas of self-disclosure, intimacy and sexuality.
43. Provide clear expectations regarding responsibilities, work schedules, assignments, goals, deadlines, fees and payments.
44. Take full responsibility to maintain the training standards of the HCMA Clinical Pastoral Training Program.
45. Provide adequate, timely and constructive feedback to students/trainees/interns.
46. Maintain a healthy respect for the personal growth of students/trainees/interns and provide professional referrals when appropriate.
47. Maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding all information and knowledge gained in the course of supervision/mentoring.

G

HCMA Ethical Principles in Advertising

HCMA Chaplains engage in appropriate informational activities that educate the public about their professional qualifications and individual scopes of practice. HCMA Chaplains:

48. Represent the competencies, education, training and experience relevant to their practice of pastoral care, education and counseling in an accurate manner.
49. Do not use any professional identification (e.g., business cards, letterhead, internet, telephone directory, etc.) if it is false, misleading, fraudulent or deceptive.
50. List and claim as evidence only degrees and certifications that are earned from educational institutions and/or training programs recognized by HCMA.
51. Ascertain that the qualifications of their students/trainees/interns are represented in a manner that is not false, misleading, fraudulent or deceptive.
52. Represent themselves as providing specialized services only if they have the appropriate education, training or experience.

H

HCMA Ethical Principles in Research and Publication

HCMA Chaplains engaging in research follow guidelines and applicable laws that strive to protect the dignity, privacy and well-being of all participants and, where applicable, the research is approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). HCMA Chaplains:

53. Engage only in research within the boundaries of their competence and with the approval of the IRB.
54. In research activities involving human participants, are aware of and ensure that the research question, design and implementation are in full compliance with ethical principles and with the approval of the IRB.
55. Adhere to basic elements of informed consent, including a clear and understandable explanation of the procedures, a description of the risks and benefits, and the duration of the desired participation.
56. Inform all participants of the right to withdraw consent and to discontinue involvement at any time.
57. Engage in research while being sensitive to the cultural characteristics and belief systems of individuals.
58. Maintain the confidentiality of all research participants and inform participants of any limits of that confidentiality.
59. Use any information obtained through research for professional purposes only.
60. Exercise conscientiousness in attributing sources in their research and writing thereby avoiding plagiarism.
61. Report research data and findings accurately.