

  Official Policy Manual	Date issued	Supersedes	Page	Section #
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	Section:			
	Patient Care			
	Directive:			
	Pastoral Care Services			
	Policy Owner:			
	Office of Diversity & Inclusion			

#### **A. Policy Statement**

The New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) recognizes that every patient has a right to freedom of choice with regard to religion and to seek out religious information. OMH recognizes that religious practices and beliefs affect mental health outcomes that often serve as standard coping mechanisms for individuals with serious mental illness, including individuals from racial-ethnic minority groups. OMH shall, within reason, endeavor to make religious services available to patients in accordance with their needs and capabilities.

#### **B. Purpose**

Patient participation in religious programs and practices shall be voluntary in accordance with the patient's wishes and needs. To this end, the OMH will make appropriate efforts to provide for religious services to complement the treatment of individuals who are receiving services at State-operated psychiatric facilities.

The chaplain represents an element in the standard care of individuals being served within State-operated psychiatric facilities. The chaplaincy should not be confined exclusively to structured worship services and spiritual support but, when and to the extent appropriate, may also be involved in spiritual counseling of patients and their families, participating in admission, treatment and discharge decisions, educating staff regarding spiritual issues as they affect treatment, and acting as a liaison with religious and other groups within the community.

Note: Proselytizing by a facility chaplain, staff person, visitor or volunteer is prohibited.

#### **C. Applicability**

This policy directive is applicable to all State-operated inpatient psychiatric facilities.

This policy does not address the job description for the title of chaplain. As with other OMH job titles, that information is available from OMH Personnel and NYS Department of Civil Service.

#### **D. Relevant Statutes and Standards**

Mental Hygiene Law, §7.27 Facility Services

**E. Body of the Directive**

This policy directive consists of two components:

1. Provision of Pastoral Care Services
2. Arrangements for Worships

**1) Provision of Pastoral Care Services**

- (a) Pastoral Care services shall be a part of the facility's overall program. The chaplain is responsible for planning and conducting religious services for patients. Chaplains of different faiths shall coordinate their activities with each other so as to best serve the needs of the patients. On request of the patient, arrangements may be made with local faith groups who are willing to provide such services on a volunteer basis, with the approval of the facility chaplain and the appropriate facility administrator.
- (b) The religious services ordinarily provided at the facility shall:
  - (1) Conduct worship services and related activities at designated times and locations. If a patient cannot attend a regularly scheduled service because of clinical, medical or other appropriate reasons, the facility shall make every effort to allow the patient to receive such services on the ward or other convenient location. Patients who are members of faith groups and who desire special services, are entitled to such services within reasonable limits. In the absence of a chaplain representing a particular faith group, arrangements should be made with denominational representatives who are willing to provide such services on a volunteer basis or contract basis.
  - (2) Counsel patients and their families.
  - (3) Coordinate and supervise appropriate religious programs conducted by qualified personnel, who in addition to clergy may include religious leaders, educators or volunteers. This shall include the availability of religious education programs, particularly at facilities which serve children and adolescents.
  - (4) Assist patients who are being discharged by taking action which may include: acting as a liaison with local church and community religious groups and being involved with post discharge supportive contact.
  - (5) Conduct memorial and/or burial services which are in accord with the decedent's religious convictions.

- (6) Coordinate with education and advocacy related activities in the community.
- (7) Maintain schedules which will accommodate the religious obligations of the patients as well as the facility's overall program.
- (8) Be available to any patient who requests the chaplains' services without regard to religious affiliation.
- (9) Maintain appropriate records, observing the confidentiality of such records and other clinical information pursuant to the requirements of Section 33.13 of the Mental Hygiene Law and the applicable privacy provisions of Federal statute and regulations.

(c) Special Provisions for Worship

- (1) Each facility shall allow and make appropriate arrangements to facilitate attendance at and observance of the Holy Days and prayer services of each faith group and other recognized days of religious observance.
- (2) When necessary, special food and beverage for the observance of religious practices will be provided on a selective basis, e.g. Kosher and Passover food, Halal food, food appropriate for Fasts and Days of Abstinence, vegetarian or pork free food, etc.
- (3) Chaplains shall, if possible, arrange their schedules to provide services on their faith's day of worship and other days of special religious significance.

(d) Role in Treatment

- (1) Chaplains are a part of the clinical team and should be included, if possible and appropriate, in Treatment Team activities, including assessments and discharge planning. Chaplains should be available to provide consultation and training to staff regarding spiritual issues with patients.
- (2) Chaplains should be involved in employee orientation regarding their role in treatment services.

## **2. Arrangements for Worship**

(a) Place of Worship

- (1) The facility shall provide an appropriate space for worship services. Such

space should be arranged by the facility administration so that other programs do not interfere with worship services and such services do not interfere with other programs. The space may be shared by all faiths.

- (2) If, because of space limitations, religious activities must be held in a space that also has other uses, every effort should be made to create an atmosphere of worship by the use of appropriate furnishings such as, but not limited to, chairs, tables, lecterns, altars, rugs and minbars.
- (3) Each facility shall ensure the safe and respectful storage of sacred religious articles.

(b) Physical Requirements

- (1) Any permanently installed religious or other symbols, in space provided by the facility and regularly used by more than one faith group, must be acceptable to all faiths using the area. If objectionable to another faith group, such symbol must be covered before the space is used by the objecting group.
- (2) Equipment and vestments unique to a particular faith will be provided and will be in the custody of the chaplain of that faith.