

This resource is a result of the collaborative efforts of NHPCO's Next Generation Leadership Council.

The Spiritual Care team member provides spiritual care for patients, their families, and the staff. Coordinates spiritual care with Community Clergy to provide for the needs of patients, family, and staff. The purpose of this document is to provide information on common skills that may be considered for the role of Spiritual Care Counselor/Chaplain.

Required Skills

The following skills are considered mandatory for Spiritual Care Counselor/Chaplain.

■ Compassion

- The ability to demonstrate understanding and concern for those suffering physically or emotionally.

■ Strong Communication

- Strong communication skills are necessary to work with the care team, the patient, their family, and any other medical professionals involved in the patient or family's needs. The ability to be clear and answer questions as they're asked as honestly and as caring as possible.

■ Observation Skills

- Observing changes in the patient's behavior, speech, appearance, eating habits, and within the family can provide clues to other challenges that may be occurring.

■ Cultural Awareness

- Having an awareness of other culture's customs, beliefs, and needs to help address end-of-life needs.

■ Emotional Strength

- Caring for the terminally ill can become emotionally exhausting. Self-care is important to maintain balance.

■ Patience

- The ability to remain calm while in a potentially emotionally charged situation.

■ Organization

- As a caregiver, you will be caring for multiple patients. The ability to keep care needs, communication, and schedules organized is essential.

■ Interpersonal Skills

- Not everyone handles stress in the same manner. Interpersonal skills include knowing how to communicate with others, strong EQ, patience, observation, and compassion.

■ Empathy

- Ability to use an empathetic approach when facilitating patient and family care.

■ Collaboration / Team Player

- Ability to collaborate effectively with the interdisciplinary team.

■ Professionalism

- Ability to maintain professional composure at all times, most especially during challenging and stressful situations.

■ Reliability

- Ability and willingness to complete assigned tasks and duties.

■ Integrity / Ethical

■ Trustworthy

Mid-level Skills

Ideally, individuals will have experience with the skills noted below but may not be experts in this area.

■ Flexibility

- No two patients, no two days, and no two deaths will look the same. Flexibility will allow you to adapt to the situation at hand.

■ Initiative

- The willingness to take charge and get something done when it needs to get done without being asked or told to do so.

■ Experience with death and dying

■ Adaptability

- Ability to assess, evaluate and adapt practices in caring for patients and families.

■ Patient Advocacy

- Assist in facilitating freedom of choice.

■ Problem Solver / Critical Thinking

- Demonstrated ability to assess and respond to the needs of patients and families in varied settings.

■ Ability to multi-task

- Ability to complete multiple tasks concurrently, as needed.

Chaplain (cont.)

Preferred Skills

These skills are those that individuals may have experience with; however, they are not required for this position.

- **Experience working with Electronic Health Records (EHR)**
- **Ability to work on-call shifts (nights/weekends/holidays)**
- **Medical knowledge of end-of-life care**
 - Ability to demonstrate and relate medical knowledge in accessing hospice & palliative care services.
- **Teaching Ability**
 - Teaching and educating patients and caregivers is crucial in hospice & palliative care.

Note: State requirements may dictate specific skill sets or credentials for Chaplains. In that scenario, please default to the requirements of your state. Please also refer to CMS Conditions of Participation related to personnel requirements.