

Diocese of San Diego**POLICY FOR MINISTRY TO ACUTE CARE HOSPITALS BY DIOCESAN
ASSIGNED CHAPLAINS AND PARISH RESPONSIBILITIES****1. Introduction**

Christ showed great compassion towards the sick and healed many of them from their infirmities. The Church, emulating the love and concern of Christ for them, cares and accompanies those who suffer in mind, body and soul.

Acknowledging the significance of this ministry in hospital institutions, the Diocese of San Diego assigns a number of priest chaplains to care for the sick in acute care hospitals in the Diocese.

2. Definitions

Hospital chaplain: A lay or ordained person hired by the hospital for pastoral care.

Assigned chaplain: A priest assigned to a hospital by the Diocese of San Diego to accompany the sick and the dying and to provide the Sacraments to them.

3. Supervision and Compensation

Assigned chaplains are supervised by and report to the Office for Vicar for Clergy. Salary and benefits for diocesan assigned chaplains are provided by the Diocese of San Diego.

4. Coverage during Vacation Time and Days Off

The dean in each deanery or his delegate is responsible for creating a calendar to cover the assigned chaplains' days off and vacation. When a hospital is situated between two deaneries, both deans must collaboratively work on a schedule of coverage for the parishes involved. The calendar must include: the name of the priest, the dates that are assigned, and a direct phone number where the priest can be contacted immediately.

Every parish and priest must participate in the circulation of coverage when the assigned chaplain is off. There are no exemptions.

• Days Off

Assigned chaplains are on call 24 hours a day; therefore, they are granted two days off a week. They cannot select Saturday or Sunday as a day off.

- **Vacation**

Information on clergy vacation can be found in the *Policy on the Compensation of Priests*. In order for the dean or delegate to create a schedule on time, assigned chaplains must notify their planned vacation to the Dean(s) at least two or three months ahead.

5. Calls for the Sick

Parish priests can call the assigned chaplain when the parish receives a call to visit a sick person in one of the hospitals covered by one of them, unless the family and the priest have made other arrangements. A directory listing with phone numbers, days off and name of the hospital covered by the assigned chaplain, will be provided by the Office of the Vicar for Clergy to all parish priests.

If a parishioner desires or requests a visit from their parish priest, the assigned chaplain will directly notify the parish. Assigned chaplains do not cover sick or emergency calls on their days off.

6. Hospital Contact for Emergency Calls:

The hospital chaplain, or the hospital chaplain on-duty, should make the emergency calls to the priests listed on the calendar covering emergencies during the assigned chaplain's days off or vacation. If the hospital chaplain has to leave a phone message, he or she must provide a direct number to be reached back for the priest to obtain the pertinent information about the patient.

Clergy should make every effort to reply promptly to emergency calls.

7. Parochial Care for the Sick and Dying

Parish priests are canonically responsible for the care of parishioners within their boundaries; even if they are not registered. Nursing homes or other places that care for the sick and dying are under the care of the proper parish. An assigned chaplain who lives in the same rectory has been appointed to take hospital calls only.

The following are parish basic standard of care regarding emergency sick calls. The Dean must verify that every parish in the deanery is in compliance.

- a) Each parish website shall include a link on the parish homepage as to how to reach a priest in case of an emergency.
- b) Each parish phone system shall indicate how a priest can be reached in case of an emergency (i.e., press ____ to reach our answering service, dial XXX-XXX-XXXX to reach a priest; etc.)
- c) Priests would be expected to contact the caller within 60 minutes of the initial call being made to make arrangements for pastoral care.

8. Assigned Chaplains Residence

Assigned chaplains reside in a parish rectory with the same benefits of other priests with diocesan assignments. They are asked to preside at one Sunday and one weekday Mass each week. For any other supply services above this, they shall be compensated as stipulated in the *Diocesan Policy on Compensation for Priests*.

9. Coverage during annual Priests' Convocation

Assigned chaplains are asked to participate in the annual priests' convocation. They should do their best to find clergy not attending the convocation to cover for them during those days.

10. Hospital Lay Ministry

The assigned chaplain must work with the pastors in the area of the hospital assigned to them to develop and provide the formation of lay leaders to assist the assigned chaplain in the ministry of care for the sick.