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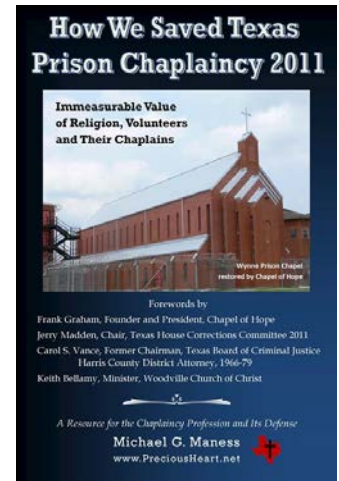
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[Chaplaincy Docs](#) ~ [Chaplaincy Saved 2011](#)

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## Gib Lewis Chaplaincy Department

### Chaplaincy Secretary Handbook

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### **General Statement of Purpose**

The chaplaincy department's secretary plays a vital role on the ministry team as a key person in the communication process between the chaplain, the inmates, the team, and the unit administration and staff. The secretary's general mission is to help the chaplains in the administration of direct delivery of pastoral care and to help the chaplains in the guidance of the ministry team in the delivery to inmates and staff. Often times the secretary will participate in direct delivery herself.

Said in another way, the secretary works with the chaplains in forwarding a pastoral agenda. A pastoral agenda is following and aiding the needs of persons in healthy communication and within the context of a vital religion. This is essentially contained in the "Correctional Chaplaincy Mission."

This delivery and the secretary's administration that aids the delivery include both the general tasking elements in office management and the higher functions of the office in communication and communication coordination. Said in another way, the chaplaincy secretary is both an office manager and a communicator.

Of first importance is a positive and open representation of the chaplaincy department. Being positive means being careful to be fair to all faiths. Avoiding language offensive to any faith (with inmates *and* staff). Being mindful that the chaplaincy office in general is the advocate of every religion on the unit. Being careful of how the chaplains are represented. Maintaining confidences. Avoiding open criticism of the department or any other department. Essentially following the employee general rules of conduct.

Giving an open representation means helping the chaplain and the ministry team communicate its fairness, its openness to healthy criticism, and its willingness to be available. In areas of confusion, it means referring to the chaplains and communicating the chaplains' willingness to hear out any concern.

The secretary will help the chaplains and the ministry team in the smooth delivery of quality pastoral care to the inmates and staff. The greatest single asset to the highest level of delivery will be the concerted effort in developing and maintaining good communication and positive people skills throughout the unit.



## **Outline of General Tasking**

The secretary should quickly become familiar with TDCJ-ID employee rules, find time to read the Secretary's Handbook, and read the handbooks contained in this manual pertaining to volunteers. This will insure success.

Read the Correctional Chaplaincy Mission statement every now and then.

The next section in this Handbook is the Operating File System that is in the secretary's desk. The Resource File System is in the filing cabinets in the inner office. Every now and then, thumb through the contents of this file system until there settles in a level of comfort.

Form City Departmental contains the primary forms used in the administration of department affairs. Form City Volunteers contains the primary forms used in the management of volunteers. Form City Examples contains some examples of some significant forms and letters.

### **Phone—Communication**

*Answering the phone and office communication.* There is a notepad to record the date, time, party calling, reason for call, and expectations of the party calling. It is best that phone coverage be maintained, even in the staggering of lunch so that someone can be available. The secretary will develop a competency about general rules and department priorities.

*Emergency calls* will be handled with the discretion expected as if in one's own family. Using the Death or Illness Worksheet (form I-241: see Form City Departmental), fill out the appropriate information: your name, date, time; the caller's name, return number, relation; inmate's name and TDCJ number; ill/deceased party's name and relation; hospital/funeral home and number if possible. When it is possible, call the hospital/funeral home to verify information; note the time and date of the verification on the Worksheet. Write the inmate's house designation next to his TDCJ number.

In time and with the variety of calls, one will gain a basic understanding of crisis calls and how the chaplain handles them. Sensing the tenseness of the family, learning the nature of the critical illness, finding out when the best time to have the inmate return call, relating to the calling party a positive level of assurance, and communicating the chaplain's intention to handle such with discretion and promptness--all these are skills that will come with experience. Use the section on the Worksheet titled, "ADDITIONAL NOTES," to make comments pertinent to the situation, but try to leave room for the chaplain to write notes too.

With all messages, but *especially* with emergency messages be sure that the appropriate chaplain is appraised of the situation. Even with reminders, the importance of helping maintain positive communication is central to the role of the secretary--indeed, central to the pastoral agenda and the department in all of its interactions.

Occasionally, the chaplain will ask for information or a follow-up on an inmate. Any call made with reference to an inmate that is *not a part* of an active Death and Illness Worksheet needs to be recorded in the green log book provided for that purpose. Note the format: date, time, inmate name, inmate TDCJ number, calling number, with calling party's name above number, relation (using code), very brief reason. These calls might range from checking on an ill family member where no emergency call was allowed the inmate, following up on a marriage seminar application, returning a family member's call, etc.

Note that sometimes the chaplain will retain this sheet for several days until the crisis call has been properly made. Then the chaplain will highlight the number that was called by the inmate and place the form in the secretary's box. The secretary will copy this form then take this form to records at the end of the day or place in the records mail box up front. The copy of the worksheet is placed in the notebook provided on the secretary's desk. This notebook is for the year, and copies are placed in it with the most recent one on top. This facilitates follow-up.

### **Mail**

Check the mail room for chaplaincy department mail each morning-- which is usually posted after 9:00 a.m. Open general mail and place in the appropriate chaplain's box. Handle the mail that can be handled. Use discretion, and avoid opening personal letters.

### **Greeting Cards**

From inmate mail requests on I-60's attempt to distribute the appropriate greeting cards from the available stock at least every few days, but preferably at each day's end if time allows. Currently, two cards a month will be available. Note the inmate's name, TDCJ-ID number, and the number of cards given on the appropriate monthly distribution list: see Form City Departmental for an example.

It will be the secretary's responsibility to keep the chaplain posted about the available stock of cards and to keep the stock of cards in some semblance of order. These are purchased mostly with church donations. Keep an accurate record of all monies received and where it was spent. Most cards are purchased through Chaplain Ray in Dallas.

### **Clearances**

*Each Monday*, check clearances for the week to make sure they are up-to-date: see Form City Examples, Etc. for examples of clearances and distribution. Note the clearances for the Gib Lewis Mentor Program, Muslim lay-ins, weekly visitors. Sometimes a Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) check may need to be done, which can be handled through the Major's office. It is helpful if the clearances are placed one day in advance. For when such is placed too far ahead of the date, there is a greater chance these might get lost prior to the visit.

### **Greif Management**

On death notifications, we will send a condolence card to each during three (3) intervals following the death of a loved one: 1 month, 5 months, and 1 year.

These time frames do not need to be exact. A card will be typed according to the following example, inserting the proper information at the underlined spaces:

\_\_\_\_\_ (*Over a month/over five months/etc.*) \_\_\_\_\_ have passed since the loss of your \_\_\_\_\_. I wanted to drop you a line and let you know I was thinking about you and your family.

You take care. Let me know how you are doing.

Chaplain Maness

On the Death/Illness Notification Form, in the upper right hand corner, note the date that each follow-up card was sent. It will be the secretary's responsibility to keep track of these postings, type the appropriate cards, and get the chaplain's signature. When typing the cards, especially for those over six months, it may be necessary to check the Master Assignment Roster to verify housing assignments and/or to check for presence on the unit. Help remind the chaplain to periodically review the Notices and the tracking of grief management.

### **Lay-ins**

These need to be written on the forms provided: see Form City Departmental. When you receive an I-60 requesting a visit with our contract chaplain, set an appropriate time, write a lay-in for the inmate, write the appointment on the calendar for the contract chaplain, and leave a note in the contract chaplain's box. If the lay-in is for the following day, call the countroom to make the lay-in, then fill out the form and place in the mailroom that evening.

#### *Muslim Juma Services Lay-ins*

*Each Monday*, prepare the lay-in list for the Muslim Juma services on Fridays. Distribute lists appropriately. When an inmate requests to be added to the Juma lay-in list, first check (or have records check) his travel card to verify that it lists this particular inmate as a Muslim. If verified, then add his name to the list on the nearest Monday following the request. If he requests Juma but is not a Muslim, instruct him to see the chaplain in person and bring a change of faith request on an I-60 with him.

In preparing the lay-in list for the Muslim Juma service, check the previous Friday's attendance. Those Muslims who miss without an appropriate or verifiable reason will be withdrawn from the list for at least two weeks, after which they will need to submit another I-60 request to be re-added to list. (Note: if you know this inmate to have a travel card listing him as Muslim, you do not need to check records.)

As with all faith change requests, each inmate needs a personal interview with the chaplain.

### **Employee Time Report**

*By each Wednesday*, prepare the employee time report. Each employee fills out their time. This needs to be in the personnel office before noon on Thursday of each week. Keep a copy in the operating file.

Keep back dated copies for a few months, after which they can be shredded.

### **Sunday Bulletin**

Usually there is a Sunday bulletin that will need to be typed. Blank inserts are in the operating file. Usually, a designated inmate deacon will have filled out an Sunday Program Outline from which to type the bulletin. If the chaplain has not selected a cover, find an appropriate one in the chaplain's desk file drawer. Ask the chaplain about the number of copies needed. Keep one complete bulletin for each week for the previous six months, after which let the chaplain review them before they are discarded.

### **Supplies**

Each week check the supplies: (1) from unit supply--such as pencils, stick'em pads, letterhead, envelopes, blank 1/5 cut files, boxes of Kleenex, copier paper, etc.; (2) from Huntsville supply--such as copier toner, toner return buckets, communion supplies, baptismal records, guitar strings, typewriter ribbons, etc. Become familiar with where we get these supplies.

1. *Ordering on the unit level*, you need to use the Requisitions supplied: see Form City Departmental for an example. Note that our ordering unit is 40, department is 064, division is 07, and the location code is CC. Use the supply list provided to fill in appropriate blanks. When you send it, keep the yellow copy and send the original. Give them a call if you want something specific.

2. *Ordering from Huntsville*, you will need to write an IOC: see Form City Departmental for an example.

Keep the yellow Requisition copy or the IOC copy you have sent in the Operating File System till it filled.

### **Work Orders**

Work orders are handled in a similar fashion. Call maintenance and make a request for anything that needs to be repaired. If equipment like the copier needs repair or the piano needs tuned, call Huntsville and see if they will authorize a contractor to meet the need. Note the date, time, and person contacted on *any* authorization. When a Huntsville approved contractor completes the work, copy and file the copy of the invoice and send the original invoice to Huntsville.

In contacting the contractor, work with the Warden's secretary and the control pickets to get an escort. Generally there is no need to write a clearance, as the contractors rarely have a very predictable schedule and will need to be escorted on and off the unit when they arrive.

## **Travel**

When the chaplain travels anywhere and *uses his own vehicle (not a company vehicle)*, like to the quarterly regional chaplain's meetings, note that a vehicle request needs to have been made *prior* to the trip. After the trip, note that there is a designated mileage chart from which to gather mileage from unit to unit. Use the copy of the previously paid travel voucher as a guide: see Form City Departmental for an example. Once it is filled out, send it to the warden for signing, copy it, then send to Huntsville; file the copies of the voucher and vehicle request; when it returns with the stamp marked paid, staple it to the copies and place in the appropriate person's box.

## **Leave/Comp Times**

This is filled out after the time is earned or taken: see Form City Departmental for an example. Section I is for time earned when working on a day normally taken off.

Only rarely will you use Section II which is for taking special time off with pay. This will primarily be used by the chaplain in denominational leave time. Note the copy that has typed in "DENOMINATIONAL LEAVE TIME"; this is the example to follow. This has to be sent to the warden, back to us, copied, then sent to Huntsville.

## **Attendance Rosters**

The secretary will process the Inmate Attendance Rosters to their proper place according to religion in anticipation of the Bi-Monthly Report. There is an appropriate section in the Operating File System. After the Bi-Monthly Report is complete, these are moved to the Resource File System and filed accordingly. At the year's end, according to religion only those collections for the months of January and July will be stored: see in this handbook the Operating File System for the first step, the Resource File System for the long term location, and the section in Form City Departmental for an example.

### **BAPTISMS**

Baptisms are usually performed each month. Keep a supply of blank certificates. When preparing to send out notices on baptism, make two identical lists of those being baptized on 3" by 5" cards. When baptisms are complete, you will use the chaplain's cards from which to make out the certificates (some do not come): see Form City Examples for an example of how to type a proper Baptismal Certificate.

## **Volunteer Application Packets - Process**

*Special Volunteers.* Each special volunteer receives a Volunteer Services Letter of Orientation and usually a Unit Volunteer Application.

When a volunteer begins the process to become an TDCJ-ID Approved Volunteer, they will need to receive the appropriate packet.

*Mentor Prospects.* The application packets consist of a Acknowledgement of Training/Orientation; Volunteer Services Application Form; a Unit Volunteer Application form; a Religious Volunteers: A Few Helpful Hints booklet; Outline of Mentor Certification; a Visitation Record Book; and list of TDCJ Disciplinary Rules; a Mentor Resources List and page of Order Forms. These are in Form City volunteers.

*Hospitality Volunteers.* The application packets consist of a Acknowledgement of Training/Orientation; Volunteer Services Application Form; a Unit Volunteer Application form; a Religious Volunteers: A Few Helpful Hints booklet; and a Hospitality Program Guidelines. These are in Form City volunteers.

*The Approved Volunteer Process.* Once the applications have been turned in, they Volunteer Services Application Form is sent to our Department Volunteer Coordinator which is a Regional Chaplain. They will notify the volunteer of training the volunteer will have to take. When we receive verification of Approved Status, we will then only need to note that status on our clearances.

#### ***VOLUNTEERS***

Note the Operating File System section marked, "Approved Processing." Note the categories of processing. When a volunteer fills out an application, the secretary will keep copies of that which is sent to Huntsville and file in the Operating File System the copies. When we hear back from Huntsville on the status of a volunteer, which is usually an approval, that approval is stapled to the copies. After approval, applications are placed in the Resource File System.

After a few visits of the Approved Volunteer, as a volunteer participates, their name, address, and phone numbers are placed on a current list of Approved Volunteers according to the nature of volunteer work: Mentor, Hospitality, All Others. The current lists by address/phone is placed in the Operating File System under the appropriate program.

#### ***MENTOR PROGRAM***

We generally write clearances for the Mentor Program for two months, but we frequently upgrade when we add a new mentor. However, these need reworked each time we add a new mentor. The new mentor has to have completed *at least* a Unit Volunteer Application with a pastoral endorsement. Then on the new IOC clearance, the Building Major has to run a DMV (Department of Motor Vehicle) driver's license check and sign off; then the warden has to sign off; then we distribute them--hopefully the day before the next mentor meeting.



Generally, a new mentor should give two weeks notice before coming. Work with the Community Mentor Program Coordinator.

Keep an up-to-date list of addresses and phone numbers and a sentence of biographical information on each mentor. This information is on the Unit Volunteer Application with the pastoral endorsement.

Keep the mentor/match rosters up-to-date. These are in the Mentor Program Notebook on the Chaplain's desk: see a copy in Form City Volunteers. These will be used in compiling the Bi-Monthly Report.

### **Mentor Resources**

Note the section in the Resource File System marked, "Mentor Resources." The file system for this collection of resources is especially related to the Mentor Program. A volunteer is given a list of Mentor Resources (see Form City Volunteers) that is filed in the Resource File System. Blanks of this list and Order Forms are also in the Resource File System. When relating to the inmate with whom the mentor is matched, the mentor may request a copy of one of these resources by designating the code and topic. For instance, the mentor may request the article on "truth," and write the request to the chaplain noting that he would like "F3." The secretary would withdraw this from the file and give it to the chaplain for that mentor on the next mentor evening.

The secretary is responsible to see that multiple copies are kept in each location in the Mentor Resources section of the Resource File System. A master copy of the Mentor Resources is in a Mentor Resources Notebook kept for that purpose.

### **Hospitality Program**

We have a on-going list of approved women in the program. This list needs to be re-approved each time additions are made: see Form City Examples, Etc. Work with our current Community Hospitality Program Coordinator, and she will give you a list of persons and a schedule for each weekend and/or month. There is an approved list of Program Volunteers that needs up-dating with each new addition. Then we send the schedule on an IOC to the Warden and distributed accordingly as all of these women have already been approved for the program. Note how the others have been done.

Keep an up-to-date list of addresses and phone numbers and a sentence of biographical information on each Hospitality Volunteer. This information is on the Unit Volunteer Application with the pastoral endorsement.

Keep the Hospitality schedules for 2 months, for they will be used in compiling the Bi-Monthly Report.

## **Library**

We have several small libraries. The chapel library is located in the chapel and contains a wide selection of books. The general Reference, the Jehovah's Witness, and the Muslim libraries are in the chaplain's office. A man may check out a book for two or three weeks (no need to be very exact on a date). Have each man each time show you his TDCJ Identification card.; write the first initial, last name, and TDCJ # on the card; write the date due on the book and on the card; and file the card.

Keep the card file up to date. Notice that the Reference and Chapel libraries' cards will go into the same section according to month of "Due Date"; this should facilitate the late notice process.

Send out late notices when appropriate. No need to keep copies.

## **Faith Changes**

An inmate needs to bring an I60 stating his desire to change religions and have a personal interview with the chaplain. After interviewing with the chaplain and the change is affirmed, you will need to go to records and check the travel card of the inmate and note the change on the travel card; date and initial change on the travel card. Then you will need to also note the time, date, and change made on the inmate's I60 request; copy the I60; file the copy and send the original to the Chaplaincy Administrator's office in Huntsville. When appropriate, note the section on Muslim Juma Service lay-ins above.

Be aware that an inmate can only change his faith once a year. If you are processing a request and run into this, notify the appropriate chaplain.

## **Monthly Special Volunteer Reports**

It will be the secretary's responsibility to keep up with this report: see the example in Form City Volunteers. A helpful hint might be to update the report weekly in pencil/pen, then type the report at the end of the month. This report goes through the Unit Volunteer Authority (UVA: Assistant Warden) to the Chaplaincy Department Volunteer Coordinator which is also our regional chaplain's office in Huntsville. Be sure and copy this before it is sent.

These are collected in the Operating File System for two months, then used in recording the Monthly Reports, then stored in the Resource File System. See Form City Volunteers for an example.

## **Monthly Reports**

Look at the previous Monthly Reports: see Form City Departmental for an example. Compile the data and type the reports. Note the different places from which you will need to gather data. Chaplain's individual and lockup counseling is noted on the large monthly calendars on the chaplain's desk. The mentor volunteers and match attendance is in the

Mentor Notebook. The hospitality volunteers are on the schedules. You have been filing rosters on attendance for two months, and some of those have the names of volunteers on them. The Monthly Special Volunteer Reports and the Volunteer Assignment Description Forms will help in accurate collection of volunteer activity.

In compilation, note if we have had any special events like marriage seminars, Prison Fellowship seminars, and other special studies that might impact the inmate attendance and volunteer activity data on the bi-monthly report.

### **Distribution Lists**

Note the section in the Operating File System for Distribution Lists. You will want to keep records of the number of cards dispersed. At the year's end, note the total number of cards dispersed for that year on the roster provided. This is for our office's use in statistics and future ordering. See Form City Departmental for an example.

### **Correspondence & Letter Log**

There will be letters to write: see Form City Examples for two types of letters. Note the two types of letterhead and the two forms of styling the return address on each one, and be aware that our address and phone number needs to be on all correspondence. Note the difference between a hyphen and a dash: a dash is two hyphens without a space and denotes a break/emphasis in dialogue.

When the chaplain writes a letter, there will be a signal as to which letters will be copied for the warden, inmates, whoever; if there is no signal, regardless, at least one copy is always kept for filing. When the secretary has typed a letter, it is placed in the chaplain's box for signature. After signing, the chaplain will place it in the secretary's box for copying and mailing. After copying and mailing, place the file copy back into the chaplain's mail box so that knowledge of the mailing will be complete.

A "Letter Log" tracks the letters written and is kept in a notebook on the secretary's desk. At the year's end, the logs are filed in the Resource File System by year. Logs are kept for ten years. The section marked, "Organization or Purpose," will generally track organizations or individuals. When a letter is sent to an individual, note the purpose of the letter as with the following (appreciations in parentheses): personal/professional (Per/Prof), death consolation (death), marriage seminar (Marr. Sem.), other crisis (crisis), Christmas (X-Mas), Mentor Program (Mentor), Hospitality Program (Hos.), or other such appreciation,

Generally, the chaplain will place the file copy in the box marked, "Filing," for it to be filed. But occasionally, there will be a need to monitor a response. In this case the copy is placed in the box marked, "Reviewing."

In time, there will come a competence in handling letter construction with minimal information from the chaplain as we work with so many groups. Do note the Style Manual in this Handbook, and do use the dictionary for questionable words or constructions. Or ask the chaplain.

#### *FILING*

See the Resource File System. Every other week or so (or once a month), the secretary will file the material placed in the box marked, "Filing." The secretary should become familiar with the Resource File System. This is the permanent and semi-permanent record of the activity of the chaplain, the volunteers, and the department as a whole. Note the major sections and the sub-sections. The filing of the letters will probably be the most difficult at first. Ask the chaplain if there are any questions. Unattainable information is useless.

Of particular importance are the Monthly Reports, the Clearances, the Letters, the Assets, and the Volunteer Applications. The Bi-Monthly Reports are described above.

The Clearances that the secretary has had the wardens sign and has distributed are placed in the box on the chaplain's desk marked, "Clearances." We need ready access to these until they expire and/or the visitors have come. After they expire, they are placed in the box for filing and are filed according to their nature. Note the various places these go. *Only* the special clearances of one time visitors will be discarded after two years.

Note how the letters are filed. Most significantly note that letters on behalf of inmates to their families are filed in the special notebook (by year) provided for that purpose. Again, note that the letters to inmates' families are placed in the notebook. All others have a place in the Resource File System. Thumb through these. An unusual file will be "Organizations -- Professional Interests," which is the catch-all for most letters to organizations.

But do note that "letters" are *not* IOC's. And do note that letters pertaining to the Muslim activity or solicitations will go into the Muslim Programming section of the Resource File System. Note that letters to specific organizations having to do with the professional credentialing of the chaplains should be placed in that specific file in the section marked, "Chaplaincy--Professional." These are also infrequent.

The secretary will handle all assets and file the forms accordingly. We occasionally solicit for money to buy cards. The hospitality women will ask some merchant for hospitality supplies. We need to keep a record of the money received and how we have spent it. For instance, the date and amount received for some cards. This will be kept in the Operating File System in the file marked, "Monies Recieved/Dispursed."

Generally, information is useless if one cannot find it. And as is often said, "if it is not written, it did not take place." It is a primary responsibility of our department to keep accurate records. And the initiative of the secretary is so greatly appreciated. This system can be updated and refined. In consultation with the chaplain, files may be added and subtracted. The goal is to find the easiest and most effective way to manage the records without undue waste of time and space. There is a helpful article, "Filing: More than Hide-and-Seek," by Jeri Rogers following the section on the Operating File System.

Also note that there is a Chaplaincy Handbook on the chaplain's desk. This needs to be kept up to date. Actually, there are two copies: the chaplain's own copy and the office copy. Both of these should be identical. See the chaplain if necessary.

### **Video Authorizations**

When processing a release of copyright for videos (or anything else), make two copies of the release. The original will go into the section on Department Programming into the file marked "Video Authorization." The copy will go into a file in the Network Ministries section in a file marked by the name of the ministry from which authorization was obtained. The third copy will go to the chaplain or volunteer for whom we sought authorization.

### **Accounting**

As we collect the money (like for cards), when we make an order, a notation needs to be made on where we sent the money and when: see Form City Departmental for an example. In the Operating File System, this accounting is kept in the section marked, "Supplies," in the file marked, "Monies Recieved/Dispursed." When we have finished a particular solicitation and have spent the monies on orders, we file this sheet in the Resource File System in the section under Assets in the file also marked, "Monies Recieved/Dispursed." Remember to always keep some blanks available for recording.

Also note the form for "Value/Estimated Value of Donated Supplies." Mostly for the Hospitality Program, this will be kept and updated as one is in contact or receives a form from the Community Program Coordinator. These should be kept on file for around six months, then transferred to the Resource File System for permanent storage.

### **SHREDDING**

As we process old records, we need to shred anything of a personal nature, anything with an inmate's number on it, and anything having a volunteer's home address/phone on it--essentially anything that would allow an inmate any personal knowledge of another inmate or of an employee or of a free-world person or of unit activities of which they do not need access.



## **Higher Functions of Secretary's Office**

### **Communication Link & Pastoral Care**

Good communication will increase the mobility of the chaplain and enhance the maintenance of professional rapport. One goal is to increase in the availability of the chaplain to everyone and make a more rich and fruitful presentation of our office in every place with which we have contact.

Though the tasking elements are very significant, they are not necessarily or always the most important. Necessary to the ongoing and progressive development of the office are skills in the maintenance of communication.

As one grows into the office, one should come to see the impact of a sustained communication system that will often result in a sense of provincialism--that is, the secretary will come "own" a part of the office structure and the communication process. As growth in the tasking elements and the higher functions increase, as abilities increase in forwarding the pastoral agenda described in the "Correctional Chaplaincy Mission," so will the secretary's confidence and understanding grow in just how pivotal the position is in quality pastoral care.

Said in another way, the office manager's value and contribution to a high level of pastoral care increases in proportion to how *well acclimated* the manager is with the chaplains' schedule, the department's activities and priorities: especially with regards to volunteers; especially when the chaplain is away, or working nights, or in town, or even on the unit somewhere. And how much greater the level of care is lifted in an individual session when someone else is there to deflect diversions in an *informed* fashion. Or know when an interruption is appropriate.

Essentially, through the tasking elements *and* the higher functions of the chaplaincy office, the secretary will come to understand the care process and how the different styles of chaplains handle the process. And with the understanding will come a growing ability to contribute to that process by facilitating the paperwork trail in the tasking elements and by growth in use of the higher functions of communication management.

As the chaplains deal with emergency messages, networking with ministries, orchestrating volunteers, knowing personalities of families and staff--with all of these and more, the pastoral agenda is to be sensitive to the faith of each person, to help make a pastoral connection, and to help the client move up to a higher level of living within their chosen faith.

## **Secretary & Pastoral Care**

Our department is dedicated to helping individuals grow toward a higher level of living. With such a pastoral agenda, there is *always* room in our department to improve the level of care available. Since *no* secretary will ever be forced to grow or pushed beyond their ability in the position, there is an expectation of the secretary to keep the chaplain informed as to their own stress level and competencies in the department's general tasking and in the higher functions. We must work together. Though there might be a high expectation, there are no crude taskmasters in the delivery of quality pastoral care.

Most of the clerical help in the other departments have a focus that is almost solely on the tasking element. Because of the higher functions of this position, the limits of contribution by this position do not have *any bounds whatsoever*.

The position is open ended in development. Because we have the potential to touch every single person on the unit and a good number off the unit, there is a degree of unlimited contribution in this position. Our office is under continual development and in a constant state of flux. We attempt to be as ready as possible to respond to the spontaneity of human need. In one sense we are weak, for the needs are too many and the numbers are too great. We will do the best we are can with what we have. So to repeat in similar words--within *both* the tasking elements *and* the higher functions of the office, the secretary has the opportunity to contribute through her unique abilities and initiative in a fashion second to few others in the clerical field.

Quality pastoral care has a focus too broad to measure. No person is outside the pastoral agenda. The only limits to quality pastoral care are the team itself, and this includes the innumerable limits of the chaplains. Remember, pastoral care is "the *struggle* of one soul with another soul toward a higher level of living."

Are these high-minded words measured? A woman calls to inform of the death of her husband, the inmate's father--are you in a hurry to get to lunch or off the phone to make copies or type a letter? Or can you listen and relate within the pastoral agenda? Somebody is angry at the chaplain or a volunteer or another staff member--do you tell them to mind their own business? Or can you hear them out, possibly help them resolve it, or get them in touch with the chaplain? You find that one person is particularly difficult to work with and you are not sure why--do you put them off or ignore them or play a delicate game of avoidance? Or can you bring that issue to the chaplain in order to seek a resolution?

How important is the secretary to the team? Only the secretary herself can measure that. Because quality pastoral care is an individually and delicately tailored *PROCESS*, each and every contribution by the

secretary--and the depth of that contribution--plays a significant and often times crucial role in the helping process.

### **Overall Programming & Pastoral Care**

Because of doing the lion's share of the tasking, the secretary has the opportunity to *participate* in the development of the office and thereby help increase the overall efficiency of the office paper shuffle two-step. Travel between Form Cities can be difficult, and the chaplains in their own distractions may miss the chance to see a smoother way of operating. Help them see through the darkness.

### **Spontaneity of Human Need & Pastoral Care**

Second to no other secretary on the unit is the opportunity to development of positive personal relationships. Being kind and patient on the phone is not a skill, that is just social grace. Being sensitive to feelings, deference, attention, reflection, confrontation, negotiation--these are skills. Vastly unlike any other department, we have as our *mission* a proactive readiness and attention to the spontaneity of human need.

Human need is our job, our *mission*, whether that be with the inmates, the inmates' families, the staff, or the community of volunteers. The numbers are huge. The needs are blatant. The weaknesses of our department and team are many. We struggle with what we have. Within the struggle, the chaplaincy department including ours is *constantly* looking at ways to improve our serve, *constantly* looking at new methods to meet a greater number of needs, and *constantly* trying to find avenues to grow in efficiency and quality.

Death and crises are no respecters of persons. The chaplains and the ministry team *live* with issues of heart and soul. From crisis to crisis we trudge. Often times we are the boat men/women over the river Styx. No other department has as its agenda to follow the course of human need. Said in another way, every other department can and has put an inmate or subordinate staff member aside or put them off indefinitely, while our *very task* if well done is to meet the person where they are as quickly as possible and with as much of a healthy presence as we are capable.

As such, the role played by the secretary in the support of the spontaneous readiness of the unit chaplaincy programming is intertwined with the level of care given. Readiness and versatility will often determine the level care we can deliver in any given event.



### **Closing Remarks**

Read over the table of contents and thumb through this Handbook.



As a practical suggestion, as one grows into the position, pencil in notations in the Secretary's Handbook that need editing or improving, when new files are added, when a structure needs re-working, when the Operating File System or the Resource File System needs up dating.

Note the other sections in the Handbook. These are as essential as the rest. The Style Manuel will be helpful as the secretary composes letters and other documents. The section on Survival Techniques has several articles to increase the efficiency of work and most of all to develop the personal/people skills so crucial to a great secretary's professional development.

The section on departmental structure needs reading so as to understand our place in the huge system that is TDCJ-ID. Right along with this are the two handbooks for volunteers. These need to be read and re-read. Never forget that this is a *prison*. Danger is present. The best preventive against harm is knowing the rules and wisdom that have been developed over decades of experience.

And with regard to the credentialing of the secretary's position and further professional develop of the skills involved in quality secretarial effectiveness, see the section marked, "Professional Development," for some resource on the profession of the secretary.

Remember, the value of your position is second to none. As you will quickly come to see in forwarding the pastoral agenda, because of *your contribution* people will be aided into a higher level of living.



[Chaplaincy Docs](#) ~ [Chaplaincy Saved 2011](#)

[Etymology of "Chaplain"](#) ~ [Gib Lewis Chaplaincy, Woodville 2011](#)

[Secretary Handbook](#) ~ [Secretary Handbook File System](#)

[How We Saved Texas Prison Chaplaincy 2011 – the book](#)

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