

**Iowa State Sheriffs' and Deputies' Association
Chaplain Program
Model Policy Manual**

Revised September 2022

Purpose

The purpose of the Iowa State Sheriffs' and Deputies' Association Chaplain Committee is to offer guidance, and assistance, to Iowa Sheriffs who wish to establish a Chaplain Program within their office, or to assist and supplement Iowa Sheriffs who may want, but do not have, a Chaplain Program. This model policy is to be used as a guide for a successful Chaplain Program.

The purpose of a Chaplain Program within a Sheriff's Office is to offer friendship, support, and spiritual guidance to those within the organization including the Sheriff, command staff, deputies, civilian employees, and citizens with whom the Sheriff's Office encounter through their daily activities, and in some cases inmates, if desired.

The Sheriff's Office Chaplain is a clergy person with special interest and training for providing pastoral care in the unique and sometimes dangerous world of law enforcement. The Sheriff's Office Chaplain recognizes the unique needs and challenges of the law enforcement community and is trained to meet those special needs. The pastoral care provided by the Sheriff's Office Chaplain is offered to all people, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, creed, or religion.

Recognizing that no one person can be qualified to handle every situation or need based on a specific religion, the Sheriff's Office Chaplain will maintain a list of contacts in which they can use to meet those needs specific to a person's religion.

The ministry of the Sheriff's Office Chaplain is to help, support, listen, work with, and guide those who face challenging situations, and to walk together with the law enforcement community to build relationships with those people with whom they serve.

The purpose of the Sheriff's Office Chaplain is to provide spiritual guidance, advice, and counsel to all members of the Sheriff's Office, both sworn and civilian, and their families in times of need. Chaplain service should be available based on need and desire and are available upon request. These services are always optional.

The Sheriff's Office Chaplain is in no way intended to replace or interfere with an individual's clergy or faith, but rather, they are a tool to help augment and support the individual's current clergy and support system.

An effective chaplaincy program can and should be an integral part of any Sheriff's Office. It is important that the individual county Sheriff's Office understand the role of a chaplain, act as a guide to their basic needs, and help define its operational role in the Sheriff's Office.

Finding the Right Chaplain

The success of a Sheriff's Office Chaplain Program hinges directly on finding the right chaplain to serve in that capacity. The law enforcement chaplain should have unique abilities to serve the officers, support team, and the community members they will encounter. Great care must be taken to find the right person for this position, or the program will be wholly ineffective. Here are some considerations when looking at chaplain candidates for your office:

- A vigorous application process should be initiated including a background and reference check.
- Does the chaplain candidate have the desire to be a chaplain or the hidden desire to be an officer in chaplain disguise? Good officers don't necessarily make good chaplains; good chaplains shouldn't desire to be an officer.
- The chaplain candidate should be ordained, licensed, and in good standing with their church or denomination. Further, the chaplain candidate should have the support of their church, or governing body, in order for the endeavor to be successful.
- The chaplain candidate should possess good people skills with the ability to form good relationships, communicate effectively and be able to put people at ease by their calming presence.
- The chaplain candidate must have a personality that your Law Enforcement Officers will come to love and respect. A chaplain is not effective if the Officers refuse to use them.
- The chaplain candidate must understand that they are not trying to build a church, they are trying to support, encourage, counsel, guide, and build people's lives.
- The chaplain candidate must have adequate time and be willing to spend a substantial amount of time with the Sheriff's Office in order to build good, solid relationships and to be available when they are called upon.
- The chaplain candidate must understand chain of command, confidentiality, and can follow procedures and work within a team.
- The chaplain candidate must be willing and able to adapt to serious situations, work with difficult people, and be patient with progress.

Making Effective Use of Your Chaplain

The Chaplain Program is only effective if the chaplain is used in an effective way. It is important for both the Sheriff's Office as well as the chaplain to understand what makes for an effective program. For the chaplain to be effective there are some guidelines for you to follow:

- Make the chaplain an integral part of the team. If you are embarrassed to have the chaplain around, or if the chaplain is in the way, then you either have the wrong person as a chaplain, or your chaplain needs more training. Simply put, if the chaplain is to be effective, the Sheriff's Office must make the chaplain an integral, important part of the entire team. This is achieved by calling on them when there is a crisis, inviting them to functions, including them in the office communications, offering trainings, and generally making them feel welcomed and included.
- Provide the chaplain with clear communication regarding chain of command. Communicate clearly who the chaplain answers to, and to whom they can take questions or concerns.
- Provide proper identification so the chaplain is and looks like they are part of the team. This can include, but is not limited to, a shirt, coat, hat, badge, body armor, name tag and any other tool that identifies the chaplain, provides for their safety, and shows that they are an integral part of the team.
- Provide access to buildings, dispatch, squad cars, and personnel. For the chaplain to do their job effectively, they must be able to interact with people at all levels of the organization. This will enable them to build good, solid relationships and trust across the entire organization.
- Provide encouragement and feedback when appropriate. This includes both positive words as well as things that may need to be improved. For them to be effective, the chaplain needs to know if they are doing a good job, or if something needs to be changed. By speaking openly and candidly, the chaplain, as well as everyone else in the agency, has confidence that the job of the chaplain is being done well and is supported by the Command Staff.
- Periodically review the effectiveness of the chaplain and their role in the agency. Provide feedback to the chaplain and discuss expectations.

Responsibilities

Each chaplain should have a basic knowledge of the duties of Law Enforcement Officers and seek to keep abreast of new procedures. They should be willing to attend trainings, briefings, and programs made available to further enhance their understanding and effectiveness.

The chaplain should always be available to the dispatchers, Sheriff, command staff, and deputies by cell phone. If they are unavailable, the chaplain should communicate this to the Sheriff's Office.

The chaplain shall not publicly criticize the action of any law enforcement officer, agency official, policy, or action.

It is very likely that many of those within the Sheriff's Office will be confused about the role of the chaplain and the need for one, especially if the Chaplain Program is new. This may require time and effort for the chaplain to "earn their credibility". Respect is most often earned, not freely given. The men and women of your Sheriff's Office are professionals and will undoubtedly treat the chaplain respectfully, but their standing as a chaplain within the office is something that must be earned.

The law enforcement chaplain will serve as the person who most likely is always there when the deputies and their families need them. To be effective in that role, they must be an integral, visible part of the team before a crisis arises.

Law Enforcement has drastically changed over the years. Today, more than ever, the law enforcement profession is unique in its demands. Because of this, the need for confidential counseling and conversations may be recognized by members of the Sheriff's Office Team. When this kind of counseling or conversation is initiated, the person coming to the chaplain should clearly understand that this is an "off the record" and "privileged" communication. Anything said between the chaplain and the person seeking counsel stays between the two unless they are deemed to be a danger to themselves or others, or in violation of the law. No notes will be taken. It will not be reported to their superior or have any bearing on his or her job status.

The chaplain can and should, as necessary, work with other professional resources as needed and make referrals to these other agencies as deemed appropriate.

The chaplain should also work in cooperation as wanted or necessary with other chaplains in their city, county, state, or even nationwide.

A Chaplain is only as effective as the relationships they are able to build. A Chaplain should be an effective communicator.

Critical Incidents

The chaplain should be willing and able to respond to all sorts of critical incidents including, but not limited to, fatalities, officer involved critical incidents, drownings, death of a child and whatever other situation deemed necessary by the Sheriff's Office Personnel.

Critical incidents are events outside the normal range of a person's experiences. They are usually unexpected and so powerful that an individual may be unable to cope following the incident. No two people will react the same to an event. The same person may react to similar events at different times in completely different ways. Some people may have no reaction. Others may suffer from nightmares, sleep disturbance, confusion, anxiety, irritability, inability to concentrate, sadness, depression, and anger. Physical symptoms may include, but are not limited to, rapid heartbeat, intestinal issues, night sweats, headaches, and dizziness. Job performance may also suffer, as well as one's ability to interact with family and friends. Some reactions last only a few days, but others can go on for weeks or months. Some symptoms appear right away while others may experience no symptoms or delayed symptoms.

When a critical incident occurs, the Sheriff's Office may conduct a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing is a therapeutic group technique designed to minimize the impact of a traumatic event and to aid in psychological and emotional recovery.

The chaplain serves as a communication link and should strive to be attentive to individuals in crisis. Due to the constant presence of danger, pressure and tension, the chaplain should strive to create a trusting relationship with officers. When needed the officer may turn to the chaplain for counsel. The chaplain should also be available to the officer's family and to all associated with a crisis. A chaplain's simple presence can often alleviate fears and anxieties.

Once the response team has been identified and dispatched, the chaplain should assess the situation and decide which person(s) need reassurance and counsel. The chaplain should never interfere with any medical or investigative activity. However, the presence of a chaplain may serve as a great comfort to those involved in the incident.

Whether in service to an officer or members of the community, the chaplain should be careful to demonstrate respect for all faith groups. If the chaplain is uncomfortable performing a certain religious ritual requested, the chaplain should find a local clergy person of that faith to perform the requested ritual.

Another important role for the chaplain is the ability to gather information from the officer or community member in crisis, including next of kin, personal clergy, etc. The chaplain can use this information and offer to make any telephone call, or other notifications as needed.

The chaplain should, most importantly, provide aid to the officer(s) or other staff members who have been immediately affected by the trauma. Interaction in the days and weeks following an incident is critical for the chaplain/officer relationship. The chaplain should be prepared to make referrals as necessary and monitor an individual's abnormal behavior or the inability to cope following the event.

Death Notifications

The chaplain should be willing and able to do the very hard task of delivering a death notification. While death notifications are a difficult thing to do, great care must be given to doing them correctly. There are several things to consider when delivering a death notification.

- **In Person** - Always make death notifications in person when at all possible. They should never be made by telephone or police radio. It is very important to provide the survivor with a human presence and compassion. Arrange for the death notification to be made in person, even if the survivor lives far away, or by contacting the Medical Examiner's Office of another law enforcement agency near the survivor.
- **Time and Certainty** - Provide notification to next of kin as soon as possible, but only after positive identification of the deceased has been made. Take special care to make sure that both the deceased as well as the one receiving the notification are properly identified. Before the notification is initiated, move quickly to gather accurate information. Mistaken death notifications have caused unnecessary alarm and emotional trauma. No-one should learn of the death of a loved one from the media. You must be absolutely certain of the deceased identity. Determine the deceased person's next of kin and gather detailed information regarding the circumstances of the death including the survivor's health risks and whether other persons are likely to be present at the notification.
- **In Pairs** - Always try to have two people present to make the death notification. Ideally, a law enforcement officer in uniform and the chaplain. It is critical to plan the notification process in advance. Before arriving at the notification site, the team should decide who will speak, what will be said, and how much information will be shared.
- **In Plain Language** - Notifiers should clearly identify themselves, identify who they are talking to, present credentials, and ask to come in & sit down. Do not make the notification on the doorstep if possible. Request to enter. Ask the survivor to be seated. Request for underage children to leave the room. The presence of the team has already caused alarm, so great care must be taken to be direct and clear. The chaplain can begin by saying something like, "I have some bad news to tell you. I am sorry, but..." Avoid vague expressions like "John was lost" or "passed away." Instead say, "John was in a car crash, and he was killed." "Your husband Tom was shot today, and he died." Always call the deceased by name and leave no doubt that they are no longer alive. There will be differing types and amounts of emotion with each respective notification. Answer the survivor's questions and offer comfort and support as practicable. There are few consoling words that survivors find helpful, but it is always appropriate to say, "I am sorry that this happened to you."
- **With Compassion** - Your presence and compassion are the most important resources you bring to a death notification. Remain sensitive to the survivor's emotions and your own. Never try to talk survivors out of their grief or make unhelpful statements, such as, "It was God's will," "She led a full life," "I understand what you are going through." Quiet, silent presence and support are often the best approach.

Hostage Negotiations

When a hostage or barricaded person situation takes place, the chaplain should be dispatched. Hostage negotiation is a specialized field and only those people who are properly trained, qualified and equipped should be involved in the negotiations. Most chaplains are not trained as negotiators, but the chaplain's role at the scene involves other duties.

What can your chaplain do during a hostage or barricaded person situation?

- Provide support and encouragement for the officers by their presence. Be a visible reminder to the officers that a "Higher Power" is also involved in what they are doing. Seeing a chaplain at a time of high stress can be reassuring for the officers and can remind them of their ethical and moral obligations to public service.
- Provide religious and spiritual expertise if needed. The hostage taker may have asked a religious question or made a religious statement that the negotiator needs help understanding. The chaplain should be on hand to interpret these statements and answer questions for the negotiator.
- Provide support for victims and their family members (of both hostages and sometimes of the hostage taker), ex hostages and witnesses. Everyone can use someone with a calming and reassuring demeanor. The chaplain can help relieve some anxiety and fear by being the communication link with what is going on. In addition, often these people being calmed by the chaplain have information that might be helpful to the negotiating team. By spending valuable time with them, the chaplain not only helps them through the tension filled time, but also may be able to garner valuable information to help resolve the situation. Further, with the agency having a chaplain on scene, they can help de-escalate the situation and assure the public that there is no desire to have a "suicide by cop" or officer involved shooting-type situation. By integrating clergy into your response, it validates your intention to help and calm the situation, not escalate it into a shooting incident.
- Collect information - this may be with victims as mentioned above, or the chaplain may be asked to contact the hostage takers clergyman, doctor, family, etc. In any contact the chaplain should be alert to information which may help the negotiating team. This information is passed along to the chaplain's contact person at the command post. A chaplain may be able to extract information more readily than other members of the hostage negotiating team. Someone with relevant information may feel more comfortable speaking to the chaplain rather than someone in a different role.
- Pray - An obvious important task for the chaplain is to offer prayer for all involved. This may be done on the way to the scene, or at any time when they find appropriate and the victims or negotiating team is receptive.

- Utilize professional contacts - Sometimes the chaplain can secure access to information from other clergy and medical personnel more quickly or easily than a regular officer can. The chaplain may have a personal working relationship with doctors or other community members that would speed the collecting of necessary information. In addition, the chaplain may be more familiar with referral resources and medical providers than other members of the negotiating team.
- The chaplain's primary role in these situations is to offer aid and comfort to Sheriff's Office personnel and to victims. The secondary role is as an information source and communication link. The chaplain must always assess the situation and decide which role they must take.
- Flexibility and discretion are always important. The chaplain should be prepared and willing to offer assistance with what may seem menial tasks as well as the more involved roles. Bringing coffee to the hostage negotiation team may be the best role the chaplain can play. Often small acts of kindness speak volumes to those individuals involved in an extremely high stress situation.
- Your chaplain can be a vital part of the Hostage Negotiation Team if utilized properly. The chaplain should understand their role and be willing to assume that role when called upon.

Peer Support

A law enforcement chaplain can and should be available to participate in services provided by a Law Enforcement Peer Support Team. Having a functioning peer support system is critically important to the emotional and mental health of people working in the field of law enforcement. Many agencies have implemented Peer Support Teams and the chaplain can and should be an integral part of this.

While many beneficial elements are part of the Peer Support Team, the spiritual element is of equal or even possibly, greater importance. The chaplain can give an officer an avenue to talk about issues and stress in a spiritual way that many others on the team cannot provide.

Make your chaplain feel like a valued member of the Peer Support Team. Make sure they are invited to meetings, kept in the loop and given the opportunity to offer input during the decision-making process.

Inmate Support

Whether to manage your clergy and biblical support services or augment them in the jail setting, your chaplain can serve as a critical point for connecting your jail administration to programs, bible study, church services and other religious outreach services for your jail inmate populations. When necessary, your chaplain can help you establish these outreach programs and connect you with the evangelical community.

While it is not advisable to have your chaplain run inmate clergy support, it is a role that there is clearly an important connection with and creditable gains to be made by having them engaged in helping develop that program. Your staff does not necessarily want to be reaching out to the same person that the inmate population does for spiritual guidance but having them aid in administrating an inmate clergy program should not be seen as distracting.

The Chaplain's Role

A chaplain is a chaplain to everyone within the agency. A chaplain must be able to see each member of the Sheriff's Office as a human being, beyond rank or personality, and be available to all members of the office to provide help and care.

A chaplain has many different duties. Most agencies are a diverse mix of culture, race, ethnicity, and personalities. One of the most essential duties of the chaplain is their ability to moderate between management and staff. For the chaplain to be an effective member of your team, there are some important things to consider.

- Confidentiality - This is of utmost importance and if breached will render the chaplain ineffective to do what they are part of the team to do. During day-to-day interaction with sworn and civilian staff alike, the chaplain will be exposed to a great deal of personal information and hearsay. As a chaplain, confidentiality in these matters is paramount and required. However, there may be exceptions to a policy of absolute confidentiality including if a staff member is suspected of being either homicidal or suicidal.
 - The chaplain is in a unique role of hearing information that could aid both administration and staff to create a better work environment. Without breaking confidentiality, the chaplain can work behind the scenes to help intervene in these situations by facilitating conversations regarding the issues at hand.
- Gossip - There is a big difference in listening to someone complain and vent about issues that concern them personally and sheer gossip. If the chaplain is privy to information about lives and it has leaked out, the chaplain's credibility can be lost. It may be tempting to agree with someone and join in their dislike about a co-worker, but it is a dangerous precedent and will eventually hurt the chaplain in their ability to do their job. As people realize that the chaplain can be trusted with what they perceive as confidential information, they (both administration and staff) will be more likely to utilize the chaplain more frequently, and with increasingly sensitive information, thus increasing the chaplain's effectiveness as part of the team. Once this bond has been established, the chaplain will increasingly gain the trust and respect of those they are trying to assist.
- Setting boundaries - If not careful, the law enforcement chaplain can become consumed with providing too much time and too many services. Help your chaplain set boundaries as well as expectations so that fatigue, burnout and resentment do not set in.
- Defining the Chaplain's Role - Many agencies have a policy and procedure manual already in place, but some may not. The role of chaplain is often not addressed. The chaplain's role and responsibilities should be clearly defined and articulated upon their hire. This is true for paid and non-paid chaplains.

- Stay in your lane - Chaplains are a great resource but are not the only tool in the toolbox. The chaplain needs to be ready to make referrals when needed. The chaplain is a part of a bigger team, and they should be ready, willing, and able to utilize other members of the team if and when necessary.
- Visibility - The chaplain is not going to be effective if nobody knows who they are or if they are never seen. While many chaplains are volunteers, the chaplain should be willing and able to commit time to being visible to both administration and staff. This includes frequent visits to the office as well as ride-alongs.

Conclusion

The chaplain can and should be an important part of the law enforcement team. If utilized properly, many meaningful and tangible benefits will be realized by a chaplain's presence. It is important that everyone involved understands the role and responsibilities of the chaplain. Great care must be taken for the chaplain not to take on the role of the law enforcement officer but rather provide the unique service and role they are called to do.

When do I call a Chaplain?

- When a fellow officer is injured, ill or killed.
- When you have a personal or family emergency (family / life issues)
- After a major trauma (personal or work related)
- When a hurting family member needs care
- When you have to deliver a death notification
- When you are stressed or need to talk
- When you need encouragement
- When you just need to vent or let off steam in a safe, confidential environment.
- When you want someone with you for counsel, friendship, or presence.
- When in doubt, call your chaplain!

2023 Credits:

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Sheriff Tony Thompson, ISSDA Past President, Black Hawk County
Chaplain Darran Whiting, Marion IA
Chaplain Rick Hamilton, Glidden IA
Chaplain Brad Wallace, Spencer IA