

Code of Ethics

(Amended Version 9/11/12)

WELS Chaplain Certification Program

Preamble

WELS chaplains are motivated by the love of Christ. We believe that Jesus, God's one and only Son, came into the world to save sinners, and that he accomplished his mission by:

- living a perfect life of obedience to God's holy law as our substitute,
- suffering a painful and shameful death on the cross as our scapegoat,
- rising from the grave to proclaim his victory over sin and Satan as our Savior.

The risen Christ sent his disciples into the world with this good news of reconciliation. As Christ's ambassadors, we continue to proclaim this reconciliation. As those won by Christ's love, we desire to share that love with the world.

The rationale for the WELS Chaplain Certification Program

There is a growing need to share the love of Christ with people who are experiencing special life situations, including but not limited to those who are confined to hospitals, correctional facilities, serving in the military, and/or other private and public residences. WELS pastors and lay workers, too, are increasingly drawn to participate in such ministries.

With the increase of opportunities for gospel ministry, the result is that those specializing in this ministry are required to be better trained and to carry qualifying credentials, certificates and appropriate degrees for various forms of chaplaincy care.

To prepare and qualify pastors and lay workers for such ministries, the WELS Chaplain Certification Program has been designed and implemented to train and prepare workers for these specialized ministries. The WELS Chaplain Certification Program also requires continuing education units for graduates to retain certification.

The mission statement for the WELS Chaplain Certification Program

The WELS Chaplain Certification Program exists to help address the challenges that face WELS chaplains in meeting requirements to gain access and to carry on ministry with public or private healthcare agencies, with public safety agencies, and in hospitals, correctional facilities, and military installations.

The WELS Chaplain Certification Program also exists to assist certified chaplains to receive ongoing education and training opportunities so that they may enhance and increase their skill sets as they learn new insights for sharing the love of Christ with others.

Definition of chaplaincy ministry

Chaplaincy ministry may be full-time or part-time, paid or voluntary. It may be carried out with police/fire departments, military installations/units, jails/prisons, nursing homes/assisted living facilities, hospitals/clinics, or anywhere else there is a need. The population served will typically extend beyond WELS members, but the chaplain will be committed to proclaim the truth of Scripture without error or compromise.

Chaplains may also assist with physical and emotional needs as necessary, but their main objective will be spiritual counsel. Their goal is to serve the spiritual needs of those who may come before them, in keeping with the Gospel and Jesus' command to love one's neighbor.

WELS Chaplain – Code of Ethics

I. Working relationships

WELS chaplains commit to honor the trust of all those they serve and with whom they work by not engaging in any form of sexual impropriety, harassment, inappropriate behaviors/gestures, proselytizing, or therapy beyond their expertise. They will not seek personal gain through knowledge they gather or by exploiting relationships.

II. Pastoral relationships

Although WELS chaplains recognize that there are many differences among people, they will not condone or engage in prejudicial treatment based on age, color, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, but will “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) to all, for God’s truth is the same for all people. Each person will be considered of equal value, with a body, mind, and spirit created by God and redeemed by Christ. When asked about their faith, they will be guided by 1 Peter 3:15: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” Their goal is to support and complement people's coping skills with Christian compassion and God's Word.

III. Inter-professional relationships

WELS chaplains will work amicably among and support other professionals within and outside of the work environment in a Scripturally appropriate manner. They will not interfere with their area of ministry/expertise, but seek cordial, mutually respectful relationships.

WELS chaplains will respect the private communications of colleagues, unless doing so would violate the safety and well-being of another person or be in conflict with Scripture, the laws or policies of the state, or of the institution in which the chaplain is working.

IV. Confidentiality

WELS chaplains will maintain confidentiality and not disclose information to anyone, except as mandated by institutional practice or by law, in order to prevent immediate danger to someone, or by written permission.

WELS chaplains will maintain records that are required by appropriate agencies. All such records will be reported and maintained in such a way as to ensure confidentiality.

WELS chaplains providing spiritual care to minors or to individuals who cannot decide for themselves will consult and seek consent from the parents or guardians.

V. Accountability

WELS chaplains will be accountable to their denomination, their sponsoring organizations (congregation and church body), and to the facility, organization, agency, or group they serve as chaplains.

As opportunities arise, WELS chaplains will state their denominational affiliation, professional qualifications, affiliations, or certifications with honesty and integrity.

Accountability will include meeting the established standards for certification by the WELS Chaplain Certification Committee, including ongoing education and training.

WELS chaplains may find it beneficial to join one or more national chaplaincy organizations for networking, educational, or certification purposes. Membership in such organizations will be pursued if consistent with the principles of God's Word.

WELS chaplains will provide the appropriate agencies prompt notice of any complaint of unethical conduct made against them in any professional organization's forum. Chaplains will provide the appropriate agencies all information requested in regard to such complaints.

