



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

IL 10-2012-009

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April 13, 2012

UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER

**NOMINATIONS FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S AWARDS FOR
EXCELLENCE IN CHAPLAINCY**

1. This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Information Letter announces that nominations are being solicited for the three annual Under Secretary for Health's Awards for Excellence in Chaplaincy: one for "Excellence in Chaplain Leadership" (see Att. A); one for "Excellence in Chaplain Clinical Practice" (see Att B); and one for "Lifetime Achievement" (see Att. C).
2. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) chaplains provide services that have a significant impact on the comprehensiveness and quality of patient care. Chaplains typically work collaboratively with interdisciplinary treatment team members to ensure that the religious and spiritual issues and needs of Veterans served are addressed. The purpose of this award is to recognize those VHA chaplains whose work has had a significant impact on the provision of patient care services and on the leadership and oversight of chaplain practice. *NOTE: Generally a VHA chaplain receives this award only once.*
3. **Selection Committee.** Each year, a selection committee, appointed by the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Services, selects the award recipients.
 - a. The selection committee is comprised of a representative from the National VA Chaplain Center, a representative from the Office of Patient Care Services, a representative from the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Services, and a facility Director selected by the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.
 - b. This selection committee is responsible for:
 - (1) Reviewing all nominations received, and making a final recommendation to the Under Secretary for Health; and
 - (2) Recommending, at its discretion, appropriate recognition, such as letters congratulating nominees, who were not chosen as the award recipient.
4. **Award Presentation.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, presents a plaque to each

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award recipient at a ceremony during Pastoral Care Week in Washington, DC.

5. Nomination Procedures. See Attachment D.

6. Inquiries. Inquiries may be directed to the National Chaplain Center at (757) 728-3180.

Robert A. Petzel, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

DISTRIBUTION: E-mailed to the VHA Publications Distribution List 4/17/2012

ATTACHMENT A

CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CHAPLAIN LEADERSHIP

The recipient of this award must have demonstrated excellence in at least five of the eight criteria, which are based on the High Performance Development Model's Eight Core Competencies.

1. **Personal Mastery.** The recipient must have encouraged personal and professional development of staff. The recipient must have taken advantage of opportunities to expand the recipient's knowledge of management principles and inspired and demonstrated a passion for excellence in every aspect of work. The recipient must have supported staff participation in faith group activities including retreats, conferences, or workshops.
2. **Interpersonal Effectiveness.** The recipient must have provided effective leadership and vision for subordinates. The recipient must have collaborated across disciplines, departments, and care lines to ensure the religious, pastoral, and spiritual needs of Veterans are served.
3. **Customer Service.** The recipient must have initiated procedures that reflect commitment to providing the highest-quality care for patients and families. The recipient must have solicited and utilized feedback from internal and external customers to identify needs and improve service delivery. The recipient is recognized by internal and external customers as a person who exemplifies the ability to build interpersonal relationships through an ecumenical or interfaith spirit built upon mutual trust, respect, sensitivity, and knowledge.
4. **Flexibility and Adaptability.** The recipient must have responded to changing priorities and the availability of resources with optimism, encouraging staff to respond positively and proactively. The recipient must readily and regularly assess workload and allocate resources to best meet patient needs.
5. **Creative Thinking.** The recipient must recognize and reward creative thinking among staff and support appropriate risk-taking. The recipient must have served as a role model for innovation and creative thinking.
6. **Systems Thinking.** The recipient must have helped staff understand how their functions contribute to the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) mission. The recipient must have been involved in projects at the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) or national level. The recipient must maintain liaison with religious, civic, and Veterans' organizations, both personally and through the support of staff chaplain involvement, in order to represent the local medical center and VA's mission, and to recruit volunteers. The recipient must provide orientation and training regarding spiritual and pastoral care and the role of chaplains to new employees, volunteers, and students receiving training in allied health care professions.
7. **Organizational Stewardship.** The recipient must have provided a clear vision of the future and led staff toward accomplishment of goals. The recipient must use resources wisely. The recipient must utilize accepted management techniques and protocols coupled with clearly-defined

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goals and objectives to maximize support of the facility's strategic management plan and to ensure the integration of appropriate pastoral care into the total care and treatment of each Veteran patient. The recipient must demonstrate the ability to create within the Chaplain staff an uncompromised pluralistic team spirit that honors diversity.

8. **Professional Skills.** The recipient provides and facilitates, as required, a full spectrum of pastoral care and religious services for individual patients and groups. This includes worship, liturgy, and sacramental ministry at bedside and in chapel settings, plus in-depth pastoral counseling. The recipient must oversee the practice of chaplains at the facility, establishing performance requirements, and ensuring the highest standards of practice.

ATTACHMENT B**CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CHAPLAIN CLINICAL PRACTICE**

The recipient of this award must have demonstrated excellence in at least five of the eight criteria, which are based on the High Performance Development Model's Eight Core Competencies.

1. **Personal Mastery.** The recipient must have assumed responsibility for personal development and career goals; must have taken the initiative for continuous learning; and must have improved behavior, skills, and knowledge as a result of evaluation and feedback.
2. **Interpersonal Effectiveness.** The recipient must be recognized within Chaplain Service, by top management, administrative and clinical service chiefs, patient care providers, volunteers, and Veterans Service Organization (VSO) leadership as a person who exemplifies the ability to build interpersonal relationships through an ecumenical or interfaith spirit built upon mutual trust, respect, sensitivity, and knowledge.
3. **Customer Service.** The recipient must have demonstrated a thorough understanding of the needs of internal and external customers. The recipient must demonstrate exemplary commitment to customer service, and must have effectively utilized customer feedback to identify systems barriers and areas for improvement.
4. **Flexibility and Adaptability.** The recipient must have demonstrated flexibility and resiliency in an ever-changing work environment, and must have demonstrated a commitment to lifelong learning as a tool for change.
5. **Creative Thinking.** The recipient must have demonstrated an ability to generate new and innovative ideas for improving the quality and processes of patient care. The recipient must have encouraged and supported innovation from co-workers. The recipient must have demonstrated appropriate risk-taking.
6. **Systems Thinking.** The recipient must have facilitated awareness of the importance of spiritual and pastoral care as part of holistic care. The recipient must have worked to remove barriers within the system that prevent or impede the successful provision of spiritual and pastoral care. The recipient must have developed strategies for improving service delivery. The recipient must maintain liaisons with religious, civic, and VSOs in order to represent the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) mission and that of the local medical facility, and in order to recruit volunteers.
7. **Organizational Stewardship.** The recipient must have promoted a positive image of the profession within the facility and the community. The recipient must have demonstrated the relevance of spiritual and pastoral care to the mission, vision, and values of VA. The recipient must have provided a high level of leadership and involvement in a broad range of medical facilities committees and interdisciplinary teams. The recipient must support the spirit of medical

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facility and Chaplain Service strategic management initiatives, and accept assignments in fulfillment of these initiatives. The recipient must maintain statistical reporting records in order to produce required reports that are both accurate and timely.

8. **Technical Skills.** The recipient must have demonstrated expertise in spiritual assessment and providing and facilitating, as required, a full spectrum of pastoral care and religious services for individual patients, groups, and families. This includes worship, liturgy, and sacramental services at bedside and in chapel settings, plus in-depth pastoral counseling.

ATTACHMENT C

CRITERIA FOR THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Nominees must have over 20 years of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Chaplain Service or 30 years of combined military and VA Chaplain Service (minimum of 10 years VA service) and must show cumulative accomplishments in at least five of the eight categories (leadership and management and/or clinical practice).

1. **Personal Mastery.** The recipient must have assumed responsibility for personal development and career goals, taken the initiative for continuous learning, and improved behavior, skills, and knowledge as a result of evaluation and feedback.
2. **Interpersonal Effectiveness.** The recipient is recognized within Chaplain Service by top management, administrative and clinical service chiefs, patient care providers, volunteers, and Veterans Service Organizations' (VSO) leadership as a person who exemplifies the ability to build interpersonal relationships through an ecumenical or interfaith spirit built upon mutual trust, respect, sensitivity, and knowledge.
3. **Customer Service.** The recipient must have demonstrated a thorough understanding of the needs of internal and external customers. The recipient must demonstrate exemplary commitment to customer service, and must have effectively utilized customer feedback to identify systems barriers and areas for improvement.
4. **Flexibility and Adaptability.** The recipient must have demonstrated flexibility and resiliency in an ever-changing work environment, and must have demonstrated a commitment to lifelong learning as a tool for change.
5. **Creative Thinking.** The recipient must have demonstrated an ability to generate new and innovative ideas for improving the quality and processes of patient care. The recipient must have encouraged and supported innovation from co-workers. The recipient must have demonstrated appropriate risk-taking.
6. **Systems Thinking.** The recipient must have facilitated awareness of the importance of spiritual and pastoral care as part of holistic care. The recipient must have worked to remove barriers within the system that prevent or impede the successful provision of spiritual and pastoral care. The recipient must have developed strategies for improving service delivery. The recipient must have maintained liaisons with religious, civic, and VSOs in order to represent VA's mission and that of the local medical facility, and in order to recruit volunteers.
7. **Organizational Stewardship.** The recipient must have promoted a positive image of the profession within the facility and the community. The recipient must have demonstrated the relevance of spiritual and pastoral care to the mission, vision, and values of the organization. The

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recipient must provide a high level of leadership and involvement in a broad range of medical facility committees and interdisciplinary teams. The recipient supports the spirit of medical facility and Chaplain Service strategic management initiatives, and accepts assignments in fulfillment of these initiatives. The recipient must maintain statistical reporting records in order to produce required reports that are both accurate and timely.

8. **Technical Skills.** The recipient must have demonstrated expertise in spiritual assessment and providing and facilitating, as required, a full spectrum of pastoral care and religious services for individual patients, groups, and families. This includes worship, liturgy, and sacramental services at bedside and in chapel settings, plus in-depth pastoral counseling.

ATTACHMENT D

**NOMINATION PROCEDURES FOR THE EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND
MANAGEMENT AWARDS, THE EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL PRACTICE, AND FOR
THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

1. The Director, Chaplain Service nominates candidates for the Lifetime Achievement Award. Nominations for the Excellence in Leadership and Management Awards and for the Excellence in Clinical Practice Award may be made by the facility senior management, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) staff, an individual chaplain, or a group of chaplains in the same facility.
2. The nomination must not exceed three single-spaced pages, and must include narrative statements responding to the applicable criteria. It must be specific in describing the nominee's accomplishments. Acronyms must be defined the first time they are used, i.e., Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), etc.
3. Nominations must be sent through the facility Director, endorsed by the respective VISN Director, and forwarded to the Director, Chaplain Service (301/111C), Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Hampton, Virginia 23667, by May 31, 2012.