

VA San Diego Healthcare System Clinical Pastoral Education

Frequently Asked Questions:

What programs do you have? We have a full-time Residency program, which runs from the last week of August to the following August. VA Residents earn four units of ACPE credit, and receive a stipend from the VA. There are three first year residency positions, and one second year Fellowship, available each Fall.

How do I apply? If you are interested in applying for any CPE program, you will need to complete an ACPE application, located at: <https://acpe.edu/education/cpe-students/cpe-application>. Please read the instructions on the application signature page thoroughly, and sign the application (an e-signature is fine). The responses for questions #2-6 typically run 7-10 single spaced pages, although there is no specific page limit. Please submit a 1-2 page resume for question #13. You are encouraged to save the essays as one document and submit your application via email to michelle.kirby@va.gov. If you prefer, applications can be mailed to: San Diego VA-DoD CPE Center; 3350 La Jolla Village Dr (008); San Diego, CA 92161.

Can I use the same essays from my last unit of CPE? If you have completed CPE previously, your application essays should reflect what you have learned about yourself and your spiritual journey. Be sure to re-read the application instructions, especially Questions 5 and 6, and update your essays accordingly. Applications submitted for Residency and Fellowship without a verbatim may not be considered.

When will I get an interview? After we receive your application, we will review your application for completeness. At that point, we will email you to set up an interview. If you do not hear from us within two weeks of applying, you may want to contact us to ensure that we received your application. It is our policy not to offer feedback to potential students about your application. You may want to consider seeking feedback about your application from a mentor or trusted colleague before submitting your packet for admission. Please be aware that we routinely receive applications for potential students with significant ministry experience and/or 1-2 units of CPE. Applicants may not be interviewed who are underqualified, or who offer minimal responses to the essay questions.

What are you looking for in the interview? CPE is an educational program in a professional, clinical environment. Therefore, we screen potential students for their capacity to participate in intensive Clinical Pastoral Education with peers, educators, and professional chaplains. Students must be able to self-reflect, receive feedback, communicate effectively in English, and provide spiritual care to diverse Veterans in a secular, government institution.

What can I do to prepare for my interview? It may be helpful to speak with a chaplain mentor, faith group leader, or Spiritual Director who has completed CPE. We are looking for candidates

motivated to become professional chaplains, or seeking to complete CPE for their professional development. We do expect applicants to have limited hospital chaplaincy experience, and to have goals for learning about clinical chaplaincy. You may want to consider reading *Clinical Pastoral Education: A Survival Kit*, by Brenda Wallace or *How to Get the Most out of Clinical Pastoral Education: a CPE Primer*, by Gordon Hilsman.

When do you accept applications? Applications are received on a rolling basis, until all positions are filled. Once the positions for the upcoming program have been filled, your application may be held on a waiting list or considered for the next available program.

What does a typical week look like? The weekly schedule for the residency is Monday-Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm. The Residency group meets for 9 hours per week, typically 6 hours on Tuesdays at the Naval Medical Readiness and Training Command, San Diego in Balboa Park, and three hours on Thursdays at the VA San Diego, in La Jolla. Residents meet with the Educator once a week for an hour, and the remainder of their time (30 hours/week) is spent in clinical time, visiting patients, leading Spirituality groups, writing chart notes, interdisciplinary team meetings, and meeting with staff.

What are the hours? Every CPE unit includes 300 clinical hours and 100 educational hours. Residency units are full time, 40 hours/week for 10 weeks, with clinical breaks between units when students can take breaks for leave.

What is the fellowship? The fellowship program is a second year residency position for a student interested in specializing in Mental Health chaplaincy. The Fellow may also focus on working toward Certified Educator CPE. The Fellow participates in an intensive, interdisciplinary cohort focused on providing care with outpatients with severe mental illness. The fellowship is also known as Specialty CPE or a Second Year residency.

Do you have Certified Educator CPE? Yes. If you are interested in participating in CEC training, please contact Michelle.Kirby@va.gov for more information.

What is the stipend? CPE Residents and Fellows are paid a stipend through the VA Office of Academic Affiliations. The amount increases slightly each year. For FY 2022, the first year stipend is \$33.6K and the second year is \$36.4K. There is no stipend for the Extended Internship program.

What is the cost? There is no application fee or tuition for CPE in the VA.

What are the requirements?

- **Residency:** Applicants must have U.S. citizenship and a Masters of Divinity from a school recognized by the Department of Education, or an M.Div. equivalent, as defined by the Board of Chaplaincy Certification, Inc:
<https://bcciprofessionalchaplains.org/content.asp?pl=19&contentid=19>.

Ordination, at least one year of ministerial experience, and a previous unit of CPE is preferred.

- **Specialty/Fellowship:** In addition to the requirements for Residency, applicants must have at least four previous units of CPE.

Who can I contact for more information?

Chaplain Michelle Kirby, ACPE Certified Educator
858-552-8585, ext 7675
Michelle.kirby@va.gov

Is the program accredited with ACPE? The San Diego VA-DoD Center is accredited by ACPE: *The Standard for Spiritual Care & Education* to provide Level I/II, and Certified Educator CPE. For more information, contact ACPE; 55 Ivan Allen Jr. Boulevard, Suite 835, Atlanta, GA 30308. (404) 320-1472. www.acpe.edu.

Can I take CPE online? The residency program is designed for in-person, hands-on learning. CPE is an experience of providing ministry in the hospital setting under supervision. There are programs that allow for telecommuting and online participation. For example, our Extended CPE program pivoted to an online learning model during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can learn more about programs that offer online options at www.acpe.edu.

What is Extended CPE? An extended unit is a part-time CPE Intern unit in which the standard 400 hours of clinical and educational time is “extended” over 20 weeks. Group education typically occurs on one day at VASDHS, although the start date and meetings times are determined by the Educator conducting the unit. Over the 20 weeks, interns meet with the educator once a week for an hour and work 15 hours/week in their clinical assignment(s) visiting patients, leading Spirituality groups, writing chart notes, attending interdisciplinary team (IDT) meetings and meeting with staff. In Extended CPE, clinical time with patients can be adapted to work around the intern’s schedule. Extended students do not receive a stipend, and may be non-citizens with permanent residency (green card) status. The minimum educational requirement is a bachelor’s degree, although some theological education is preferred. The VA San Diego is not currently offering extended CPE.