

Clinical Pastoral Education at CVHCS

Menu

- What is Clinical Pastoral Education?
- History of the Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS) CPE Program
- CPE in the Context of CVHCS
- Instructional Philosophy
- Faculty
- Instructional Schedule
- Qualifications for Admission
- How to Apply
- Testimonials
- Mission, Vision, and Core Values of the CPE Program
- Statement of Accreditation

What is Clinical Pastoral Education?

Clinical Pastoral Education is interfaith professional education for ministry. It brings theological students and ministers of all faiths (pastors, priests, rabbis, imams and others) into supervised encounter with persons in crisis. Out of an intense involvement with persons in need, and the feedback from peers and teachers, students develop new awareness of themselves as persons and of the needs of those to whom they minister. From theological/spiritual reflection on specific human situations, they gain a new understanding of ministry. Within the interdisciplinary team process of helping persons, they develop skills in interpersonal and interprofessional relationships.

History of the Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS) CPE Program

Two different CPE programs have operated at CVHCS, one from 1993 to 2003, and the other from 2015 to the present: In the summer of 1991, Chaplain Harry E. Simmons, a fully certified CPE Supervisor, was hired to plan and implement a CPE Program at the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA medical center. Candidacy program accreditation, the initial step for all CPE Programs, was sought in 1992, and was granted by the Accreditation Committee of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the ACPE in March 1993. The CPE program received full accreditation in January 1996, and full accreditation through 2006. The CPE Program was granted a one year-long stipend Residency until its accreditation was withdrawn in 2003. Over 40 student units of CPE, and more than 300 students completed CPE training at the ACPE program.

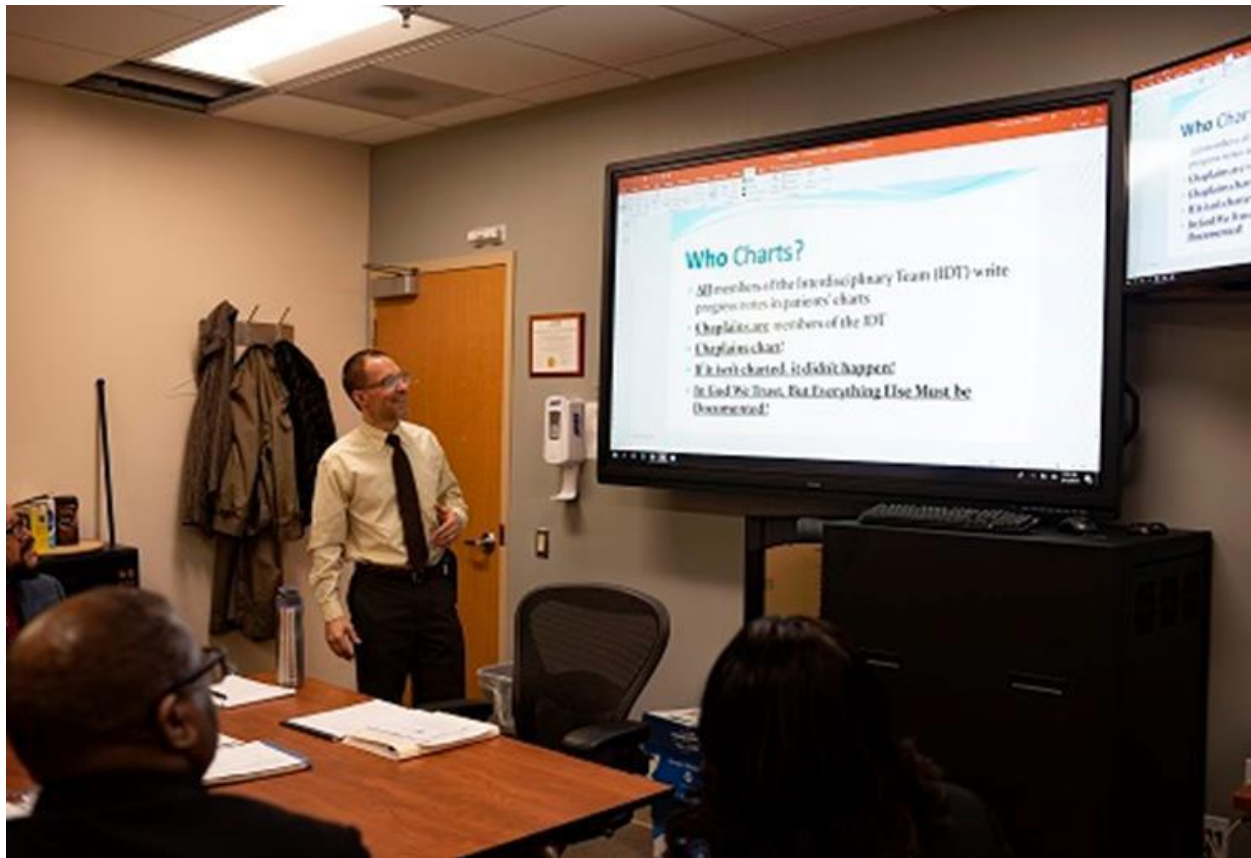
In February 2015, Chaplain Kenneth Linder, PhD was hired to establish an accredited Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) CPE program at CVHCS. CVHCS became a satellite of VCU's CPE program and achieved full accreditation by ACPE in 2017. CVHCS was granted a year-long four-stipend interprofessional residency that continues to this day along with internships. CVHCS was granted accreditation by ACPE to provide Certified Educator CPE in 2019 and launched Certified Educator CPE in 2021 with Certified Educator Candidate Unique

McKibbens. The CPE program is housed in a CPE education room that includes a state-of-the-art video-teleconferencing system and computer workstations for every student. The CVHCS CPE program has been blessed with strong support from the leadership of CVHCS and its Professional Advisory Group. CPE students are very well-received and highly valued at CVHCS. Over 100 student units of CPE have been completed since the re-opening of the CPE program.



CPE in the Context of CVHCS

CVHCS is one of VA's leading health care systems and serves as a tertiary care referral center. CVHCS includes both the Richmond VAMC and five Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). The Richmond VAMC is a 1.2 million square foot facility and home to the latest and most sophisticated medical equipment and facilities for healthcare delivery for our Nation's Heroes. The Richmond VAMC has approximately 300 beds and multiple outpatient clinics, so students can gain experiences in a wide variety of clinical settings, including the following: a polytrauma center of excellence, a large spinal cord injury and disorders unit, two ICUs, multiple medical-surgical units, oncology clinics, a Parkinson's clinic, an in-patient behavioral health unit, an inpatient substance use disorder unit, a women's health center, a hemodialysis unit, a hospice unit, a nursing home care unit, an emergency department, and extensive ambulatory care units. Within these settings, each unit of CPE requires at least 400 hours of combined structured educational work and clinical work. CPE students minister to Veterans, Veterans' families/friends/caregivers, and medical center staff of all faith traditions.



Instructional Philosophy

CPE educators value the experience students bring with them and guide students along their unique paths of growth while teaching them the art of spiritual care. We develop a student into a compassionate and competent spiritual caregiver by using the clinical method of learning (action/reflection/new action). We facilitate a student's reflection on the student's personal identity, family history, social location, and spiritual orientation. This reflective process increases self-awareness and develops spiritual care skills. As students learn to hear deeply the spiritual and religious dimensions of others in times of suffering, they learn to articulate their own spiritual beliefs and resources that inform their spiritual care. By employing a multicultural and multi-faith perspective in an experiential learning environment, each student learns to provide spiritual care for diverse populations and develops a unique style of spiritual care. Educational methodologies include the following: case studies (in a verbatim format), one-on-one education with the CPE educator, coaching by staff chaplains, and interactive learning within the peer group. This learning takes place in the CPE classroom (see picture above), conveniently located next to the Chaplain Service Office.

Faculty



Kenneth Linder, ACPE Certified Educator

Chaplain Kenneth Linder was born and raised in a northeast suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He has B.S. and M.S. degrees in Mechanical Engineering from Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He has a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. After working for nine years as a mechanical engineer, he left his engineering career and earned an M.Div. from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was ordained by the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination in 2005. He was the senior pastor of a Christian and Missionary Alliance church in Allentown, Pennsylvania from 2003 to 2009. He did his residency and Certified Educator CPE training from 2009 to 2014 at Lehigh Valley Health Network in Allentown, Pennsylvania. In November of 2014, he was certified as an Associate Certified Educator by ACPE. He began working at CVHCS in February of 2015. In September 2016, he was certified as a Certified Educator by ACPE. He is a board certified chaplain with the National Association of Veterans Affairs Chaplains (NAVAC). He has been married for over thirty years and has three grown children. Ken enjoys hiking, jogging, reading the Bible in the original languages and spending time with family.



Unique McKibbens, ACPE Certified Educator Candidate

Chaplain Unique McKibbens was born and raised in Bronx, New York. She felt the calling to serve God and her community from an early age. She has a bachelor's degree in Christian Education. She has a Master of Divinity degree from Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. She has worked in ministry since 2005 in community outreach, discipleship and Christian education. She was ordained as a pastor in 2014 by Dr. Wade S. Runge at Mountain Movers Ministry (a non-denominational church). She has served at Mountain Movers Ministry since 2013 as a bi-vocational associate pastor. She was ecclesiastically endorsed through the non-denominational Christian organization InFaith. She has worked for Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS) since 2010 and started her chaplain journey in 2015, completing two CPE internships. She did her CPE residency training at CVHCS from 2019-2020 and was accepted at CVHCS in January 2021 to continue her work in chaplaincy as Certified Educator Candidate in Certified Educator CPE. She is a board certified chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC). She has been married to Terrence McKibbens (United States Navy Veteran) since 2016. Unique enjoys, karaoke, bowling, podcasting, graphic arts and spending time with friends and family.



Instructional Schedule

We offer three educational opportunities, all of which provide education for CPE Levels IA, IB, IIA, and IIB:

- 1. Full-time 11-week Summer (late-May to mid-August) Intensive Internship (Non-compensated position to earn 1 unit of CPE).** This internship enables students to work on ACPE Levels I or II. Students in Level I focus on the fundamentals of spiritual care, including visitation skills, reflective listening, spiritual assessment, grief and loss counseling, and non-directive ministry. Students in Level II continue to strengthen these fundamentals while learning more advanced skills, such as behavioral science and spirituality/theology. This internship is often a good fit for seminarians seeking a unit of CPE during the summer break from classes or persons exploring chaplaincy as a vocation, although it is open to anyone who qualifies. Typical hours are Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 4:00 pm. Total time for class, clinical work and homework is approximately 45 hours/week; consequently, this internship is not compatible with excessive outside employment or activities.
Lead Educator: Kenneth Linder
Application Deadline: **December 31, 2024**
Unit Dates: **May 27, 2025-August 8, 2025**
- 2. Part-time 36-week (mid-September to late-May) Extended Internship (Non-compensated position to earn one unit of CPE).** This internship enables students to work on ACPE Levels I or II. Students in Level I focus on the fundamentals of spiritual care, including visitation skills, reflective listening, spiritual assessment, grief and loss counseling, and non-directive ministry. Students in Level II continue to strengthen these fundamentals while learning more advanced skills, such as behavioral science and spirituality/theology. This internship is spread out to accommodate people who have significant commitments, such as employment or other activities. During the first two weeks of this internship, students are required to participate in five full days of orientation from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm. Following orientation, students participate in a 2.5 hour class each week. These regular weekly classes are scheduled on a day and time that works for everyone within the M-F, 7:30 am to 4:00 pm timeframe. Students have flexibility to schedule their clinical work within the same timeframe. Total time for class, clinical work, and homework is approximately 13 hours/week.
Lead Educator: Kenneth Linder
Application Deadline: **Feb. 28, 2025**
Unit Dates: **August 18, 2025—May 15, 2026**
- 3. Full-time year-long (September to September) Interprofessional Residency (with stipend and benefits) with emphasis on preparation for Board Certification to earn 4 units of CPE.** This residency enables students to work on ACPE Levels I & II and has openings for both first-year and second-year residents. Typical hours are Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 4:00 pm with a few required days of work on Sundays. Total time for class, clinical work, and homework is approximately 45 hours/week; consequently, this residency is not compatible with excessive outside employment or activities. The major themes for the four units of the residency are the following: Spiritual Care and the Behavioral Sciences,

Theology of Spiritual Care in the Context of the VAMC, Spiritual Care in a Multi-Cultural Environment, and Professional Competency in Spiritual Care Using Evidence-Based Practice. In addition to these themes, the residency includes interprofessional training with weekly meetings for eight months. The meetings enable residents to learn interprofessional teamwork skills along with a CPE educator, a psychology educator, and psychology students through didactics, role plays, and case conferences. In addition, residents gain a wide variety of experience through clinical rotations during the residency. The cohort size is usually five residents, all of whom receive 10 days of paid time off, 11 paid federal holidays, and 10 days of sick leave as needed.

Lead Educator: Unique McKibbens

Application Deadline: **November 30, 2024**

Unit Dates: **September 8, 2025—September 4, 2026**

Qualifications for Admission

Both Internships and Residency

Required qualifications include

- United States citizenship, with potential exceptions, when space allows, in an intern unit.
- Proficiency in spoken and written English as required by 38 U.S.C. 7402(d), and 7407(d).
- Proficiency in computer skills to be able to accomplish the tasks that are computer-based.
- Ability to move about the hospital independently.

Internship

Required

- Completion of a bachelor's degree or equivalent from an institution accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or completion of three-year Master of Divinity degree or equivalent from an institution accredited by an accrediting agency validated by the United States Department of Education (USDE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).
- Recommendation from representative of faith group.
- Prior ministry experience.

Preferred

- Completion of at least one unit of ACPE accredited CPE at CVHCS.
- Completion of a Master of Divinity degree from an institution accredited by an accrediting agency validated by the United States Department of Education (USDE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or equivalent (equivalency is determined by the Association for Professional Chaplains).
- Ordination, commissioning, licensing, candidate for ordination or licensing, or equivalent by faith group.

Residency

Required

- Completion of a Master of Divinity degree from an institution accredited by an accrediting agency validated by the United States Department of Education (USDE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or equivalent (equivalency is determined by the Association for Professional Chaplains).
- Completion of at least one unit of ACPE accredited CPE.

Preferred

- Completion of at least one unit of ACPE accredited CPE at CVHCS.
- Ordination, commissioning, licensing, candidate for ordination or license, or equivalent by faith group.

How to Apply

A downloadable ACPE CPE Application form in both WORD and PDF formats can be found at acpe.edu under “Education” and “CPE Application,” or go to <https://acpe.edu/education/cpe-students/cpe-application> for the page from which to download it. **Note: Applicants are required to follow the “Guidelines for Filling Out Application” in the paragraph below.**

Guidelines for Filling Out Application (Use 12 point font)

- Reasonably full account of your life (how did persons and events in your life influence who you are today?): 5-7 pages (single-spaced)
- Spiritual growth and development: 3-5 pages (single-spaced)
- Description of your work: listing is sufficient
- Account of a helping incident or verbatim (what does it show about your current view of ministry?): 2-15 pages (single-spaced)
- Impressions of CPE (what have you heard or learned about CPE?) And what do you want to learn?: 1-2 pages (single-spaced)

Note: All materials need to be written at a master’s degree level or could be rejected.

Application and Tuition Fees: There are **no** application fees or tuition costs for internships and residency.

Notice of Non-Discrimination

The CVHCS CPE program aligns itself with ACPE’s mission as an anti-bias association and does not discriminate against persons because of race, ethnicity, religious/spiritual tradition, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, or disability. Equal access to educational opportunities is extended to all qualified persons. The CVHCS is handicap accessible, so students who use wheelchairs/mobility scooters can be accommodated and are welcome to apply.

Send completed application in one of two ways:

By email:

Attachment to kenneth.linder@va.gov

Ken's phone number is 804-675-5000 x3985

By mail:

ATTN: Kenneth Linder
Chaplain Service
Central Virginia VA Health Care System
1201 Broad Rock Blvd.
Richmond, VA 23249

Entry into the internships and residency is competitive. Upon receipt of the application, the applicant may be invited for an interview appointment. The interview is about "fit" as a student in a challenging educational process.

Testimonials

"For me, one of the best things that happened related to my supervision these past two weeks was Ken's offer to look at a verbatim I had done. I was especially grateful that he was attuned enough to me to see that the results of the visit really bothered me and that I was having a strong emotional reaction to it. His willingness to review it at that time, rather than waiting for me to present it in class, showed both great sensitivity and stood as testimony of his willingness to help us as students. His comments were reassuring and helped to restore my confidence in how I handled a visit which had caused me to question my abilities as a chaplain. It was not so much the positive affirmation, which certainly was helpful, but the level of concern and willingness to help me work through the issue that was most meaningful. Thanks!"
- Chaplain Intern, Extended Unit, Fall 2015-Spring 2016

"I will always be grateful to God for the time I have been privileged to spend as a chaplain intern at the Veteran's Hospital. It has been such an honor to serve people who have given so much to and for our nation. The Veterans and staff are fantastic people, and I am the better for being exposed to such a wonderful group of people. I also appreciate the training I received. There are no adequate words to express what I have received in this internship. The time I have spent in introspection has been so eye-opening and freeing. IPR [Inter-Personal Relations group] and IS [Individual Supervision] have been some of the most liberating times of my life. I have grown tremendously from every one of the teachings and use the principles I learned to minister to those I serve. I truly appreciate the new relationships I have with our group that has been such a blessing. I will never forget my group, instructor Ken, and my time in this internship." - Chaplain Intern, Extended Unit, Fall 2020-Summer 2021

"Unique always brought so much energy as a chaplain herself. Even though she did our lectures, she was the strongest when we did IPR. She let us know we could share, encouraged the group to participate and build trust together. She always walked alongside us with compassion and patience and care. She can help us reflect on our feelings and how we can put them to practice in spiritual care. Her compassion level for people is outstanding. She recognized what was going on with me in class, and after class she checked on me. She really cared about where I was in my journey, and I appreciate that."

- Chaplain Intern, Extended unit, Fall 2021-Spring 2022

Mission, Vision, and Core Values of the CVHCS CPE Program

Mission

Educate persons to be effective spiritual caregivers to the Veterans, families, friends, and staff within the CVHCS to improve their health and well-being. Teach persons knowledge and skills so they can provide effective spiritual and emotional support in a variety of settings.

Vision

The CPE program at the CVHCS will be a gold standard for VA health care systems by integrating a wide array of clinical experiences with vigorous reflection. Students will have opportunities to participate in diverse experiences, including the following: individual care, group work, crisis ministry, interdisciplinary teams, etc. Students will reflect on their personal stories, religious heritages, theological understandings, and knowledge of the behavioral sciences as these influence the ministry they provide. Students will explore ways to be different and to function differently as ministers to improve their spiritual care.

Core Values

- Integrity: Act with the highest moral conduct at all times.
- Veteran-centered: Honor Veterans by providing exceptional service to them, their families, friends, and the staff who care for them.
- Learning: Give and receive open and honest feedback in respectful ways that promote increased self-awareness and skill-building.
- Transformation: Embrace personal change as a person and minister.
- Collegiality: Demonstrate clarity of communication, accountability, and clear and professional boundaries.
- Diversity: Respect and celebrate diversity as a foundation for learning culturally competent ministry.
- Self-care: Practice self-care that enables the ability to continue to care for others.

Statement of Accreditation

The CVHCS CPE program is accredited to offer CPE (Levels I/II) and Certified Educator CPE by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.

Address:

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