

Endorsement

All Southern Baptist pastoral counselors should receive denominational endorsement from the Chaplains Commission of the SBC. The endorsement provides assurance to the using agency and its clients that the counselor meets the highest requirements of academic and practical training. It affirms the counselor's competency.

Endorsement also provides counselor training, fellowship, and other personal benefits provided from the denomination.

Endorsement requirement details are available from the Chaplaincy Division.

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HOME MISSION BOARD, SBC

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"And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for

Pastoral counseling is a form of care by which a minister with specialized clinical training seeks to help others cope with personal, marital, family, social, or religious problems.

The pastoral counselor helps people enhance their problem-solving abilities, increase interpersonal skills, gain self-understanding, and communicate more effectively.

"Pastoral counseling is bringing God to persons and persons to God. It uses care, confrontation, psychological theory, and religious faith to develop insight and direction to life."

Larry P. Henderson, D. Min., Pastoral Counselor
Little Rock, Arkansas

"Pastoral counseling is a ministry of individualized and focused love, representing the resource and alternative of Christian faith in dealing with the pressures and complexities of daily living. I see pastoral counseling as a calling to a specialized ministry that is an extension of the broader mission with which Christ has commissioned the church."

Austin L. Ingram, Christian Counseling Center
Texarkana, Texas

Qualifications for Certification

The following minimum qualifications for a pastoral counselor have been established by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC).

1. An undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university.
2. A Master of Divinity Degree or equivalent from an accredited seminary. This program of study includes at least one unit of clinical pastoral education or its equivalent.
3. Supervised, specialized training leading to certification and/or an advanced degree from a graduate school or a school of theology. A significant part of this advanced education is spent in some type of clinical training setting.
4. Three years of ministerial experience.
5. A total of 375 hours of pastoral counseling, including 125 hours of supervised counseling experience.

Other pastoral counseling professional organizations have their own qualifications for certification.

for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36, NASB).

A Specialized Ministry

When people need help with personal problems, they most often seek the clergy first. Ministers give much of their time to counseling. Therefore, they recognize the need to continually improve their counseling skills. Most theological training includes counseling emphases.

Pastoral counseling has emerged as a specialized field of ministry.

Uniqueness of Pastoral Counseling

In addition to psychological and medical approaches to human problems, the pastoral counselor brings a religious basis to counseling. The pastoral counselor combines training in psychotherapy, psychology, or psychiatry with religious and theological understanding.

Pastoral counselors bring to the helping situation the most comprehensive set of counseling tools of any profession.

Various Ministries

While ministries vary with the setting, the following are common pastoral counseling ministries:

- Dating and marriage
- Divorce and remarriage
- Communication skills
- Strengthening family units

- Marriage enrichment
- Career assessment
- Matters of faith
- Religious struggles
- Depression
- Stress and anxiety
- Marital problems
- Family conflict
- Sexual dysfunction
- Substance abuse
- Widowhood
- Retirement
- Illness
- Financial problems
- Parenting
- Personal Relationships

Convenient Settings

Historically ministers have provided pastoral counseling in the church office as part of their congregational ministries.

Today much pastoral counseling is done away from church settings. This enables people with no church affiliation to use this needed service. It also provides convenient settings for people who are uncomfortable in church facilities.

Pastoral counselors are available in local churches, associational counseling centers, institutions, hospitals, geriatric residences, and other places.