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CHAPTER 5. ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

5.01 CHAPEL AND ITS USE

a. The chapel, or a room set aside specifically for use as a chapel, will be reserved exclusively for religious purposes. Such chapels will be appointed and maintained as places for meditation and prayer. Existing chapel space will not be altered without concurrence from the Director, Chaplain Service, VA Central Office. Rooms where the eucharistic host is reserved shall not be used by any other faith group.

b. When no chapel exists, but where a room or hall allocated for other purposes is used for religious services, every effort will be made to have this room furnished to provide an atmosphere for worship. Assistance in the re-arranging of this room for services and the returning of it to its general function will be provided by management.

c. The construction of chapels for the exclusive use of a particular faith group is contrary to policy (see OP. Sol 644-647). The facility director may designate a building or a room for the use of a particular faith group as the need is indicated.

d. The chapel or room used for services will be properly prepared in advance of the appointed hour for worship. At the conclusion of the service, the chapel (or room) will be prepared for the succeeding service, if one follows immediately. Otherwise, the chapel will be arranged for private devotions for all patients. Symbols of a denominational nature will be removed.

e. Arranging for the comfort of patients at the chapel requires particular attention. Provisions will be made for wheelchair and other non-ambulatory patients to enable them to attend the worship services.

f. The use of lighted candles during religious services is permitted. It is the responsibility of the chaplain to eliminate possible fire hazards. All altar draperies must be fireproofed. The use of votive lights of all types is prohibited at facilities where a eucharistic room is maintained. An electric sanctuary light (lamp) must be approved by the Safety and Fire Protection Officer.

5.02 OFFICIAL CHAPEL FLAGS

Standard American, Christian and Jewish chapel flags are available in VA depots and flags may be obtained through regular requisition procedures. The Christian flag has a white cross imposed upon a blue field. The Jewish flag has the Tablets of Moses in Hebraic numerical characters surmounted by the Star of David imposed upon a blue field.

5.03 FUNERALS

a. Funerals at VA medical center facilities for VA beneficiaries who died while receiving VA care are the responsibility of the facility Director. An appropriate chaplain may be delegated the responsibility for funerals. When interment is made

in a National Cemetery, unless arrangement has been made by the next-of-kin for another clergyperson, the chaplain may conduct the funeral. Chaplains shall notify their Directors

when performing funerals at National Cemeteries for veterans who were not receiving VA care when they died. This will permit Directors to arrange for reimbursement to the medical care appropriation from the general operating expenses appropriation. When a clergyperson, not employed by VA, is to conduct the service, the facility chaplain will offer any needed assistance and be present on such occasion when the facility chapel is used.

b. The chaplain may officiate at non-VA funerals during duty hours only when specifically authorized to do so by the facility Director.

c. The chaplain will guard against being drawn into any situation where they displace the proper official or officiant in the community.

d. When a United States flag drapes the casket at a committal service conducted by VA chaplain, the flag will be properly folded following the ceremony and presented to the next-of-kin. The flag is presented in behalf of the United States by the officiating chaplain, military honor guard, or other appropriate person.

5.04 FUNDS

a. Appropriated Funds. Prior to each fiscal year, the Chief, Chaplain Service, will determine the budget requirements, both current and projected, for the Chaplain Service for submission to the facility Director, including all planned purchases and employment needs, subject to appropriated funds.

b. General Post Funds. The Chief, Chaplain Service, will, when necessary, prepare a budget for the use of monies in the General Post Funds available to the Chaplain Service. This budget will be submitted to the facility Director (see VHS&RA Supp., MP-4, pt. VII). General Post Fund monies may be used to purchase:

(1) Expendable items such as religious literature for distribution to patients, copies of the Scriptures, missals, mass leaflets, prayer books, yarmulkes (skull caps), taleysim (prayer shawls), and other religious articles.

(2) Nonexpendable items of equipment which are not normally part of the equipment purchased by other VA funds.

c. Donations to the General Post Fund. VA Manual MP-4, part V, chapter 2, section I and VHS&RA Supplement to MP-4, part VII, chapter 4, set forth the policies and procedures for accepting, handling, and using donations to the General Post Fund. These policies should be followed except where this manual otherwise.

(1) VA chaplains are authorized to accept gifts and donations on behalf of VA:

(a) For the benefit of the religious needs of the patients at their facility and

(b) To support all Chaplain Service activities at their facility.

Chaplains receiving gifts and donations of funds will turn such funds over to the agent cashier immediately, or as soon as practicable if received during non-duty hours, and will instruct the agent cashier to deposit the funds into the General Post Fund. Chaplains

must also instruct the agent cashier for what purpose, if any, the donor intended the funds to be used. Donors may designate that funds be used for patients of a particular faith group. Unless donors specifically designate the purpose of their gifts and donations, gifts and donations received by chaplains shall be earmarked to support the activities of the facility's Chaplain Service.

(2) Where it is customary to accept an offering at the VA chapel, a receptacle may be placed at an appropriate place in the chapel to permit visitors to contribute if they desire.

(3) The Chief, Chaplain Service, at each facility may authorize the withdrawal and expenditure of funds in the facility's General Post Fund earmarked for the benefit of the religious needs of the patients at their facility and to support Chaplain Service activities at their facility. Appropriate records of expenditures made shall be maintained.

(4) Although VA Chaplains have in the past maintained a chaplain's fund, there is in fact no basis in law for maintaining such a fund. The General Post Fund is, however, available for donations to VA for the religious needs of VA patients. Accordingly, all funds in a chaplain's fund should be transferred to the facility's General Post Fund earmarked for Chaplain Service activities or returned to the donor.

(5) Equipment or articles which a VA chaplain procures with General Post Fund monies, except for such items distributed to patients for their personal use, shall be designated VA property.

(6) Gifts and donations received for religious purposes will not be used for the following:

(a) Employment of personnel (except for honoraria for organists, choristers, or soloists for occasional services rendered).

(b) Remuneration of clergy to cover chaplain responsibilities during regular off-duty hours of the employed chaplain (except for honoraria to clergy who provide religious services on a nonrecurring basis).

(c) The personal or private use of the chaplain.

(7) Chaplains shall not take custody of, or maintain in any manner, patients' funds.

(8) VA chaplains shall not personally accept gifts or gratuities where such acceptance would violate VA conduct regulations (see 38 CFR § 0.735-11). For example, a VA employee generally may only accept gifts from a VA patient or ex-patient where the employee and the patient or ex-patient had a personal relationship that predated their VA contact or that lasted long after their VA contact. The facts of each case must be examined individually.

5.05 SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

a. It is the policy of VA to provide the equipment and supplies necessary to carry out the mission of the Chaplain Service, except as follows:

(1) Religious articles to be used in the Chaplain Service which must be blessed, sanctified or consecrated according to the regulations of the chaplain's religious community, cannot be purchased from appropriated funds.

(2) Vestments and ritual garments used by a chaplain, if purchased by the chaplain from personal funds, will be the property of the chaplain. If these items are donated for the use of the Chaplain Service and are not to be blessed, consecrated or sanctified according to the practice of a particular faith, they will become the property of VA. Choir robes may be purchased from appropriated funds and will remain the property of VA.

(3) If vestments and articles used in the religious services are blessed, sanctified or consecrated according to the practices of the religious community of which the chaplain is a member, they do not become the personal property of the chaplain or the property of VA. These are the property of the ecclesiastical endorsing agency of the chaplain concerned and placed at the field facility by the agency on a continuous loan basis. The chaplain of the faith group concerned will be the responsible custodian of these articles and will care for them according to the practices of the religious community. VA property will not be blessed or consecrated.

(4) All articles used in the Chaplain Service which are on loan from an ecclesiastical endorsing agency will be listed on a memorandum forwarded to the Acquisition and Materiel Management Officer. When the chaplain is transferred or separated, the Acquisition and Materiel Management Officer will inventory these articles and provide for their proper security until a new chaplain is assigned. The new chaplain will then be given custody of these items.

5.06 FACILITIES

Standards for the construction or provision of chapel and chaplain facilities in VA medical centers and domiciliaries are set forth in H-08-09, Planning Criteria for Medical Facilities, chapter 208, paragraph 208.05 as follows:

- a. Nave;
- b. Chancel (including altar and choir);
- c. Eucharistic room;
- d. Devotional room;
- e. Sacristy, other storage and choir robing;
- f. Offices;
- g. Patient toilet facilities;
- h. Staff lounge and toilets; and
- i. Housekeeping aids closet.

Chaplain offices should be large enough to accommodate wheelchairs and litters in order to provide privacy for counseling with patients.

5.07 CHAPLAIN SERVICE SECRETARY

a. The secretary will be the secretary to the Chief, Chaplain Service, and will provide secretarial service to all chaplains. This work will be supervised by the Chief, Chaplain Service.

b. With respect to confidential matters, the secretary will be governed by the same ethics as the chaplain.

c. Because of the confidential nature of the chaplain's work, the secretary's office will be a separate unit within Chaplain Service.

d. Staffing Pattern

<u>Number of Beds</u>	<u>Secretarial Coverage</u>
100 - 249	1 Secretary
250 - 449	1 Secretary
500 - 1499	1 Secretary
1 Secretary 1500 -	2 Secretaries

e. A facility with two divisions should have one secretary at one division and either one secretary or clerk-typist at the other division.