

Unit 8 – DR Chaplains’ Code of Ethics and Guiding Principles

NSW Disaster Recovery Chaplains’ Code of Ethics and Guiding Principles¹

FOLLOW THE INCIDENT COMMAND STRUCTURE

Disaster Recovery Chaplains will usually be activated when Disaster Welfare Services branch determines a need for their presence and thus will not self-activate. They are part of an overall care response. In the context of Evacuation and Recovery Centres, Disaster Recovery Chaplains always work under the direction of the Senior Chaplain/Duty Officer and the Centre Manager, and are willing to accept the authority of those in command and demonstrate flexibility. They will also work cooperatively with other Disaster Recovery Chaplains and will follow all protocols specified in the training and will participate in regular retraining to ensure appropriate and relevant response.

DISASTER RECOVERY CHAPLAINS DO NOT PROSELYTISE

Disaster Recovery Chaplains serve as part of an overall response team which cares for individuals in the context of great trauma and dislocation. This team cooperates with a wide range of agencies which are also responding to the disaster. While chaplains are working on this team, their objective is to provide spiritual care and emotional support to those who have been affected by the disaster. They are not representing their congregation or attempting to influence people to join their faith tradition.

DEMONSTRATE SENSITIVITY TO ALL FAITH TRADITIONS

While individually maintaining their own faith tradition, chaplains seek to be sensitive to the wide range of faith traditions which are a part of our community and the wider Australian society. Chaplains will not seek to be what they are not, but will respect the faith of the individuals they serve and facilitate connection of people with their own faith tradition.

MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

Those to whom chaplains provide spiritual care will have an expectation that what they share with the disaster recovery chaplain will remain confidential. Situations that require disclosure in relation to duty of care (such as in child abuse or domestic violence as well as circumstances where an individual is in danger to self or others) must be reported, but the most ethical means of doing this is for the chaplain to inform the individual that he or she must share the information with appropriate authorities.

All other confidential information will remain unrevealed, except as it is helpful for the individual’s concerns to be known by others who are providing psychological first aid, emotional support and spiritual care. Chaplains may be asked to report aggregate information that is not connected with specific individuals (e.g. general demographics and concerns of those who are seen).

¹ These principles are adapted from the Nebraska Disaster Chaplain Network of Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska

ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS

Disaster Recovery Chaplains volunteer their services as a ministry on behalf of God and their fellow humans. They will accept no financial gift for such services, nor perform any duties with the view of personal material gain. Should Chaplains be approached to accept a donation – financial or otherwise – they should direct those persons offering to send their contributions to local congregations or other disaster response agencies.

RECOGNITION OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIMITS

Disaster Recovery Chaplains recognise that their skills are for the provision of spiritual first aid and emotional support, and that their scope of practice is limited to this responsibility. They should take care not to extend themselves beyond the provision of this service and should refer people to others for expert care. Chaplains will refer media enquiries to the Centre Manager or Senior Chaplain/Duty Officer.

AVOIDING SPECULATION

Disaster Recovery Chaplains will not involve themselves in speculation about what or who is to blame, or about what may have happened. Neither are chaplains to “second-guess” other chaplains, those in authority in the chain of command, or officials responding to the disaster. If there are unresolved concerns about circumstances, these are to be taken to the Senior Chaplain/Duty Officer.

BE AWARE OF ALL AFFECTED

No one involved in either the disaster itself, or the disaster response is unaffected. Chaplains will be aware of those around them – helpers, community members, families and friends of the survivors, and other Disaster Recovery Chaplains.

STANDING DOWN

Chaplains will stand down from operations following discussion with, or at the direction of, the Senior Chaplain/Duty Officer. On standing down, and/or at the end of an operation, Disaster Recovery Chaplains will be willing to participate in debriefing processes.

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