

Archdiocese of Boston



Procedures for the Certification of Pastoral Associates

*Office of Pastoral Planning
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ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON

I. INTRODUCTION

The certification policies and procedures for Pastoral Associates in the Archdiocese of Boston are based upon the USCCB document, “*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*” and the National Certification Standards developed by the National Association of Lay Ministry (cf. www.usccb.org/laity/laymin and www.nalm.org)

It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Boston that only those who meet the requirements of these Pastoral Associate Guidelines and who are certified by the Archdiocese of Boston, may call themselves and serve in the ministry as “Pastoral Associates.”

II. MINISTRY OF THE PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

A Pastoral Associate is a non-ordained professional lay ecclesial minister who shares with the pastor or administrator (referred to herein as pastor), the parochial vicar, deacon and other members of the parish pastoral team in the overall care of the parish. He or she is a member of the parish staff, usually full-time, and is accountable to and delegated to serve the parish by the Pastor, who by reason of his ordination receives the power to teach, govern and sanctify the community. The Pastoral Associate is qualified and certified to serve in a generalist’s role. The ministry of the Pastoral Associate is comprehensive, relating to varied aspects of parish life as designated by the Pastor, e.g., liturgy, faith formation and development, administration, pastoral care, or social outreach. The designated responsibilities of the Pastoral Associate are dependent upon the needs of the parish, the gifts of the Pastoral Associate and the gifts of the other members of the parish staff. To qualify for the role of Pastoral Associate, the Archdiocese requires that each individual be registered and certified by the Archdiocese of Boston.

III. CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY

The Pastoral Associate must be a practicing Roman Catholic in good standing. He or she is knowledgeable in the exercise of parish ministry and enjoys a good reputation as a lay ecclesial minister who fosters communion. All applicants to the role of a Pastoral Associate must meet the basic requirements of a lay ecclesial minister, as these are articulated in the latest edition of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*¹. Indeed, given the importance of the role of the Pastoral Associate, one would expect more than meeting a minimum requirement.

There are four areas of formation – human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral – that provide the framework for the call and ministry of a Pastoral Associate. Therefore, Pastoral Associates need:

¹ “Lay persons with a call to lay ecclesial ministry possess certain dispositions, which are further developed during the formal preparation process.” (*Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, p.30). For a list of these dispositions, cf. Appendix C of this text.

- *Human qualities* critical to the development of a pastoral leadership style of service, compassion, and delegated responsibility for the parish, vicariate and Archdiocese.
- *A spirituality* and practice of prayer, personal and communal, contemplative and liturgical that grounds one's ministry in God's Trinitarian life.
- *Advanced knowledge* in theological and pastoral studies, along with intellectual skills to use it effectively across the various cultures that make up the local church.
- The practical *pastoral abilities*, especially for coordination, called for in their particular ministry.

Ongoing formation in all four areas of formation – human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral – is a significant and regular ministerial responsibility for all Pastoral Associates. It is the obligation of the Archdiocese to make provision for the ongoing formation of Pastoral Associates across the spectrum and course of their careers.

A. ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

A master's degree in pastoral or theological studies or in divinity (or an equivalent) from an accredited Catholic institution is required. Applicants should have the ability to articulate and demonstrate knowledge of Catholic theology appropriate to a master's level in theology or divinity. The person should demonstrate successful completion of field education credits or CPE experience.

B. COMPETENCIES

1. Knowledge and Understanding of: (*Candidates of Pastoral Associates should be able to demonstrate successful completion of courses in the following areas of theological knowledge*).

- An in-depth grasp of Catholic Church teaching (especially as summarized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*)
- Current teaching on ministerial priesthood and theology of the laity
- Ecclesiology
- Moral theology
- Sacraments and Liturgy
- Scripture
- Stages of human and faith development
- Principles of organization, management and team building
- Communication and counseling skills
- Pastoral theology
- Cannon Law, especially the Canon Law of Marriage
- The Theology of Marriage and Family
- Catholic social teaching
- Ethics in Church Ministry

2. **Administrative Skills** (*Candidates for the position of Pastoral Associate should be able to demonstrate skills in these areas*).
 - a. Possesses basic management, leadership, collaborative and group process skills.
 - b. Is able to initiate and implement programs appropriate to area of responsibility, including recruitment, training and supervision of volunteers.
 - c. Is able to develop and maintain a budget for the above programs.
 - d. Is able to make decisions and assume responsibility for delegated tasks.
 - e. Is able to negotiate and manage conflict.
 - f. Is able to communicate effectively and has good interpersonal skills.

3. **Pastoral Skills** (*Candidates for the position of Pastoral Associate should be able to demonstrate skills in these areas*).
 - a. **Spiritual:**
 - Is able to contribute to the spiritual growth of the people of the parish.
 - Is able to lead others in prayer.
 - Is able to share own faith journey and enable others to do the same.
 - Is able to appreciate Catholic spiritualities and the Church's spiritual traditions, different from one's own.

 - b. **Community Building:**
 - Is able to assist in shaping the parish vision.
 - Is able to foster communion in parish relationships.
 - Is able to collaborate effectively with others in ministry.
 - Is able to be objective in pastoral situations.
 - Is able to work effectively with those of differing cultures, ethnic and racial backgrounds, disabilities, as well as difficult personalities.

 - c. **Pastoral Guidance:**
 - Is able to apply basic skills of pastoral guidance and can appropriately refer persons.
 - Has the capacity to bring Christ's healing presence to the sick, dying, and bereaved.
 - Is able to communicate and apply the social teachings of the Church.
 - Is sensitive to and able to work effectively in a multi-cultural church and social environment.

C. EXPERIENCE

The person should demonstrate a variety of effective ministerial experiences.

FORMATION/SPIRITUALITY

1. Is aware of the need for, and takes time, to pursue personal spiritual growth.
2. Is an active Roman Catholic participating in a parish faith community.
3. Has an ability to integrate ministry with prayer and the sacramental life.
4. Takes time for regular private prayer.

D. IRREGULARITIES

Individuals in irregular or civil-only marriages or unions are not eligible for the role of Pastoral Associates.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES AND TASKS

A. GENERAL PASTORAL MINISTRY OF A PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

1. As determined by the Pastor, assists in the overall process of parish administration including needs assessment, pastoral planning, hiring and management of pastoral staff and volunteers, direction of parish ministries, implementation of archdiocesan, vicariate and collaborative projects and programs.
2. Serves on the parish pastoral council, as an ex-officio member and other boards and committees as designated by the Pastor.
3. Serves as director or coordinator of one or more of the parish ministries or programs, as determined by the Pastor (some of the possible ministries or programs are listed under the heading "Specific Pastoral Responsibilities").
4. Participates in the recruitment, training and formation of other members of the parish staff, including volunteers.
5. Leads communal prayer when needed and liturgically appropriate.
6. Is present at primary parish gatherings, such as Sunday liturgies and social functions
7. Is available to parishioners for help with personal needs and parish projects.
8. Assists or provides for ministry to persons in crisis.
9. Participates in regular staff meetings.
10. Demonstrates an interest in the initiation of new members in the parish community and in the processes of evangelization and renewal.
11. Relates to collaborative, vicariate, and archdiocesan structures as appropriate.
12. Performs other tasks to be determined by the Pastor.

B. POSSIBLE SPECIFIC PASTORAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Since the role of the Pastoral Associate may vary according to the needs of the parish, she or he may be involved in one or more of the ministries listed below. However, in determining these roles with the Pastor or administrator, care must be taken to be sure that appropriate Archdiocesan agencies have approved and/or certified the Pastoral Associate's skills and competencies for the various ministries. In some cases, further training and/or accreditation is needed for the proper fulfillment of this ministry or service. The following ministries of spiritual life, education and human concerns are delegated under the Pastor's threefold "munera" of sanctifying, teaching and governing.

1. Ministry of spiritual life

- a. If qualified, provides spiritual direction, pastoral counseling and retreats.
- b. Develops and facilitates a parish liturgy committee for the purpose of assisting the Pastor in planning Sunday and seasonal parish liturgies.
- c. Works cooperatively with the parish music director in planning music liturgy.
- d. Coordinates and provides training for parish liturgical ministries (i.e. extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, servers).
- e. Assists in the preparation of individuals for Sacraments.
- f. Assists in the planning of parish sacramental services.
- g. Provides Scriptural reflections when pastorally and canonically appropriate.

2. Ministry of education/formation

- a. Oversees the RCIA process, including the recruitment and formation of team members.
- b. Develops or assists with parish retreats.
- c. Coordinates family-life ministry.
- d. Provides for adult-education program.
- e. Coordinates the young adult program.
- f. Collaborates with the Director(s) of Religious Education (DRE), principal and Director of Youth Faith Formation or youth minister in assisting with ministry to children, youth and adults.
- g. Assists in providing for staff development, education and enrichment.

3. Ministry of pastoral/human concerns

- a. Acts as liaison with the Marriage Tribunal for couples regarding marriage or annulment procedures after Tribunal approval.
- b. Develops support groups for the widowed, grieving, separated and divorced, or makes referrals to outside groups to provide these services.

- c. Networks with local community resources.
- d. Coordinates the ministry of care program.
- e. Provides pastoral care to people in need in the parish.
- f. Oversees outreach to the homebound, hospitalized and nursing home patients and plans for their sacramental needs.

V. CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR A PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

A. APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION

A person who is applying for the position of Pastoral Associate must first contact the Archdiocesan Office of Pastoral Planning for an Application Packet for certification. Applications will be received in the spring and certification provided in the fall of each year.

1. The Application Packet requires that the following be returned:

- a. A Certification Application Form (Appendix A).
- b. A long form Baptismal Certificate from the parish of baptism.
- c. Transcript of graduate studies
- d. Three letters of reference.
- e. A letter from one's home pastor.
- f. If presently or previously employed by a parish, a letter from each pastor currently serving in ministry.
- g. A letter from the regional bishop.

Upon completion and return of the application packet to the Office of Pastoral Planning, an interview will be arranged.

B. DECISION ON CERTIFICATION

The decision regarding the certification of a Pastoral Associate rests with the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership. The Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership consults with the Certification Committee.

Certification is granted for a period of five (5) years. For certification to be renewed, a person certified as a Pastoral Associate is required to participate in ongoing formation programs according to policies and practices of the Secretariat for Parish Life and Leadership.

A provisional certification with notation will be granted when an applicant is considered to possess the pastoral skills and qualities necessary but is lacking in some area of the academic and/or pastoral formation required for the position. The notation will be reviewed periodically, as indicated at the time of certification. The provisional certification will be withdrawn if the candidate has not met the required standards within two (2) years of application.

If certification is denied, the individual may appeal to a review board convened by the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership on an ad hoc basis. Members of that review board may include no more than three persons from the following list: Director of the Office for Clergy Personnel, Pastoral Associates, a permanent deacon, the Director of the Master of Arts in Ministry Program and the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership. The decision of the review board will be final, with due respect to the provisions of canon law.

C. SPECIAL CERTIFICATION

Special certification is required for certain areas of responsibility. This includes such areas as preparation of canonical forms in connection with marriage or annulments. These specific certifications and others are granted upon completion of certification procedures and programs approved by the appropriate Archdiocesan office.

CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

I. INTERVIEW

After receipt of all required forms and letters, the Office of Pastoral Planning will convene a Certification Committee of at least one Pastoral Associate and two other committee members to interview candidates for certification as Pastoral Associates in the Archdiocese.

II. CERTIFICATION DECISION

A. The Certification Committee, after reviewing the completed Application Packet, references and interview material, will make a recommendation to the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership regarding certification.

B. The certification decision will consist of one of the following:

1. Certified as Pastoral Associate.
2. Not-certified as Pastoral Associate.
3. Provisional Certification with notation for a determined period of time.

C. An individual who has been provisionally certified or not certified may appeal the decision to a review board.

1. A candidate desiring to appeal the decision must notify in writing the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership within two (2) weeks of the date of the original decision. Included in the letter should be the reasons for making the appeal and pertinent information, which supports the reasons given.

2. An ad hoc review board will be established by the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership. Membership on this board is to include three (3) persons familiar with the Pastoral Associate Guidelines and the Procedures for Certification of Pastoral Associates.
3. The review board, after reviewing the candidate's Application Packet, the original interview material and any new information submitted, will make a decision. An additional interview may be required.
4. The decision of the review board is final.

III. PASTORAL ASSOCIATE FILE

- A. A certification file will be established in the Secretariat for Parish Life and Leadership for each Pastoral Associate who is granted certification.
- B. In keeping with the *Pastoral Associate Guidelines* concerning continuing formation (I.C.), each Pastoral Associate will be required to submit yearly updated information regarding courses taken, continuing education units and related experiences to the Office of Pastoral Planning. The Office of Pastoral Planning will remind Pastoral Associates of this requirement in June of each year by email or mail if necessary. Every parish should set aside a professional educational allotment for the ongoing formation of its pastoral associates. The Archdiocese provides formational opportunities for pastoral associates.

IV. PASTORAL ASSOCIATE CERTIFICATION RENEWAL

A. Eligibility

1. At the end of five (5) years, a Pastoral Associate actively serving in a parish of the Archdiocese is required to have his or her certification status renewed. That renewal process is initiated by a letter sent by the Office of Pastoral Planning in the spring of the Pastoral Associate's renewal year. Failure to renew one's certification may be cause for a reassessment of employment as a Pastoral Associate in the Archdiocese.
2. An individual who has let his or her certification expire must reapply for certification and follow normal application procedures. An individual who is presently or has been previously certified and terminated from a Pastoral Associate or lay ecclesial ministry position will participate in a certification interview (cf. Section II of this section). Special circumstances will be evaluated

and proper procedures determined by the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership.

3. Pastoral Associates certified in other (Arch)dioceses, seeking employment in the Archdiocese of Boston, must submit an application for certification in the Archdiocese of Boston with the Office of Pastoral Planning. These Pastoral Associates must meet the basic requirements for eligibility found in this document.

B. Requirements

1. Evidence that the Pastoral Associate has continued to manifest the ecclesial and human qualities required of Pastoral Associates in the Archdiocese.
2. Documentation of any continuing formation opportunities that the Pastoral Associate has taken advantage of since the last certification². Normally, this should be the equivalent of two (2) semester courses (or 60 hours or CEU's) over five (50) years.
3. Documentation that the Pastoral Associate has fulfilled any notation indicated on previous certification.

C. Procedure

1. The Pastoral Associate who is eligible for certification renewal is contacted by the Office of Pastoral Planning and asked to submit a completed Pastoral Associate Certification Renewal Application.
2. Upon receipt of the Application, the following will be required by the Office of Pastoral Planning:
 - a. A letter of reference from the Pastor currently overseeing the Pastoral Associate.
 - b. Two (2) letters of reference as noted on the Application.
 - c. Feedback from the Regional Bishop of the region where the candidate works.
3. A Pastoral Associate who had a notation on his or her certification will be interviewed by the Office of Pastoral Planning, as necessary.

² Membership in the National Association of Lay Ministers or another professional organization designed to assist lay ecclesial ministers is recommended.

Decision

1. The completed Pastoral Associate Renewal Application Form and other required documentation will be reviewed by the Certification Board.
2. The Certification Committee, after reviewing the completed application packet, will make a recommendation to the Secretary for Parish Life and Leadership.
3. The certification renewal decision will consist of one of the following:
 - a. Certification is renewed for five (5) years.
 - b. Certification is denied.
 - c. Provisional certification renewal is granted with a notation for a determined period of time.
4. An individual may appeal the decision regarding certification renewal to a review board (See Section V.B. Certification Decision).



ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON

(Appendix A)

PASTORAL ASSOCIATE APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION

Please print in ink or type all entries except signature:

NAME: _____
Last Name First Name Middle

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

CURRENT PARISH: _____

STATUS: Religious Single Church Marriage Civil Marriage/Union

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

Name: _____

Date of Entrance: _____

Name of Major Superior: _____

Address: _____ Telephone: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

EDUCATION

Use additional sheets of paper if necessary

Degree	Area of Concentration	College/University	City/State	Date

LIST SPECIFIC UNDERGRADUATE COURSES AND/OR CREDITS EARNED IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY (Graduate transcript to be sent to PPO)

Course	Credits	College/Institution	Date

CERTIFICATES RECEIVED:

OTHER EDUCATIONAL PURSUITS: *(Degree program, Post-Graduate Courses, Workshops attended since last degree earned)*

LIST ANY SCHOLARSHIPS OR HONORS RECEIVED:

Title **Granted by** **Date**

EXPERIENCE

PRESENT EMPLOYMENT - Position: _____

Dates Employed: From: _____ to: _____

Parish/Institution: _____

City/Town: _____

RESPONSIBILITIES: _____

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT – Position: _____

Dates Employed: From: _____ to: _____

Parish/Institution: _____

City/Town: _____

RESPONSIBILITIES: _____

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES IN MINISTRY:

WRITE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALITIES AND SKILLS YOU BRING TO PASTORAL MINISTRY:

REFERENCES

NAME THREE REFERENCES: (Colleagues, Employer)

Name	Relationship	Address	City/Town

PRESENT PARISH NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY/TOWN: _____

WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED?

Return this application form with:

- Recent baptismal certificate (Long Form)
- Transcript of graduate studies

Letters of reference:

- If you are currently employed in a parish, you **MUST** have a letter from the Pastor who is your employer
- Letter from your home pastor – not your employer
- Letter from your Regional Bishop
- **In addition**, you must have **three (3)** letters from colleagues, supervisors, etc.

Sign this form and return it to:
 Sister Patricia Boyle, CSJ
 Associate Director
 Office of Pastoral Planning, Archdiocese of Boston
 66 Brooks Drive, Braintree, MA 02184-3839

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT: _____



ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON

(Appendix B)

PASTORAL ASSOCIATE APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL

Please print in ink or type all entries except signature:

NAME: _____
Last Name First Name Middle

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ **EMAIL:** _____

CURRENT PARISH: _____

STATUS: Religious Single Church Marriage Civil Marriage/Union

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

Name: _____

Date of Entrance: _____

Name of Major Superior: _____

Address: _____ Telephone: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

EDUCATION

Use additional sheets of paper if necessary

Degree Area of Concentration College/University City/State Date

LIST SPECIFIC COURSES, WORKSHOPS OR ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY SINCE THE INITIAL CERTIFICATION

Course College/Institution Date

OTHER CERTIFICATES RECEIVED SINCE INITIAL CERTIFICATION

Course _____ College/Institution _____ Date _____

OTHER EDUCATIONAL PURSUITS SINCE THE INITIAL CERTIFICATION: DEGREES, POST GRADUATE COURSES, CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS, ETC. (Use additional paper if necessary).

Course _____ College/Institution _____ Date _____

LIST ANY SCHOLARSHIPS OR HONORS RECEIVED SINCE INITIAL CERTIFICATION

:
Title _____ Granted by _____ Date _____

REFERENCES

NAME TWO REFERENCES: (Religious Superior, Colleague)

Name _____ Relationship _____ Address _____ City/Town _____

EMPLOYMENT

Present Position: _____ Date Employed: _____

Parish/Institution: _____ City: _____

Pastor: _____

Responsibilities: _____

WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED?

Four Letters of Reference:

- Letter of reference from the pastor currently overseeing the Pastoral Associate
- Letter from Regional Bishop
- Two additional letters of reference from your references as referred to above

Sign this form and return it to:
Sister Patricia Boyle, CSJ
Associate Director
Office of Pastoral Planning, Archdiocese of Boston
66 Brooks Drive, Braintree, MA 02184-3839

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT: _____

ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON

Appendix C

DISPOSITIONS OF A LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTER³

- Being in full communion with the Catholic Church, able to minister joyfully and faithfully within the hierarchical communion that is the Church.
- The desire to serve the Church and its mission, which proceeds from love of God and God's people.
- A commitment to regular personal prayer, frequent participation in the Mass beyond the Sunday obligation and in the other sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Penance.
- Zeal to live a Christian life, and willingness to live and teach as the magisterium teaches.
- Emotional maturity, including the ability to sustain friendships and professional relationships and the management and appropriate expression of both anger and affection.
- The intellectual gifts needed for the specific ministry.
- A commitment to good communication and conflict resolution skills.

³ *Co-Workers in the Vineyard: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry – A Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (2005), p. 30.