

## COMISS Network Guidelines

Revised at the January 2016 Annual Forum in Alexandria, VA.

### I. Name, Purpose, Mission and Objectives

- a. The name of this group is COMISS Network; incorporated as a 501.c3 in Atlanta, Georgia.
- b. The purpose of the COMISS Network is to provide its membership with a unique forum for communication, networking, and advocacy beyond our common calling to pastoral ministry.
- c. The Mission of the COMISS Network is: We are a pre-eminent network of organizations committed to the preparation and practice of multi-faith spiritual care through chaplaincy and pastoral counseling in specialized settings and promotes and supports collaboration among its members.
- d. The Objectives of the COMISS Network are:
  - i. To provide a forum for dialogue among those who share a similar mission, nationally and internationally.
  - ii. To encourage shared programs/resources in order to increase collaboration and reduce duplication among members.
  - iii. To advocate professionalism in standards and service in the provision of multi-faith-based care and counseling.
  - iv. To educate our constituency and various publics regarding the value of professional, multi-faith-based care and counseling.
  - v. To propose and plan initiatives that furthers our purpose.
  - vi. To encourage research into experience-based pastoral care and counseling.

### II. Membership:

- a. Membership is available to organizations which subscribe to the purpose, mission, and objectives of COMISS. Organizations applying for membership and those renewing current membership may self-select the organization's membership category. The characteristics of each category are recommended guidelines for assisting the organizations in selecting the most appropriate category for membership:
  - i. Professional Certifying or Accrediting Organization: These organizations certify individuals for the practice of and or training for professional pastoral care. A certifying organization will be able to demonstrate a process for certification of individuals which includes standards/categories in **compliance** with CCAPS (The COMISS Commission on Accreditation of Pastoral Services). They will also demonstrate how certified chaplains, pastoral counselors, or other pastoral care professionals conform to a code of ethics that prohibits proselytizing, conflicts of interest, and crossing of professional boundaries. Or, organizations in this category accredit institutions, facilities, centers, or systems for the

- practice, education, and training of chaplains, pastoral counselors, and/or other pastoral care professionals. An accrediting organization will be able to demonstrate a process for accreditation which includes standards/categories in *compliance* with CCAPS.
- ii. Religious Endorsing Bodies: These organizations include faith groups, denominations, or religious organizations which endorse individuals of their respective group for chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and/or other professional pastoral care ministries. A Religious Endorsing Body will be able to demonstrate a process of endorsement which includes on-going accountability between the endorser and the endorsed individual. Also, these organizations will be able to demonstrate recognition as a religious endorsing body. They will be able to demonstrate that they are recognized as a 501 (C) (3) religious organization and have primarily a lay constituency.
  - iii. Professional Membership Organizations: These organizations exist as groups of chaplains and/or other pastoral care professionals whose work focuses on ministry in specific specialized settings. These organizations may be for profit or not for profit.
  - iv. Chaplain and Pastoral Counselor Employing Organizations or Agencies: These organizations utilize the services of chaplains and/or pastoral counselors who are certified by one of the Certifying Organizations of the COMISS Network. These organizations may be for profit or not for profit, but they must demonstrate, via their mission statement and table of organization, that they operate in accordance with the purpose, mission, and objectives of the COMISS Network.
  - v. Academic and Educational Institutions: These institutions prepare students for chaplaincy/ specialized ministry through academic degree programs and/or conduct research related to ministry in specialized settings. These institutions are accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and/or the U.S. Department of Education.

### III. COMISS Network Forum

- a. Membership
  - i. Members in good standing are current in membership dues and have filed all reports required.
  - ii. Each member organization may be represented by up to three participants.
  - iii. There will be one vote per member organization in good standing.
- b. Annual Forum
  - i. The COMISS Network will gather for one or more meetings annually in Forum.

- ii. All Forum business will be presented for agenda approval to the COMISS Network Leaders no later than 24 hours prior to the opening of the Forum.
- iii. The conduct of business at the Annual Forum will include presentations, discussion and action on:
  - 1. Annual reports
  - 2. Financial report
  - 3. Presentation of a budget and its adoption
  - 4. Election of officers
  - 5. Election of nominating committee
  - 6. Presentation of new members
  - 7. Proposed new initiatives
- iv. All mailings pertaining to an upcoming Forum are to be sent to the voting member of record.

#### IV. COMISS Network Leadership (Officers and At-Large Members)

- a. Network Leadership shall be members of one of the member organizations of the COMISS Network in good standing.
- b. The COMISS Network Leadership annual elections shall take place at the Annual Forum.
- c. New COMISS Network Leaders will begin their terms of office at the conclusion of the Annual Forum.
- d. The officers of COMISS Network will be:
  - i. Chair
    - 1. Presides at all meetings of the COMISS Network Forum and the COMISS Network Leadership.
    - 2. Presents an annual report to the Forum.
  - ii. Chair-Elect
    - 1. Assumes the duties of the Chair in absence or disability of the Chair.
    - 2. Serves as chair of Forum Program Planning Task Force.
  - iii. Treasurer
    - 1. Is responsible for financial management.
    - 2. Provides financial reports to the COMISS Network Leadership and to the Annual Forum.
    - 3. Convenes a Finance Committee to be made up of the Chair of CCAPS, the Chair of PCW, and one member of the COMISS Network Leadership, to prepare an annual budget. The Executive Administrator will be an ex officio member of the Task Force.
    - 4. Schedules an audit every three years with an outside professional auditor.
  - iv. Secretary

1. Attends all sessions of the COMISS Network Leadership and Annual Forum and records all votes and minutes.
- e. The officers of the COMISS Network will serve as the officers of the corporation and as such are responsible for its business and direction as approved by the COMISS Network.
  - f. At-Large Members: There shall be two at-large members elected at the Annual Forum by and from the membership groups to insure diversity.
  - g. The COMISS Network Leadership will act on business responsibilities between meetings of the Forum. They will:
    - i. Contract services
    - ii. Hire and annually evaluate staff
    - iii. Implement decisions of the Forum
    - iv. Be responsible for the budget
    - v. Engage the membership in strategic planning
    - vi. Establish and appoint Task Forces as needed to support the mission and objectives.
  - h. Terms of Service
    - i. The Chair and Chair-Elect will each serve one two-year term. The Chair-Elect succeeds the Chair. If the chair position is vacated before the end of the two year term the chair-elect will assume the position and fill the unexpired term (and afterwards, fulfilling the term to which s/he was elected.) An election will be held at the next Forum to elect a succeeding chair-elect.
    - ii. In the interest of continuity, a nominee for Chair-Elect is selected by and from the COMISS Network Leadership. Former COMISS Network Leadership members who have served within the last 5 years may also be nominated directly from the floor.
    - iii. The Secretary, Treasurer and two Members-at-Large of the COMISS Network Leadership will serve a two-year term and may be re-elected to one successive term.
    - iv. The Chair-Elect and Treasurer will be elected in odd-numbered years; the Secretary and two At-Large members will be elected in even-numbered years.
    - v. PCW Committee members will serve a four-year term.
    - vi. CCAPS Commissioners will serve three-year terms and may be re-appointed to one successive term.
    - vii. Individuals who are completing an unfulfilled term are eligible to serve a two-year term and be re-elected to one successive term.
    - viii. The chair can appoint an individual for Secretary or Treasurer if the position is vacated prior to the Forum.

V. COMISS Network Staff

- a. The Executive Administrator
- b. The Bookkeeper

VI. Standing Committees and Commissions

- a. A Nominating Committee of four (4) will be nominated and elected annually from the membership categories at the Annual Forum. They will be responsible for the process of nominations and conducting the election.

- i. Solicit names from each of the membership groups.
- ii. Secure agreement to being nominated from the nominee.
- iii. Prepare the slate to be mailed to the membership with registrations packets for the Annual Forum.
- iv. Conduct the election at the Annual Forum.
- v. The Committee may receive nominations from the floor.
- vi. They are administratively accountable to the COMISS Network Leadership.

- b. The COMISS Commission for Accreditation of Pastoral Services consists of eight members.

- i. The Network Leadership will appoint three commissioners drawn from the Certifying or Accrediting category, two from the Religious Endorsing Bodies, one from one of the other two Network groups, and two at-large drawn from outside the COMISS Network. When there is a commissioner vacancy, CCAPS will receive applications from individuals representing the appropriate membership group. CCAPS will then make their recommendation to the National Leadership who will make the appointment.

ii. CCAPS will:

- 1. Propose and revise CCAPS standards
- 2. Conduct accreditation site visits of pastoral services
- 3. Represent the COMISS Network to external national accrediting bodies
- 4. Submit an annual report to the Network
- 5. Recommend nominees to the Network Leadership for the at-large commissioners from outside the Network.

iii. COMISS Network Leadership will:

- 1. Approve membership criteria for CCAPS
- 2. Appoint CCAPS commissioners. The commissioners will elect their own chair from among themselves.
- 3. Approve policies, procedures, and standards of CCAPS.

4. Approve CCAPS accreditation recommendations for pastoral services.

c. Pastoral Care Week Committee

- i. The purpose of the committee is to plan and implement the annual observance of Pastoral Care Week. A committee will be appointed by the COMISS Network Leadership from among the membership categories. The PCW observance is intended to raise awareness of the importance of pastoral/spiritual care. This includes, but is not limited to:
  1. Determination of a theme for a three-year cycle in advance.
  2. Promote and manage an opportunity for constituents to design and submit a graphic promoting a theme.
  3. Produce publicity and educational materials to support the theme.
  4. Contract with and supervise a manufacturer to supply materials
  5. Supervise sale and distribution of materials
- ii. The committee will elect its own chair.
- iii. The committee will present an annual report to the Annual Forum.

VII. Amendments and revisions to the Guidelines

- a. Will be developed as needed by the COMISS Network Leadership
- b. Will be sent to the voting member of record of each member organization 60 days prior to the Forum.
- c. Changes to the Guidelines shall be ratified by a simple majority of the voting members present at the annual Forum.

VIII. Required Quorum

- a. At the COMISS Network Leadership meetings, a simple majority (one more than half of the Network Leadership) is sufficient to take action.
- b. At the Annual Forum a simple majority of the voting members present is sufficient to take action.