

Spiritual Care - Brief COVID-19 Guidance for Health Care Workers TO REACH A STAFF CHAPLAIN 24/7, CALL HOSPITAL OPERATOR OR PAGE 619-290-1560

Professional chaplains and other spiritual caregivers recognize the incredible amounts of stress, worry, spiritual, physical and emotional suffering occurring in healthcare at this time. Although we seek to be at the bedside and by the sides of healthcare workers when needed, we understand this may not always be possible. We have created this brief guidance for all health care workers to address the spiritual needs of patients, their loved ones and your teams.

Remember: Spiritual care entails connection to loved ones, identity, connection to something bigger than oneself, whether that be explicitly religious or something like nature, science. Any health care worker can attend to these dimensions.

Prioritize your own spiritual well-being and self-care when/however you can

It is natural to think about your mortality in ways you may never have before. Providing “spiritual first aid” to yourself and your colleagues through brief check-ins are an important way to take care of yourself. [Supportive Care Coalition Caregiver Well-Being](#) and [GWish Resources for Coping with COVID-19 Webpage](#) provide helpful materials to cultivate hope and manage stress and anxiety.

Acknowledge legacy

Let patients, family members and colleagues know that you see the meaningful impact they make on their loved ones and the world.

Recognize regrets, reconciliation/forgiveness and expressions of love

Patients and family members may not have the opportunity to say they are sorry and forgive each other in the same physical space, but they can be encouraged to express regrets and expression of love anywhere and at any time.

Affirm dignity and community/connection

If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to patients; even if you are not sure they can hear you. You can include information you have learned from their family about their beloved qualities and let them know that loved ones are thinking (and praying, if applicable) for them.

Address family concerns about a peaceful death and respectful post mortem care

Hope for a peaceful death is consistent across all cultures and spiritual traditions. Some families will be particularly concerned about this and have certain assumptions and fears. It can be helpful for families to know that everything **possible** was done to keep their loved ones comfortable. In addition, morgue viewings and large (or any) gatherings for funerals may not be possible. Being sensitive to that (without trying to “fix” this reality) can be helpful for long-term healing.

Sacraments and Rituals

Most faith traditions have rituals or blessings for illness and end of life. If a chaplain is available, they can facilitate this. There are also several other published resources (see below).

Brief blessing for medical staff to offer when chaplain or clergy cannot be present

Honoring Death and Our Patient Care [Courtesy of UCSF Health Spiritual Care Services]

Let us pause to honor the life and mark the death of _____ . In this moment, we are _____’s community. Though their family, caregivers, and friends cannot be here, **we are here**. With compassion and skill, we have provided care, dignity, and comfort. May _____ know that we care for them, and be at peace. (*10 seconds of silence*). As caregivers we are essential in life and marking death. Our service is honored. As we transition from this moment to serve other people, let us hold compassion for ourselves, our team members and our patients. Thank you for being here. May we all be well and supported.

Resources:

[ACPE: The Standard for Spiritual Care & Education](#)
[Association of Professional Chaplains](#)
[Center to Advance Palliative Care](#)
[Chaplaincy Innovation Lab](#)
[COVID Spiritual Care](#)
[End of Life Nursing Education Consortium](#)
[Harvard Divinity School](#)

UC San Diego Health

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[Interprofessional Spiritual Care Education Curriculum](#)

[\(ISPEC\) Online Program](#)

[GWish Resources for Coping with COVID-19](#)

[Webpage](#)

[National Association of Catholic Chaplains](#)

[Spiritual Care Association](#)

[Supportive Care Coalition](#)

[Transforming Chaplaincy](#)