

Why should I take CPE?

CPE helps make people better pastors through integrating their theology and life, and applying this to their ministries. Through training in pastoral reflection, formation, and competence, students develop a greater understanding of themselves and the people they serve. They learn how to meet with people on a daily basis and provide care for them. This spiritual development equips students to serve and thrive in many ministry settings, such as church ministry, chaplaincy, lay ministry, teaching, and counseling.

CRCNA Chaplaincy endorsement and board certification require two completed units of CPE or specialized ministry training equivalent. Most full-time positions require four completed units.

Learn more

Contact us to learn more about:

- How to identify your learning goals
- Finding CPE that meets your needs
- Guidance in applying for CPE
- Expectations for completion
- How CPE can benefit your future ministry
- Training support grants

Contact us

Email: chaplaincy@crcna.org
Phone (USA): 616-224-0844
Phone (CAN): 1-877-279-9994

U.S. Office:
1700 28th St SE,
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Canadian Office:
3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070 STN LCD1
Burlington ON L7R 3Y8

Clinical Pastoral Education guide



What is CPE?

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) gives ministers the experience and tools to provide pastoral care in a variety of ministry settings. In CPE, students work in clinical settings such as hospitals, agencies, and health care centers, ministering to people in crisis within a diverse environment. Under close supervision and direction, CPE students are challenged to enhance their pastoral skills, reflect on their theological grounding, and develop greater self-awareness in addition to better understanding the people they serve.

CPE includes:

- 400 hours (300 clinical and 100 instruction) spread over 12 to 24 weeks
- Providing pastoral care to individuals and families
- Didactic and clinical seminars, and other educational opportunities
- Mutually supporting, working, and sharing with approximately six other students
- Detailed reporting and evaluation of one's pastoral care
- Pastoral supervision and mentorship by a Certified Educator of CPE

Where can I take CPE?

Many organizations offer CPE programs, but finding the right one requires research. Choosing a site depends on your CPE goals, timeline, and ministry setting. There are many different training centers, but here are a few that have widespread recognition in Canada and the U.S.:

Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) is one of the most recognized and accepted CPE program providers in the United States. They offer a variety of programs, including internships, residencies, and hybrid (with an online component) programs. These units of CPE meet the requirements for Association of Professional Chaplains Board Certification.

Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC) is the only professional chaplain certification and education organization in Canada. They are unique in that they offer both CPE and PCE (Pastoral Counselling Education). CASC has an agreement with ACPE and the Association of Professional Chaplains in which all units are accepted.

College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP) is recognized in certain pockets of the U.S. such as the west and east coasts. One unit from CPSP may be transferred for board certification through the Association of Professional Chaplains.

The Institute for Clinical Pastoral Training uses a heavy online component, featuring online learning modules, video conferencing, larger class sizes, and flexibility in allowing students to complete clinical hours in their current ministry setting. These units focus on developing skills, but have less focus on theological reflection and pastoral formation. They are not recognized by the ACPE.

Being there in moments that matter