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**Chapter Life**

Chapter life is the heart and soul of the CPSP Community. Chapters function as a small covenant community of clinically trained practitioners who are dedicated to professional competence within the clinical pastoral movement.

Chapter members meet together to build community and support one another, as well as to challenge and hold one another accountable to the standards that guide our professional practice. In this way, the values and commitments expressed in the Covenant of CPSP—collegial professional community; mutual responsibility; personal authority and creativity; persons over institutions—are each expressed most profoundly in our individual chapters.

According to the Standards of CPSP, chapter size should be no fewer than six and no more than twelve members. It is understood that at times of growth and transition, these limitations must be flexible, but they should be observed whenever possible. Mutual accountability requires a group that is both intimate enough to allow deep relationships and diverse enough to provide a variety of perspectives.

*All Conveners and chapter members should be familiar with CPSP Standards for Chapters.*

**Chapter Meetings**

Each chapter is unique and must determine for themselves the best way to organize meetings and engage in the necessary work of chapter life. That being said, healthy chapter life takes time. Chapters are encouraged to have extended meetings, even overnight meetings where possible.

The experience of many long-standing chapters has taught us that extended work sessions mixed with socializing events and sharing meals, enable chapter members to form more lasting bonds. A short, “business meeting” approach to chapter meetings is not conducive to healthy chapter life.

Chapters should meet for a *minimum* of two hours per member per year, and ideally would meet three or more hours per member per year to ensure enough time for case consultation, support, and accountability. Meetings should be scheduled far enough in advance to avoid conflicts and ensure all members can fully participate.

Chapter meetings generally should:

- Highlight and integrate the CPSP Covenant
- Allow for each member to regularly present clinical issues/cases for feedback and consultation
- Foster deep relationships through the sharing of personal concerns as well as socializing
- Monitor each member’s personal well-being and professional functioning.
- Review members’ readiness for certification and annual re-certification, providing ongoing guidance about areas of growth
- Encourage and provide for the continuing education of all members
- Communicate any news, updates, etc. from CPSP nationally to local members
- Limit time for inquirers/visitors to the chapter as this can disrupt chapter bonding

Some chapters have found the use of teleconferencing and video-conferencing software helpful in ensuring the participation of all members. This creativity and adaptability is encouraged, but should not be used to the complete exclusion of face-to-face gatherings.
Membership

As described in the CPSP Standards, chapter membership should be between six and twelve persons. These limits might seem arbitrary, but group dynamics begin to shift when there are more than twelve people in the room. The ability to maintain deep relationships and mutual accountability requires an intimate group. The same applies to minimum size: a minimum of members ensures that the chapter maintains a diversity of perspectives and avoids insular tendencies.

Diplomates and their clinical trainees should not be members of the same Chapter, nor should training supervisors and their SITs. This is a boundary issue. Failure to maintain this boundary leaves both the training supervisors and the trainees without the rich benefit of chapter life where both personal/professional issues can be fully addressed. Even if a trainee has completed the supervisory process, serious consideration and reflection is to be given to the advisability of a former trainee and supervisor being members of the same Chapter.

The chapter is responsible for helping candidates prepare for certification, as well as reviewing and documenting members’ re-certification on an annual basis. This process requires that chapters maintain a critical mass of at least four members at or above a given certification level. To certify and re-certify members at the Clinical Chaplain level, for example, requires at least four members who are certified as Clinical Chaplains, as well. Likewise, annual re-certification of Diplomates and oversight of their training centers requires at least four members certified at the Diplomate level. Chapters with fewer certified members than required to meet the standards, encouraged to partner with other chapters to ensure that certifications can be completed and maintained. This partnership must be clearly documented in the Annual Chapter Report forms submitted by both chapters.

Chapters are not only charged with the responsibility of supporting and challenging its members in their personal and professional journeys, but to provide responsible oversight of its members’ clinical training and service programs to insure the programs reflect CPSP’s Standards and CPSP’s commitment to the highest standards of clinical practice.

Chapters are strongly encouraged to also use an Outside Consultant to review and assess the life and vitality of their Chapter, especially in times of transaction.

Convener’s Role

The Convener is the primary point person for the chapter and the communication link with the larger CPSP community. Traditionally, the Convener also serves to organize and convene chapter meetings. Other administrative tasks required of the convener include, but are not limited to:

• Communicating any changes in the chapter’s membership and the payment of annual dues CPSP’s Administrative Coordinator (krista@cpsp.org)
• Overseeing and submitting required documentation for all Certifications and/or Accreditations
• Submitting of the Annual Chapter Report by January 1st of each year
• Communicating with the Committee on the Certification and Promotion of Chapters regarding any concerns related to the Chapter’s Annual Report
• Conveying information from CPSP Leadership to the other members of the chapter
• Arranging for an Outside Consultant to assist the chapter in times of formation, conflict, or transition
Chapters may determine other roles or positions to help facilitate other tasks necessary to maintain the chapter. Some examples of such tasks include:

- Keeping records of meetings (note: confidential personal or clinical information should not be detailed in such records)
- Maintaining any necessary financial accounts
- Coordinating technology and/or communication
- Coordinating and/or mentoring those in process of certification

Establishing a New Chapter

CPSP is a vibrant and growing organization, and as such new chapters form regularly. Some chapters begin as an off-shoot from an established chapter that has grown too large, while others begin when several persons affiliated with CPSP join to create a chapter where none previously existed.

Some things to be aware of in the forming of a new chapter:

- Chapters must submit a New Chapter Form to the Administrative Coordinator (krista@cpsp.org)
- All chapter members must enroll with CPSP and pay their annual dues
- Chapter names must be identifiable as a specific geographical location that does not overlap with or subsume other locations. A city or town name would be appropriate, but a state would not because multiple chapters might exist within a single state. Names that might be deemed offensive are also not permitted.
- To be recognized on the CPSP directory, a chapter must have no less than four and no more than twelve members. Temporary exceptions will be made for chapters that are newly forming or in transition.

- Diplomates and their trainees must not be members of the same chapter
- Newly forming chapters must utilize an Outside Consultant for feedback and guidance during their formation process. If you need assistance in finding a Consultant, contact your regional representative and/or the Chapter Life Committee.
- Chapters that do not yet have the critical mass required for certification at any given level are advised to seek a sponsoring chapter to assist in certification and re-certification.

Splitting a CPSP Chapter

When a CPSP Chapter decided to split into two or more chapters, the steps for this process are the same steps that should be taken for establishing a new chapter, including submitting a New Chapter Form. Please see the previous section for details.
CPSP National

CPSP Leadership & Governance
The Governing Council is the highest governing entity in CPSP. It establishes policies and creates official CPSP documents. The Governing Council meets twice yearly, once in the fall and once at Plenary (CPSP’s annual conference, held in the spring). The Governing Council is made up of the following sub-groups:

• The Executive Chapter – the CPSP President, General Secretary, Treasurer, and chairs of selected standing committees

• The Chapter of Diplomates – six Diplomates who represent the interests of all Diplomates and training programs in CPSP

• The Chapter of Chapters – six Chapter conveners, one from each of six geographically defined regions, who each represent the interests of all the chapters in their region.

The Chapter of Chapters is designed so that each geographical region has one representative who sits on the Governing Council and one alternate representative who can sit on the Council when the primary representative is not available. Each Chapter is encouraged to communicate with their regional representatives about issues related to the governance of CPSP. Regional gatherings or other forms of support and cooperation within regions are also encouraged.

A full listing of Committee Chairs, Regional Representatives, and other members of the Governing Council can be found on the CPSP website, under the Directory menu.

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National Gatherings of CPSP
CPSP gathers as a community every spring, usually in mid-March, for the Annual Plenary. All members are invited and encouraged to participate in this national gathering, and it is recommended that each chapter try to facilitate at least one member (ideally the Convener) attending Plenary each year by contributing financially to defray the expense. In this way the Convener can share with the whole chapter any important information and developments that affect the life of the CPSP community.

In addition to Plenary, CPSP has several regional events called National Clinical Training Seminars (NCTS) that take place around the country at different times throughout the year. Attendance at these regional gatherings is also highly recommended. Chapters that know what’s going on in the organization are able to contribute their insight and help shape the future of CPSP. They are also able to advocate for and accurately represent the organization in their local community. Chapters that do not participate run the risk of drifting away from the organization’s values and isolating themselves from the support of the wider CPSP community.