

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS LINDSEY P. HORVATH
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Providing Spiritual Supports to Specialized Populations

In the face of life's most challenging moments, a calm and comforting presence can make all the difference — someone alongside you offering a listening ear, thoughtful counsel, and spiritual support when you need it most. This presence is often embodied by a chaplain. Chaplains are unique in their capacity to serve diverse communities, providing pastoral care outside the traditional church. They are often the unsung heroes, quietly offering support where it's needed most, from hospitals, military, schools, and beyond. Their work is crucial, impacting lives every day.

Chaplaincy is a very specialized ministry where the minister serves not in a church nor "para-church" ministry, but in an institutional setting. The chaplain ministers not to a congregation, but to the public at large and communities. The people who make up the communities served by chaplains may vary in geography, culture, and beliefs and demonstrate a wide variety of needs, however chaplains are trained to provide spiritual support and guidance based what is being requested/accepted by the individual and/or

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community served. Chaplains are there to listen, care, and respond appropriately to the agenda of the client and/or their community.

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) has valued foundational work and projects that support the intersection between mental/behavioral health services and spiritual support. This work is done through several existing partnerships with Faith-Based organizations (FBOs) and Houses of Worship (HOW) through the eight (8) DMH Service Area Interfaith Collaboratives and the DMH Faith-Based Advocacy Council (FBAC). Additionally, through a partnership with the County Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership, DMH has collaborated with other County departments on faith-based events and information-sharing. To augment this work, DMH is seeking to provide spiritual support services to clients and their family members in need through hiring a Discipline Chief to serve as the DMH Chaplain to interface directly operated DMH clinics and the community at large and advise the Department on programming. The Chaplain will serve as the DMH Subject Matter Expert and advisor on working with Faith-Based organizations and serve as an ambassador for the Department, while bringing a Faith-Based perspective to department programming, services, operations, interface with clients, community and community partners.

The DMH Chaplain will advise the Department on how to better collaborate with communities of faith while honoring faith related beliefs and practices in treatment programming. The Chaplain will interface with Faith-Based partners, as well as clinic staff, clients and the communities that DMH serves through the creation of listening sessions and workgroups focused on spiritual support for various specialized populations, such as the re-entry population and individuals experiencing homelessness.

Through the hiring of a Discipline Chief Chaplain, DMH will be uniquely equipped to support DMH staff, consumers and their family members, and strengthen Faith-Based partnerships that build upon the natural strengths and well-being that come from individual spiritual connection and support grounded in faith related beliefs and practices.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Mental Health (DMH) in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to:

1. Identify and hire a Chaplain, funded with mental health realignment funding, to collaborate with faith-based partners, behavioral health and homeless services and housing providers, community and others.
2. Establish a voluntary faith-based subcommittee under the Chaplain focused on the behavioral health needs of people experiencing homelessness. The subcommittee should collaborate with existing bodies working on homelessness in the faith community.
3. Report to the Board in writing in 90 days, and quarterly thereafter on the status of implementing the above, including identified item, specified role and responsibilities, associated costs, and challenges and opportunities if any, until the Chaplain position and subcommittee have been established.

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