

***North Carolina State Board of Examiners of
Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counselors***

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Pastoral Counseling?

As the mental health and chaplaincy movements grew in the 1940s, many pastors began to use the new approaches to therapy in their own parish counseling. “Pastoral Counseling” initially came to mean “counseling by a pastor” and often has this connotation today. As pastors began formal, intense training in providing therapy, there began a new specialization in doing long-term, in-depth, faith-based therapy, commonly known as “Pastoral Counseling” or “Pastoral Psychotherapy.”

2. What is a North Carolina Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counselor?

“Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counselors” are ordained ministers with specialized education in therapy and the behavioral sciences who work with persons who may have mental illnesses and/or face other serious mental health issues. “Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counselors” are mental health service providers who specialize in spiritually integrated psychotherapy. NC law establishes standards that therapists must meet in order to work as Pastoral Counselors. The NCFBPPC Board of Examiners awards Certificate or Associate status to those who have met the corresponding criteria. “Fee-Based” means that Pastoral Counselors may charge a fee for their services. “Practicing” denotes that they are conducting counseling as a profession. At the Associate level, trainees work under supervision. At the Certificate level, they work on their own and may also file for insurance reimbursement. “Pastoral Counselor” is considered the same as “Pastoral Psychotherapist” under NC law.

3. What is Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counseling?

“Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counseling” focuses through the lens of faith on the relationships one has with oneself, family, friends, coworkers, and the Pastoral Counselor. It is done at specific times, at specific locations, with charges spelled out in advance. Pastors on a church staff may offer counseling to their parishioners as part of their role as pastors, but it is not legal in the state of North Carolina for pastors to charge a fee for counseling their own church members. NCFBPPC have completed the requirements to be certified by the state and charge a fee for their counseling services. Everything discussed in Pastoral Counseling is regarded as

confidential. Individuals, couples, families, and groups may participate in Pastoral Counseling.

4. How is Pastoral Counseling different from other forms of counseling?

Pastoral Counseling integrates care for clients' spiritual well-being as well as their mental health, recognizing that the two are intertwined. It looks for long-term solutions rather than quick fixes. It focuses on deeply held beliefs and experiences that influence thinking, feeling, and behavior as well as strategies for managing present and future symptoms. Discussions about faith, theology, spirituality, and ethics are welcomed in Pastoral Counseling.

5. How is Pastoral Counseling similar to other forms of counseling?

A pastoral counselor/psychotherapist is like any other mental health service provider in their knowledge and practice of the behavioral sciences (for example, licensed professional counselor, marriage and family therapist, clinical social worker), however, the pastoral counselor/psychotherapist is unique in their formal training in spiritually integrated therapy. Recent research indicates that mental health outcomes are improved when clinicians consider the whole person, and that includes faith and spirituality.

6. What's the difference between a church staff counselor and a Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counselor (NCFBPPC)?

Pastors on a church staff may offer counseling to their parishioners as part of their role as pastors. They may legally call themselves Pastoral Counselors, but in North Carolina pastors may not charge a fee for counseling their own church members. NCFBPPC have completed the requirements to be certified by the state and may charge a fee for counseling services. Most pastors do not have the training or the time to conduct long-term, in-depth psychotherapy.

7. What is the difference between Certificate and Associate levels?

The main differences between Certificate and Associate levels are the requirements for hours of clinical work and hours of supervision. In addition, therapists working as NCFBPPC-Associates must be under supervision by an approved supervisor and cannot file for third party reimbursement. Therapists at the Certificate level may file for third party reimbursement.

8. Does the Board of Examiners provide rules and regulations that govern Fee-Based Pastoral Counseling?

The Board acts in accordance with North Carolina law. The role of the Board is to implement the law as established in Article 26 of the General Statutes.

Excerpted from the Board of Examiners' Website:

<https://www.ncpastoralcounseling.org/faq.html>

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