

Chapter 18

Certification in Specialized Areas of Ministry

For more information, contact GBHEM's Director of Deacon Ministry Development and Provisional Membership at deacons@gbhem.org or (615) 340-7375. See also www.gbhem.org/certification.

Qualifications for Certification in Specialized Ministry

- Called to specialized ministry
- Committed to meeting the standards for academic training
- Experienced in a particular area
- Committed to continuing education and development in the area of specialized ministry
- Dedicated to achieving and maintaining ministerial excellence

Standards for Certification

- Faith formation
- Academic training
- Experience
- UMC membership
- Continuing study in the area of specialization

Certification Tracks

UNDERGRADUATE – for undergraduate students.

- Earn undergraduate degree, including certification courses at a UM-related college/university that offers a GBHEM-approved program (qualifying institutions are listed at www.gbhem.org/certification).
- Complete two years of employment in the specialized area.

PROFESSIONAL – graduate-level training for lay, licensed or ordained leaders who have an undergraduate degree and take graduate level courses

- Master's degree in the area of specialization
- Bachelor's degree that includes the required certification courses
- Bachelor's degree and five graduate-level certification courses

PARAPROFESSIONAL – for those who do not have a college degree and are working or volunteering in a specialized ministry.

- Focuses on training and skill development rather than academic credit
- Is available for those employed or volunteering in an area of specialized ministry
- Requires completion of a GBHEM-approved jurisdictional, Annual Conference or UM-related college/university program (See www.gbhem.org/certification)

OTHER

- United Methodist jurisdictions, Annual Conferences, colleges and universities may submit proposals for programs to GBHEM for approval.

Areas of Specialization in Each Track

- Camping/Retreat Ministries
- Children's Ministry
- Christian Education
- Evangelism
- Ministry with People with Disabilities
- Ministry with the Poor
- Music Ministry
- Older Adult Ministry
- Spiritual Formation Ministry
- United Methodist Parish Nurse Ministry
- Urban Ministry
- Youth Ministries

Certification Process

- Candidate notifies BOM of interest in seeking certification
- Candidate begins studies at an approved institution for UM certification classes (List available at www.gbhem.org/certification)
- Candidate downloads and completes the appropriate Enrollment Form from www.gbhem.org/education/certification. This initiates the candidate's course completion records and entitles the candidate for professional certification to apply for scholarships.
- Candidate completes education requirements
- Candidate downloads and completes the appropriate Application for Certification Form from www.gbhem.org/certification once education requirements are complete
- GBHEM confirms completion of educational requirements and forwards the application and confirmation of completed education to the conference BOM

- BOM confirms church membership, academic background, employment/vocational interest and present employment, including years of service
- Applicant completes required psychological assessment and background checks, which are administered by the BOM
- BOM certification committee confirms that personal, church, educational and employment requirements are fulfilled
- BOM certification committee reviews application, references and transcripts, and interviews applicant
- BOM certification committee makes a recommendation regarding the application to the BOM. The BOM acts on the committee's recommendation and informs the applicant of the decision. Certifications are reported in the Annual Conference journal
- The BOM Registrar notifies the Office of Certification in Specialized Ministry at GBHEM in writing of the BOM's decision
- GBHEM prepares the certificate and mails it to the registrar with an accompanying letter and sends a copy of the letter to the applicant (Forms and certificates are available only through GBHEM's Office of Certification.)
- BOM maintains the files of the certified ministry specialists, including applications and achievement of milestones (approved certification and renewals)
- BOM presents the certificate to the applicant at Annual Conference

Certification Interview

- The interview committee should explore the candidate's interpersonal and leadership skills, emotional and spiritual maturity, dedication to and understanding of The United Methodist Church, commitment to continuing education and development and ability to apply his or her education to ministry.
- A certification interview need not be as thorough as an interview for clergy credentialing.
- A written report of the interview, including the team's recommendation to the BOM, should be placed in the applicant's file.
- **Suggested interview questions**
 - Describe the nature and mission of the church. How will your ministry further this mission?
 - In what ways do you fulfill your call and commitment to the church's ministry as a certified ministry specialist?
 - Describe the ministry setting in which you are involved. How is your ministry specialty important in this setting?
 - How does your work contribute to a vital, healthy congregation?
 - Describe how you make use of United Methodist resources in your ministry.
 - How would you contribute to healthy ministry partnerships among staff at your ministry setting?
 - How do you anticipate your field of ministry will develop in the next 10 to 15 years?
 - Share some positive and negative experiences in both your ministry and personal life this last year. How have these led to growth for you, in your spiritual, ministry and personal life?
 - What are your plans for continuing education for personal and professional growth?
 - Do you have any questions for the interview team or BOM?

Role of the BOM in Certification

- Assigns a committee or board member to fulfill governance responsibilities for certification ministry careers following the GBHEM guidelines (§635.1c, §635.2u, §1421.1d, §1421.3e)

- Administers the certification process in cooperation with the appropriate general agency for each certification
 - **General Board of Higher Education and Ministry** – Children’s Ministry, Christian Education, Collegiate Ministry, Evangelism, Ministry with Persons with Disabilities, Ministry with the Poor, Music Ministry, Older Adult Ministry, Spiritual Formation, United Methodist Parish Nursing (ordained clergy), Urban Ministry, Youth Ministry
 - **Discipleship Ministries** – Camping and Retreat Ministry, Parish Nursing (non-ordained)
 - **General Council on Finance and Administration** – Business Administration
 - **United Methodist Communications** – Communications
- Maintains records of all who have been certified in areas of specialized ministry and in each even-numbered, year reports their names, addresses, status and areas of certification to GBHEM. Official reporting forms, resources and guidelines for the certification process can be downloaded from www.gbhem.org/education/certification
- In consultation with GBHEM, determines whether applicants meet the standards for certification in a specialized area of ministry
- Interviews candidates and administers psychological assessments and background checks
- Recommends approval to the BOM and Annual Conference session for those who have met certification standards
- Renews or discontinues professional certification based on a biennial review (in even-numbered years) and an evaluation of all certified ministry specialists
- Provides support to ensure opportunities for continuing education and professional growth and addresses matters pertaining to morale, fulfilling employment and ministry settings
- Publishes the roster of all clergy and laity currently certified in areas of specialized ministry in the conference journal annually

Certification Renewal

- All certified ministry specialists must renew their certification every two years (even-numbered years) in order to maintain active certification, regardless of when the candidate received initial certification.
- Registrar’s responsibilities
 - Sends renewal forms (HE4004) with cover letter giving deadline date for return to those certified
 - Presents returned forms to the reviewing committee for evaluation and reports to the BOM
 - Submits recommendations on renewal to the BOM executive committee for the committee’s approval
 - Reports the BOM’s decision to those renewing their certification
 - Reports the names and specialties of those whose certification has been renewed to the Annual Conference for recording in the conference journal
 - Reports the BOM’s decisions on renewal requests to GBHEM

Transfer of Certification to Another Annual Conference

- The certified ministry specialist who is moving to a ministry setting in another conference may transfer his or her certification credentials. The specialist writes to the receiving and sending conference’s BOMs, asking that certification credentials and records be transferred between the Annual Conferences.
- The receiving conference BOM may wish to interview the certified person before requesting or approving transfer of credentials.

- The sending conference BOM sends file with cover letter to the registrar of the receiving conference BOM and sends copy of cover letter to the certified person.
- Both conferences report the transfer in their Annual Conference report with dates of transfer in or out and send notification and contact information of the certified person to GBHEM.
- The receiving conference's BOM is responsible for maintaining these files and making sure that the transferring person is included in renewal reminders, in conference journal reports, etc.

Certificate Replacement

Those who have lost their original certificates may request a new one through the BOM. The BOM shall confirm that the person's certification remains in good standing and send a written request to GBHEM for a replacement certificate. GBHEM will send the replacement to the BOM to give to the individual.