



FAQs: Confidential Communications to Navy Chaplains

Q1. Is this a new policy?

A1. No. Confidentiality has been a standard practice for the Navy Chaplain Corps since 1775 and is part of a sacred trust between you and your chaplain. In order to better communicate this benefit and better protect everyone involved, the Navy made it official policy on February 7, 2008 under SECNAVINST 1730.9. All Navy chaplains have a professional obligation to keep all information disclosed to them, which is not intended for a third party, private.

Q2. Do confidential communications apply only to discussions of religious matters?

A2. No. All communications that are intended to be private between Navy chaplains and those who confide in them are covered by the policy.

Q3. Does the confidentiality policy apply only to certain settings?

A3. No. Individuals are afforded complete protection under this policy in all places. The conversation should take place in complete privacy to guarantee the confidential nature of the conversation.



Q4. Will the chaplain tell my commanding officer or someone in my chain of command?

A4. No. The unique role of Navy chaplains includes a sacred trust of maintaining confidentiality. Therefore, chaplains are bound by this unbreakable trust. Commanders are required to honor the confidential relationship between service personnel and chaplains and therefore cannot compel a chaplain to break confidentiality. *You* hold the key.

In times of crisis, chaplains will always assist in guiding an individual to the appropriate resources. If the individual needs the chaplain to help with something beyond the chaplain's capabilities or expertise, then it is up to the individual, alone, to waive confidentiality in order for the chaplain to share any information with another provider. During couples counseling, *both* parties need to agree to waive confidentiality in order for the chaplain to share any information with another provider.



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Q5. Does this policy apply to Religious Program Specialists and Chaplain Assistants?

A5. Yes. Religious Program Specialists and others who assist the chaplain may become aware of confidential communications in the course of their support duties. In that event, they are obligated to immediately refer the matter to the chaplain and keep that information confidential.

Q6. What if I confide in a lay leader or religious education support personnel?

A6. Confidential communications do not extend to lay leaders or directors of religious education. Lay leaders or directors of religious education who inadvertently become aware of confidential communications must immediately refer the matter to a chaplain and must keep such matters confidential.

Q7. Do I have to be religious to seek support from a Navy chaplain?

A7. No. Chaplains are committed to supporting *you and your families* with dignity, respect and compassion, regardless of your individual beliefs and religious or personal convictions. One of the unique ways we do this is through the Navy's policy on confidential communications to chaplains.

Navy chaplains are available to provide you a safe place to talk *without fear or judgment* and to serve as your *advocate* to help you get the support needed to overcome the challenges you face. Contact your command chaplain today!

Don't know who your nearest chaplain is?

Scan here for a listing of chaplain offices on Navy installations:



To learn more about the Navy's policy on confidential communications to chaplains, refer to SECNAV Instruction 1730.9 or scan here:



Still have questions? Visit www.navy.mil/local/chaplaincorps and click on the Confidentiality tab.
