

Mental Health Integration for Chaplain Services (MHICS) training program

Description and Course Overviews 2021-2022

Mental Health Integration for Chaplain Services (MHICS) is an intensive sub-specialty training that aims to better equip chaplains in the provision of care to Veterans and Service members with emotional and psychosocial challenges. This innovative training tailored to the contexts of VA and DoD chaplains uses formational, interactive, and applied methods to cultivate knowledge and skills in evidence-based psychosocial and integrative approaches to spiritual and pastoral care. Our aim is to further develop professional chaplaincy through the application of new and relevant skills within the contexts chaplains serve, whether clinical, training, or operational. Faculty and presenters include top experts from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and academic settings.

The MHICS training program spans three academic semesters, each consisting of a course and participation in practicum small-group consultation calls. Each course requires completing distance modules, a written paper, and attending a multi-day training intensive. Each distance module is comprised of three 50-60-minute video didactics, readings, and interactive online assignments, requiring an estimated time of 8-12 hours each to complete. There is substantial flexibility in choosing when to complete the distance modules within guidelines provided to maximize small-group engagement.

Consultation calls focus on application of material through case examples. Regularly scheduled 90-minute small-group consultation calls using video conferencing occur during the second week of each distance module. All participants present actual (de-identified) cases during their small-group calls as part of learning how to incorporate different evidence-based modalities into their chaplain care – in particular, Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT), Problem-Solving Training (PST), and Motivational Interviewing (MI) – and to enhance collaboration with interdisciplinary colleagues.

An overview of the MHICS training program is provided below (course content is subject to recurring change and improvement).

In response to consistent feedback from participants desiring a credential more commensurate with the substantial work entailed in MHICS, chaplains admitted to MHICS may apply to Vanderbilt Divinity School (VDS) to pursue a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) in Integrative Chaplaincy and earn academic credit while completing MHICS. See divinity.vanderbilt.edu/dmin for more information and the final page of this overview for a comparison of the MHICS and D.Min. options. VA and DoD chaplains funded by their Service wishing to complete MHICS without pursuing the D.Min. will have that option.

Please e-mail any questions to the Mental Health and Chaplaincy program office at: MH-C@va.gov

For more information, visit: <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/mentalhealthandchaplaincy/MHICS.asp>.



Course #1

Innovations in Care for Mental Health and Chaplaincy

August 25 – December 13, 2021

This first course involves a face-to-face kickoff that introduces chaplains to the MHICS training program, followed by six distance modules. Students examine historical and contemporary possibilities for integrating spiritual and psychosocial approaches to care and consider chaplaincy standards of practice, particularly in the context of interdisciplinary teamwork. They then consider and explore integration of principles from three evidence-based practices (EBPs)--Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT), Motivational Interviewing (MI), and Problem-Solving Training (PST)--into their chaplaincy care. Consultation calls focus on integrating course materials and collaboration with interdisciplinary colleagues.

- ❖ **Face-to-face* training intensive: August 31 – September 2 (or Sep. 3), 2021**
 - ❖ *Day 1: Developing the framework*
 - ❖ *Day 2: Integrating chaplaincy and mental health care*
 - ❖ *Day 3: Emerging possibilities for pastoral and psychological care (half day)*
 - ❖ *Day 4: D.Min. students complete extra day (afternoon on Day 3 plus half day on Day 4)*

- ❖ **Module 1: Pastoral care and approaches to psychotherapy (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 1.1: History of psychotherapy and pastoral care*
 - ❖ *Unit 1.2: Defining "evidence-based" in psychotherapy*
 - ❖ *Unit 1.3: Overview of contemporary psychotherapies*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 2: Chaplaincy standards of practice (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 2.1: Spiritual assessment*
 - ❖ *Unit 2.2: Screening, referral, and informed consent*
 - ❖ *Unit 2.3: Documentation of chaplaincy care*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 3: Spiritual care and innovations (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 3.1: Spiritual practices and contemporary psychotherapy*
 - ❖ *Unit 3.2: Mindfulness*
 - ❖ *Unit 3.3: Possibilities for spiritual care in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 4: Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT; 2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 4.1: Introduction to ACT: The perils of language*
 - ❖ *Unit 4.2: The practice of ACT: Facilitating the process of change*
 - ❖ *Unit 4.3: Applications of ACT within chaplaincy*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 5: Motivational Interviewing Training (MI; 2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 5.1: Motivational Interviewing: An introduction*
 - ❖ *Unit 5.2: Motivational Interviewing: Fundamental skills*
 - ❖ *Unit 5.3: Motivational Interviewing: Considerations and techniques*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 6: Problem-Solving Training (PST; 2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 6.1: Problem Solving Training: An introduction*
 - ❖ *Unit 6.2: Problem Solving Training: Treatment components and tools*
 - ❖ *Unit 6.3: Problem Solving Training: Applications for chaplaincy*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

*Training intensives are typically in person; due to COVID-19, the required on-campus instruction was remote for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021.

Course #2

Signs and Symptoms in Mental Health and Chaplaincy

January 11 – May 9, 2022

The second MHICS course provides six distance modules of intensive training on mental health problems that are prevalent and/or are of particular importance within Veteran and Service member populations. Students examine approaches to and contexts for mental health care and the etiology and treatment of mental health concerns, including mood disorders, substance abuse, serious mental illness, suicide, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and moral injury. Consultation calls focus on the application of ACT in chaplaincy care.

- ❖ **Face-to-face* training intensive: January 11-13 (or Jan. 14), 2022**
 - ❖ *Day 1: Applied ACT/PST/MI training*
 - ❖ *Day 2: Applied ACT/PST/MI training*
 - ❖ *Day 3: Applied ACT/PST/MI training (half day)*
 - ❖ *Day 4: D.Min. students complete extra day (afternoon on Day 3 plus half day on Day 4)*

- ❖ **Module 1: Mental health essentials (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 1.1: Mental health providers and settings*
 - ❖ *Unit 1.2: Mental health diagnoses*
 - ❖ *Unit 1.3: Pharmacotherapy*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 2: Mood disorders, substance abuse, and serious mental illness (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 2.1: Depression and mood disorders*
 - ❖ *Unit 2.2: Substance use disorders*
 - ❖ *Unit 2.3: Serious Mental Illness (SMI)*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 3: Suicide (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 3.1: Suicide in military and veteran populations*
 - ❖ *Unit 3.2: Suicide prevention*
 - ❖ *Unit 3.3: Religion, spirituality, and suicide*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 4: Upstream Suicide Prevention (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 4.1: Human flourishing*
 - ❖ *Unit 4.2: Stress and resilience*
 - ❖ *Unit 4.3: Demographic considerations*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 5: Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; 2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 5.1: Overview and evolution of PTSD*
 - ❖ *Unit 5.2: Evidence-based psychotherapy for PTSD*
 - ❖ *Unit 5.3: Military Sexual Trauma (MST)*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 6: Moral injury (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 6.1: Moral injury Part I*
 - ❖ *Unit 6.2: Moral injury Part II*
 - ❖ *Unit 6.3: Providing care for moral injury*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

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Course #3
Contemporary Conversations in Mental Health and Chaplaincy
August 24 – December 12, 2022

In the third MHICS course, students examine topics at the intersection of chaplaincy, spirituality, and mental health care, including: links between religiousness/spirituality and mental health; research methods for chaplaincy; the complexities and necessity of care for care providers, staff, and leadership; culturally responsive spiritual care; and suffering and resilience. Consultation calls focus on the application of PST and MI in chaplaincy care.

- ❖ **Module 1: Spirituality and linkages to mental health (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *PST/MI training refresher*
 - ❖ *Unit 1.1: Examining the relationship between spirituality and health: Promises and pitfalls*
 - ❖ *Unit 1.2: Research growth and trends in spirituality and health*
 - ❖ *Unit 1.3: Spiritual care in a time of therapeutic technique*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 2: Research methods for chaplaincy (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 2.1: Approaches to research within chaplaincy*
 - ❖ *Unit 2.2: Toward a research informed chaplaincy*
 - ❖ *Unit 2.3: Mixed methods for systematic inquiry and evaluating the impact of care*
 - ❖ *Practicum Call*

- ❖ **Module 3: Care for the care provider (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 3.1: Stress response and self-care*
 - ❖ *Unit 3.2: Care for the care providers and command*
 - ❖ *Unit 3.3: ACT for the care provider*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 4: Special pastoral concerns (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 4.1: Post-deployment adjustment and spirituality among recent Veterans*
 - ❖ *Unit 4.2: Marriage and family issues for Veterans and Service members*
 - ❖ *Unit 4.3: Advanced topics in selected populations*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 5: Culturally responsive care (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 5.1: Culturally responsive care*
 - ❖ *Unit 5.2: Contextualizing mental health care*
 - ❖ *Unit 5.3: Culturally responsive spiritual care*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Module 6: Spirituality, suffering, and resilience (2 weeks)**
 - ❖ *Unit 6.1: A theological rethinking of trauma and suffering*
 - ❖ *Unit 6.2: Resilience*
 - ❖ *Unit 6.3: Human flourishing*
 - ❖ *Practicum call*

- ❖ **Face-to-face* training intensive: December 6-8 (or Dec. 9), 2022**
 - ❖ *Day 1: MHICS application*
 - ❖ *Day 2: Sustainability*
 - ❖ *Day 3: Course evaluation and graduation (half day)*
 - ❖ *Day 4: D.Min. students complete extra day (afternoon on Day 3 plus half day on Day 4)*

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Comparison of MHICS and Doctor of Ministry in Integrative Chaplaincy

The MHICS training program occurs over the course of three academic semesters. Chaplains admitted to MHICS may apply to Vanderbilt Divinity School to pursue a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) in Integrative Chaplaincy, with their work as part of MHICS going toward academic credit for the D.Min. The D.Min. entails a total of 36 credit hours, 24 of which can be earned while completing MHICS. In addition to completing all of the same work as the students only pursuing MHICS, D.Min. students complete extra readings, assignments (e.g., quizzes, exams), and practicum work (e.g., case write-ups, peer calls) – with all work contributing to letter grades (as opposed to the pass/fail work for MHICS only) submitted to the VDS Office of the Registrar at the end of each semester and contributing to a cumulative GPA. D.Min. students also attend one extra day as part of each of the three MHICS training intensives (i.e., 3.5-days instead of 2.5-days) and attend an additional multi-day on-campus training intensive* after MHICS during the Spring Term of the 2nd Year. Both D.Min. and MHICS students receive a MHICS completion certificate upon satisfactory completion of the three semesters of coursework. Students who begin only pursuing MHICS cannot later decide to pursue the D.Min. in Integrative Chaplaincy – they must apply and be accepted to the D.Min. through Vanderbilt Divinity School before the training begins. The table below compares the MHICS and D.Min. options.

Year	Term	Coursework	MHICS	D.Min. (credit hrs)
1 st Year	Fall	Innovations in Care for Mental Health and Chaplaincy Practicum	✓	✓ ⁺ (4) ✓ ⁺ (4)
	Spring	Signs and Symptoms in MH and Chaplaincy Practicum	✓	✓ ⁺ (4) ✓ ⁺ (4)
2 nd Year	Fall	Contemporary Conversations in MH and Chaplaincy Practicum	✓	✓ ⁺ (4) ✓ ⁺ (4)
	Spring	D.Min. Research Project Seminar I Research Course I		✓ (3) ✓ (3)
3 rd Year	Fall	Research Course II		✓ (3)
	Spring	D.Min. Research Project Seminar II		✓ (3)

⁺ Extra readings, assignments, and practica work required for D.Min. Only D.Min. students earn credit hours.

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