

## **BOP Chaplains Balance Safety and Ministry**

Chaplains of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) serve out of their calling, with courage, and care. BOP Chaplains minister within conflict laden and dangerous federal prison correctional environment. BOP Chaplains are needed to be peace makers and promote wider hope, healing, and transformation of inmates, staff, and the wider community. BOP Chaplains reach, reconcile, and restore all lives affected by crime incarceration which includes inmates, correctional staff, wider communities, and the public. While correctional work is not for the faint of heart and is difficult on a good day, it is also incredibly rewarding and miraculous work. When BOP Chaplains truly provide healing to deepest levels of human brokenness, further justice and mercy emerges.

At its core, federal enforcement ministry at the BOP is one of balancing security for everyone's safety and our Chaplaincy specific duties to teach and preach of our own faith, ensure religious accommodations across any and all faiths, provide spiritual and pastoral care, as well as effective faith-based reentry programming.

All staff at the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), including Chaplains, undergo the same federal law enforcement training as correctional officers. BOP Chaplains are classified as law enforcement because we, like all institutional staff, operate within the confines of prison walls among the incarcerated. We help during crises, respond to body alarms when other staff require help, and support various emergency situations. Everyone working in this dangerous environment is classified as law enforcement. Furthermore, like other staff in this setting, we occasionally cover non-chapel posts alongside our primary Chaplaincy role. Our ministry is unique in this aspect and different than many other correctional Chaplains serving in jails or state prisons.

BOP Chaplains must meet *both* the security and spiritual programming needs of all federal offenders. The successful balance of our correctional and security responsibilities, alongside our Chaplaincy leadership, is essential to provide the necessary religious accommodations, pastoral care, and faith-based reentry programming for the inmates we serve. This ministerial balance is directly tied to federal laws, agency policies, and our position descriptions. Therefore, it is critical for religious endorsers to understand – just as we interact with agency Chaplains according to our employment policy, mandatory training, and directives from Central Office – the kind of correctional posts that are most appropriate given our pastoral roles. Field Chaplains should be supported through effective

teamwork, clear communication, and collaboration with their local institutional Chain of Command (their Associate Wardens and Wardens) to request augmentation posts that best align with their individual religious beliefs, pastoral roles, and endorsement.

Routine augmentation or covering institutional posts have been occurring more regularly as of late due to significant agency budgetary and staffing constraints. The fact that the BOP received an additional 5 billion dollars over the next five years will hopefully help elevate the regularity of augmentation. In the PP I also attached, there are additional ways for us to partner to support endorsed BOP Chaplains. For instance, our office will be offering *Chaplaincy Familiarization* mandatory training virtually the last week of August and again in mid-September, if you want to join us for any or all of the sessions, please let me know at [hkugler@bop.gov](mailto:hkugler@bop.gov).

Thank you for the many ways you support and care for BOP endorsed Chaplains. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with NCMAF and all of its endorsers. As always, if you or your Chaplains have further questions, concerns, or want to discuss how best to work with the institutional and regional Chain of Command, please let me know as my team and I are all here to help. May God continue to guide, empower, and compel us together to meet wider federal ministry needs.

Blessings, peace, and prayers- CH Heidi Kugler, BOP Chief of Chaplains