



## Confidential Communications to Navy Chaplains

## Fact Sheet

“By patient, sympathetic labors with the crew, day in, day out, and through many a night, every chaplain I know contributed immeasurably to the moral courage of our fighting men; none of this appears in statistics. Most of it *necessarily secret* between pastor and confidant. It is for that toil, in the cause both of God and country, that I honor the chaplain most.”

*-Fleet Admiral Chester A. Nimitz, USN*

- Chaplains are committed to caring for all Sailors, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and their families with dignity, respect and compassion, *regardless of an individual's faith beliefs.*
- Rooted in the sacred trust between an individual and a chaplain, chaplains are bound by unbreakable confidentiality.
- What you say to a chaplain in confidence stays *between you and the chaplain*, unless you decide differently. *You hold the key.*
  - Service members and families have the right and privilege to confidential communication with a Navy chaplain.
  - Chaplains have the obligation and responsibility to protect and guard the confidential communications disclosed to them.
  - Commanders honor and support the unique, confidential relationship between an individual and a chaplain.
- Chaplains cannot be compelled by the command, medical professionals or others to disclose what a service member or family member shares in confidence.





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- While chaplains are not bound by mandatory reporting requirements in DOD or DON, chaplains will always assist in guiding an individual to the appropriate resources. *Chaplains will not leave an individual alone when the individual or others are at risk.*
- Information conveyed to a Religious Program Specialist (RP) or a Chaplain's Assistant for further communication to a Navy chaplain is also considered confidential.
- The confidential relationship extends to written communication like letters, emails and text messages, beyond the end of the counseling relationship with the chaplain, and also beyond the death of the individual making the disclosure. All counseling records are considered confidential and must be safeguarded and destroyed when no longer needed.
- The chaplain is available to provide Sailors, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and families a *safe place* to talk *without fear or judgment*. Chaplains serve as an advocate to help individuals get the support needed to overcome the challenges they face.

Don't know who your nearest chaplain is? Call Navy 311 to request chaplain support in your area: 1-855-NAVY-311 or text to: Navy311@navy.mil

To learn more about the Navy's policy on confidential communications to chaplains, refer to SECNAV Instruction 1730.9: <http://doni.daps.dla.mil/allinstructions.aspx> or scan here:

Still have questions?

Visit [www.chaplain.navy.mil](http://www.chaplain.navy.mil), and click on the Confidentiality tab.

