



DCoE Brief

**USF-I Chaplains
Baghdad, Iraq**

The background is a dark blue field with several lighter blue, five-pointed stars scattered across it. In the upper right corner, there are dark silhouettes of two figures, one taller than the other, standing together. At the bottom of the image, a thick red curved line separates the blue background from a white area.

I Life as a Chaplain and Chaplain's Assistant in Theater

How much time is spent counseling on psychological health issues v. spiritual issues?

- **MEDCOM RST**

- No difference. Most counseling is “reframing” the event or problem; which includes Spiritual realm.

- **FAMILY LIFE**

- Chaplain adds the human dimension to the Army.
- Chaplain offers a relational aspect.
- All counseling has a spiritual element.
- Healthy spirituality develops psychological health.

- **CORPS CHAPLAIN PLANNER**

- Chaplains bring unique perspective, religious/spiritual/sectarian.
- Teaming with Behavioral Health enhances care – collaborative.

- **NAVY RMT**

- Little or no counseling on issues called “psychological or spiritual.” Most counseling deals with marital and relationship issues.

How the Chaplain and Chaplain's Assistant work as a team?

- **MEDCOM RST**

- Clear lines of work; supporting one another. Establishing clear lines of work. Trusting each other to do their job. Recognizing each others gifts and abilities.

- **FAMILY LIFE**

- Chaplain and Assistant model relationship in combat.
- Roles need to have clearly understood.
- Have to support each other.

- **CORPS CHAPLAIN PLANNER**

- Remember the “supervisory” nature of the relationship.
- Encouraging external sources for pastoral/personal care when needed.

- **NAVY RMT**

- In the Navy they are “THE” team

What type of personal crisis do Chaplains and Chaplain's Assistants face themselves?

- **MEDCOM RST**

- Same as others; usually older so different life-cycle things going on.
- Isolation and assumption that everything is OK. Things must be bad if the Chaplain or Chaplain Assistant is having a bad day.

- **FAMILY LIFE**

- Chaplain and assistant role as pastor/non-combatant .
- Recognition for efforts – best efforts hard to quantify.
- Integration with their units.

- **CORPS CHAPLAIN PLANNER**

- Narrowly defined pastoral identity lends to unrealistic expectations and isolation from other care-givers and healthy sense of self.

- **NAVY RMT**

- Personal crises we face are separation, stress, fatigue from working long hours.



II Personal Supports

What coping strategies do Chaplains and Chaplain Assistants use to cope with compassion fatigue and getting burned out?

- **MEDCOM RST**

- Finding friends to walk along side of me. Maintaining relationships with others who may not be deployed. Physical fitness; journaling.

- **FAMILY LIFE**

- Rest/work cycle.
- 6 ½ day work week.
- Relationship – having someone to share the struggles.
- Use downtime as a way to recuperate.
- Exercise.

- **CORPS CHAPLAIN PLANNER**

- Well defined pastoral identity shapes decisions for success.
- Allows room for “re-creation” and personal/pastoral development.

- **NAVY RMT**

- Devotions, prayer, personal journal, Skype, exercise, sleep and diet.

What type of support do Chaplains receive from their denominations and how does that help them cope?

- **MEDCOM RST**

- Maintaining contact while deployed. Retreats upon return; informal get-togethers when home on R&R.

- **FAMILY LIFE**

- Communication with denomination is healthy.
- Connection and support for military.
- Encouragement spiritually through resources.

- **CORPS CHAPLAIN PLANNER**

- Chaplains must reconcile denominational and Chaplaincy mandates
- Resources and coaching that facilitate reconciliation are helpful.

- **NAVY RMT**

- letting me know that they are praying for me and my family, sending denominational news and information.

How does the training Chaplains and Chaplain Assistants receive help them to cope?

- **MEDCOM RST**

- CPE helps to look at things objectively. Medical RST's require CPE of Chaplains and EMM/CMM course of Chaplain Assistants. Spiritual Renewal and Resiliency Training course provides some great insights into compassion fatigue.

- **FAMILY LIFE**

- Encourages growth.
- Helps the team stay networked – prevents isolation.
- Relief from the busy routine.

- **CORPS CHAPLAIN PLANNER**

- Development on honest self-evaluation is exceedingly helpful.
- This kind of self-awareness facilitates better decisions and resiliency.

- **NAVY RMT**

- CPE
- Compassion Fatigue/Combat Stress



III

Way Ahead Discussion

What resources are available to Chaplains and Chaplain Assistants to get help for psychological health issues such as compassion fatigue?

- **MEDCOM RST**

- CSC Chaplains and BDE Chaplains.
- Previous Chaplain supervisors.

- **FAMILY LIFE**

- Resources for compassion fatigue prevention.
- Support from denominations.
- Encouragement from fellow soldiers.
- Recognition for efforts.
- Staying connected with other chaplains.
- Keeping the UMT relationship fresh.

- **CORPS CHAPLAIN PLANNER**

- Building multi-disciplinary relationships and teams/mindset.

- **NAVY RMT**

- Taught compassion fatigue at the Navy Chaplains School.

What supports are there for National Guard and Reserve Chaplains and Chaplain Assistants?

- **MEDCOM RST**

- Not many.
- Vet centers.

- **FAMILY LIFE**

- Outside coping resources for NG and Reserve Chaplains
- Civilian clergy, counselors, veteran groups.
- Retreats involving story telling.
- Retreat facilities – getaways.
- Relationships with family and friends.

- **CORPS CHAPLAIN PLANNER**

- May arrive with established relationships (church and unit).

- **NAVY RMT**

- Support from immediate family, church family, friends, downtime from work.

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Comments**

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