



## *PCS Covenant Agreement*

As a potential participant in the Pastoral Care Specialist certificate program we ask that you read this covenant agreement and discuss any questions regarding its content with Oates Institute staff prior to agreeing to participate in the program.

The Pastoral Care Specialist certificate program is an intense program that requires consistent attention from each participant. Participants will be involved in self-reflection and peer interaction, including theological reflection and personal sharing that will require each participant to make a commitment to their peers and the group process. The relational interaction is a key element in the formation of pastoral care skills. For these reasons it is important that each participant remain involved for the duration of the program.

The goals of the PCS certificate program are to help participants: listen with understanding, maintain boundaries, differentiate the “being” from the “doing” in the role of the pastoral care giver, respond appropriately to crisis, and utilize referral resources. It is the overall goal of the program to strengthen the participant’s capacity to give competent, compassionate and collaborative care to others.

To achieve this certificate, participants are required to be actively involved in an online peer group and meet the continuing education requirements of each of the four core seminars (12 contact hours each) and the six-week practicum (a total of 72 contact hours). Participants in this certificate program should anticipate spending 4-5 hours per week, at his or her convenience, in order to fulfill the certificate requirements.

Because our participants come from a variety of educational and experiential backgrounds we do not seek to limit one’s opportunity to participate in the PCS certificate program based on prior academic credit or certification in a specific discipline. In order to be accepted in this certificate program, participants must:

- Be willing to articulate their feelings and experiences verbally and in writing.
- Commit to the time and effort required to complete the program.
- Be open to self-discovery.
- Maintain the peer group’s confidentiality throughout the certificate program.
- Compassionately hold themselves and their peers accountable to the goals of the program.

### **Commitment to the Peer Group:**

This certificate program is structured around a peer group utilizing the Oates Institute’s unique *Connected Learning* approach. Each peer group consists of 6-12 persons who will work together through the four core seminars and the pastoral care practicum, learning from each other as well as from the readings and faculty facilitators.

As a participant in the program you are asked to covenant with your peer group to participate in the group process by sharing of yourself in the dialogue, listening attentively to the others in the group while respecting their unique gifts and perspectives, and supporting one another as colleagues in ministry.

Your continued participation with the group is important to the group's overall learning experience, so we ask that you covenant with the group to do your best to complete the sequence as a group. (We do realize that this is not always possible due to life circumstances. Should you find yourself needing to interrupt or discontinue your progress with this certificate, it is important for you to talk to your course facilitator and the Oates staff about the need to discontinue and bring closure to your participation with the group.)

**Commitment to Seminar Participation:**

Each three-week seminar consists of at least 3 hours of instructional presentation and 9 hours of interactive dialogue, reflection, and small group consultation with peers. Each seminar is facilitated by a member of the Oates Institute's faculty who is also a Fellow or Diplomate with the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

As a participant in this program you covenant to read the presentations and participate in the discussion by contributing a minimum of two substantive messages per week to the cohort group's email discussion. One message is to reflect on the week's presentation(s) or case studies in light of your personal experience and ministry context. The second message is to respond to a peer's reflection or inquiry.

**Commitment to the Pastoral Care Practicum:**

The six week Pastoral Care Practicum (24 contact hours) follows the core seminars and requires participants to be serving in an identified ministry context throughout the six week practicum. Case study presentations based on one's ministry will be required of each participant and these will be reviewed by the peer group and practicum facilitator. Participants are also expected to utilize the feedback and support of an on-site Advisory Committee consisting of 3-5 leaders from that ministry context. Outside readings will be recommended as applicable.

**Covenant Agreement:**

I agree to the PCS Covenant as stated in the above text.

I further acknowledge that I understand that this certificate signifies the completion of a course of continuing professional education but it does not represent certification as a pastoral counselor. While it may qualify me membership in the American Association of Pastoral Counseling at the level of Pastoral Care Specialist level if I meet the other qualification requirements, I acknowledge that this certificate does not meet any requirements for certification or licensure as a counselor in any state or country.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**The Covenant of the PCS certificate program facilitator and Oates Institute staff to the Participant:**

- The program facilitator and Oates Institute staff agree to provide or make available the best possible opportunity for learning.
- We agree to honor the confidentiality of the group and maintain an environment of safety and trust.
- We commit our support to each participant and your learning process.
- We will honor each participant with honest feedback, encouragement, and accountability throughout the course.
- We will remain open to learn from each participant, to receive feedback, and to make quality improvements as needed.

The Wayne E. Oates Institute