

GUIDELINES  
**FOR CHAPLAINS**

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ENDORSER  
VISITATION  
TO  
MILITARY  
INSTALLATIONS

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MINISTRY  
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## INTRODUCTION

Endorsing agents act for their religious bodies to provide ecclesiastical, spiritual and personal support for their chaplains. Whether in the United States or overseas, this responsibility is fulfilled best when it involves periodic on-site visitation of endorsers to their chaplains.

These guidelines are recommended procedures for an endorsing agent's visit to a military installation. While these recommendations may be modified to fit needs, and no chaplain or endorser is required to follow them, they do represent many years of experience and will facilitate a successful endorser/chaplain visit.

## PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF ENDORSER VISITS TO CHAPLAINS

The endorser's visit is a pastoral call from one who cares about you and your ministry. The benefits of an endorser visit include the following:

1. **Friendship and Education:** You and your endorser have a chance to become better acquainted, and your endorser can learn more about your ministry.
2. **Support and Appreciation:** Your endorser is able to convey the support and appreciation of your religious body for your ministry.
3. **Pastoral Care and Counsel:** Your endorser is able to provide pastoral care and counsel as may be needed to deal with personal, professional, domestic and/or spiritual issues.
4. **Information:** You can provide information that will help your endorser better report and interpret your ministry to your faith community.
5. **Testimony of Support:** Senior officers are able to witness the relationship and support that your religious body provides for you and your ministry.
6. **Communication and Trust:** You and your endorser are able to build bridges of communication and trust.
7. **Ecclesiastical Outreach:** You are able to help your endorser see your ministry as an extension of your religious body within the military community.

## PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

1. **Ask your endorser about his or her needs and desires concerning the visit.** Plan accordingly to help achieve the objectives of the visit for your endorser and yourself.
2. **Clear your calendar.** Emergencies can always arise, but plan to defer routine business to the extent possible.
3. **Determine if a briefing is advisable.** Especially if the endorser is new to this responsibility or to your military community, a briefing about the installation and/or the chapel program may be helpful. A briefing can also be an effective way to engage your endorser and your staff in dialogue.

4. **Plan an itinerary for the visit.** This will help achieve the objectives of the visit. You may also be able to assist with the pre- and post-visit needs of your endorser.
5. **Determine whom the endorser should see.** Courtesy calls with the commander and supervisory chaplains are customary. Coordinate with your endorser if there are ancillary denominational responsibilities in the area of your installation.
6. **In advance, brief those whom the endorser will visit.** Make sure that these persons understand the work of an endorsing agent and provide biographical and professional information about your endorser. It is helpful for senior officers and others to understand your relationship to the endorser and the endorser's relationship to the military community.
7. **Make logistical arrangements.** Determine your endorser's lodging needs and make appropriate arrangements. Consider if there is a need to reserve a civilian hotel, military guest facilities, or even a chaplain's home. Be sure that there are dining facilities available on the weekend, as well as other times when you are not eating together. Many, but not all, endorsers have military ID cards. Make sure that your arrangements include all your endorser's needs while on the installation.

## DURING AND AFTER THE VISIT

1. **Alert administrative staff and security personnel to the visit.** Inform the gate guards of your visitor's arrival time; this will help especially those with no prior military background or military ID card. Arrange for mail or messages to be delivered promptly.
2. **Provide adequate time for your endorser to meet with you privately, as well as with other personnel as appropriate. Include time with your family if possible.** Allow enough time for those contacts that will help achieve the purposes of the visit.
3. **Expose your endorser to a variety of ministry-related activities.** Provide a good overview of your ministry and the unique conditions under which you work.
4. **Facilitate arrangements if the commander or any of your staff need to have a private meeting with your endorser.**
5. **Remain with your endorser until the visit is completed and he or she has left your installation.**
6. **Care for follow-up responsibilities.** Express appreciation to command and staff who participated in the visit. File appropriate after-action reports and follow-up on decisions or obligations that may have arisen during the visit.