

# **ORIENTATION CHECK LIST FOR A NEW CHAPLAIN**

*As suggested by Carl Wake 26 Jun 2021*

## **PRIOR TO STARTING**

- A CPIC (i.e., police records) check may have to be completed
- Health Screening: Negative TB & Hepatitis Tests may have to be completed. There may also be certain immunizations to be done.

## **WITHIN THE FIRST WEEK**

- With Human Resources, complete the necessary paperwork. This could also include:
  - An oath of secrecy taken by Superintendent or Deputy Superintendent
  - Application for a government travel card – See Office Manager
- With Security Manager:
  - Photo taken for ID Tag and security's photo database
  - Arrange for access to all appropriate keys
  - Review of the standard security lecture material
- With Supervisor:
  - Orientation to Institution: extensive tour with an explanation of how it all functions (including where to meet one-on-one with inmates)
  - Introduction to staff in each area of the institution
  - Given Institutional Phone List
  - Assigning office space, computer and phone
  - Voicemail protocol briefing
  - Arranging for access to the internet
  - Scheduling / Hours
  - Accountability Structure
  - Dress Code
  - Job Description / Daily Routine
  - Record keeping
- With Staff Training Officer: Arrange for OTIS training and all other essential training ASAP. This should include being registered for the next available custodial training module.
- Begin learning prison slang and terminology

## **WITHIN THE FIRST MONTH**

### **In Relation to Inmates**

- Learn how to gather, record, triage and respond to inmate requests
- Establish credibility - Keep your promises (be SLOW to promise in the first place)
- Establish boundaries with inmates
  - No cashing cheques for inmates
  - No holding of inmate property
  - Clothing is only given for release, NOT court
- Learn how to regularly update the diet sheet and smudge list
- Begin twice a week visiting of all inmates in segregation

### **In Relation to Staff**

- Establishing credibility
  - Know what you want to do and express it clearly and concisely
  - Do not question a correctional officer's orders in front of an inmate – obey and ask questions later
  - Think safety and security ALL the time
  - Efficiency of movement within the institution
- Establishing boundaries
  - Know your job description
- Responding to requests in each area of the institution
  - Know how to read an area and when is a good time to just come back later
- Paging staff
- Establishing your relationship with the union

### **In Relation to Volunteers and Professional Visitors**

- Meet all your volunteers and professional visitors in a group setting or one-on-one
- Learn their names, history and level of involvement in the institution
- Confirm their contact information

### **In Relation to Other Chaplains**

- Learn the location of all the prisons in Ontario (provincial and federal)
- Learn what prisons regularly send inmates to, and receive inmates from, your institution
- Start visiting the prisons closest to you and meeting their chaplains
- Become involved with the monthly teleconferences for correctional chaplains
- Start contacting the chaplains in local hospitals and military bases

## **In Relation to Outside Agencies and Faith Communities**

- Start building your network of contacts with local agencies and faith communities, with the help of your institution's discharge planner(s).

### **GENERAL TIPS**

- *Develop your survival skills as a government chaplain:* make yourself indispensable; have "backburner projects" on the go as a possible source of employment should you find yourself no longer a chaplain.
- *Job satisfaction / self-monitoring / productivity:* recognize the tension between "real ministry" and administration / paperwork (in all the pigeon-holes).
- *Efficiency of movement:* Plan ahead where you are going in the institution and take what you need with you. Staff notice when you wander around like a chicken with your head cut off. This will destroy their confidence in you, if you appear like an "air-head".
- *New role of chaplains:* Chaplains are no longer just employees. We fulfill a prophetic advocacy role.
- *Fine coping skills of a prison chaplain:*
  - Flexibility
  - Patience (lots of it!)
  - Appropriate assertiveness
  - Anti-burnout strategies ("fire prevention")
  - How to walk the fine line of reactive vs. proactive chaplaincy
  - Setting S.M.A.R.T. goals (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and with a **T**ime-Frame)
- *Confidentiality:* get in the habit of shredding old documents and culling your files.