

AFFINITY™ PASTORAL CARE PROGRAM

AFFINITY™

Pastoral Care Crisis & Immediate Response Policy Manual

Official Program Policy

Brooks Consulting & Training Solutions, LLC

Licensed AFFINITY™ Pastoral Care Program Document

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear and consistent process for responding when an immediate safety concern, serious crisis, or urgent need is identified during the AFFINITY™ Pastoral Care process.

AFFINITY™ pastoral care is designed to support the whole person—emotional, social, spiritual, relational, and practical. When immediate safety or serious risk is involved, the church's first responsibility is to recognize the concern, respond within appropriate pastoral scope, and connect the person with the level of help the situation requires.

1. Immediate Response Takes Priority

When an immediate safety concern or serious crisis is identified, routine pastoral-care intake, eligibility determination, and resource processing should not delay necessary action.

Immediate safety takes priority.

2. Immediate Response Indicators

Immediate-response procedures should be considered when there is concern involving:

- immediate danger to the person
- immediate danger to another person
- suicidal thoughts with immediate risk
- threats of serious harm
- suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- domestic or interpersonal violence
- serious mental-health or emotional crisis
- medical emergency
- lack of a safe place to stay when immediate safety is involved
- lack of food or basic necessities creating an urgent health or safety concern
- another situation requiring immediate professional, protective, medical, or emergency intervention

3. Determine the Level of Response

Emergency Response

Immediate involvement of emergency, medical, protective, crisis, or law-enforcement services.

Urgent Professional Connection

The person is not in immediate danger, but the concern requires timely connection with an appropriate professional, healthcare provider, crisis service, community agency, or specialized resource.

Routine Pastoral-Care Follow-Up

The concern does not require immediate intervention and may continue through the normal AFFINITY™ pastoral-care process.

4. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a national crisis-support resource available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for people experiencing suicidal thoughts, mental-health distress, substance-use crisis, or other emotional crisis.

A person may call or text 988, or use the online chat at 988lifeline.org, to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

Pastoral-care leaders may use 988 when a person needs immediate crisis support but the situation does not require 911 or emergency medical response.

If the person is in immediate physical danger, has a medical emergency, or requires an immediate emergency response, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

988 does not replace the church's responsibility to follow applicable mandatory-reporting, emergency-response, or protective-service requirements.

5. Do Not Manage Emergencies Outside Pastoral Scope

Pastoral-care leaders should not attempt to independently manage situations that require emergency or specialized intervention.

Depending on the situation, appropriate outside resources may include:

- 911
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- emergency medical services
- mental-health crisis services
- law enforcement
- child or adult protective services
- domestic-violence services
- healthcare providers
- other appropriate emergency or protective resources

6. The Role of Pastoral Care During Crisis

Pastoral-care leaders may provide:

- calm presence
- supportive listening
- prayer when appropriate
- reassurance
- assistance contacting appropriate help
- practical support

- appropriate communication with authorized individuals
- continued pastoral connection after immediate safety has been addressed

Pastoral leaders should remain within their role, competence, and authority.

7. Protect Safety

When possible and appropriate, leaders should:

- remain calm
- avoid escalating the situation
- move the person to a reasonably safe environment
- avoid leaving a person alone when an immediate and serious safety concern is present
- involve another authorized leader when appropriate
- contact the appropriate emergency or professional resource
- avoid promising absolute confidentiality when safety or legal reporting requirements may apply

8. Reporting Obligations

Each licensed church is responsible for understanding and following applicable reporting requirements.

Suspected abuse, neglect, exploitation, or other legally reportable concerns should be handled according to applicable law and established church policy.

9. Documentation

After immediate safety needs have been addressed, the church should document the response according to its pastoral-care recordkeeping procedures.

Documentation may include:

- concern identified
- immediate action taken
- emergency or professional resource contacted
- referral or connection made
- authorized individuals notified
- follow-up required

Documentation should remain factual, relevant, and limited to information necessary for the care and response provided.

10. Continue the Care

A crisis response should not automatically end the church's pastoral connection with the person.

Once immediate safety has been addressed, continued pastoral care may include:

- prayer and spiritual support
- emotional support

- social connection
- relational support
- practical assistance
- professional collaboration
- referral follow-up
- continued pastoral contact

The person may re-enter the normal AFFINITY™ pastoral-care process when appropriate.

11. Support for Pastoral-Care Leaders

Crisis situations may also affect the leaders and volunteers involved in providing care.

Churches should provide appropriate:

- supervision
- debriefing
- shared responsibility
- emotional support
- rest
- referral for additional support when necessary

This reflects AFFINITY™ and Human-Centered Leadership principles of resilience, trauma-informed leadership, and burnout prevention.

12. Church Responsibility

Each licensed church is responsible for:

- identifying who has authority to respond to crisis situations
- maintaining current emergency and crisis contact information
- training pastoral-care personnel on this policy
- understanding applicable reporting requirements
- ensuring leaders understand their scope
- knowing when outside professional or emergency intervention is required
- documenting serious incidents appropriately
- providing follow-up when appropriate

AFFINITY™ Crisis Response Standard

When immediate risk is identified:

Recognize the Concern → Protect Safety → Connect With Appropriate Help → Document the Response → Continue Appropriate Pastoral Care

The role of AFFINITY™ pastoral care during crisis is to protect dignity and safety, remain within appropriate scope, connect the person with appropriate help, and preserve pastoral connection when continued care is appropriate.