

AFFINITY™ PASTORAL CARE PROGRAM

AFFINITY™

Pastoral Care Scope Policy Manual

Official Program Policy

Brooks Consulting & Training Solutions, LLC

Licensed AFFINITY™ Pastoral Care Program Document

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the appropriate scope of pastoral care within the AFFINITY™ Pastoral Care Program and establish clear standards for determining when care may continue within the church, when collaboration is appropriate, and when referral to another professional or community resource is necessary.

AFFINITY™ Definition of Pastoral Care

AFFINITY™ defines pastoral care as the intentional, compassionate, and culturally responsive care of the whole person—emotional, social, spiritual, relational, and practical—through the collective caring resources of the faith community. Its purpose is to help people feel supported, connected, and cared for while strengthening their agency, well-being, and capacity to navigate life’s challenges. When pastoral care is done well, ministry leaders feel equipped to care for people without burning out, the church develops a committed team that shares responsibility for care, and people experience the safety, connection, belonging, and trust that strengthens their relationship with the church.

1. The Five Care Pathways

Pastoral-care needs may fall within one or more AFFINITY™ Care Pathways:

- Emotional Care
- Social Care
- Spiritual Care
- Relational Care
- Practical Care

A person may require support across several pathways at the same time.

Identifying a Care Pathway does not mean that the church must personally provide every service associated with that need.

The church must consider the nature of the need, pastoral scope, competence, available resources, safety, and whether collaboration or referral is appropriate.

2. Pastoral Care Within Scope

Pastoral care may appropriately include:

- supportive listening
- prayer and spiritual support
- pastoral counseling within appropriate scope
- grief and loss support
- encouragement during difficult life circumstances
- relational and family support
- spiritual guidance
- connection with church community and social support
- practical assistance when resources are available

- assistance identifying community resources
- collaboration with outside professionals
- referral when another level of care is needed
- follow-up and continued pastoral support

3. Scope and Competence

Pastoral-care leaders should provide care only within the limits of their role, training, experience, competence, and authority.

Leaders should consider:

- What need has been identified?
- Which Care Pathway or Care Pathways are involved?
- What level of care does this situation require?
- Is this need appropriate for pastoral care?
- Am I equipped to address this need?
- Does the church have an appropriate resource?
- Would collaboration improve the person's care?
- Does this situation require referral to another professional or organization?

Recognizing that a need exceeds pastoral scope is part of responsible pastoral care.

4. Limits of Pastoral Care

Pastoral care does not replace services that require professional licensure, specialized training, emergency intervention, or another level of care.

Pastoral care should not be represented as a substitute for:

- licensed mental-health treatment
- psychotherapy
- psychiatric care
- medical care
- specialized substance-use treatment
- legal services
- emergency services
- domestic-violence intervention
- child or adult protective services
- intensive case management
- other specialized professional services

5. Pastoral Counseling

Pastoral counseling may be provided when it remains within the leader's role, competence, training, and pastoral scope.

Pastoral counseling may address concerns involving:

- faith and spirituality
- grief and loss
- relationships
- coping
- life transitions
- decision-making
- meaning and purpose
- emotional support
- other appropriate pastoral concerns

Pastoral counseling should not be presented as licensed clinical treatment unless the individual providing the service is appropriately licensed and acting within that professional role.

6. AFFINITY™ Care Decision Pathways

Continue Within Scope

The church has the appropriate role, competence, and resources to provide the needed pastoral care.

Collaborate Across the Gap

The person continues receiving pastoral care while also receiving support from another professional, provider, ministry, or community resource.

“Across the gap” means the space between what the church can appropriately provide and what the person also needs from another source. Collaboration allows pastoral care and outside support to work together instead of treating referral as the end of the church’s involvement.

Refer to Appropriate Professional

The person requires a level or type of care outside the appropriate scope, competence, or resources of the church.

These decision pathways are supported through the C5 Counseling Integration Framework™.

7. Referral Does Not End Pastoral Care

Referral should not automatically end the church’s pastoral relationship with the person.

When appropriate, the church may continue to provide:

- prayer
- encouragement
- spiritual support
- relational connection
- social support
- practical assistance
- follow-up
- pastoral presence

Professional care and pastoral care may occur at the same time.

8. Church Responsibility

Each licensed church is responsible for:

- identifying who is authorized to provide pastoral care
- defining pastoral-care roles and responsibilities
- establishing appropriate boundaries
- ensuring leaders understand their scope and competence
- identifying available church resources
- maintaining appropriate referral resources
- following applicable laws, policies, and ethical requirements
- referring or collaborating when needs exceed the church's scope

AFFINITY™ Scope Standard

AFFINITY™ pastoral care should remain intentional, compassionate, culturally responsive, appropriately bounded, and centered on the whole person.

Continue Within Scope → Collaborate Across the Gap → Refer to Appropriate Professional