

Pastoral-Care Role Boundaries Guide

PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY MANUAL™ | DOMAIN 1 - LEADERSHIP, ROLES & PASTORAL SCOPE

RESOURCE 4
BINDER TAB 01

WHAT THIS GUIDE DOES

This guide turns the roles your church already approved into simple frontline boundaries. Complete one copy for EACH pastoral-care role from Resource 2. The person serving in that role should be able to read the completed page and know what they may do, what they should not do, and who to contact when they are unsure.

NO NEW SYSTEM DESIGN REQUIRED

Do not invent new roles, services, or authority here. Copy the role from Resource 2, use the church's approved services from Resource 3, and select from the boundary choices already provided in this guide.

ROLE INFORMATION

Approved pastoral-care role / title

Copy the exact approved role title from Resource 2 - Pastoral-Care Roles & Responsibilities Matrix.

HOW TO COMPLETE THIS GUIDE

1. Complete one guide for each pastoral-care role your church approved in Resource 2.
2. Read every boundary statement. Check every statement that applies to this role.
3. Use Resource 3 only where this guide tells you to use your church's approved pastoral-care services.
4. Do not rewrite the statements. Use the provided choices unless your church has a formally approved exception.
5. Leadership reviews and approves the completed guide before it is used by staff or volunteers.
6. Place the approved role guide in the binder so the person serving in that role can use it as a quick reference.

THE FRONTLINE RULE

This guide does not decide what services the church offers. Resource 3 already did that. This guide answers a different question:

"While serving in THIS ROLE, what may I do - and when must I stop and get help?"

If a boundary is reached, the person should not improvise. They should use the church's approved consultation, escalation, handoff, or outside-help process.



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PART A - IN THIS ROLE, YOU MAY

Leadership checks every action this role is approved to perform. These are role guardrails, not a new list of church services.

- Provide prayer, spiritual encouragement, and pastoral presence.
- Listen, offer appropriate spiritual support, and help the person identify an appropriate next step.
- Provide only the pastoral-care services assigned to this role under the church's approved Resources 2 and 3.
- Complete follow-up that has been assigned to this role.
- Make hospital, home, bereavement, or other pastoral-care visits when those visits are assigned to this role.
- Complete required pastoral-care documentation when this role is responsible for it.
- Connect the person with the appropriate pastor, care leader, ministry leader, or approved care team member.
- Help connect the person with approved outside professional, crisis, emergency, or community support when the church's process calls for it.
- Consult with the designated pastoral-care leader when the situation is unclear or exceeds this role's responsibility.
- Escalate or hand off the situation when this role reaches a boundary.

CHURCH-SPECIFIC APPROVED ACTION - OPTIONAL

Use this only if leadership has already approved an additional responsibility for this role that is not covered above. Otherwise write N/A.

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PART B - IN THIS ROLE, DO NOT

Leadership checks every boundary that applies. These statements tell the person what not to take on independently.

- Do not promise or provide pastoral-care services the church has not approved in Resource 3.
- Do not take on a service or responsibility that has not been assigned to this role.
- Do not make decisions outside the authority already approved for this role.
- Do not present pastoral care as licensed mental-health, medical, legal, or other specialized professional treatment unless separately qualified and formally serving in that professional capacity.
- Do not continue handling a situation alone when the person's needs exceed this role's training, preparation, responsibility, or approved function.
- Do not promise absolute confidentiality. Follow the church's approved confidentiality, safety, reporting, and information-sharing requirements.
- Do not manage serious safety, abuse, crisis, or emergency concerns alone when the church's process requires another leader or outside response.
- Do not make personal promises about money, housing, transportation, counseling, availability, or other assistance on behalf of the church unless authorized.
- Do not create an expectation of unlimited personal access or 24/7 availability unless this role is specifically assigned to an approved on-call function.
- Do not allow an assigned pastoral-care relationship to continue indefinitely without review when the situation is recurring, increasing, or no longer fitting the role.

CHURCH-SPECIFIC PROHIBITION - OPTIONAL
Use only for a formally approved role-specific boundary not already covered above. Otherwise write N/A.

PART C - STOP AND GET HELP WHEN...

These are prewritten stop-signs. Check every trigger that should tell the person in this role not to keep handling the situation alone.

- You are unsure whether the request fits your role or the church's approved pastoral-care scope.
- A decision is needed that you do not have authority to make.
- The person's needs are becoming more complex than this role is prepared or assigned to handle.
- There is concern about immediate safety, abuse, neglect, self-harm, harm to others, medical emergency, or another urgent risk.
- You are unsure whether information should remain private or needs to be shared under the church's policy or applicable requirements.
- The person is repeatedly returning with the same or increasing need and the current response is not enough.
- You do not have the time, availability, staffing support, or other capacity needed to provide the assigned response responsibly.
- The person is becoming dependent on one individual leader or volunteer instead of the church's established care structure.
- The situation requires a type of professional, crisis, emergency, legal, medical, or community help outside this role.
- A personal relationship, conflict of interest, dual role, or other circumstance may interfere with appropriate pastoral care.

WHEN ANY CHECKED STOP-SIGN OCCURS

Do not improvise. Pause the part of the response that is outside your role and use the church's approved consultation, escalation, handoff, safety, or outside-help process.

PART D - WHEN YOU ARE UNSURE OR REACH A BOUNDARY

Complete these contact fields so the person using this guide never has to guess who to call next.

Primary person to contact for consultation

Backup person to contact if the primary person is unavailable

Role / leader who receives escalated pastoral-care decisions

Church contact for confidentiality or information-sharing questions

Church contact / process for urgent safety or crisis concerns

IF THE DESIGNATED PERSON IS UNAVAILABLE

Use the approved backup person / coverage structure.
If the situation cannot safely wait, follow the church's approved escalation or urgent-response process.

REMEMBER

A boundary is not abandonment. It tells you when another person, process, or source of help must become part of the response.



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BINDER-READY PAGE

APPROVED ROLE BOUNDARY SUMMARY

This page confirms the completed guide has been reviewed and approved. Keep the full approved Resource 4 guide for this role together in the binder.

APPROVED PASTORAL-CARE ROLE / TITLE

FINAL REVIEW

- The actions checked in Part A match this role's approved responsibilities.
- The boundaries checked in Part B are clear enough for the person serving in this role to follow.
- The stop-signs in Part C tell the person when not to continue alone.
- The contact information in Part D tells the person exactly who to contact next.
- Nothing in this guide gives the role more authority or a broader service scope than Resources 1-3 established.

LEADERSHIP APPROVAL

Approved by / Leadership body

Approval date

Signature: _____

Next review date

RESOURCE 4 COMPLETE

This role now has an approved frontline boundary guide. Duplicate Resource 4 and complete it for every pastoral-care role established in Resource 2.

BINDER INSTRUCTION: Place the full approved guide for each role behind BINDER TAB 01 - Leadership, Roles & Pastoral Scope.