



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS  
WASHINGTON, DC

3 September 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR ALMAJCOM-FOA-DRU/WING CHAPLAINS

FROM: HQ USAF/HC  
1380 Air Force Pentagon, Room 4E260  
Washington, DC 20330-1380

SUBJECT: Chaplain Corps Guidance on Care for Same-gender Couples

I would like to provide a more specific vector on ministry to same-gender couples. As you know, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) recently announced that all married couples would receive the same benefits and services starting 3 September 2013. Following that announcement, Ch Page provided you with my initial vector in a letter dated 21 August 2013. This memo is intended to provide you with additional, more specific guidance.

- a. MAJCOM/DRU/FOA Senior Religious Support Teams (RSTs), talk with your senior wing RSTs regularly. Help them to resolve challenges they may be facing. Ensure they are not working these issues in isolation but are in conversation with you, JA, and wing leadership. Also, ensure their chaplains have a clear understanding of their endorsers' expectations. Work with AF/HCP, AF/HCX, the Chaplain Assistant Career Field Manager, and/or the Deputy Chief of Chaplains to get the answers your wings need and to keep me informed. You are also welcome to contact me directly where that is needed.
- b. Wing Chaplains, talk with the chaplains under your supervision so that you are clear on what each chaplain's endorser's expectations are regarding ministry to same-gender couples. Honor those expectations and do not ask a chaplain to do anything contrary to his or her endorsement. Our mutual respect for each other within the Chaplain Corps is an essential foundation from which we care for all Airmen and their families. Some ministries being offered at your wing may present challenges for you as the leader of a ministry team during this time of transition. As we have always done, we will directly "provide" or indirectly "provide for" the spiritual needs of Airmen and their families. Here is how this strategy may be applied to specific ministries.
  1. MarriageCare: If you are offering MarriageCare retreats, anticipate there may be same-gender married couples who ask to attend. When you advertise a MC retreat, announce the chaplain who will be leading the event and the chaplain's endorser. If the chaplain is permitted to train same-gender couples in a MC event, then you may register all eligible married couples. However, if the chaplain is not permitted to train same-gender couples in a MC event, be prepared to offer a civilian marriage enrichment opportunity or a MC event at another base or at a later date to a same-gender married couple. If a same-gender couple will be attending a MC event, make this known to the other couples as they register. If those couples choose not to register for this event, be prepared to offer them a

civilian marriage enrichment opportunity or a MC event at another base or at a later date. Treating all married couples with dignity and respect will guide us through this transition.

2. Weddings: Talk with your JAG and be certain you understand the laws of your state regarding same-gender unions or marriages. Know the capabilities of your chaplains and honor their faithful representation of their endorsement. For now, inform your commander, MAJCOM chaplain, and appropriate endorsers when a same-gender marriage is scheduled to occur in your chapel facility or involves one of your chaplains.
3. Volunteers: Anticipate that you may have Airmen, or their same-gender marriage partners, who volunteer to serve as worship leaders, choir members, lectors, ushers, religious education teachers, and other ministry leaders. Talk with your chaplains to understand the instructions from their endorsers and then work together with your team to determine how you will respond in these cases. Honor your chaplains' commitments to be faithful to their endorsement. For example, chaplains endorsed by the Roman Catholic Church or Southern Baptist Convention or other endorsers may not be allowed to put a partner in a same-gender marriage in a position of leadership in worship while other chaplains may. Use our traditional strategy of "provide" or "provide for" in order to care for and show hospitality to all Airmen. Talk with your MAJCOM/HC team as you work together with your chaplains, chaplain assistants, lay leaders, local civilian religious leaders, and others to find ways to care for Airmen and their families.

My vision is a Chaplain Corps totally committed to Airmen and their families. We remain committed to consistently provide religious and spiritual care to all. My expectation is that we will treat everyone with respect and hospitality as we continue to Glorify God, Serve Airmen, and Pursue Excellence in all we do!



HOWARD D. STENDAHL  
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Chief of Chaplains