

# **National Certification Procedures for Lay Ecclesial Ministers**

*serving as*

Director of Worship

Parish Life Coordinator

Pastoral Associate

Director of Music Ministries

Parish Catechetical Leader

Youth Ministry Leader, incl. *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*

Diocesan Youth Ministry Leader, incl. *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*

*Created by*

## **The Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers**

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

National Association for Lay Ministry

National Association of Pastoral Musicians

National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry

*Approved by*

## **The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation**

November, 2011

# Overview

## Introduction

The Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers (or, “the Alliance”) includes the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC), the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM), the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM), the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM). The Alliance seeks to affirm and promote lay ecclesial ministry in parishes and dioceses throughout the United States.

In fulfilling its mission, the Alliance has revised and updated the 2003 *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* and has developed procedures for the certification of lay ecclesial ministers serving in the specialized ministries represented by the Alliance partners, as follows:

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions  
**Director of Worship**

National Association for Lay Ministry  
**Parish Life Coordinator**  
**Pastoral Associate**

National Association of Pastoral Musicians  
**Director of Music Ministries**

National Conference for Catechetical Leadership  
**Catechetical Leader**

National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry  
**Youth Ministry Leader, including *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana***  
**Diocesan Youth Ministry Leader, including *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana***

A task group of the Alliance consisting of representatives from the five partner organizations has been working together for the past several years to develop the certification procedures described in the following pages. The procedures have been approved by each of the Alliance partner organizations, and have been approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA), in accord with Commission requirements.

## History and Background

When it adopted the *National Certification Standards* in 2005, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians received approval from the USCCB/CCA for its specialized competencies for directors of music ministries and for certification procedures which have been in use since that approval. When the Alliance was formed in 2007, the partner

organizations decided not only to seek USCCB/CCA approval for revised *National Certification Standards* but also to work together on common procedures for certification of lay ecclesial ministers represented by their respective organizations, including:

- Director of Worship
- Pastoral Associate
- Parish Life Coordinator
- Director of Music Ministries
- Parish Catechetical Leader
- Youth Ministry Leader, including *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*
- Diocesan Youth Ministry Leader, including *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*

The Alliance established a task group charged with the development of certification procedures that takes a common approach to assessing the core competencies for lay ecclesial ministry while also providing ways to assess the specialized competencies for each ministry.

In the course of its work to develop certification procedures, the task group consulted widely with members of the partner organizations, leaders of other ministry associations, directors of academic and (arch)diocesan programs of ministerial formation, various USCCB offices, and leaders of organizations representing the concerns of cultural and ethnic groups. Two extensive rounds of formal consultation were held, along with numerous informal conversations.

Most of the comments expressed concerns regarding simplification, clarity, attention to cultural differences, and how best to demonstrate intellectual competence.

Based on the concerns, comments, and suggestions that it received, the task group set out to establish certification procedures that:

- are as clear and simple as possible;
- are based on a candidate's demonstration of competence in ministry as described in the *National Certification Standards*, including the core competencies for all lay ecclesial ministers and the specialized competencies for each group of ministers to be certified;
- require holistic formation in both core and specialized competencies;
- are accessible to persons of various educational, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds.

These certification procedures are designed only to assess the competence of lay ecclesial ministers and should not be confused with any form of authorization for ministry, which is the province of the local bishop. The certification of lay ecclesial ministers may be included by a given (arch)diocese as a means for assessing competence as part of a(n) (arch)diocesan process of authorization, but they are in no way to be understood to encroach on the authority of the local bishop in authorizing lay ecclesial ministers.

## Certification Portfolio

In order to establish certification procedures that provide clarity and flexibility while adhering to rigorous standards, the task group decided that competence for the various lay ecclesial ministries would best be demonstrated through a certification portfolio. The certification portfolio is a collection of documents assembled by the candidate that provides various types of evidence of one's competence for a particular lay ecclesial ministry. Based on the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, the portfolio includes several different ways by which the candidate can demonstrate his or her competence, including:

- *testimony*, in the form of assessments provided by the candidate, a supervisor, a peer in ministry, and a subordinate;
- *evidence of successful academic study* in theology, pastoral ministry, and other fields appropriate to each ministry, or *other methods (equivalencies)* that manifest competence in these areas of study;
- *demonstration* of ability in one's own particular ministerial specialization, such as a project, program description, or recital;
- *integration paper* that shows the candidate's ability to approach ministry in a way that includes one's personal, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, and specialized competencies.

The task group developed a portfolio structure that includes a number of common elements. Within that common structure, each organization has also specified elements particular to individual ministries. For example, while specifying the number of hours of course work expected in theology, pastoral ministry, and other areas of intellectual formation, each organization has also provided for equivalencies—various ways that intellectual competence may be demonstrated.

## Administration of the Certification Process

The Alliance certification procedures require the creation of committees and other entities to administer and monitor the process, accept applications, review portfolios, and make certification decisions. During the course of their work toward certification in one of the specialized ministries, candidates will encounter three groups involved in the administration of the process:

- *Partner Certification Review Committee (PCRC)*. Each of the five Alliance partner organizations has established its PCRC that receives, reviews, and approves applications to begin the certification process; appoints and monitors the work of certification advisors; receives, reviews, and formulates a recommendation on completed portfolios of certification candidates; and forwards recommendations and portfolios to the National Certification Review Committee.
- *National Certification Review Committee (NCRC)*. The Alliance has established an NCRC made up of one representative from each of the PCRCs. The NCRC receives, reviews and finalizes recommendations on portfolios forwarded by PCRCs, and forwards recommendations with portfolios to the Alliance Commission.

- *Alliance Commission (AC)*. The Alliance Commission is the governing body of the Alliance. In addition to its governance role, the AC reviews recommendations for certification from the NCRC and is responsible for final approval and granting of certification for each of the specialized ministries. Certification for each specialized ministry is granted in the name of both the Alliance and the respective partner organization. In addition, an *Alliance Appeals Panel* has been established to address grievances and appeals from candidates when these have not been resolved to their satisfaction by the NCRC and the AC. In each case the determination of the Appeals Panel is to be considered final.

## Conclusion

The ministry leaders who developed these procedures did so to contribute to the continuing development and formation of men and women who serve the Catholic Church in the USA as lay ecclesial ministers. The work presented here is a testament to a powerful shared commitment to well-prepared and fruitful lay ecclesial ministry. We trust that this work will in turn have an enduring positive impact on our Catholic faith communities. The procedures described here may also serve as a resource for the leaders and institutions that form persons for lay ecclesial ministry, including bishops, pastors, diocesan offices, academic institutions, and ministry formation programs.

The women and men who developed these procedures on behalf of the Alliance believe that this work, a product of unprecedented national cooperation and collaboration, represents a significant contribution to the unfolding reality of lay ecclesial ministry here in the United States.

## Certification Procedures

### General Policies

This section includes general policies governing the relationship of the Alliance to the collaborating organizations regarding recommendations for initial and renewal of certification and an Appeals Panel to hear appeals for adverse decisions regarding certification

**1. Availability of Materials:** All Alliance certification materials, including applications and forms, will be available online and as much as possible will be completed electronically. Application materials that cannot be transmitted electronically must be sent directly to the appropriate Alliance partner organization

**2. Deadlines:** Complete applications and certification portfolios will need to be submitted according to the following schedule. Incomplete applications and certification portfolios will be deferred to the next certification review period.

- a. March 1 and October 1 are established as annual deadlines for both initial applications and completed certification portfolios.
- b. Initial application decisions will be made and communicated within two months of the above deadlines.
- c. Certification decisions will be made and communicated within three months of the above deadlines.

**3. Fees:** The following fees will be in effect until further notice:

- a. \$95 initial application fee (nonrefundable);
- b. \$165 candidacy fee, to be paid upon acceptance into the certification process;
- c. \$100 annual candidacy fee (for applicants who do not achieve certification within one year of their admission to the certification process), to be paid after the first year and each year thereafter to maintain candidacy status;
- d. \$50 fee for submission of portfolio in paper format instead of electronically;
- e. \$145 renewal fee, submitted with application for seven-year certification renewal.

**4. Authority:** The Alliance Commission, as established by the boards of the Alliance partner organizations in the Alliance Memorandum of Understanding, bears ultimate responsibility for the Alliance certification process and its various committees, advisors, and appeals panels. Certification decisions rendered by the Alliance Commission are understood to be final, except in the case of formal appeals, in which cases the decisions of the Alliance Appeals Panel will be final and binding.

**5. Decision Making:** The Partner Certification Review Committees (PCRCs) of the Alliance partner organizations will recommend affirmation or denial of initial applications and completed certification portfolios to the National Certification Review Committee (NCRC). The NCRC recommends approval or denial of initial applications and completed certification portfolios to the Alliance Commission (AC). The Alliance Commission makes final decisions regarding initial applications and grants or denies certification. Certification is granted by the Alliance in conjunction with the respective partner organization, with the title of the specialized minister under the certification standards and procedures approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation.

**6. Terms:** Once granted, certification will be in effect for seven years, dated from the deadline of submission of the completed certification portfolio (March 1 or October 1 of a given year). Certification will lapse at that time without a formal application for renewal of certification.

**7. Withdrawal of Certification:** Certification may be withdrawn by the Alliance Commission in the event of:

- a. Any misrepresentation of any fact in connection with the applicant;
- b. Failure to meet the continuing professional development requirements for renewal of certification; or

- c. Substantiated evidence that the certified individual has engaged in conduct deemed detrimental to the profession, as articulated in each organization's code of ethics.

In all cases, the Alliance Commission shall notify the individual in writing of withdrawal of certification and the reasons therefore and shall provide opportunity for appeal.

**8. Certification Records.** Certification materials submitted by certification applicants are to be held strictly confidential. Only those formally authorized to review such materials are to have access to them, and any additional copies—paper or electronic—that are submitted are to be destroyed immediately after their utilization.

Alliance partner organizations will retain certification records of their own members. Records that have reached the level of the NCRC will be retained by the AC. Records will be retained indefinitely in electronic format. Application materials, portfolio, and official correspondence will be scanned and preserved electronically. If materials were submitted as hard copy, they will be shredded after electronic storage.

The AC will retain all electronic certification records in a single, secure location, with access limited to AC and NCRC members and duly designated office staff. Each partner organization will also retain its own respective certification records in a single, secure location, with access limited to PCRC members and duly designated office staff.

Applicants and certified ministers may obtain an electronic copy of their records by written request (hard copy or electronic) so there is a record of each request. Requests will be directed to the current PCRC chair of the respective partner organization or to his or her duly deputed representative.

Note: Federal laws require retention of documents related to employment, as per the following: Title VII (1964 Civil Rights Act, amended in 1991), Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Family and Medical Leave Act. Although provisions therein do not apply directly to certification, the spirit and intentions of these laws as regards avoiding discrimination based on age, race, color, ethnicity, disabilities and family setting are relevant. Since all documentation will be retained in electronic form indefinitely, the Alliance record retention policy meets or exceeds those mandated by federal employment laws.

## Required Documentation

This section details the required documentation to be submitted by applicants from initial application through renewal of certification.

### Initial application materials will include:

1. Evidence that prerequisites for admission to the certification process have been satisfied:

- a. Education in a field related to one's specialized ministry (for example, a bachelor's degree or equivalent);
  - b. A minimum of three years of full-time (min. 30 hrs./week) or six years of part-time (min. 15 hrs./week) pastoral ministry experience in the particular ministry specialization.
  
2. Three references, one from the supervising pastor (or equivalent) and two from colleagues in ministry who have observed the candidate in ministry. (Standard recommendation forms will be provided.)
  
3. Ministerial autobiography: a narrative description of the applicant's human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation and experience, including the theology of ministry with a focus on the particular ministry specialization. (No more than five pages double-spaced, 12-point font). The Ministerial Autobiography (3-5 pages) will include the following:
  - a. A description of your call and path to lay ecclesial ministry in the Church.
  - b. The areas of strength and growth in understanding the theology of the Roman Catholic Church.
  - c. Your vision of lay ecclesial ministry and the particular ministry in which you are engaged.
  - d. Examples from your current ministry that demonstrate your ministerial competence with regard to the National Certification Standards:
    - i. Human
    - ii. Spiritual
    - iii. Intellectual (especially Theological)
    - iv. Pastoral
  - e. The leadership skills that you bring to your ministry.
  - f. The satisfactions and struggles that have been part of your ministerial story.
  - g. Your ministerial plans for the future.
  - h. Official verification from the (arch)diocese in which you serve that you have satisfied their child protection and criminal background check requirements.
  
4. Other information, including:
  - a. Evidence of full communion with the Catholic Church;
  - b. Education/formation history (provide transcripts, copies of certificates of completion and/or any other evidence of training, classes, coursework, etc. that will substantiate education and formation for ministry)
  - c. Ministry experience: A minimum of three years of full-time staff-level (min. 30 hrs./week) or six years of part-time (15 hrs./week) staff-level pastoral ministry experience in the particular ministry specialization;
  - d. Criminal offense record information.
  
5. A signed and dated code of ethics.

**Completed portfolios will include:**

Documentation of competence relative to approved certification standards, including the pertinent specialized standards, specifically:

1. A cover letter in which the applicant formally requests certification based on the evidence provided in the portfolio;
2. All initial application materials for admission to the certification process (see listing above);
3. Assessments of the candidate (standard assessment form will be provided) based on approved certification standards by:
  - a. The candidate him or herself (including any “ministerial development plans” generated as a result of the candidate’s self-assessment);
  - b. The candidate’s supervisor (e.g., pastor or equivalent approved by the PCRC);
  - c. A peer or colleague in ministry with expertise in the candidate’s ministry specialization and firsthand experience of his or her competence; and
  - d. A subordinate (volunteer or staff) who has worked with or under the direction of the candidate for a minimum of one year;
  - e. Other(s) according to the specific requirements of one of the partner organizations relative to its specialized ministries.
4. evidence of intellectual formation in theology and other disciplines at a level appropriate to the particular ministerial specialization;
5. integration paper that demonstrates the candidate’s ability to apply personal, spiritual, theological, pastoral, and specialized competence to the practice of ministry;
6. evidence of competence in one’s ministry specialization as required by each organization.

Portfolio requirements for each ministerial specialization are as follows (N.B.: unless otherwise designated, “hours” refers to clock hours, not credit hours, semester hours, or the like.):

## Portfolio Requirements by Ministry Specialization

(N.B.: Unless otherwise noted “hours” refers to clock hours, not semester hours, quarter hours, etc.)

LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY	Director of Worship (FDLC)	Parish Life Coordinator (NALM)	Pastoral Associate (NALM)	Director of Music Ministries (NPM)
<b>Cover Letter</b>	A cover letter in which the applicant formally requests certification			
<b>Application Materials</b>	All initial application materials for admission to the certification process			
<b>Assessments</b>	Written assessments by the candidate, supervisor, a peer or colleague, a subordinate, and the (arch)bishop or (arch)diocesan director	Written assessments by the candidate, supervisor, a peer or colleague, and a subordinate		
<b>Evidence of Theological Study</b>	Minimum 120 clock hours or 12 credits in four core disciplines, with the remainder totaling no fewer than 240 hours to be completed before the first renewal of certification. Equivalency may be demonstrated by a paper, examination, lecture, or other approved method	Master’s degree in theology, pastoral ministry, or allied field. Equivalency in one or more of the core theological areas may be demonstrated by a combination of research paper, lecture, or other approved method	Preferably a master’s degree in theology, pastoral ministry, or allied field. Minimum of 300 clock hours or 30 credits. Equivalency in one or more of the core theological areas may be demonstrated by a combination of research paper, lecture, or other approved method	Minimum 120 clock hours or 12 credits in four core disciplines, with the remainder totaling no fewer than 240 hours to be completed before the first renewal of certification. Equivalency may be demonstrated by a paper, examination, lecture, or other approved method

<b>Evidence of Specialized Study</b>	18 graduate or undergraduate credits in liturgical studies. Equivalency may be demonstrated by a paper, examination, lecture, or other approved method	N/A	N/A	Preferably a master's degree in liturgical music or related disciplines. Minimum of 18 graduate hours of musical study. Equivalency may be demonstrated by examination, paper, lecture, or other approved method.
<b>Demonstration of Competence in One's Specialized Ministry</b>	Evidence of successful completion of major parish or (arch)diocesan liturgical celebrations	Evidence of successful leadership in a pastoral context (e.g., job description, programs, planning documents)	Evidence of successful leadership in a pastoral context (e.g., job description, programs, planning documents)	Evidence of successful completion of juried recital or concert in one's area of musical concentration
<b>Integration Paper</b>	Integration paper that applies personal, spiritual, theological, pastoral, and specialized competence to the practice of pastoral ministry			

<b>LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY</b>	<b>Parish Catechetical Leader (NCCL)</b>	<b>Diocesan Youth Ministry Leader, Including <i>Pastoral Juvenil Hispana</i> (NFCYM)</b>	<b>Youth Ministry Leader, Including <i>Pastoral Juvenil Hispana</i> (NFCYM)</b>
<b>Letter</b>	A cover letter in which the applicant formally requests certification		
<b>Application Materials</b>	All initial application materials for admission to the certification process		
<b>Assessments</b>	Written assessments by the candidate, supervisor, a peer or colleague, and a subordinate	Written assessments by the candidate, supervisor, a peer or colleague, a subordinate, and the (arch)diocesan director	
<b>Evidence of Theological Study</b>	Preferably a graduate degree in catechesis, religious education, theology, or allied field. Equivalency may be demonstrated by providing certificates or diplomas and transcripts from diocesan, national, or foreign pastoral institutes. Equivalency may also be demonstrated by a paper, examination, lecture, or other approved method.	Preferably a master's degree in theology, pastoral ministry, or allied field. Equivalency in one or more of the core theological areas may be demonstrated by a combination of research paper, lecture, or other approved method. Equivalency may also be demonstrated by providing certificates or diplomas and transcripts from (arch)diocesan, national, or foreign pastoral institutes.	Minimum 120 clock hours or 12 credits in four core disciplines, with the remainder totaling no fewer than 240 hours to be completed before the first renewal of certification. Equivalency may be demonstrated by a paper, examination, lecture, or other approved method. Equivalency may also be demonstrated by providing certificates or diplomas and transcripts from (arch)diocesan, national, or foreign pastoral institutes.
<b>Evidence of Specialized Study</b>	120 hours of training and formation in catechesis and/or religious education. Equivalency may be demonstrated by a paper, examination, lecture, or other approved method. An additional 90 hours to be completed before the first renewal of certification. Equivalency may be	120 hours of training and formation in youth ministry and/or <i>pastoral juvenil Hispana</i> (PJH). For PJH candidates, additional evidence of knowledge and skill in various aspects of Hispanic ministry.	90 hours of training and formation in youth ministry and/or <i>pastoral juvenil Hispana</i> (PJH). For PJH candidates, additional evidence of knowledge and skill in various aspects of Hispanic ministry.

	demonstrated by a paper, examination, lecture, or other approved method.		
<b>Demonstration of Competence in One's Specialized Ministry</b>	Evidence of successful leadership in a catechetical context (e.g., job description, meeting outlines, program brochures)	(1) Overview of a three-month period in ministry, showing successful implementation of two diocesan programs or projects. (2) Outline of a sample presentation on Catholic youth ministry and/or <i>pastoral juvenil Hispana</i>	Overview of a three-month period in ministry, including evidence of successful implementation of two programs or projects
<b>Integration Paper</b>	Integration paper that applies personal, spiritual, theological, pastoral, and specialized competence to the practice of pastoral ministry		

**Applications for renewal of certification will include:**

1. Completion of a ministerial self-assessment based on the current approved certification standards. For each of the four standards and the specialized competencies for one's own ministry, the candidate for certification renewal will address the following:
  - a. Describe how you have addressed any areas in need of further development noted when you were certified.
  - b. What are your current strengths relative to the standards?
  - c. What are your current areas in need of further development relative to the standards?
  - d. What are your specific goals and plans for continuing development in these areas?
  
2. Submission of supporting documentation, including:
  - a. Evidence of continuing human and spiritual formation (e.g., retreats, spiritual direction, ministry mentoring/coaching, support groups);
  - b. Evidence of continuing education and pastoral formation (e.g., courses, workshops, seminars) totaling at least seventy hours spread over seven years;
  - c. Evidence of fulfillment of any theological requirements not completed at initial certification;
  - d. Any specialized requirements of the partner organization.
  
3. One peer assessment addressing the following:

- a. What are this person’s ministerial strengths relative to the standards, including the specialized competencies for his or her ministry, and how are they demonstrated in practice?
  - b. What are this person’s current areas in need of further development relative to the standards?
  - c. Describe your assessment of this person’s overall effectiveness in ministry.
4. Signed and dated code of ethics
  5. Payment of the certification renewal fee

## **Certification Procedures**

This section includes the procedures outlined step by step from the submission of initial required documentation to the conferral and recognition of certification on their members.

### **Overview**

The Alliance Certification Procedures consist of three steps:

1. Application for Admission to the Certification Process
2. Certification Preparation Process
3. Submission of Certification Portfolio for Review and Decision

In these three steps, the Alliance has provided a process and procedures that will allow applicants sufficient time and the opportunity to work closely with an advisor in developing and compiling the necessary documentation for certification as well as addressing the development of necessary competencies.

This section outlines procedures common for certification of all lay ecclesial ministers.

### **Step One. Application for Admission to the Certification Process**

1. Potential applicant reviews information on the Alliance website and decides to apply.
2. Applicant submits fee and completes online application and arranges for required documents to be sent to the respective partner organization’s PCRC.
3. Application Review and Decision: One member of the PCRC conducts a conversation with the applicant to review his/her materials. Each application will then be submitted for approval to the full PCRC. Decisions on initial applications will be communicated within two months of the application deadline (March 1 or October 1). Applications are approved based on:
  - a. The applicant’s qualifications;
  - b. The potential of the applicant to complete the certification process;

- c. The applicant's suitability for ministry.

## **Step Two. Certification Preparation Process**

1. **Self-Assessment and Ministerial Development Planning:** Upon acceptance into the certification process, the candidate conducts a comprehensive self-assessment relative to the National Standards (using the standard Alliance Self-Assessment Form) and specialized competencies related to the candidate's ministry specialization. This self-assessment will be used in conjunction with the list of portfolio requirements to develop and compile documentation for the candidate's certification portfolio and is itself a requirement for inclusion in one's portfolio. The "Ministerial Development Planning" worksheet at the conclusion of the Self-Assessment Form may be used by the candidate to develop plans to address any deficiencies revealed in the self-assessment process.
2. **Portfolio Development:** The candidate proceeds to develop his/her portfolio in accord with the portfolio requirements of the partner organization (see "Certification Requirements" section above.)
3. **Certification Advisor:** The candidate may be assisted by a certification advisor in performing the self-assessment and developing a plan for completion of requirements for the certification portfolio.
4. **Decision to Submit Portfolio:** When the candidate (and advisor, if appropriate) has determined that the portfolio is completed, the candidate prepares to submit the portfolio to his/her PCRC, along with fee. (Note: portfolios are to be submitted electronically; paper portfolios incur an additional fee.)

## **Step Three. Submission of Certification Portfolio for Review and Decision**

1. **Submission of Completed Certification Portfolio:** The candidate submits the completed portfolio to his/her PCRC by the March 1 or October 1 deadline. There are three formal approvals pursuant of certification, as follows:
  - a. **Approval by the PCRC:** Decisions are made based upon satisfactory documentation of competence relative to approved standards.
  - b. **Approval by the NCRC:** Portfolios approved by the PCRC are forwarded to the NCRC. Decisions by the NCRC are made based upon the following criteria:
    - i. Satisfactory documentation of competence relative to approved standards;
    - ii. Recommendation of the PCRC.
  - c. **Approval by the AC**
    - i. Portfolios approved by the NCRC are forwarded to the AC;
    - ii. The AC renders final decisions to grant certification in the name of the Alliance.

## 2. Communication of decision

- a. Certification decisions will be communicated to candidates in writing within three months of the relevant deadline (March 1 or October 1).
- b. The term of initial certification is seven years.

## Appeals

An appeal is a review of an adverse decision regarding certification. An appeal must be based on the grounds that a decision was either (a) in disregard or in violation of USCCB/CCA-approved standards and/or procedures, and/or (b) based on an incorrect or incomplete representation of the applicant's competence. There is no fee to initiate an appeal of a negative certification decision to the Alliance Appeals Panel.

Candidates making an appeal shall:

- submit to the chair of the Appeals Panel a written request for an appeal, detailing the grounds for the appeal as noted above, within thirty days of the postmark of the letter received denying certification;
- provide the Appeals Panel with evidence substantiating fulfillment of the requirements of the USCCB/CCA-approved certification standards and procedures along with written verification establishing that all required portfolio documentation was submitted by published deadlines.

The required materials will then be forwarded to the members of the Alliance Appeals Panel for their review and final and binding decision.

Candidates have the right to:

- a timely and complete review of a negative decision for certification by the Appeals Panel whose members were not part of the PCRC, NCRC, or AC that recommended and/or made the decision not to certify;
- a response within sixty days after the appeal was received by the chair of the Appeals Panel.

## Procedures for Renewal of Certification

Certification renewal is contingent on evidence of commitment to ongoing ministry formation and education and continuing good standing relative to one's partner organization's code of ethics. Certification renewal standards and procedures will be provided at the time of granting of certification, and formal notification of upcoming renewal will be sent one year before expiration.

Renewal of certification takes place every seven years upon approval of a completed certification renewal application (see section above on "Certification Requirements" for specific requirements).

Applications must be submitted to the respective PCRC no fewer than ninety days prior to the expiration date of certification.

Applications will be reviewed by the PCRC chair or his/her duly deputed representative. If the renewal application is incomplete, it is returned to the candidate within thirty days. If the criteria below have been met, the renewal application will be forwarded to the AC with a recommendation for renewal. The PCRC will also notify the NCRC of recommendations for renewal made to the AC. Renewal of certification is granted by the AC and communicated to the candidate within thirty days of the decision.

The criteria for renewal of certification are:

1. Submission of a complete application by the deadline along with a self-assessment and peer assessment based on the standards and specialized competencies;
2. Documentation of continuing formation/education;
3. After initial certification, documentation of satisfactory completion of any remaining theological requirements;
4. Evidence that any notations from the previous certification had been satisfactorily addressed.

## 3.5 Guidelines for Portfolio Development

### ALLIANCE FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS

#### Guidelines for Portfolio Development

##### Introduction

The portfolio is a compilation of documentation that provides evidence of competence relative to the National Certification Standards. Once completed, a candidate's portfolio is submitted to the Partner Certification Review Committee (PCRC) of his/her national partner organization (FDLC, NALM, NCCL, NPM, or NFCYM) for review and decision. If approved by the PCRC, the portfolio proceeds with the PCRC's recommendation for approval to the National Certification Review Committee (NCRC), and finally to the Alliance Commission for final approval. Upon approval by the Alliance Commission, certification is granted for a period of seven years, at which time the candidate must apply for renewal of certification.

Candidates for certification will use these guidelines to develop their certification portfolios. Candidates are advised to read and follow these guidelines carefully. A certification advisor may be appointed to assist in portfolio development.

##### Portfolio Contents

Completed certification portfolios will be organized into three sections, as follows:

###### **Part One:**

###### **Title Sheet, Checklist, Cover Letter, and Initial Application Materials**

This section includes the completed application and all documentation that was submitted and approved for initial application to the certification process, along with a detailed list of coursework, etc. accomplished since admission to the certification process to satisfy certification requirements.

###### **Part Two:**

###### **Documentation of Competence**

###### **Relative to the National Certification Standards**

(including the specialized competencies and requirements identified by each partner organization for the particular ministry specialization)

Four sources of evidence will be used to document competence (see below for detail):

- **Self-assessment**, including ministerial development planning forms.
- **Evidence of demonstrated competence in ministry** that substantiates competence relative to the National Certification Standards, including specialized competencies.

- **Evidence of formal education and formation for ministry**, including transcripts, certificates of course completion, course syllabi, program descriptions, etc. (Important: Use the *Table of Partner Organization Requirements* below.)
- **Testimony / observational evidence**, including reports by persons who have first-hand experience of the candidate in ministry settings.

[NOTE: At the conclusion of these guidelines you will find a table of information detailing the portfolio requirements of each partner organization relative to each of the specialized ministry roles to be certified.]

### **Part Three: Integration Paper**

The concluding section of the portfolio consists of an integration paper that demonstrates the candidate's ability to apply personal, spiritual, theological, pastoral, and specialized competence to the practice of ministry.

### **Instructions**

#### **❶ Instructions for Part One:**

##### **Title Sheet, Checklist, Cover Letter, and Initial Application Materials**

Place these items in the first section of the certification portfolio in the following order:

1. Portfolio title sheet (use template provided)
2. Cover letter in which the applicant formally requests certification based on the evidence provided in the portfolio (use template provided)
3. Checklist (use template provided)
4. Copies of all materials that were submitted with your initial application to the certification process

The specific requirements of the Alliance partner organization for the candidate's ministry specialization (see table below), and precisely where in the portfolio those requirements are addressed.

#### **❷ Instructions for Part Two:**

##### **Documentation of Competence Relative to the National Certification Standards**

Arrange these items in the following order, with a cover page for each section:

## **Section One. Self-assessment**

Completed self-assessment (using the standard Alliance Self-Assessment Form), including “Ministerial Development Planning” forms generated from the self-assessment, along with evidence that the plans were successfully completed and any gaps and/or deficiencies satisfactorily addressed.

## **Section Two. Evidence of Demonstrated Competence in Ministry**

Documentation that substantiates competence relative to the National Certification Standards, organized in order of their relevance to each of the four standards, including the specialized competencies of the candidate’s ministry specialization, as follows:

- Human: evidence of healthy human maturing, including but not limited to healthy boundaries, balance between personal life and ministry, healthy interpersonal and ministerial relationships, ability to collaborate well and effectively, etc.
- Spiritual: evidence of spiritual formation, including history of patterns of prayer and worship, retreats received, spiritual direction, continuing education in spirituality, etc.
- Intellectual: evidence of sound theological foundations for ministry grounded in Scripture and Catholic tradition; evidence of command of the principles and working knowledge requisite to one’s ministry specialization, etc.
- Pastoral: evidence of a history of competent and capable pastoral ministry, including but not limited to examples of fruitful and effective ministry activities, projects and/or programs in one’s ministry specialization, etc.

Candidates are encouraged to use the framework of the self-assessment (Section One) to assist in their compilation and organization of documentation in this section. Additionally, indicators have been developed for each standard that may assist candidates in developing this section of the portfolio (see Appendix 2).

**Important:** Each of the four sections (Human, Spiritual, Intellectual, and Pastoral) must be preceded and introduced by a 1–3 page synopsis or summary report on the candidate’s competence relative to that standard. Candidates are encouraged to compose these brief summary reports *after* reviewing the self-assessment, plans for ministerial development, and documentation compiled for each standard. These summary reports should be concise narratives of the candidate’s competence relative to each of the standards and should cite in summary fashion specific examples that demonstrate and substantiate competence.

Following are some further guidelines to assist the candidate in developing this section of the portfolio:

- Encouraged kinds of documentation:
  - Copies of recent supervisory performance reviews;

- Summaries of activities, projects, and/or programs that were developed, designed and led by the candidate, along with publicity materials and summary evaluations;
  - Signed and dated letter from one's spiritual director verifying commitment to regular prayer and spiritual direction;
  - Signed and dated letters of recommendation from colleagues and volunteers with whom one has closely worked substantiating various competencies (in addition to the required observations).
- Discouraged kinds of documentation:
    - Stand-alone flyers, brochures and other types of publicity materials without accompanying summary or explanation (these provide unsatisfactory evidence of ministerial competence);
    - Audio-taped or videotaped sessions (these are difficult or impossible to duplicate and make available to reviewers).

### Section Three.

#### Evidence of Formal Education and Formation for Ministry

1. Evidence of *theological education*: In this section provide a complete report on all of your relevant theological education/formation, *including those identified in your initial application*. Provide titles and brief descriptions of courses, workshops, internships and/or other educational/formational experiences, along with names of instructors, dates attended, and classroom clock hours. (The candidate must supply evidence of theological study at an academic institution or ministry formation program that has accreditation or episcopal approval (e.g., a diocesan ministry formation program), in accord with the requirements of each Alliance Certification Partner Organization (see table above). Unless otherwise stipulated, certification requires a minimum of 20 hours each (80 total hours) of instruction in at least four of the following core areas: basic doctrine; Christology; Sacred Scripture; Church history; ecclesiology; worship/sacraments; moral theology/Christian living. The remaining three areas are to be completed (minimum 20 hours each) prior to the first renewal of certification. **Important:** The sum of these along with those identified in your initial application must meet the requirements established by your partner organization, as listed above.
2. Evidence of *specialized education and formation*: In this section provide a complete report of all education and formation relevant to the specialized competencies of the ministry role for which you're seeking certification, *including those identified in your initial application*. Provide titles and brief descriptions of courses, workshops, internships and/or other educational/formational experiences, along with names of instructors, dates attended, and clock hours in attendance. **Important:** The sum of these along with those identified in your initial application must meet the requirements established by your partner organization, as listed in the table at the end of these guidelines.
3. *Transcripts, certificates and/or other forms of documentation* that substantiate satisfactory completion of requirements for specialized education and formation for ministry. **Important:** If you

have arranged for official transcripts to be sent from an educational institution to your PCRC, be sure to note that in your cover letter and in this section.

4. In lieu of courses, *equivalency* may be demonstrated by an examination, research paper, lecture, or other demonstration method proposed by the candidate and approved by the PCRC. Candidates should contact their organizational PCRC in advance for approval of equivalencies.

#### **Section Four. Testimony / Observational Evidence**

Completed formal assessments by the following persons (using the standard Certification Alliance observer assessment form):

- a. The candidate's pastor (or equivalent) or other supervisor approved by the PCRC;
- b. A peer or colleague in ministry with expertise in the candidate's ministry specialization and firsthand experience of his or her competence; and
- c. A subordinate (volunteer or staff) who has worked with or under the direction of the candidate for a minimum of one year.

#### **Section Five. Other Evidence**

Additional documentation that further substantiates your competence relative to the National Certification Standards and their specific competencies, organized in order of their relevance to one of the four standards: Human, Spiritual, Intellectual (esp. Theological) and Pastoral (e.g., evidence of mentoring, supervised experiences, ongoing spiritual development, commitment to prayer, spiritual direction, days of reflection, retreats, etc.)

#### **⑤ Instructions for Part Three:**

##### **Integration Paper**

The portfolio is to include an integration paper of 11–15 pages, double-spaced, in a 12-point font. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate the ability of the candidate to bring to the practice of ministry the resources of one's own human and spiritual formation; appropriate insights from Scripture, Church teaching, theology, and other pertinent areas of study; and formation in the sound practice of one's pastoral ministerial specialization.

In preparing the paper, the candidate may seek guidance from his or her certification advisor and from members of the PCRC.

The integration paper should be organized according to the following outline:

- *description* of a concrete problem or issue in ministry that one has encountered in practice (1–2 pages);

- *exposition* of material from Scripture, Church teaching, theology, and other pertinent areas of study that address this problem or issue (5–6 pages);
- *application* of theological/intellectual insights to the problem or issue in a genuinely useful way and a *resolution* of the problem or issue that reflects sound practice of one's pastoral ministry specialization (3–4 pages);
- *reflection* on how one's personal and spiritual formation help the candidate to deal with the problem and ways in which the issue challenge the candidate to further personal and spiritual growth (2–3 pages).