A Chaplain’s Guide to Job Related Issues

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

There are instances in which MChapUSA chaplains will participate in discussions with client company employees about job related issues or concerns (JRI). The following guide is intended to assist chaplains in both responding to such issues and in recording these discussions in CCS.

The following is the official definition of a JRI:

“Job Related Issue (JRI) is a type of confidential pastoral discussion (CPD) where the issue is clearly job-related and the issue relates to a problem or concern that the employee is having. There are specific categories of these job related discussions included in CCS. A JRI would not include a positive or neutral discussion about the employee’s job circumstances.”

- List of Common CCS Definitions

Many discussions that chaplains have with client employees include a job related dimension to the discussion, but that is not the same as a JRI. The key element that makes a discussion a JRI is where the specific focus of the discussion is an issue related to work, e.g. work conditions, relationship with a supervisor or fellow employee, fear of being terminated, etc.). Chaplains may wish to consult with a chaplain supervisor if unsure that an issue should be reported as a JRI.

Remember that only one JRI is to be reported per discussion with an employee. As with any type of CPD, when more than one topic is discussed, a JRI is reported in the category for the main topic discussed (the one that best fits).

NUMBER OF JRIs REPORTED

There are two extremes in the reporting of JRIs and they are at the opposite end of the same spectrum: (1) Over reporting, can be caused by creating an atmosphere where employees look for the chaplain to tell him or her about the bad work conditions or being too quick to identify a conversation as a job related issue when in fact it falls in the category of just “grumbling.” (2) Under reporting, can be caused by unwillingness to report JRIs for fear that it will reflect poorly on morale. Both extremes, over reporting and under reporting are to be avoided.

EXAMPLES OF WHAT ARE AND WHAT ARE NOT JRIS:

(1) A client employee tells you that he has heard that there will be layoffs because of slow business and he’s afraid that since he has worked there less than a year, he will lose his job. (This is a “JRI” in the category of “Slow Business.”)

Another client employee tells you that his finances are really tight now and he doesn’t know what he would do if he should lose his job. (This is a “Finances” CPD rather than a JRI)

(2) An employee complains that the night crew is getting the floors too wet when they clean up. She has slipped down on one occasion and is afraid that someone is going to get hurt. (This is a “JRI” in the category of “Work Conditions.”)
Another employee tells you that since he started work in the frozen food section his has had almost continuous colds. The employee is going to the doctor about once a month. (This is a “Health/Illness” CPD rather than a JRI as it is necessarily cold in the frozen food section.)

THE CHAPLAIN’S ROLE IN JOB RELATED ISSUES
In instances when an employee wants to discuss a job-related issue, the chaplain’s role is two-fold: (1) to listen and, as appropriate, provide biblically based guidance or encouragement and (2) to refer the employee to the proper procedure for following established client company policies. As a result, it is essential that chaplains are clear themselves as to client company policies and procedures for handling employee complaints.

NOTE: Chaplains should also consult with their chaplain supervisor when learning of situations that would be of special interest to the client company.

When involved in JRI discussions, chaplains should always remember that a basic feature of our employee care program is that chaplains are “neutral from company business operations.”

HELPFUL TIPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH JOB RELATED CONCERNS
It is important that chaplains keep the right perspective when talking with employees about job related concerns.

Don’ts
(1) Chaplains must remember that their purpose is not to be an advocate.

(2) In addition, it is also not the purpose of the chaplain to have the employee feel that the chaplain is siding with them. In almost every instance the chaplain is hearing only one side of the story.

Do’s
There are many ways in which the chaplain can be a resource to the employee regarding JRIs.

A chaplain greatest contribution in providing employee care with job related concerns is through (1) non-judgmental listening, (2) the offer of encouragement and (3) a faith based orientation that can provide direction and support.

As noted above chaplains will always point employees to company procedures for dealing with complaints.

A chaplain will also help the employee to put a job related issue in a proper perspective. It is often helpful to make careful use of positive language and to encourage the employee to try to find the “bright side.”

Lastly, a job related issue is sometimes an indicator of other issues in the employee’s life and careful listening may uncover non-job related issues as well.
CHAPLAIN RESOURCES FOR JOB RELATED ISSUES

Possible Talking Points
You may be able to use one of the following Biblically-based “talking points” when discussing JRIs:

- Guide the client employee in discovering the secret of contentment in all areas of life
- Point to the need to pray for those who have wronged you
- Encourage the client employee to make every effort to be reconciled to others
- Affirm the importance of finding joy in life by living in peace with everyone, as much as is possible for us to do

RBC:

Chaplains should be aware of the Radio Bible Class (RBC) booklet on dealing with work related issues entitled “How Can I Find Satisfaction My Work.” It should be noted that the perspective of this booklet is clearly Christian and biblical.

Hope For The Heart (Counseling Keys Available as a link from within CCS)

- Employment
- Reconciliation
- Conflict Resolution
- Stress Management
Recording JRIs in CCS
Discussions with client employees that deal primarily with job-related issues are reported in CCS as a “Job-related Incidents.” JRIs must “fit” into one of 10 categories for such issues. Categories are selected by using a drop-down menu:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JRI Topic</th>
<th># Informal</th>
<th># Formal</th>
<th>Private Notes</th>
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SPECIAL NOTE:
CCS is programmed to require that each JRI entered also include a brief “Note” as to the nature of the JRI. The “notes” section may also include a description of any necessary further action to resolve the issue. **DO NOT USE IDENTIFYING INFORMATION SUCH AS EMPLOYEE NAMES IN THE NOTES SECTION.**

1. **Benefits** – a job-related concern that is specifically related to a non-compensation benefit provided by the client such as insurance, retirement plan, 401K, etc. **EXPLAIN THE TYPE OF BENEFIT IN THE NOTES SECTION.**

2. **Compensation** - a job-related concern that is specifically related to how or how much an employee is being paid

3. **Career Dissatisfaction** - a job-related concern that involves an employee’s general dissatisfaction with the type of work he or she does and the need to change careers

4. **Conflict with Co-worker** - a job-related concern that is specifically related to a strong disagreement with another employee at that location

5. **Conflict with Management other than Supervisor** - a job-related concern that is specifically related to a strong disagreement with someone in client management other than his or her own direct supervisor (see category 7)

6. **Fear of Job Loss** - a job-related concern that is specifically related to an employee’s concern that for whatever reason the employee may be “laid off” or terminated.

7. **Foreman or Immediate supervisor** - a job-related concern that is specifically related to a strong disagreement with the employees own direct supervisor

8. **Slow Business** - a job-related concern that is specifically related to the client’s business being slow (usually causing anxiety or fear on the part of the employee).

9. **Work Conditions** - a job-related concern that is specifically related to aspect of work conditions, such as temperature, parking lot lighting, cafeteria. **EXPLAIN WHAT WORK CONDITION IN THE NOTES SECTION.**

10. **Work Schedule** - a job-related concern that is specifically related to the hours or the shift assigned to the employee. Examples of this category would be too many hours, too few hours or having to work on Saturdays.