

**Archdiocese of Omaha
Ongoing Formation for Permanent Deacons**

**Policies and Procedures
Adopted October 8, 2011
Effective January 1, 2012**

Policy on Continuing Education

Continued growth both in theological knowledge as well as pastoral skills is essential to the ongoing formation and development of a permanent deacon. To this end, all permanent deacons in active service within the Archdiocese of Omaha are required to obtain a minimum of twenty (20) contact hours of continuing education on a calendar year basis. Each active deacon shall submit a report of his continuing education activities to the Permanent Diaconate Office on a semi-annual (June 20th and December 20th) basis. The form to be used for reporting such activities is included in this policy.

The requirement for continuing education is measured in “contact” hours. This means that for every hour of instruction or skill building in which a deacon takes part, one hour of credit is allowed towards the fulfillment of the twenty (20) hour annual requirement. Each deacon is ultimately responsible for attending workshops, courses, small groups, etc. which will provide him the hours needed to meet the requirements of this policy. The Archdiocesan Deacon Council, however, will assist deacons in locating opportunities to help fulfill the expectations.

To ensure that the educational requirements are achieved, certain criteria have been established and are stated below to assist each deacon in determining what qualifies as appropriate content for fulfillment of the “contact” hour’s requirement:

- A. The scope and nature of the instruction taken should be that it adds to the intellectual knowledge or practical skills of the deacon (especially relative to the ministries of Word, Worship, and Justice/Charity), or that it helps in his spiritual development. Any courses which provide background, or updating in your present

ministry, or courses which will prepare you for other types of ministry are considered to be appropriate for continuing education.

B. Contact hours are to be distinguished from total hours offered in a particular program. The twenty (20) hour requirement is fulfilled by time in which you are actually getting information, learning new skills, etc. The following activities are not normally considered contact hours:

1. Travel to and from the place where instruction is given
2. Informational meetings or conferences
3. Retreats
4. Prayer services and liturgies
5. Spiritual Direction sessions
6. Parish Council or committee meetings
7. Social gatherings
8. Archdiocesan Boards and Committee meetings
9. Support group functions
10. Courses not directly related to ministerial service
11. Conducting classes, workshops, retreats, etc.

Courses need not necessarily be offered by a Catholic institution. Deacons are encouraged to look upon workshops or formal academic courses in counseling, social work, and any other human helping skills as appropriate for continuing education credit.

C. Credit may be recorded in whole or in part using the following guidelines:

1. Attendance at courses which grant certificates, whether they are national, regional, or local courses, may simply be reported according to the number of actual contact hours of instruction or practice.

2. Creighton University and/or other university/college courses: count one contact hour for each classroom hour attended. Add an additional five (5) hours of contact for course preparation including the final exam.
3. Adult enrichment courses offered at parishes, in local high school programs, hospitals, etc. count one hour for each contact hour of lecture or classroom work attended.
4. Other formal courses, conferences, seminars, or workshops are to be reported as in #3 above, each hour of instruction being counted as one contact hour.
5. Self-study projects: According to the Continuing Education policy, 50 percent or ten (10) contact hours may be used toward fulfilling the yearly requirement. Self-study projects which may be considered include individual reading of books, periodicals, etc. specifically related to enhancing a deacon's ministry knowledge base (other than just leisure reading), library research, listening to CDs, viewing DVDs, etc.
6. Other activities: General reading of a theological, pastoral, or spiritual nature, homiletic research, pilgrimage, C.P.E., internships, and formal ministry supervision experiences would all be appropriate activities to fulfill a deacon's continuing education responsibility.
7. On-the-job experience: Very often a deacon in his civil occupation may be attending programs which are beneficial to his skills as a deacon. Any job-related courses which, in fact, build the personal skills of a deacon for his ministry should certainly be included as providing contact hours in fulfillment of the continuing education policy.
8. On-line (or distance) continuing education courses. Contact hours will be credited as prescribed by the on-line course provider.

Particular emphasis is made to small group study in the fulfillment of the annual CE requirement. Gathering in small groups (e.g., parishes, deaneries, etc.) can be an effective way to learn, to share ideas, and to grow. Examples of small group study can include viewing of DVDs; discussion of a particular spiritual or theological book that the group has read; discussing a social teaching of the

Catholic Church or papal encyclical, etc. There is a wealth of subject material available to deacons in a variety of formats. Another example of an effective continuing education experience is when a deacon offers a lecture(s) to a small group on a particular subject in which he has expertise.

Continuing Education Reporting

Following completion of a particular continuing education unit, the deacon is encouraged to write a brief report outlining the knowledge that was gained and how the learning applies to his ongoing development as a deacon. Novel ways of communicating these messages abound, such as creating a video using Archdiocesan equipment and subsequently posting it to the diaconate web page. In this way, a deacon can share his ongoing formation with the community.

The reporting form for continuing education activities is included as Attachment A.

Policy on Ongoing Spiritual Formation

Ongoing spiritual formation is essential to the lifelong development of a permanent deacon. Some recommended spiritual exercises to assist the deacon in developing and promoting his spiritual life include:

1. Daily or frequent participation in the Eucharist, as well as daily or frequent Eucharistic adoration, as often as his secular employment and family situation allow.
2. Regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
3. Daily celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, particularly morning and evening prayer (This is required).
4. Shared prayer with his family.
5. Lectio divina.
6. Devotion to Mary, the Mother of God.
7. Prayerful preparation of oneself prior to the celebration of the sacraments, preaching, or beginning one's ministry of charity and service.

8. Theological reflection.
9. Regular spiritual direction (see discussion following.)
10. Participation in an annual retreat (see discussion following.)
11. Authentic living of one's state of life and vocation with particular regard for the sacrament of Holy Orders.
12. Time for personal and familial growth.

Specific Archdiocesan requirements relative to ongoing spiritual formation which require annual reporting to the Office of the Permanent Diaconate are:

1. Spiritual direction: Each deacon is required to have a spiritual director with whom they confer regularly. Each deacon shall provide a written report to the Office of the Permanent Diaconate on a semi-annual basis stating the name of his spiritual director and the number of times met during the reporting period. The form to be used to report this information is included with this policy (Attachment A).
2. Annual retreat: To facilitate growth and ongoing conversion, active deacons are required by canon law to make at least one (1) retreat each calendar year. The retreat must be at least twenty-four (24) consecutive hours in duration. Deacons are free to choose any appropriate retreat. The Archdiocese of Omaha will strive to offer one or more retreats each year to facilitate completion of this requirement.

Men's Ministry Programs

Of particular importance in the Archdiocese of Omaha is the development and nurturing of men's ministry programs.

To the extent that a deacon has the proper skills and desire, through the graces of the Holy Spirit, he is encouraged to learn about and support the ongoing efforts of bringing lay men to Christ through leadership in developing men's ministry programs in the Archdiocese.

October 5, 2011

The Permanent Diaconate Office particularly encourages deacons to attend learning sessions or workshops on how to 1) evangelize men, 2) teach men to pray, 3) assist men in becoming authentic Catholic spouses and fathers, and 4) be better witnesses to Christ in their professions and while participating in cultural and political activities.