

Paraprofessional Certification in the Virginia Conference, The United Methodist Church

Paraprofessional Certification is designed for persons who are called to professional ministry in the church in an area of specialization. Professional ministry means that you desire to serve as a staff person in a church. "Staff person" is defined by job description, supervision, and accountability, and continuing education. Usually a salary is involved, but a stipend is acceptable.

1. At least one year of membership in The United Methodist Church is required prior to enrollment for certification.
2. Educational requirements: Paraprofessional certification is for persons who do not have an undergraduate degree who are working in an area of specialized ministry. The educational requirement is completion of five certification courses in the area of specialization. Since these are graduate level courses, those without undergraduate degrees will have to audit the courses, but a transcript of completion will be required. The five certification courses include courses in United Methodist Studies, Bible, Theology, and two additional courses in the area of specialization (except where specified otherwise on the enclosed sheet). These graduate level courses are offered at United Methodist seminaries and some United Methodist colleges. The closest seminary to Virginia offering these courses is Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Three of the five courses may be taken on-line.
3. Since those enrolled for paraprofessional certification must audit these courses, scholarship assistance is limited. The Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry offers up to \$100 per year based on need. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry only offers scholarship assistance to those with undergraduate degrees.
4. In addition to the educational requirements, paraprofessional certification in the Virginia Conference requires two years of effective supervised experience with full responsibility in the area of specialization at the time of certification.
5. Finally, applicants for certification complete an application and interview process with the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry that includes references, writing papers, background checks, a psychological assessment, and an interview. Please contact the Center for Clergy Excellence for the application packet in July of the year prior to the annual conference at which you wish to be certified. You must complete all course work by December 31 of the year you are seeking certification. You may apply at the end of your third year of supervised experience, with the year you make application counting as your fourth year.

Please note that the Virginia Conference application process is slightly different from that on the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry web site. Please contact the Center for Clergy Excellence first before beginning any work on an application.

The following are the areas of specialization currently offered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry:

- Christian Education
- Children's Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Evangelism
- Spiritual Formation
- Music Ministry
- Camping and Retreat Ministries
- Older Adult Ministries
- Ministry with the Poor
- Urban Ministry

For more information, please email ClergyExcellence@vaumc.org. You will also find additional information at this web site: <http://www.gbhem.org/ministry/certification-studies>.