

(Adopted 8 December 1993)

NCMAF Procedures for Change of
Religious Body (Denomination) Endorsement
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General:

It is important to recognize the difference between changing endorsements and changing denominational affiliation. Changing denominational affiliation is a church polity issue and is governed by the rules established by the respective religious bodies. Changing endorsement is an administrative procedure that may be accomplished by the authorized endorsers when a change in religious body (denomination) has been effected.

The original endorsement a religious body gives to a clergy person is the authority that gives status when the Service accesses that person as a chaplain in the armed forces. Whenever that endorsement is withdrawn, whether by request, denominational needs, or for cause, the chaplain loses the qualification to serve as a chaplain and shall be processed in accordance with DoD Directive 1332.31. Any subsequent service as a chaplain is dependent on the needs of the Service and shall follow the procedures outlined in this directive.

Chaplains desiring to voluntarily change their endorsement need to be aware that a change of endorsement could mean that they may not be retained on active duty and that the respective service is responsible to decide on the retention of the chaplain.

When an endorsement is withdrawn, the procedures in DoD Directive 1332.31 go into effect. One of those options in paragraph B.3. is for the chaplain to seek another ecclesiastical endorsement. At that point a new endorsement may be sent to the appropriate Chief of Chaplains. Final determination of retention is made in accordance with paragraph D of the procedures outlined in the enclosure to the directive.

NCMAF Procedures:

Some chaplains voluntarily choose in the course of their career to change endorsements. As a cooperative effort among its participating religious bodies, The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, therefore, establishes the following procedures for

changing endorsement. These procedures apply to Regular and Reserve component chaplains on extended active duty and Reserve component chaplains in an active or inactive status.

1. The chaplain desiring a change of endorsement may speak informally to a prospective new endorser to determine the requirements and the possibility of endorsement by the prospective religious body. The prospective new endorser will give to the chaplain a copy of this NCMAF procedure and point out the possibility that a change in endorsement may put retention at risk.
2. The chaplain may discuss informally with the current endorser his/her concerns and desire to obtain new endorsement from another religious body.
3. The chaplain must then write a letter to his/her current (losing) endorser formally informing the endorser that he/she desires a change in endorsement with reasons for change, and requests that his/her current endorsement be maintained for a negotiated period of time required to process a new endorsement. The losing endorser will continue to offer pastoral support to the chaplain during this period of transition and will assist the chaplain to the extent possible in identifying a religious body whose theology and polity is in consonance with the chaplain's current faith and practice.
4. The chaplain then writes a letter to the gaining endorser formally requesting endorsement. A copy of the letter to the current (losing) endorser must be included.
5. The gaining endorser will take no further action until the above steps have been taken. Upon receipt of both letters, the gaining endorser will initiate a meeting or phone conversation with the losing endorser to ascertain if there is any problem involved of which the new endorser should be aware, and negotiates the period of time the endorsement will be maintained by the losing endorser. If not previously done, the gaining endorser will then instruct the chaplain as to the requirements that must be met (to include change of religious affiliation) in order for the endorsement to be processed and subsequently granted.
6. Upon completion of processing of the new endorsement, the gaining endorser will contact the losing endorser so that the current endorsement may be withdrawn.