

§3900 Priestly Assignment

This policy sets the expectation that all priests who are incardinated into the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois shall accept an assignment entrusted to them by the Diocesan Bishop. To be unassigned should only occur in very specific circumstances. This policy helps answers the question, “What do we do in the event that someone cannot or will not exercise priestly ministry?” It applies to those who are unable or unwilling to carry out an assignment, with or without fault, temporarily or permanently. Additionally, it speaks to the support such priests will receive and the obligations that they will take on in such circumstances. This policy does not refer to those priests in senior status, those who have canonically left the clerical state, or those who have been dismissed from the clerical state.

3901.1. Policy The policy of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is that it is for the Diocesan Bishop to make assignments in the Diocese by free conferral (c. 157).

Procedures:

- A. In most circumstances the Diocesan Bishop will attempt to give an unassigned priest an assignment when possible and practical provided that he is able and provided that such assignment will not cause scandal among the Christian faithful as determined by the Diocesan Bishop.
- B. While the Diocesan Bishop retains the prerogative to make direct assignment of priests, the Priests Personnel Board, according to its constitution and bylaws, shall ordinarily advise him in the assignment of priests. (C.f. *Fourth Diocesan Synod, 2017 Synodal Statutes*, statute 29).

3902.1. Policy The policy of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is that all persons given an assignment must be suitable, that is, endowed with those qualities which are required by that assignment (c. 149 § 1).

3903.1. Policy The policy of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is that the Diocesan Bishop may, by his prudent discretion and judgment, and according to the prescripts of law, remove a priest from an assignment (c. 193 § 3).

3904.1. Policy Priests shall undertake and fulfill faithfully any function which the Diocesan Bishop entrusts to them unless a legitimate impediment excuses them (c. 274 §2). Priests are expected to accept assignments from the Diocesan Bishop in the spirit of obedience as a call to participate in the mission of the Diocese. If an individual priest refuses to accept such a function, except as provided below in 3903.1, he shall receive a warning in writing that this failure could result in canonical penalties. (C.f. *Fourth Diocesan Synod, 2017 Synodal Statutes*, statutes 29-30).

Procedures:

- C. The priest shall be given 15 days from the date of the written warning either to assume the new assignment, or to offer reasons explaining his refusal. In the latter case, the Diocesan Bishop will judge whether the reasons suffice.
- D. If appropriate, other sanctions and penalties may apply as well. Priests are reminded that they have the right to seek canonical advice and, in addition, when appropriate, to hierarchical recourse as determined by canons 1732-1739. Resources about canonical counsel can be found by contacting the Judicial Vicar of the Diocese or the Canonical Consultant for Priests.

3905.1. Policy Recognizing that there are a variety of legitimate impediments or reasons why a priest may not be able to serve in active ministry, with or without fault, temporarily or permanently, special circumstances shall be responded to with canonical equity pursuant to the procedures outlined below.

Procedures:

The following special circumstances are envisioned in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois:

- A. Priests on short-term health leave
- B. Priests who are disabled and unable to exercise part-time priestly ministry
- C. Priests who are disabled but able to exercise part-time priestly ministry
- D. Priests on administrative leave or voluntary leave of absence
- E. Priests who cannot be certified for purposes of Safe Environment
- F. Priests who refuse an assignment

A. Priests on Short-Term Health Leave

1. **Description:** Short-term health leave occurs when a priest, due to medical or psychological causes, must take time off from his assignment in order to address these same causes. This will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The Diocese of Springfield in Illinois has a Short-Term Disability Plan for incardinated priests of the diocese in active ministry. The Office for Insurance and Benefits manages the plan.

2. **Duration:** "Short-term" is understood as less than six months. If recovery or convalescence require it, this period can be extended in specific cases at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop.

3. **Salary and Benefits:**

Salary: First six months = Equivalent of base salary and expense allowance
(without additional parish or diocesan ministry amounts)
More than six months = Equivalent of base salary and no expense allowance

Insurance: Provided

Residence: Housing or means for housing provided. It may reasonably come to pass that short-term health leave is carried out in a rehabilitation facility or similar location. In this case, whatever is not covered by insurance and an equitable housing allowance will be the responsibility of the priest.

4. **Check-In:** As far as possible, the Vicar for Clergy or another designated Episcopal Vicar will confer monthly with these priests.
5. **Proof of Disability:** Unless it appears needless to do so, it will be the responsibility of the priest to demonstrate that he is unable to carry out priestly duties, after having consulted physicians or other medical or psychological personnel.

B. Priests who are Disabled and Unable to Exercise Part-time Priestly Ministry

1. **Description:** A permanently disabled priest who cannot exercise even part-time ministry is understood to be a priest who is not capable of exercising public priestly ministry in a stable manner, due to mental or physical illness or injury, but who would otherwise be under no ministerial restriction. Such inability to stably exercise even part-time ministry is determined by the Diocesan Bishop in consultation with medical professionals. These priests will be given the opportunity to carry out ministry according to their limited capacity.
2. **Duration:** This depends on the nature of the disability on a case-by-case basis.
3. **Salary and Benefits:**
 - Salary: Determined through the Commission for Priests' Benefits Plan
 - Insurance: Provided
 - Residence: Housing or means for housing provided
4. **Government Assistance:** Upon reaching the age of eligibility, the priest in this category should, with the assistance of the Office for Insurance and Benefits, apply for Social Security, Medicare, Parts A and B and any other federal and/or state benefits for which he may qualify. Additionally, the priest shall apply for any benefits, should they exist on account of his medical status.
5. **Check-In:** As far as possible, the Vicar for Clergy or another designated Episcopal Vicar will confer quarterly with these priests.
6. **Proof of Disability:** Unless it appears needless to do so, it will be the responsibility of the priest to demonstrate that he is unable to carry out any priestly duties, after having consulted physicians or other medical or psychological personnel.

C. Priests who are Disabled but Able to Exercise Part-time Priestly Ministry

1. **Description:** A disabled priest, whether short-term or permanently, who can exercise part-time ministry is understood to be a priest who is capable of exercising public priestly ministry to some degree but who cannot fulfill the material duties of a full-time assignment due to mental or physical illness or injury. Such inability to exercise full-time ministry is determined by the Diocesan

Bishop in consultation with medical professionals. These priests will be given the opportunity to carry out ministry according to their limited capacity.

2. **Duration:** This depends on the nature of the disability on a case-by-case basis.
3. **Salary and Benefits:**
 - Salary: Determined by the Commission for Priests' Benefits Plan; Salary may be split between the part-time work location and the benefits plan. Other arrangements will be determined by the Commission or the Diocesan Bishop.
 - Insurance: Provided
 - Residence: Housing or means for housing provided
4. **Government Assistance:** Upon reaching the age of eligibility, the priest in this category should, with the assistance of the Office for Insurance and Benefits, apply for Social Security, Medicare, Parts A and B and any other federal and/or state benefits for which he may qualify. Additionally, the priest shall apply for any benefits, should they exist on account of his disability.
5. **Check-In:** Priests are to confer quarterly with the Vicar for Clergy or another designated Episcopal Vicar.
6. **Parish Obligations:** Salary and benefits will be split equitably between the appropriate benefit plan (or other source as determined by the Diocesan Bishop) and the parish/institution of work of the priest, based on the quantity of work performed.
7. **Proof of Disability:** Unless it appears needless to do so, it will be the responsibility of the priest to demonstrate that he is unable to carry out any priestly duties, after having consulted physicians or other medical or psychological personnel.

D. Priests on Administrative Leave or Voluntary Leave of Absence

1. **Description:** Administrative leave arises when the actions of a priest make it impossible or at least seriously difficult for him to continue in active ministry such that he is directed to step away for a time from active ministry. This leave is determined by the Diocesan Bishop, who may refer the matter to the Diocesan Special Panel on Clergy Misconduct pursuant to Book II, Policy §120 Policies and Procedures for the Operation and Support of the Special Panel on Clergy Misconduct. This leave could also apply in the case of an investigation by the Diocesan Review Board that warrants a priest be withdrawn, pending the investigation, from ministry.
2. A voluntary leave of absence arises when the same circumstances exist, but a priest chooses to voluntarily step away from active priestly ministry for grave reasons not otherwise contained in this policy with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop.
3. **Duration:** Administrative leave and a voluntary leave of absence are understood as six months or less. This period can be extended in specific cases at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop.

4. **Salary and Benefits for the first six months:**
Salary: Base salary and Expense Allowance (without additional parish or diocesan ministry amounts)
Insurance: Provided
Residence: Housing or means for housing provided
5. **Salary and Benefits after six months:**
Salary: Sustenance not to exceed base salary without expense allowance
Insurance: Provided unless otherwise attainable
Residence: Housing or means for housing provided unless otherwise attainable
6. **Counseling:** If appropriate (as determined by the Diocesan Bishop in consultation with the appropriate staff), he shall also be strongly encouraged to engage in structured counseling as coordinated with the Vicar for Clergy or another designated Episcopal Vicar.
7. **Check-In:** Priests are to confer monthly with the Vicar for Clergy or another designated Episcopal Vicar

E. Priests Who Cannot Be Certified for Purposes of Safe Environment

1. **Description:** Priests in this category are understood as those who have acted in such a way that they cannot be certified for ministry per the Policies of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, including Insurance, Employment, or Safe Environment policies, or in accord with Article 5 of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.
2. **Duration:** Inability for certification is of indefinite length.
3. **Government Assistance:** If eligible, a priest in this category shall first apply to the federal and/or state government for benefits for which he may qualify, once he has concluded the appropriate civil, criminal, and canonical processes in response to any civil or canonical crime, presuming that he has not been dismissed from the clerical state or received any other perpetual penalty.
Upon reaching the age of eligibility, the priest should, with the assistance of the Office for Insurance and Benefits, apply for Social Security, Medicare, Parts A and B and any other federal and/or state benefits for which he may qualify.
4. **Outside Employment:** If it is appropriate and possible, the priest shall make every effort, with the assistance of the Vicar for Clergy or another designated Episcopal Vicar, to obtain employment in some other position that is in keeping with the dignity of the clerical state and that will not cause scandal to the Christian Faithful. To the extent that this position provides a stipend or salary, the priest shall be entitled to retain this amount.
5. **Salary and Benefits, if not provided by outside employment or government assistance:**
Salary: Sustenance amount not to exceed base salary without expense allowance
Insurance: Insurance or means for insurance provided unless otherwise attainable
Residence: Housing or means for housing provided unless otherwise attainable

6. **Tax Information:** A priest in this category must provide his most recent income tax return, or such portions of the income tax return to establish his total income on an annual basis and at such other times as may be requested by the diocesan Finance Office. This information will be used solely to provide the most effective means of assistance to the individual priest. Such information will otherwise remain confidential.
7. **Check-In:** Priests are to confer monthly with the Vicar for Clergy or another designated Episcopal Vicar

F. Priests Who Refuse an Assignment

1. **Description:** An individual priest who is otherwise capable who absolutely refuses to accept such an assignment or ministerial function without a legitimate impediment or reason; or, one who refuses to participate in one of the above programs or special circumstances as directed by the Diocesan Bishop.
2. **Salary, Benefits and Check-In:** Given that the individual, through his refusal to exercise legitimately his priesthood at the service of the Diocese, has placed himself in an interim state (that is, not fulfilling an assignment nor on recognized retirement or leave), he cannot receive diocesan financial support. In his sole discretion, the Diocesan Bishop can authorize a sustenance amount for a limited time. Health insurance may be provided, as determined by the Diocesan Bishop, until it is otherwise available, contingent upon a monthly check-in with the Vicar for Clergy or another designated Episcopal Vicar.

Summative Chart

	Duration	Salary - % of Standard	Insurance	Residence or Means	Check-in Frequency	Other information
Short-term Health Leave	<6 months	Salary w/expense allowance equivalent	Yes	Yes	Vicar to Priest	Proof of disability per STD plan
	>6 months	Salary no expense allowance			Monthly	
Disabled with no Stable Ministry	Case-by-case	Determined by CPB Plan	Yes	Yes	Vicar to Priest Quarterly	Proof of disability
Disabled with Part-time Ministry	Case-by-case	Split, determined by CPB Plan	Yes	Yes	Priest to Vicar Quarterly	Proof of Disability
Administrative or Voluntary Leave with permission	<6 months,	Salary w/expense allowance	Yes, unless otherwise attainable	Yes	Priest to Vicar	No
	>6 months	Sustenance thereafter			Monthly	
Non-Certification of Safe Env.	Case-by-case	Sustenance	Yes, unless otherwise attainable	Yes	Priest to Vicar Monthly	Yes
Refusal of Assignment	Duration of refusal	Sustenance to 0%	Discretion of Bishop until otherwise available	No	Priest to Vicar Monthly	No

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