

**HACKETTSTOWN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER  
PASTORAL CARE POLICY MANUAL  
BABPTISM**

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<b>Effective Date:</b>	<b>March, 1996</b>	<b>Policy No:</b>	<b>8670.002</b>
<b>Cross Referenced:</b>		<b>Origin:</b>	<b>Pastoral Care</b>
<b>Reviewed Date:</b>	<b>2/05, 10/07, 2/16</b>	<b>Authority:</b>	<b>Pastoral Care Manager</b>
<b>Revised Date:</b>		<b>Page:</b>	<b>1 of 2</b>

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**Purpose:** When baptism is requested:

- 1) To assist in coordinating the patient's baptism upon discharge, or
- 2) To coordinate an in-hospital baptism when a post-discharge baptism is impossible, such as in the case of a critically ill infant, or adult with a terminal illness.

**Policy:** When the act of baptism (by whatever mode) is requested, the Chaplain is involved as consultant, facilitator, or officiating minister.

**Note 1:** Some faith groups consider baptism to be an essential sacrament, while others do not regard baptism in a clinical setting as a necessity. Also, some specifically forbid the baptism of infants and require adult baptism by immersion. Thus, baptism should not be "offered" by the nursing staff. Hospital personnel must respect the traditions of the patient or family (in the case of an infant). In no case will a baptism be performed to satisfy the emotional needs of a staff member, or performed against the wishes of the parent.

**Note 2:** In cases such as the imminent death of a newborn, to fulfill the need of those who consider baptism to be an essential sacrament, in faith groups such as the Roman Catholic Church, anyone can baptize without waiting for the Chaplain or the family's clergy. The ordinary method of conferring such an emergency baptism is for the person to pour water on the head or the forehead, and while the water is being poured, audibly stating the individual's name followed by "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

**Note 3:** A family's request to baptize a stillborn infant is to be handled with great sensitivity. Baptism is a sacramental/covenantal act intended for the living. However, in some circumstances, the needs of the family for pastoral care may best be met through the act of baptism.

- Procedure:**
1. Consult with the patient/family to determine the nature of the request and religious affiliation.
  2. Contact the clergy from the church or faith group of the patient to officiate if time allows. If a clergy person from the patient's church is not available, or if there are no religious preferences or the family specifically requests the Chaplain, the Chaplain may officiate.
  3. If the request for baptism is for a mode of baptism that the Chaplain is not comfortable with, the Chaplain should request the help of another clergy and maintain whatever pastoral relationship seems appropriate.

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4. If the request is for baptism by immersion of an adult:
  - a. Consult with the Manager of Pastoral Care.
  - b. Consult with and gain consent of the attending physician
  - c. Make necessary arrangements with the Rehabilitation Department for use of their whirlpool tank. This requires considerable lead time for preparation.
5. Regardless of the mode of baptism or the clergy officiating, notify and work cooperatively with the nursing staff.
6. Assist the officiating clergy as needed, or if officiating, perform the baptism.
7. Record the baptism in the patient's chart.
8. A Baptismal Certificate is available in the Pastoral Care office.