

Sec. 1. BOARD AUTHORITY

The Erath Excels Academy Board of Directors (“Board”) is authorized by law to employ or accept as a volunteer a chaplain to provide support, services, and programs for students as assigned by the Board. *Education Code § 23.001(a)*.

At a duly called and constituted Board meeting under the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Board voted to adopt a policy authorizing acceptance of chaplains as volunteers who may provide support, services, and programs for students in a manner consistent with this policy.

Sec. 2. DEFINITION OF CHAPLAIN

For purposes of this policy, a “chaplain” is religious official who is responsible for providing spiritual care for individuals in a non-religious organization, in this case an open-enrollment charter school. In the context of this policy, no one religion will be favored over another religion. Chaplains of all religious faiths will be eligible to serve under this policy.

Sec. 3. CHAPLAIN SERVICES

Erath Excels Academy acknowledges and respects that students, parents and legal guardians, and employees practice many different religions, faiths, and spiritual practices, including none at all. In order to best serve students, and the broader school community, volunteer chaplains are expected to:

1. Provide support, services, and programs for Erath Excels Academy students as requested, regardless of student religion, faith, or spiritual practice, or lack thereof;
2. Respect the cultural, ethnic, gender, racial, and religious diversity of Erath Excels Academy students, families, employees, and community; and
3. Refrain from proselytizing or imposing the chaplain’s values and beliefs on a student, a student’s parent or guardian, or Erath Excels Academy employees.

Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted or applied in a manner that infringes upon the free exercise of religion of a student, a student’s parent or guardian, and/or Erath Excels Academy employees.

If a volunteer chaplain is unable to support a specific need of the student due to the chaplain’s religious beliefs, the chaplain shall promptly notify the School Administrator.

Sec. 4. CHAPLAIN QUALIFICATIONS

- a) ***State Board for Educator Certification Not Required***

A chaplain volunteering under this policy is not required to be certified by the State Board for Educator Certification. *Education Code § 23.001(a)*. Chaplains serving as volunteers are subject to generally applicable Erath Excels Academy policies and procedures governing volunteers.

b) *Background Checks and Criminal History*

All volunteer chaplains must complete the applicable requirements set forth under Chapter C, Chapter 22 of the Education Code and described in Board Policy PG-4.6 prior to volunteering at Erath Excels Academy. *Education Code § 23.001(b)*.

A person may not serve as a volunteer chaplain at Erath Excels Academy if they have been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision for an offense for which a defendant is required to register as a sex offender under Chapter 62, Code of Criminal Procedure. *Education Code § 23.001(c)*.

Sec. 5. LIST OF AUTHORIZED CHAPLAINS

Erath Excels Academy will invite and accept applications to serve as a volunteer chaplain for the school. Applications shall be submitted to and processed by Superintendent. Upon receipt of an application, the Superintendent shall take the necessary steps to verify that the individual is qualified under state law and this policy to serve as a volunteer chaplain. If eligibility is confirmed, the volunteer chaplain will be placed on a list of eligible and available chaplains maintained by Superintendent. Superintendent will review and update the list, as necessary and appropriate but at least annually.

Sec. 6. REQUEST AND CONSENT FROM PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

Erath Excels Academy shall provide notice to students and their parents and legal guardians of the availability of volunteer chaplain services each school year. The support, services, or programs provided by volunteer chaplains, such as spiritual and moral counseling, will be offered only upon written request and consent by a student's parent or legal guardian.

The parent or legal guardian shall submit the request in writing to the School Administrator. The School Administrator will provide the requesting parent or legal guardian with the list of approved volunteer chaplains from which to choose. Once the parent or legal guardian has selected a chaplain to provide services to the student, Erath Excels Academy shall obtain written consent for the chaplaincy support, services, or programs.

A parent or legal guardian may also identify a chaplain who is not on the list of authorized individuals compiled by Erath Excels Academy. In such instances, the chaplain must demonstrate his or her eligibility and willingness to serve, including to provide written consent for a criminal history background check to be performed for the individual in accordance with state law and this policy. Upon confirmation of eligibility and receipt of written consent, the chaplain will be

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approved to provide services to the student in accordance with this policy. If the chaplain agrees, Erath Excels Academy will add that individual to the list of approved volunteer chaplains.

The School Administrator will coordinate the specific chaplaincy support, services, or programs requested by the student's parent or legal guardian, verify eligibility of the selected chaplain, and coordinate with campus leadership and the student's teachers to oversee the provision of chaplaincy services to the student. The School Administrator shall maintain all relevant documentation pertaining to these tasks.

If a parent or legal guardian wishes to change the selected provider of chaplaincy services or revoke consent for services, such request or revocation must be submitted to the School Administrator in writing.

Sec. 7. EMERGENCY AND CRISIS SUPPORT

In the event of an emergency or crisis affecting the school, its students, and/or the broader school community, Erath Excels Academy may make chaplains from the approved list available on campus to offer general student support on a short-term basis outside the process outlined above regarding parent or legal guardian request or consent.

Sec. 8. NO PUBLIC FUNDING

No school funds shall be allocated to compensate volunteer chaplains for their services to the students of Erath Excels Academy. Chaplains are permitted to donate their time and resources for the benefit of students.