

Chapter 8 | Psychological Assessment

For more information, contact GBHEM's Executive Director of Candidacy and Conference Relations at candidacy@gbhem.org or 615-340-7374.

The Psychological Assessment/Ministerial Assessment Process

WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

- One source of evaluation the BOM or dCOM uses to credential candidates and clergy for licensed and ordained ministry.
- A resource that allows BOMs and dCOMs to make decisions about candidates using theological, ecclesiological and psychological criteria

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

- Psychological testing, a clinical interview with a Ministerial Assessment Specialist (MAS) and the MAS's submission of a written psychological report to authorized persons on the BOM or dCOM
- Consultation with a MAS to applicants and interview committees

REASONS FOR ASSESSMENT

- An individual applies for certification as a candidate for licensed or ordained ministry
- A provisional or full member transfers between denominations
- A clergy member seeks to return from various leave statuses, especially medical leave related to psychological or emotional health
- BOM, District Superintendent or self-referral of clergy
- Other reasons as needed

Selecting a Psychological Assessment Service

Minimum requirements of an acceptable psychological assessment service as established by the Advisory Committee on Candidacy and Clergy Assessment (ACCCA) of the Division of Ordained Ministry (DOM) are listed below.

TESTING

The utilization of standardized self-report instrumentation with multiple data gathering instruments

- The data collected includes information about personality, vocational interests, biographical, interpersonal relationships, self-image and behavior.
- Standard assessment instruments used are the 16 Personality Factor (16PF, 5th Edition), the Minnesota Multi-Phasic Personality Inventory 2 (MMPI-2) and the Incomplete Sentences Blank.
- Additional instruments include a Personal Data Inventory (PDI) and personal reference forms. Other instruments may be included at the discretion of the MAS or BOM in consultation with the MAS.

INTERVIEWING

- An interview between the MAS and the candidate is a requirement of the psychological assessment process.
- The interview occurs after all assessments and reference forms have been received by the MAS and before the MAS finalizes the written report to submit to the BOM.
- Interviews should include a time to review the results of the written assessments and provide time for both diagnostic and interpretive considerations in assessing the candidate's fitness for licensed or ordained ministry in the UMC.

EVALUATION

- The report the MAS prepares for the BOM should include an evaluation of the candidate's fitness for ministry, as well as any suggestions/needs that will benefit the candidate's growth in fitness for ministry.
- Reports are to be in writing and released only with the written consent of the applicant and only to authorized persons, professionals or agencies.
- A written statement of criteria used to evaluate data from the applicants is required.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Maintains candidate files according to the guidelines for psychological files of the UMC, the laws of the state and the ethical standards of the state psychological association and American Psychological Association
- Establishes a plan and a budget in order to periodically review and evaluate the assessment process

Ministerial Assessment Specialist (MAS)

- An individual who is contracted by the BOM and approved by GBHEM's Division of Ordained Ministry to provide psychological assessments is called a Ministerial Assessment Specialist (MAS).
- An MAS is approved through DOM's application process and is required to have credentials, experience and training which meet the DOM's standards.
- Only an approved and contracted MAS may participate in the psychological assessment process managed by DOM.
- Three standard competencies for MAS
 - **Psychological assessment** – A psychologist or other licensed professional certified in psychological assessment with specific training and experience in personality and vocational assessment including test theory and construction, administration, scoring and interpretation
 - **Psychotherapy** – A psychotherapist with graduate training in personality theory and psychotherapy including experience in the application of clinical evaluative skills to vocational or personnel selection and evaluation
 - **Ministry assessment** – A person who values church and religious experience and is familiar with ministry issues as they apply to the selection and nurture of candidates in the UMC
- Areas of knowledge – When one or more of these areas are missing in an individual person, a team will be used in order to ensure all dimensions of the assessment are included.
 - **Technical assessment** – How ministry candidates score differently from other norm groups on the assessment instruments

- **Criteria Evaluation** – How the criteria used in the decision-making processes – in ministry generally and the UMC particularly – are different from criteria in other selection contexts
- **Interviewing** – How to interpret test results in ways that relate to the ministry context
- **Writing reports** – How best to convey assessment information to both candidate and board/committee, who are typically non-clinicians
- Maintaining approved status
 - A MAS must remain in good standing with the appropriate professional credentialing bodies
 - The MAS approval also requires participation in DOM training events and is subject to review at any time, at the discretion of the DOM

The Four Major Stages for Psychological Assessments:

Psychological assessments are used for the selection, nurture and support of candidates and clergy. Throughout the process, all procedures must be appropriate and fair to the church and candidate. Comparisons need to be based on empirical research with both female and male candidates and must be sensitive to culture, language and heritage of the candidate and corresponding groups in the church.

CANDIDACY

The psychological assessment is used to test the applicant's fitness and potential and to answer if the applicant has the qualities (gifts, grace, character and personality) to become an effective minister.

PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

The psychological assessment is used to test the applicant's readiness and to answer if the candidate is developing knowledge, professional and interpersonal skills and the spiritual formation essential for effective ministry and is ready for appointment as a provisional member.

FULL MEMBERSHIP

The psychological assessment is used to test the applicant's effectiveness and to answer if the provisional member is developing effectiveness and is ready to practice ministry as an ordained member of the Annual Conference.

CONTINUING MINISTRY

The psychological assessment is used to test the applicant's effectiveness and if the clergy person is functioning effectively in ministry and participating in continuing education and growth.

Psychological Assessment Reports

- Assists committees in identifying questions to discuss with candidates.
- Address the kinds of questions that BOM and dCOM encounter in interviewing candidates.

- Provide information concerning an applicant's internal and interpersonal functioning and is one factor that influences the dCOM/BOM's decision about a candidate
- Serve a dual function
 - **Consultation**
 - In the face-to-face interview, the MAS should interpret the testing results to the candidate using understandable, nontechnical language.
 - The report provides mental health information and the candidate's potential for effective performance in professional ministry.
 - The MAS may make specific suggestions for enhancing the candidate's strengths and addressing areas for growth.
 - **Evaluation**
 - The report consists primarily of a clinical description and evaluation of the candidate based on test data as well as data from a diagnostic or history-taking interview.
 - The report is descriptive rather than predictive. It describes psychological requirements of professional ministry in the UMC and does not predict future behavior.

Psychological Assessment Process

CERTIFICATION OF CANDIDACY AND/OR REQUEST FOR LICENSE AS LOCAL PASTOR

- **Candidacy Mentor**
 - Requests assessment for candidate through the United Methodist Candidate and Record Entry System (UMCARES)
 - Receives packets and monitors testing
 - Returns completed packets to GBHEM's candidacy office for scoring
- **Applicant**
 - Completes Personal Data Inventory and self-reference form
 - Provides reference names and email addresses to GBHEM for completion of personal reference forms
 - Meets with the Candidacy Mentor to complete the assessment tests (MMPI-2, 16 PF and Incomplete Sentence Blank)
 - Meets with MAS to discuss results of the assessment process
- **MAS**
 - Meets with the candidate after completion of report to assist candidate in assessing fitness for set-apart ministry
 - Recommends additional psychological resources as needed to enhance the candidate's development
 - Helps the candidate explore other vocational options as needed
 - Sends assessment report to the BOM's psychological assessment chairperson or other appropriate dCOM/BOM representative (not the candidacy mentor or the DS)

APPLICATION FOR PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- **Conference Registrar** – Prepares list of provisional membership applicants for the psychological assessment chairperson to coordinate information for the MAS and applicants
- **Applicant** – Participates in the testing and interview process as managed by the BOM

- **MAS** – Conducts a review as applicable for provisional membership and presents results in a face-to-face interview with the candidate with a written report to the chair of the Psychological Assessment Committee
- Results of the assessment are made available to:
 - Candidate (face-to-face interview)
 - BOM (Psychological Assessment Committee)
 - Another mental health professional, if requested by the candidate for future work

APPLICATION FOR ORDINATION AND FULL MEMBERSHIP

- **BOM and applicant** – Follow same process as in applications for provisional membership
- **MAS** – Prepares a report that focuses on developing effectiveness in ministry, considering the candidate's education and provisional membership experiences, any competency issues remaining from previous assessments and developing effectiveness in ministry
- Results are available in the same manners as in applications for provisional membership

Psychological Assessment Committee

Each BOM should have a Psychological Assessment Committee and chairperson to oversee the psychological assessment process and train dCOMs and BOM members in making decisions related to psychological assessment

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR

This individual ideally has advanced training in pastoral counseling beyond what is offered in M.Div. programs. Also, this person should be able to interact perceptively and firmly with peers.

- Represents the BOM's interests in the relationship with the MAS
- Arranges for a contract between the BOM and the MAS
- Interprets the psychological assessment process to the Candidacy Registrar and Candidacy Mentors
- Manages psychological assessment reports
 - Instructs MAS which reports are needed by the dCOM and BOM
 - Receives reports from the MAS and distributes them for dCOM and BOM interviews
 - Collects reports after decisions are made and returns them to the MAS to retain on behalf of the candidate and the BOM
 - Communicates the content of the report to the dCOM liaison for the Psychological Assessment Committee.
 - Collaborates with the Candidacy Registrar to arrange for training in the use of the psychological report in the dCOM interview process
 - Works with the Psychological Assessment Committee to meet with the MAS in order to review the written reports for clarification of issues and their implications and for training prior to report use
- Arranges for a second opinion in the event that a candidate desires one as part of an appeal process
- Arranges for the transfer of the candidate's psychological files from any outgoing MAS to any newly designated MAS
- Prepares a budget and submits invoices for payment as required by the conference treasurer
- Ensures confidentiality of candidate information in the psychological assessment process

- Keeps all confidential information confidential and handles sensitive material with discretion, wisdom and empathy
- Follows the BOM's policies in determining access to the assessment reports and maintains a balance between the candidate's right to confidentiality and the BOM's need to know information that contributes to decisions about candidates
- Ensures that only those with legitimate "need to know" access the psychological reports and that any copies are returned to the appropriate files at completion of their use
- Ensures that the dCOM requires the candidate to sign an "Acknowledgment of the Process" and "Release of Information" before the assessment process begins
- Maintains contact with DOM staff, psychological assessment chairpersons from other Annual Conferences, as well as with jurisdictional, regional, seminary and general church-sponsored programs and events in the area of psychological assessment, candidate interviewing and clinical counseling

Psychological Assessment Committee Liaison Member of the dCOM

- Communicates with the BOM committee chair in order to facilitate the psychological assessment process for candidates
- Receives psychological reports from the BOM Psychological Assessment Committee for use in the dCOM process of candidate evaluation
- Reviews psychological reports in light of conference standards for licensed and ordained ministry and the candidate's fitness (potential) for gaining sufficient levels of competence for effectiveness in licensed or ordained ministry
- Orients the dCOM in the proper use of the reports during the dCOM interview process, including issues of confidentiality and the nature of the reports as consultation rather than as recommending an accept/reject decision
- Participates in training with members of the BOM Psychological Assessment Committee