

Hospital or Care Facility Ministry Guidelines

What Hospital Ministry Is:

1. **On-call Ministry:** You will be notified when there's a need to visit, and you'll respond by going to the hospital or care facility.
2. **Extending Care:** This is about providing comfort and support to those in pain or facing challenges.
3. **It is not a time or place to engage in Theological or Philosophical Discussions:** It's important to focus on the patient's emotional and physical well-being rather than engaging in deep theological or philosophical conversations.
4. **Not a Counseling or Therapy Session:**
 - You are not there to answer the question "Why?"
 - If asked "Why?" A simple and honest answer could be, "I don't know... But I'm here because I care."

The Role of Your Presence:

- **"Being There"** is the most important part of the visit. By your presence, you have a chance to extend care and comfort to a comrade and or a comrade's family.
- Remember, you're representing not just yourself but also your VFW post and family, so convey that they are thinking of and praying for the patient.

Preparation for the Visit:

1. **Gather Information:**
 - Write down the patient's **full name** (avoid nicknames).
 - If possible, obtain names of **family members**.
 - Note who notified you to visit. (you can say to the patient, your son, Bob called and asked me to visit you)
 - Gather key information about the facility:
 - **Name of the facility and location**
 - **Facility phone number**
 - **Room number** (if available)
 - **Reason for the visit** (if known)
 - Write everything down legibly.
2. **Dress Appropriately:** Ensure you are well-dressed and presentable as you represent yourself, your post, and the VFW.

Upon Arrival:

1. **Check-in at Patient Information:**
 - Introduce yourself clearly, stating that you're Chaplain _____ from the VFW, and give the name of the patient you desire to visit and their room number.
 - The staff will verify if the patient is still there and provide room details and directions. Write down the room number and directions. Many facilities provide a small map.
 - If the patient is in the ICU, they will provide special protocols to follow.
2. **Check-in at Nurse's Station:**
 - Upon reaching the patient's floor, stop at the nurse's station, identify yourself, and inform them of your visit.
 - They will confirm if the visit can happen at that time and direct you to the room.

3. **Entering the Room:**

- **Knock Gently:** Knock softly to avoid disturbing the patient, especially if they might be resting.
- **Respect Privacy:** If there are medical staff present, wait outside until they have finished.

4. **Building Rapport:**

- Upon entering the room, introduce yourself and establish rapport with the patient and any family or friends who may be present.

5. **Time Considerations:**

- Visits should generally be brief, lasting around **10-15 minutes**. This respects the patient's need for rest while still providing comfort and connection. ICU visits should be kept to **5 minutes**.

Additional Suggestions:

- **Personal Connection:** If appropriate, you might share stories or memories from their VFW family, which can provide comfort and strengthen the bond.
- **Follow-up:** Depending on the situation, offering to follow up with the patient or family can further demonstrate your care and commitment.

This guidance is clear, practical, and compassionate. It emphasizes the importance of being present, respectful, and sensitive to the patient's condition while maintaining professionalism as a representative of the VFW.