

CANDIDATES' INTRODUCTION TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION PROCESS RATIONALE

Every conference is charged with conducting psychological evaluations for ministerial candidates. Some are mandated and some are specific to the conference. The Missouri Annual Conference (MOAC) uses a specific test protocol developed through the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) Pastoral Evaluation Committee's consultations with professional psychologists who have experience in ministry. The rationale for the evaluations is twofold: First, the MOAC/BOM has a responsibility to insure that a candidate's engagement in ministry will not be harmful to the candidate, the churches served or the parishioners; second, the evaluation reports can be used by supervisors, mentors, District Superintendents, etc. in making wise placement decisions and giving guidance to the candidate that will enhance his/her ministry.

The MOAC has candidates evaluated at several levels and/or points during their ministerial careers. The same test protocol is used on each of one or two evaluations to insure consistency and measure growth or identify problems that may have developed over time. Generally, applicants for candidacy certification, lay ministry, local pastor's licenses, and individuals who are seeking transfer of their credentials from another conference or denomination are evaluated early in their ministerial journey with the MOAC. Lay ministers, locally licensed pastors and transfer applicants are typically tested only once unless psychological problems appear to be impairing their ability to perform well in ministry. Candidates seeking full-connection with the United Methodist Church are evaluated twice, once before candidacy certification or commissioning as deacon or elder and again before ordination.

Evaluation Protocol Candidates will complete a Release of Information and Personal/Professional Reference request through the UMCARES website before the Candidacy Summit. At the Candidacy Summit the candidate will complete the MMPI-2, 16PF (16 Personality Factors) and Incomplete Sentences Assessment. Candidates will complete the Ministerial Assessment Questionnaire in the week following the Candidacy Summit.

The MMPI-2 test identifies personality factors that may represent particular strengths that a candidate could use to enhance ministry and/or areas of growth that could be addressed. These factors include: emotional adjustment, integrity/control, intellectual efficiency and interpersonal relations.

The 16PF is an instrument that identifies personality factors that assist with career development.

The Ministerial Assessment Questionnaire collects data related to efficient and safe functioning in ministry. Areas explored with the MAQ include: employment history, educational history, religious history, marital history, family of origin history and personal history, including current and past physical and psychological health, financial history and current status, arrest record, involvement in civil litigation, involvement in domestic violence or sexual harassment (victim or perpetrator), etc.

The Incomplete Sentences Blank assessment is a projective technique that asks the candidate to complete sentence stems. It gives the candidate an opportunity to provide open-ended narrative information for discussion with the Ministerial Assessment Specialist or psychologist.

The test administration takes candidates three to four hours to complete. We will allow breaks throughout that time.

In order for a Ministerial Assessment Specialist to schedule an interview with you, your UMCARES file needs three references. Four references are required before certification of candidacy.

The Ministerial Assessment Specialist will have access to your test results through UMCARES and review your results. Then an interview time and location will be set up with the candidate and MAS. The reports are usually completed within 60 days of the testing.

Evaluation Outcomes

One of five recommendations is made as follows:

1. Excellent candidate – This recommendation is made in only about one percent of the cases. It usually comes with zero or very few recommendations for enhancing the candidate's ministry.
2. Above average candidate – This recommendation implies a very strong candidate and comes with few recommendations for ministerial enhancement.
3. Acceptable candidate – This recommendation is received by most candidates and often includes suggestions for personal, professional or educational growth along with any precautionary concerns such as employment, interpersonal or financial instability, etc.
4. Acceptable but less than average candidate – This is a precautionary recommendation and usually reflects serious concerns about the candidate's ability to function successfully in ministry. Recommendations are made with regard to psychological counseling, close supervision, balancing one's life with different vocationally themed activities and educational enhancements, etc.
5. Unacceptable candidate – This recommendation comes when there is deemed to be psychopathology that would seriously impair a candidate's ability to function in ministry or that would put the candidate, parishioners and/or the church at risk of harm. Recommendations are made regarding care and support of the candidate (psychological counseling, evaluation for psychiatric medications, etc.).

Candidates will sign a waiver of release of report at the interview. The candidate does not receive a copy of the report. Reports are sent to the Board of Ordained Ministry for review and revision if necessary. They are then forwarded to the MOAC where they are disseminated to District Superintendents, a dCOM and/or a BOM member for review and decision-making. However, supervisors, psychotherapists/Ministerial Assessment Specialist, dCom and District Superintendents may use the report in consultation with the candidate to enhance ministerial performance and/or personal well-being.