

***CHEROKEE MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE***

1251 West Cedar Loop  
Cherokee, IA 51012

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Type of Center: Psychiatric Hospital

General location: City

Original CPE affiliation: ACPE

**PROGRAM HISTORY**

Year of first program: 1968      Full accreditation: 1968

Number of students who have been enrolled in the program: 400

Number of total units of CPE completed: 64

Present Supervisor(s): Robert C. Alexander, ACPE

Gene E. Sitzmann, NACC (USCC-CCA)

Levels of CPE offered: Basic

Persons instrumental in establishing CPE program:

*Names, title/position, agency*

Robert C. Alexander

**PROGRAM ENROLLMENT STATICS FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS**

Lay students: 20+

Minority students: Few

International students: Very few

***CHEROKEE MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE***  
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CPE AT CHEROKEE MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE AND SIGNIFICANT FACTORS IN IT'S DEVELOPMENT:** The mission of the Ecumenical Institute is to provide quality pastoral education through an accredited training center by certified personnel on an ecumenical, non-discriminatory basis in compliance with all local, state and federal laws, and to provide these services primarily on behalf of the people of Northwest Iowa. Special concern is directed to meeting the needs of rural communities.

The CPE program began at the Cherokee Mental Health Institute (CMHI) in 1967 when ACPE Supervisor/Chaplain Robert C. Alexander joined the staff. Cherokee possessed an attractive reputation as an active, progressive treatment center and teaching hospital with a patient census of 450 and an AMA Accredited Residency in Psychiatry. At the peak of the state hospital “warehousing” era, its census reached 1,729 patients (1945). In that era, many lived out their lives at the “Insane Asylum” and approximately 829 were buried in a cemetery on the grounds, totally abandoned by their families and communities.

Starting in the early 1950's, progressive administrators and psychoactive medications led to the “de-warehousing” era, and by 1977 the census stood at 238 patients. The new active treatment model was allowing more patients to return to their homes.

I joined the staff as a Chaplain-Intern in 1972. Following that year of training under Chaplain Alexander, I continued in pastoral education training and was certified as a CPE Supervisor with the National Association of Catholic Chaplains in 1974. In 1976, I completed a University of Iowa Masters degree in Social Work and have co-supervised CPE programs with Chaplain Alexander since then. Although “retiring” in 1986, Chaplain Alexander has continued his services on a part-time, volunteer basis to this date. Our years together have been synergized through training we received and then applied to pastoral education, e.g. Gestalt, Transactional Analysis, Latent Language, Symbolism/Myth, and especially, Family Systems.

**PROGRAM FUNDING – PRESENT, PAST, SOURCES:** Why envision a change in focus and funding? Because, just as anticipated in the planning that first began 10 years ago, our daily census now averages just 75 inpatients! Mostly, we have been right on track with anticipating the impact of the developments in health care delivery that have occurred during this time and have adjusted both the Mission of the Ecumenical Institute and the timing of its fulfillment accordingly. Our goal has been to develop an alternative source of funding in order to finance the pastoral education needs of the new millennium for this rural area. Programs, as they are developed, will be distinct from those traditionally offered on the CMHI campus. Still, all such community-based activities – in churches, community colleges, hospitals, etc. – are being planned to operate complementarily with the current on-campus CPE programs. We anticipate continued State funding of my position until my retirement a few years from now.

We have come a long way since an organizational meeting of the Institute in November 1993. The Board of Directors is now well informed, dedicated and effectively moving to fulfill the Mission. Our funding goal is to establish an endowment of some two million dollars. This would be developed through a baseline of participation, county by county, of \$100,000 total in gifts and pledges from the residents of a given county. Planning to serve a network of the 24 counties of Northwest Iowa sets the ultimate goal of full community-based participation at \$2,400,000. At this time, we have the first member of the network in place (Sioux County) through a family gift of \$100,000. This, together with other assets accrued, builds the Institute's total capital to \$160,000. It is calculated that a \$2 million (plus) endowment fund would generate enough annual income to run a community-based program largely as it has operated at CMHI, i.e. to supervisors, salary and benefits, as well as an adequate budget for other program costs.

**UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE CENTER'S CPE PROGRAM:** For all three decades now, our CPE program has remained unchanged in format, consisting of a full-time Summer unit and an extended Fall-Spring unit. This Summer unit has gathered seminarians and those in other institutional settings that held them fully occupied the other months of the year.

