Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America

Clergy Compensation Manual

For Clergy and Parish Councils

Effective January 2018-January 2019

Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

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Introduction

In 1980, Metropolitan PHILIP, of thrice-blessed memory, appointed a commission to make a thorough study of the stipends and benefits available to the clergy of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. This directive demonstrates that the welfare and dignity of the clergy have long been of great concern to the Metropolitan Primate and to the Antiochian Archdiocese. His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH continues to share that concern.

The Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement has responsibility for coordinating the policies for stipend guidelines, health insurance, long-term disability and term life insurance, retirement planning, and the confidential assistance plan. The Department consists of His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Ellias of Brooklyn, NY, Chairman, Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Zain, also of Brooklyn, NY, Fr. Paul Matar, Fr. Nicholas Belcher,Ms. Mary Winstanley-O'Connor of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees and the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, Mr. Gregory Laham of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees, Mrs. Marlene Ayoub and Mr. Sameh Khouzam, Comptroller.

This revised Clergy Compensation Manual attempts to bring together all the pertinent policies necessary for our clergy and parish councils to make informed decisions about salaries and personnel matters. **Please read this manual carefully as every aspect of the program has changed since the last edition.** The Department welcomes any input or suggestion users of this manual may have.

1. Salary Guidelines

This section provides information about recommended stipends and mandatory allowances and benefits. This section also provides some recommendations for handling Social Security and income tax payments.

Recommended Stipends

The 2015 Archdiocese Convention that met in Boston, MA, endorsed the report of the Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement in which the Department recommended that stipend guidelines for full-time pastors should increase annually according to the rate of inflation. These Guidelines exist for the benefit of the clergy and parish councils. As in past versions of this manual, each priest and parish council must adjust the recommended Basic Minimum Monthly Stipend according to local factors.

To apply these guidelines equitably, it is necessary to recognize that **each parish is unique in terms of its size**, **geographical location**, financial stability, and sociological background. Each priest, in turn, has unique characteristics, such as length of service in the parish and the archdiocese, personal record of achievement, and ecclesiastical rank. **These factors should be taken into consideration in determining the pastor's stipend.**

Each version of the Guidelines has stressed the need to consider local conditions and has emphasized the words **"guidelines"** and **"minimums."** If differences or conflicts arise, the diocesan auxiliary bishops are available to act as intermediaries, but the Metropolitan Primate will render any final decisions.

Stipend Guidelines for Full-time and Full-time assistant Pastors

The following guidelines apply to full-time pastors and full time assistant pastors. The Basic Minimum Monthly stipend has been indexed to reflect an increase of **1.7% for 2016, 0.3% for 2017 and 2% for 2018**. **The total adjustment is 4.0% since the September 2015 edition of this manual.** These numbers reflect the COLA increase. Please note that the stipend varies for each state according to the cost of living (please go to www.CityRating.com for your city Consumer Price Index).

Size of Mission or Parish by pledged unit[1]	**Basic Minimum Monthly Stipend**
under 25	Negotiable
25 to 50	$2,197.00
51 to 100	$2,374.00
101 to 150	$2,555.00
151 to 250	$3,270.00
251 to 350	$3,984.12
351 to 450	$4,700.16
451 or more	$5,417.00

At the time of Assignment the stipend is agreed upon by the Archdiocese, the pastor, and the parish council. By the end of each year, parish councils are to grant **automatic** cost-of-living adjustments based on the COLA published by the social security administration. The link is **https://www.ssa.gov/news/cola.** Such adjustments **are not substitutes for merit raises.** A Yearly update of the compensation package is to be sent to the Archdiocese at archdiocese@antiochian.org or frpaul@antiochian.rg no later than January 10.

Stipend Guidelines for Part-time Clergy

Assistant part-time pastors, deacons, and lay assistants who are assigned for part-time ministry in a parish should receive stipends and benefits agreed upon by the Archdiocese, the appointed pastor and the parish council. By the end of each year, parish councils are to grant **automatic** cost-of-living adjustments based on the COLA published by the social security administration. The link is **https://www.ssa.gov/news/cola. Such adjustments are not substitutes for merit raises.** A Yearly update of the compensation package is to be sent to the Archdiocese at **frpaul@antiochian.org** no later than **January 10**. Part-time pastors and assistant pastors are strongly encouraged to find employment which does not contradicts Christian and Orthodox ethics in case the stipend is not sufficient to support them.

Mandatory Allowances and Benefits

Parishes must provide the following allowances and benefits to full-time clergy and:

- Housing, car, tax, and insurance benefits
- Paid vacation time
- Travel expenses for Archdiocese/church related events

[1] At the time of negotiating the stipend, the Archdiocese and the parish council will take into consideration the number of people actively served by the pastor in the parish.

- Moving expenses

- A bi-yearly 1 %[2] increase of the minimum stipend for each year of active ministry.

Formula:

Minimum stipend+ (minimum stipend*0.5/100 * years of active ministry)+(minimum stipend* CPI)

Example:

(priest active for 21 years in a 51 to 100 pledge parish community)

$2374** (51 to 100 pledges) **+**{**2374*0.5/100 * 21** (minimum stipend * 0.5/100* 21 years of active ministry +{$2374* 2.58/100** (CPI of your city)}=$**2,684.5192**

Housing, Car, Tax, and Insurance Benefits

In addition to the Basic Minimum Monthly Stipend, parishes must provide the following allowances and benefits to full-time clergy:

- A parish home or a fair housing allowance which depends on local real estate markets.

- Payment of utilities (Electric, water, sewage, heating, Internet, cellphone (pastor's cell phone only, neither his wife's nor his children) or a **fair** allowance for same.

- Payment of **not less than** 50% of the U.S. Social Security tax or its Canadian equivalent.

- An allowance of **not less than** $400 per month for auto maintenance and operation to cover gas, oil, tires, repairs, tolls, etc.

- An allowance for the full cost of auto insurance. (the pastor's car insurance only, neither his wife's nor his children)

- The **full cost** of the Archdiocese Group Insurance Plan for life and long-term disability.

- An allowance for the **entire cost** of medical insurance for the priest and his family. The Joint Orthodox Health Plan, as described in this manual, is the minimum requirement for benefits levels. The parish may provide the same benefit level at a lower cost, if locally available.

[2] 0.5 % per year of active ministry experience.

- All reasonable expenses for travel, meals, and lodging incurred while attending the Archdiocese Convention, Diocesan Parish Life Conferences, Archdiocesan Clergy Symposium, deanery clergy meetings, and mandatory retreats and seminars.

Annual Paid Vacation

Parishes must also assume the following obligations:

- Annual paid vacation period according to seniority:

1 to 10 years ordained	15 days (2 Sundays)
11 to 15 years ordained	22 days (3 Sundays)
16 or more years ordained	29 days (4 Sundays)

N.B. If the parish retains another priest to serve while the pastor is on vacation or is incapacitated by illness, the parish must cover the expenses and an honorarium for the priest who is substituting.

Moving Expenses

When the Metropolitan Primate assigns or transfers clergy, the receiving community pays all reasonable moving expenses.

Social Security and Income Taxes

The parish is responsible for withholding at least 50% of a priest's U.S. Social Security tax or the Canadian equivalent. The total Medicare and Social Security tax is currently 15.3% of gross salary, including housing allowance for self-employment earnings. The priest is responsible for setting aside enough funds to pay the balance of this tax as well as funds for federal and state income tax.

Estimated Tax Payments

The federal government and most states require quarterly estimated tax payments from individuals whose employers do not withhold all taxes from their salaries; therefore, clergy must make quarterly payments of the estimated total Social Security (15.3%) and income tax due for the current year. The parish is to compensate the pastor for (15.3/2=7.65) 7.65% of the self-employment tax (for 1099 employees).

Consult with an accountant or other tax or financial advisor to obtain the correct forms that must be filed with payments and to calculate the amount of the quarterly payments. The Internal Revenue Service and state departments of revenue impose stiff penalties for insufficient or irregular payment of estimated taxes.

Exemption from the Social Security System

A priest may exempt himself from the Social Security system within three months of ordination. Clergy cannot seek exemption from Social Security because they think it is a bad investment. When filing for exemption, a member of clergy makes some representations under penalty of perjury. A member of clergy must certify opposition on the basis of religious principles to acceptance of public insurance. That includes payments for death, disability, retirement or medical care.

A member of clergy must certify that they have informed their ordaining body of their opposition to accepting public insurance benefits on the basis of religious principles. Few members of clergy will be able to meet these requirements. **The Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement strongly recommends that priests do not exempt themselves from Social Security.** Participation in the Social Security System provides retirement income and may also provide disability income if a priest is disabled.

In 1999, the U.S. Congress passed a provision that allows clergy who have "opted out" of the Social Security system to resume their participation. Priests wishing to resume participation in the Social Security system should consult a tax advisor to obtain the appropriate form to notify the IRS and the Social Security Administration of their intent.

By law, an individual must have at least 40 quarters of Social Security coverage to be eligible for Social Security benefits. Priests returning to the Social Security system may want to contact the Social Security Administration to determine whether they had some covered employment before opting out of the system. This employment would apply to the 40 quarters needed for benefits. A tax advisor can provide the appropriate form for obtaining this information from the Social Security Administration.

Disallowance of Clergy Severance Compensation

Because our clergy serve our parishes with the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop and the Metropolitan Archbishop, and may be transferred at any time at the sole discretion of the Diocesan Auxiliary Bishop and the Metropolitan Archbishop, severance packages and/or severance compensation is not allowed.

2. Life and Disability Insurance

The Antiochian Archdiocese now provides both life insurance and long-term disability insurance for its clergy through **Aetna**. As mentioned in Section 1, all parishes **must** pay for these benefits via their $100/month payment to the Archdiocese. Upon becoming eligible, all clergy should submit a completed enrollment form to the Antiochian Archdiocese headquarters to participate in the Archdiocesan Group Life and Long-Term Disability Program.

This section briefly summarizes the life and disability benefits available to eligible clergy. The benefits are fully described in the booklets that Aetna provides to enrolled clergy. Refer to these booklets for more detailed information about coverage. Keep the most recent copies of these booklets with this manual so that up-to-date information about coverage is readily available when needed.

Life Insurance

Participation in the Archdiocese Life Insurance and Long Term Disability plan is still **mandatory** for all full-time pastors. The yearly cost has been $1200 per year for many years and is the sole responsibility of the parish.

Death Benefit

At the demise of a priest enrolled in the Archdiocesan Group Life and Long-term Disability Program, the surviving spouse or other designated beneficiary receives a $150,000 death benefit for those clergy under seventy (70) years of age.

When a priest reaches age 70, the death benefit to the surviving spouse or other designated beneficiary decreases to $75,000.

The Department strongly urges surviving spouses and beneficiaries to consult a financial advisor as to maximizing this benefit.

Long-term Disability Insurance

This section describes the process for receiving disability payments when a priest becomes disabled. It also identifies other sources of disability income in addition to those provided by insurance coverage.

Applying for and Receiving Disability Benefits

When an active priest who is covered by the Archdiocesan Group Life and Long-Term Disability program becomes disabled, he must notify the archdiocese immediately to request the proper disability claim forms and applications for benefits.

After thirty (30) days of continuous disability, known as the "elimination period," the priest should send the disability claim forms, with appropriate signatures, to the Archdiocese. The priest should also complete and forward the Claim Form for Premium Waiver on his life insurance. The Archdiocese forwards the completed forms with additional paperwork to the insurance company.

If the insurance company approves the claim, the insured receives the following disability payments:

- $500 per month from the Archdiocese for up to sixty (60) days of continuous disability and

- $2,000 per month from the insurance company for as long as total disability lasts or until age 65, whichever comes first; these payments begin after the first ninety (90) days of disability (that is, after the 30-day elimination period plus the 60 days covered by the Archdiocese)

Other Disability Benefits

Unless a priest has opted to exempt himself from the U.S. Social Security system, the priest may also be eligible to receive disability payments (SSI) from the Social Security Administration. These payments begin after six months of continuous disability and are **in addition** to the $2,5000 per month from the insurance company.

When the priest's disability income of $2,000 per month from the insurance company ceases at age 65, the Metropolitan Primate may deem the priest eligible to receive the archdiocese's Retired Clergy Allowance (See Section 3.).

3. Retirement Planning

This section describes the vested 401(k) Defined Contribution Plan which began in January 2013.

- Mandatory Defined Contribution Plan
- Retired Clergy Housing Allowance
- Personal retirement plans, including Retirement Selector Accounts (RSAs), Individual Retirement Accounts (SEP and traditional IRAs) and New Mandatory Defined Contribution Plan

Mandatory Defined Contribution Plan

Effective January 1, 2013, the Antiochian Archdiocese inaugurated its first **mandatory** and **contributory** employer-sponsored pension program for the clergy. The Budget Committee of the Archdiocese approved the program in April 2012, and the Archdiocese Board of Trustees approved it in June 2012.

The program qualifies under IRS Code 401(k) as a **Defined Contribution Plan** which will combine participation and contributions from the priest, the parish and the Archdiocese.

The parish will deduct a **minimum of 3%** of the priest's stipend and will **match** that sum (capped at the first $40,000/year or a contribution of $100/month).[3] The parish will submit the combined total to the Archdiocese headquarters which will add an **additional $100/month** and forward the deposit to the fund managers as long as both the priest and the parish adhere to the rules of the program; however, both the clergy and the parish are entitled and **encouraged** to make larger contributions.

N.B. This check must be separate and must not be combined with any other payments to the Archdiocese. The memo section of the check should read "Retirement Contribution for Fr. (Name)".

Clergy serving in Canada will need to submit a "T4" tax form to ManuLife, the Canadian provider, in order to determine eligibility and to comply with Canadian tax law. The provider will provide counsel on investment selection and compliance.

Canadian clergy should also send their checks to the Archdiocese Headquarters but made payable to the "Diocese of Canada and Upstate New York." The Archdiocese will then forward the funds with its contribution to the provider through the Auxiliary Bishop of Ottawa.

[3] If the 3% is less than $100 per month than the parish should endeavor to contribute $100 per month.

The Archdiocese's matching portion will come from the operating budget and a grant from the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. The total maximum allowable contribution is currently $16,500, but the IRS adjusts that threshold each year. There will be an **open enrollment period** each year between October 1 and December 1.

Each priest will own a share of a pooled retirement account based on the amount of his submissions, the match by the parish and the contribution of the Archdiocese. The vast majority of the clergy have chosen to remain in the pooled account, but a small percentage has chosen to establish individual accounts. Those who choose the individual option are responsible for the additional account maintenance fees and all investment choices. Because this program qualifies as a "salary deferral" plan, the participant has the option to choose either a "pre-tax" designation or a "Roth" ("after-tax") designation. (Please confer with your financial or tax advisor to make an appropriate choice.) Every participant will receive an annual statement beginning in January 2014 from the auditor/accountant in order to track progress.

All contributions by the priest will be automatically **vested**, but the contribution of the parish and the Archdiocese are vested after **three years** of continuous service. Those clergy who are over fifty (50) years of age are entitled to make "catch-up" contributions. In 2012 the IRS authorized such contributions up to $5,500, but that amount changes each year.

The priest may begin making withdrawals from the plan when he reaches normal retirement age and stops working. By IRS regulations he **must** begin to make withdrawals no later than age 70 ½ in a non-Roth account. He may, however, rollover the proceeds to an IRA or other annuity within sixty (60) days of the distribution.

The priest's wife will automatically be the beneficiary of his account unless he specifically designates a different beneficiary. Unmarried clergy may nominate any beneficiary, including the retirement fund or the Archdiocese itself.

In addition to the mandatory participation in the new Defined Contribution Plan the Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement strongly recommends additional retirement savings. The priest can either add a higher percentage of his own earnings to the Defined Contribution Plan, or he can utilize other tax-advantaged savings vehicles as described below.

Retired Clergy Housing Allowance[4]

The funding for the Retired Clergy Housing Allowance has historically derived from the Archdiocese's operating budget and the generosity of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Several years ago the Antiochian Women stabilized the fund through a five-year campaign. It is, therefore, in priests' interest to encourage new memberships and upgrades in the Order and to offer their full support for the Antiochian Women. Additionally, Metropolitan JOSEPH, together with the Department of Finance and the Archdiocese Board of Trustees, has authorized that an additional $1,000,000 be added to the fund from the interest of an endowment over the next several years.

The Metropolitan Primate **grants** the Retired Clergy Housing Allowance **at his discretion** as a housing stipend, which means that the allowance is not taxable under the U.S. federal tax code. The Retired Clergy Housing Allowance is **not** a qualified pension payment. There is **no vesting**. The formulas for calculating the allowance depend on the status of the priest at the time of retirement.

An actuarial study of the Retired Clergy Housing Allowance showed that due to our rapid growth the fund was unsustainable for the long-term in the absence of an infusion of capital. Given the increasing demands on the Archdiocese's operating budget, such an increase is unlikely.

All current recipients of the Retired Clergy Housing Allowance will continue to receive their full stipend. Current projections of expenditures indicate that the system will last approximately 10-12 years in the absence of further infusions of capital. The time was opportune, therefore, to migrate to the vested Defined Contribution Plan as described above.

The Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement continues to monitor the assets of the Retired Clergy Housing Allowance carefully through periodic actuarial studies and other means. As of this revision of the Clergy Compensation Manual, we are pleased to announce that Metropolitan JOSEPH has made the commitment that all clergy will receive whatever amount they expected from this fund (according to the guidelines outlined above, that is, at his discretion as has always been the case) **as of their status in the fund on January 1, 2013** (the date when the new plan started).

[4] All Clergy Ordained after January 1, 2013 are encouraged to enroll in the 401K retirement plan and do not fall under the Retired Clergy Housing Allowance. The Retired Clergy Housing Allowance will not be considered for them at the time of their retirement.

For example, if a full-time pastor has served in the archdiocese for 15 years as of January 1, 2013, he will receive $400.00 a month from the old "Clergy Housing Allowance" **in addition** to whatever he has accumulated in the new plan. Those clergy who have been serving the archdiocese on a full-time basis for 30 years or more as of before January 1, 2013, will receive the maximum $800.00 a month when they retire according to the guidelines above. We thank Metropolitan JOSEPH for making this commitment even though this was never a qualified pension program, and neither the clergy nor the parishes contributed to this fund.

Allowance for Active Clergy eligible under the old plan

An active, non-disabled priest of the Archdiocese may retire only with the approval of the Metropolitan Primate. The earliest age at which a priest may apply for such approval is 62.

At the time of a priest's retirement, the Metropolitan Primate **may** deem the priest eligible to receive the Archdiocese's Retired Clergy Housing Allowance until the priest's demise. The priest can receive the full amount of this allowance only after age 65.

The allowance equals $**26.67** per year of active service as **full time pastor** in the Antiochian Archdiocese to **a maximum of 30 years**. The maximum allowance, therefore, is $800 per month based on years of active service **up until** January 1, 2013.

Allowance for Disabled Priests, Early Retirees, and Widows

For a disabled priest, years of service continue to accrue until age 65. For example, if a priest becomes disabled at age 50 after completing 10 years of active service, his total years of service at age 65 equal 25 years.

For clergy who retire with the approval of the Metropolitan Primate between ages 62 and 65, the allowance is reduced by 0.5 percent per month for each month that the participant retires before age 65.

At the demise of a priest who is receiving the archdiocese's retired clergy allowance, the widowed *khourieh* is eligible to receive 75 percent of that allowance for the rest of her life once she herself reaches age 65; however, if a widowed *khourieh* remarries, she automatically forfeits the allowance.

Personal Retirement Plans

Personal plans have included Retirement Selector Accounts (RSAs), SEP IRAs, and traditional or Roth IRAs. Changes in the IRS code have affected some of these choices; nevertheless, the Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement strongly urges each priest to establish and contribute regularly to a personal retirement plan in addition to the Defined Contribution Plan described above.

Retirement Selector Accounts (RSAs) and SEP IRAs

In 2008 the IRS made changes to the tax code which rendered some 403(b) plans obsolete. At that time the Department encouraged the clergy to establish either an RSA account or a SEP IRA sponsored by the parish. Because both forms of investment are considered "employer sponsored," neither account will be compatible with the new Defined Contribution Plan. A priest may only participate in one employer sponsored plan at a time.

Those clergy who opened either an RSA or a SEP IRA sponsored by their parish may continue to carry a balance in that account and to manage its assets, but they cannot make any additional contributions to it. Please call Merrill Lynch at **1-800-723-9831** for additional details on how to proceed.

Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs)

An Individual Retirement Account (IRA) is an investment account that meets government regulations for individual investment of money for retirement. Two types of IRA are available, traditional and Roth:

- The money contributed to a traditional IRA is tax-deferred. The investor pays no tax on contributions in the year they are contributed. The contributions and the investment earnings are taxed at the time of withdrawal. The government taxes withdrawals at the tax rate of the retiree, which is likely to be lower than when contributions are made during the peak earning years.

- The money contributed to a Roth IRA is taxable in the year it is contributed. Neither the contributions nor the investment earnings are taxed at the time of withdrawal. Also, the IRS does not compel the owner to take mandatory distributions; therefore, it is possible to pass a Roth IRA account untouched to heirs. The retiree enjoys tax-free income from this type of IRA. Roth IRAs can be especially beneficial to young clergy, who may accrue significant earnings that are nontaxable income during retirement.

Contribution limits for traditional and Roth IRAs may change each year under the tax code. Consult a tax accountant or other financial advisor to obtain the latest information about maximum contributions to IRAs. For tax year 2017 the IRS permitted up to $5,500.00 in contributions in addition to the $18,000 maximum for an employer sponsored plan. Please note there are limits for people using ROTH IRA's depending on their total income. For most clergy, they will fall under these limits; however, consult your tax advisor to be sure, especially for those households where the *khourieh* also works. There is also a $1,000.00 "catch-up" contribution available above the $5,500.00 for those over the age of 50.

As noted above a traditional or Roth IRA can also be a useful tool for receiving and managing mandatory distributions from the Defined Contribution Plan. Merrill Lynch has provided such services for the clergy of the Archdiocese, but banks, other brokerage houses, mutual fund companies, insurers and other financial institutions offer traditional and Roth IRAs with a wide range of investment options and risk factors. Most of these institutions will gladly consult with potential clients to select investments that best fit an individual's specific situation.

Contributing to a Personal Retirement Plan

While some pastors struggle to maintain a balanced budget, the Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement strongly urges clergy to make regular contributions to a personal retirement plan. While clergy can borrow money to buy a house or to finance their children's education, they cannot borrow money on which to retire.

Here are some strategies for making regular contributions:

- Some priests choose to put the gifts they receive for blessing homes into their retirement accounts.

- Some priests also choose to apply any cost-of-living increases or merit raises they may receive into their retirement accounts.

As daunting an exercise as retirement planning may seem, it is a vitally important aspect of our personal and financial stewardship. Both the Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement and our Merrill Lynch account representatives are available to help make prudent choices.

4. Health Insurance

In both industry and the nonprofit sector, the issue of health insurance benefits has become increasingly problematic due to the rapid rise in the cost of healthcare. The Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement continues to monitor developments in the political and judicial areas surrounding the "Affordable Care Act."

In this context, the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, the Orthodox Church in America, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, ROCOR, and the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America have joined together to sponsor and offer The Joint Orthodox Health Plan.

The current carrier is Aetna U.S. Healthcare, which offers the Joint Orthodox Health Plan using a Preferred Provider Option (PPO), and as of last year now includes a **Health Reimbursement Account (HRA)** component. Premium rates currently are $1295 per month for a single participant, and $2235 per month for a family. Premium adjustments occur during the month of May each year.

This section provides the following information about the Joint Orthodox Health Plan:

- Brief description of the plan
- Eligibility and enrollment information
- Health insurance alternatives for those who choose not to participate in the plan

Claim forms are available from the Archdiocese and from GDC Financial, the broker which administers the Joint Orthodox Health Plan. Contact GDC Financial at (800) 785-4432 or (203) 367-4070.

Plan Description

A health insurance plan with a Preferred Provider Option (PPO) allows participants to receive medical services either from "preferred" healthcare providers, such as physicians, hospitals, and pharmacies, who belong to the plan's provider network, or from providers outside this network. So-called in-network providers have agreed to charge lower rates, and the insurance company covers a larger percent of the cost of in-network claims than of claims from out-of-network providers; however, coverage for out-of-network services is still substantial and enables participants to choose their providers.

The new **HRA** system has three components:

The HealthFund – at the start of each calendar year, the participant receives a deposit into his HealthFund to help pay for eligible out-of-pocket health care costs automatically;

The deductible – is the amount ($3000/$6000) the insured pays before the health plan begins to pay for any eligible expenses. HealthFund payments go towards the deductible and help to meet the deductible; and

The health plan – pays for most eligible expenses after the deductible is met. The insured then pays a smaller share of these costs out-of-pocket until reaching the maximum limit.

The Orthodox HealthPlan puts a certain amount of money ($750/$1500) into the HRA HealthFund. This money helps to pay for eligible medical expenses and to meet the health plan deductible. The insured can roll over any HRA HealthFund balance to the next year. This way it is possible to build up the HRA balance for future medical needs.

In summary, the HRA HealthFund pays for eligible medical expenses automatically. After using all of the money in the HRA HealthFund, the insured pays any additional expenses incurred towards his deductible. After the deductible is met, the plan covers most of the remaining expenses. The HealthFund payments count towards meeting the deductible. Once the HealthFund is depleted, the insured is responsible for any additional costs incurred until the deductible is satisfied.

As a PPO plan, the Joint Orthodox Health Plan has two levels of coverage:

- **In-network providers**: services usually covered at 90% after a $35.00 co-payment

- **Out-of-network providers**: services usually covered at 70% after applying an annual deductible; no copayments

The Joint Orthodox Health Plan also includes prescription, dental, and vision coverage:

- The prescription plan covers generic and brand-name drugs. See the benefits summary for a detailed description of prescription coverage.

- The dental plan provides coverage for preventive services (for example, cleanings), basic services (fillings, etc.), and major services (crowns, etc.). The plan has an annual deductible. See the benefits summary for a detailed description of dental coverage.

- The Vision One discount program is an integrated feature of the health plan. See the brochure that comes with the introductory information from Aetna for descriptions of discounts, participating locations, and a toll-free telephone number for further information.

Plan benefits change periodically. Aetna distributes updated information to participants when benefits change. Keep the latest benefits summaries with this manual and discard old summaries when new ones arrive. The latest plan summary can be found at **www.orthodoxhealthplans.com**.

Eligibility and Enrollment

All full-time clergy are eligible to enroll in the Joint Orthodox Health Plan. Upon ordination, new clergy should request an enrollment form from the Archdiocese headquarters. Clergy already enrolled in the plan can use the enrollment form as a change of information form (for example, to add dependents or remove adult children).

Upon enrollment, Aetna sends enrolled clergy an information packet that includes the following materials:

- Provider directory
- Summaries of medical, prescription, and dental benefits
- Introductory brochure
- Pharmacy listing
- Pamphlet and order form for mail-order drugs
- Vision One brochure
- Internet address card
- Claims forms for medical and dental benefits
- Claims envelope

Alternatives to the Archdiocese Plan

Clergy are not required to participate in the Archdiocese plan. If the plan does not provide network coverage in a given locale, or if there are preferable alternatives that offer equal benefits, clergy may choose other plans.

Often clergy choose to enroll in plans that are available through their spouse's employment. If clergy adopt this option, their compensation from the parish is negotiable as there would be significant savings to the parish's operating budget.

Clergy can also evaluate these options:

- Health plans available through a local chamber of commerce or small business association (Such plans may require membership dues or other enrollment fees to participate.)

- Private-pay plans (These plans usually lack premium discounts that are available through group plans and may not have readily accessible appeals processes or other protections.)

Clergy should remember, however, if they choose another health plan and later want to enroll in the Joint Orthodox Health Plan, a medical exam may be needed to determine eligibility. There is an Open Enrollment Period for the Joint Orthodox Health Plan from November 15 through December 31 of each calendar year for coverage beginning January 1.

While some clergy have tried to enroll in the health plans offered by parishioners' businesses, the Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement discourages this practice because it skirts ethical issues and blurs the relationship between pastors and parishioners.

5. Confidential Assistance Program

The Confidential Assistance Program (CAP) is a service available to clergy and their family members **free of charge** to provide immediate, confidential assistance from trained counselors for any problem for which assistance is needed. Such problems include but are not limited to the following issues:

- Marital, family, and other relationship issues
- Emotional, stress, and work/career issues
- Grief counseling
- Mental illness
- Child and elder care questions
- Financial and legal problems
- Real estate transactions
- Substance abuse and violence

Availability of CAP Services

Clergy or family members who identify themselves as associated with the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese are considered eligible to receive services. Unlimited telephone counseling and up to five face-to-face counseling sessions are available each time a person contacts the Confidential Assistance Program.

Our CAP provider has changed. Our new provider, **ComPsych**, makes **c**ounselors are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by calling **(800) 272-7255**. For TDD call **(800) 697-0353**. Online resources are available at **guidanceresources.com**. The Archdiocese's Company ID is **COM589**. No voice mail, answering machines, or answering services are used. Callers who seek a face-to-face appointment can request one from the counselor answering the phone. Appointments for face-to-face counseling are made within three days for non-urgent requests and within 24 hours (same day) in an emergency.

Confidentiality is strictly maintained. Information or records kept by CAP will **not** become part of the participant's personnel file.

Referrals and Follow-up

In addition to phone and face-to-face counseling with CAP counselors, counselors can refer clergy or family members to providers capable of giving any extended or specialized care necessary to address the problems identified. Depending on the problem, providers might include mental health professionals, credit counseling services, legal resources, or other appropriate professionals. Counselors make every effort to accommodate individual preferences in terms of gender, location, financial limitations, or age. Counselors notify the provider that the person will be calling to set up an appointment.

Counselors review the cost of the recommended care and applicable benefit coverage with the person seeking assistance before making recommendations. Counselors strive to make referrals that do not create financial hardship or that are eligible for benefit reimbursement.

Two weeks after the last face-to-face counseling session, CAP counselors follow up by telephone with the person who sought assistance to determine whether the person connected successfully with the referred provider and whether the person is satisfied with the provider. Any unsatisfactory outcome will be addressed with additional face-to-face counseling or another referral. Counselors follow up every four weeks thereafter for up to three months to assure that the person is doing well and is satisfied with CAP services provided and with any referrals.