

Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church
Lay Servant Ministries
P. O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, Virginia 23058
March 2017

Standards for Specialized and Alternative Training Courses

These standards are established to cover situations where organizations outside the Virginia Annual Conference Lay Servant Ministries Program offer training courses that may be used as substitute courses for the advanced Lay Servant Ministries Program.

These standards are established in accordance with information published in the Lay Servant Ministries Guide for Conference & District Committees published 2014. If a group desires to offer training courses that are expected to be used as a substitute to the courses outlined for periodic Lay Servant required courses the following procedures are established as a guide for the group to get approval of these courses. If a Certified Lay Servant or Certified Lay Speaker is anticipating using an alternative learning course, event or activity they should receive prior approval from their district director of lay servant ministries.

1. These events must:
 - (a) Meet the criteria of minimum class room work;
 - (b) Be in an area that falls within the scope of the Lay Servant Ministries; (Leading, Caring and Communications)
 - (c) Include assignments outside the classroom; and
 - (d) Provide an opportunity for a commitment for specific service in Lay Servant Ministries.

2. Examples of events that could meet the criteria established for an approved alternative advanced course are: conference and district retreats; schools of Christian missions; national training events sponsored by the general agencies of the United Methodist Church; and cruises/seminars sponsored by continuing education agencies.
 - (a) These courses cannot be used as the initial class for Certified Lay Servant approval. That must be the Basic Class
 - (b) These courses can only be used once for recertification.

- (c) Instructor may use courses taught only once for recertification. You are expected to complete additional educational growth at least once every three years.
3. As agencies provide courses to meet special needs or interest and second level (more in-depth) advanced courses for skill development for specific ministry, the following must be included:
- (a) Content that leads to a new awareness and understanding of the topic, issue or concern;
 - (b) Related biblical and theological reflection;
 - (c) New skills and a time to practice these skills; and
 - (d) An opportunity to make a commitment to act.
4. Many agencies of the church offer wonderful events for celebration and information or retreats for reflection and renewal. Lay Servants should be encouraged to attend these connectional events to “charge their batteries” and to broaden their knowledge of The United Methodist Church. However, most of these do not qualify as substitutes for an advanced class since skill development; practice and evaluation are not included in the purpose of these events.
5. In order to insure the quality of the Advanced Lay Servant Ministries Program, agencies wishing to offer a course as a substitute must provide the information listed in items #1 and #3 above in advance of the event where the course is to be offered. Send the information to the Conference Director of Lay Servants or the District Director of the Lay Servant Ministries.

A complete review of the forwarded data and resources will be made within 14 business days of receipt of the material. Please include all the details showing compliance with paragraphs #1 and #3 above to avoid delays in approval.