

Title: Amend Canon 16, Professional Standards with a new Section 6.
Proposer: The Standing Committee of the Diocese of Montana

Professional Standards

Canon 16

(New) Section 6. All stipendiary clergy, in order to obtain licensure in the Diocese, upon election as a Rector, or selection as an assistant clergy person, shall provide evidence to the Ecclesiastical Authority, that either through a Letter of Agreement or Vestry Resolution (if there is not a Letter of Agreement) that the parish guarantees the clergy person health insurance per Church Pension Group (CPG) guidelines, if the individual is not covered by Medicare or other government program. In the event that the clergy person is not working sufficient hours for coverage under CPG guidelines, the parish shall show evidence to the Ecclesiastical Authority of the parish's willingness to contribute to the clergy person's health insurance policy obtained in the market and the specific amount thereof, providing that the cleric is not covered by Medicare or other government program. Licensure shall be withheld until such evidence is produced. As well, licensure can be revoked if a parish vestry does not provide health insurance per CPG guidelines, or contribute to health insurance if the clergy person obtains health insurance in the market. The same conditions shall hold true for payments into the Church Pension Fund.

A vestry can have a stipendiary priest or stipendiary deacon, or elect a rector (or obtain an assistant clergy person other than a deacon) but he or she can't do anything until the Bishop or Standing Committee, if it is the Ecclesiastical Authority) is satisfied that the cleric has health insurance. It is not unlike the Ecclesiastical Authority withholding licensing or revoking licensure from a cleric until that person takes, or is up to date in taking, safeguarding or has a background check. Either way, having the language in a LOA or a Vestry resolution would provide the assurance the Bishop, and in the absence of a Bishop, the Standing Committee rightly must have in the event there is not an LOA with respect to Canon I. 14.2 regarding a vestry's authority and Canon III. 9. 3. (4) in which the word "may" is used instead of "shall" re: having a LOA. It would also cover payments into the Church Pension Fund.

Fiscal Ramifications: There are no fiscal ramifications to the Diocesan Budget.