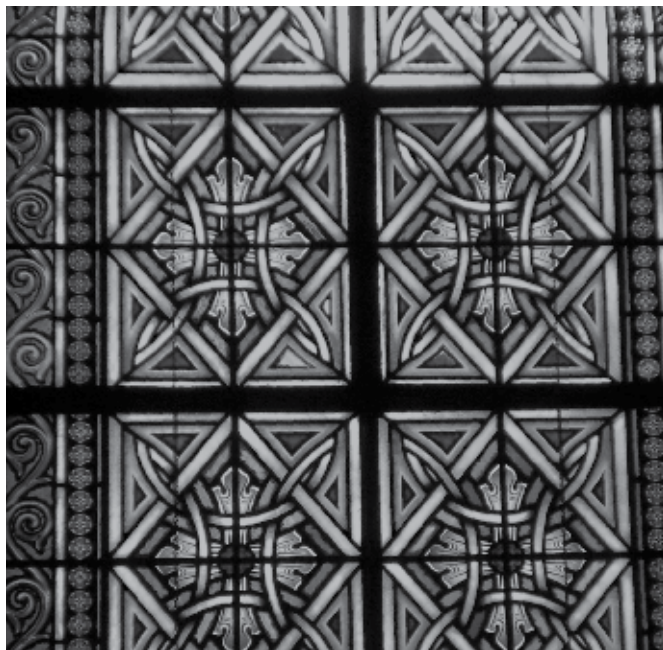
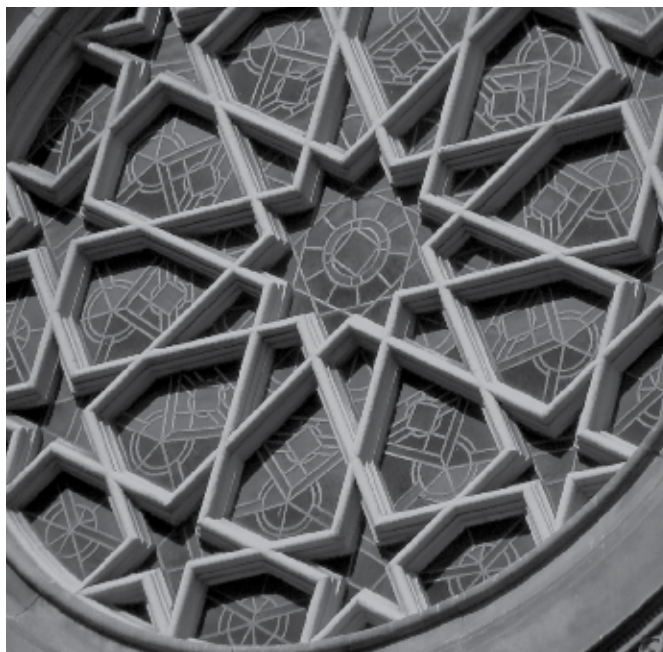
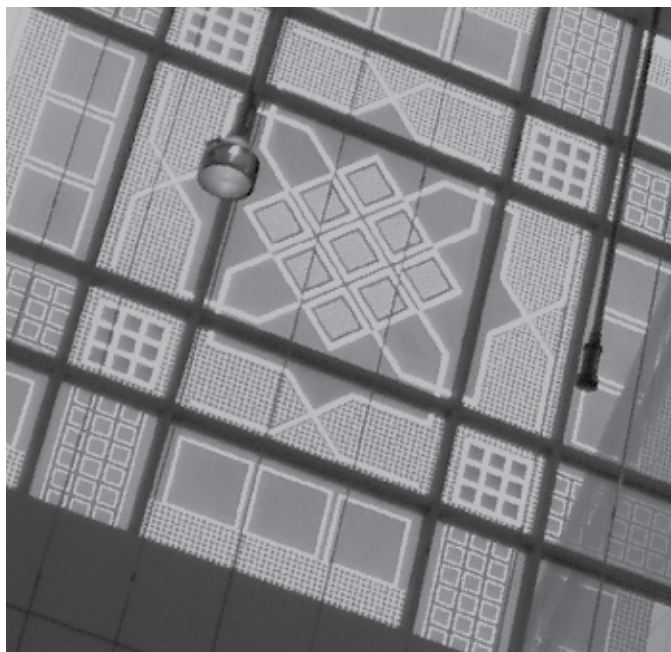



RELIGIOUS LITERACY PRIMER

FOR CRISES, DISASTERS, AND PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES



A FIELD GUIDE COMPANION FOR RELIGIOUS LITERACY AND COMPETENCY



This project was funded in part by the California Emergency Management Agency working in collaboration with the National Disaster Interfaiths Network (NDIN) and the University of Southern California Center for Religion and Civic Culture (USC CRCC). The *Religious Literacy Primer* is part one of a two-volume resource set together with its companion *Working with U.S. Faith Communities During Crises, Disasters and Public Health Emergencies: A Field Guide for Engagement, Partnership and Religious Competency*.

For the latest version of these documents please visit www.n-din.org or crcc.usc.edu.

Contents

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS	5
INTRODUCTION	9
WORKS REFERENCED	10
BAHÁ'Í	11
BUDDHISM	15
CHRISTIANITY: ANABAPTIST	21
CHRISTIANITY: ANGLICAN/EPISCOPAL	25
CHRISTIANITY: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE	29
CHRISTIANITY: EVANGELICAL	33
CHRISTIANITY: JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES	37
CHRISTIANITY: MORMONISM	41
CHRISTIANITY: ORTHODOX	45
CHRISTIANITY: PENTECOSTALISM	51
CHRISTIANITY: PROTESTANTISM (Mainline)	55
CHRISTIANITY: ROMAN CATHOLICISM	59
EARTH-BASED SPIRITUALITY	65
HINDUISM	69
HUMANISM	77
ISLAM	79
JAINISM	87
JUDAISM	91
NATIVE AMERICAN/ AMERICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGION	99
SCIENTOLOGY	103
SHINTO	107
SIKH FAITH	111
TAOISM	117
ZOROASTRIANISM	121
APPENDIX A: DISASTER TIP SHEETS FOR FAITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS	127





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About the Contributors

Darius Alemzadeh, M.A.S. has spent his career working in the human rights field, focusing on children's rights issues across the world. His work has cultivated insight into working with diverse cultures and faiths in the context of emergency and development, most recently working in communities affected by Hurricane Sandy in New York. Mr. Alemzadeh has and continues to work as a researcher and consultant on issues of child labor and human trafficking in North America, West & Central Africa, and the Mediterranean. He has managed education and health programs in India, and is working on research concerning street children in Mumbai. He has worked with refugees in West Africa and Southeast Asia. Mr. Alemzadeh has worked with and for grassroots NGOs, World Vision, Save the Children, and many UN agencies, including IOM, ILO, UNICEF, and UNHCR. Mr. Alemzadeh holds a BA in Global Studies - Global Security from the University of Wisconsin and a Masters of Advanced Studies in Children's Rights from the University of Fribourg.

John Kim Cook, Ph.D. is currently President and CEO of Cook Strategies LLC, a Washington, DC area consulting firm specializing in homeland security and emergency management business development strategies, program management, government relations, training, and technical writing as well as policy issues such as civil rights and civil liberties, disability and human services. Previous to his consulting role, Dr. Cook served for eight years as a political appointee in the George W. Bush Administration, serving most recently as Director of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI). He was also simultaneously designated by President George W. Bush as FEMA's Small State and Rural Advocate. Dr. Cook previously served as Vice President of the National Disaster Interfaiths Network (NDIN) Board of Directors. He holds a Ph.D. in higher education administration and public policy from Texas A&M University, a Master's in education administration, and a Bachelor of Arts in communications from Baylor University.


Hebah Farrag, M.A. serves as the assistant director of research of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California (USC). Ms. Farrag has worked for and with organizations such as the Levantine Cultural Center, the Youth Policy Institute, Human Rights Watch, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Global Exchange, and Casa Del Pueblo; traveling on delegations to conduct research in Cuba, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Chiapas, Mexico. Ms. Farrag is a graduate from the American University in Cairo (AUC) with a masters degree in Middle East studies, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and International Relations from USC and a graduate Diploma in Forced Migration and Refugee Studies from the AUC.



Richard Flory, Ph.D. is associate research professor of sociology and director of research in the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California (USC). He is the author and/or editor of *Spirit and Power: The Growth and Global Impact of Pentecostalism* (Oxford University Press, 2013), *Growing up in America: The Power of Race in the Lives of Teens* (Stanford University Press, 2010), *Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation* (Rutgers University Press, 2008) and *GenX Religion* (Routledge, 2000). Mr. Flory's current research focuses on several projects that investigate the role of religion and religious institutions in Los Angeles. His research has been supported by grants from the Louisville Institute, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Lilly Endowment, the Haynes Foundation, and the John Templeton Foundation. Mr. Flory holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Chicago.

Peter B. Gudaitis, M.Div. currently serves as the Chief Response Officer of New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS) and President of the National Disaster Interfaiths Network (NDIN). From 2003 to 2009 Mr. Gudaitis was the Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer of NYDIS. Since 2007 Mr. Gudaitis has also served as the president of the NDIN and as a freelance consultant, recovery contractor, researcher and trainer. He speaks nationally and internationally on interfaith and inter-religious emergency management partnerships as well as disaster readiness, response, and recovery best practices. He has served on many local and national boards and committees in a variety of capacities. Currently, Mr. Gudaitis is a member of the Faith-based Caucus of the International Association of Emergency Managers; Advisory Board of the Mt. Sinai Hospital Center for Occupational and Environmental Medicine; Guest Lecturer and Advisory Board member for the Metropolitan College of New York, Emergency and Disaster Management Program; Research Associate at the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California; and the Mass Fatality Preparedness Advisory Board at the University of California, San Francisco. In 2012, he was appointed to the New York State Respond Commission by Governor Andrew Cuomo. Most recently, Mr. Gudaitis was appointed as an Adjunct Professor at Hartford Seminary. Mr. Gudaitis holds a Master of Divinity degree from the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church and a B.A. from Kenyon College. He completed CPE training through the Healthcare Chaplaincy at Beth Israel Medical Center.


Frank Levy, M.A. is an independent disaster and public health consultant and recently retired as Bureau Chief of Public Health Preparedness for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services. He served in this position since 2007. Prior to working with the Health Department, Mr. Levy served as Director of Interfaith Relations in the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Response for Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston. Mr. Levy's career includes over 20 years of sales management and marketing for several Fortune 500 and 100 companies. He is a board member of Epiphany Community Outreach Services (ECHOS), and the Anti-defamation League, and is a member of the Fort Bend ISD Diversity Council. Mr. Levy holds a Master of Arts degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Goodman Theatre at the Art Institute of Chicago.



Brie Loskota, M.A. is the managing director of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California. In this capacity, she oversees the strategic planning and daily operations of an interdisciplinary research center that conducts 25 research and community-based projects each year. In addition to serving on a dozen boards and advisory committees focusing on understanding and enhancing the role of religion and religious communities in the public square, she has written for the Huffington Post, the Brookings Institute and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs on topics such as interfaith dialogue, faith-based human services, and religious identity among Millennials. She received her M.A. degree from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles, studied Hebrew at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and completed her B.A. in History and Religion from the University of Southern California.

Dr. Lucinda Allen Mosher, Th. D. is Director of Lucinda Mosher & Associates and Faculty Associate in Interfaith Studies at Hartford Seminary. Dr. Mosher is concurrently Lecturer II at The University of Michigan-Dearborn, where she is the founding instructor for the annual Worldviews Seminar—an innovative introduction to America’s religious diversity; a Senior Fellow at Auburn Seminary, conducting research for its Center for Multifaith Education; and an interreligious relations consultant whose recent clients have included Trinity Institute, Unity Productions Foundation, and the National Disaster Interfaiths Network (NDIN). Dr. Mosher is the author of *Toward Our Mutual Flourishing: The Episcopal Church, Interreligious Relations, and Theologies of Religious Manyness* (2012); the *Faith in the Neighborhood* book series on America’s religious diversity (2005, 2006, 2007), and articles and chapters on multi-faith issues generally or Christian-Muslim concerns specifically. An Episcopal Church Fellow, Dr. Mosher holds degrees from Boston University, the University of Massachusetts (Lowell), Hartford Seminary, and a doctor of theology from the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church.

Tyler Radford, M.I.A. is a Senior Program Officer with the National Disaster Interfaiths Network (NDIN) and an independent disaster recovery consultant. As former Supervisor for the American Red Cross Hurricane Sandy Long-Term Recovery Program, he led the strategy development and implementation of community recovery efforts across all 12 affected counties in New York State including directing a team of community recovery specialists engaging faith-based and other community organizations. Mr. Radford has worked in a number of post-disaster and community development contexts nationally and internationally while serving as a United Nations staff member in New York, and consultant for organizations such as Save the Children in Bolivia and the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust in Sri Lanka. Mr. Radford holds a Master of International Affairs degree from Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs and a Bachelor of Science degree in Management from Boston College Wallace E. Carroll School of Management.



Reverend Ruth Yoder Wenger, M.A. serves as Executive Vice President of New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS), where she also represents Mennonite Disaster Service on the board of directors, and manages day-to-day operations for NYDIS. Rev. Wenger previously served NYDIS as Coordinator of Community Outreach and Training (2007-2009). Since 2008, Rev. Wenger has also served as Director of Training for the National Disaster Interfaiths Network (NDIN). A seasoned educator, she facilitates Disaster Chaplain and Spiritual Care Worker trainings, as well as trainings in disaster preparedness for religious leaders and congregations. She is pastor of North Bronx Mennonite Church, moderator of the New York City Council of Mennonite Churches, and a member of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. She is also a member of Spiritual Directors International. Rev. Wenger received her M.A. degree in education from Columbia University Teachers College, and her B.A. in English from Eastern Mennonite University.

Introduction

Faith communities have historically responded to disasters and human suffering, and over time several have developed expertise in service provision during various phases of the disaster lifecycle. In addition to a growing interest from government for greater faith engagement, there is also a growing interest from government in better understanding the nature of faith communities. Emergency managers and their public health and behavioral health partners are increasingly involved in providing crisis response within a religiously pluralistic environment. As noted by Stephen Prothero in his book *Religious Literacy – What Every American Needs to Know – And Doesn’t*, the United States is “both Christian and pluralistic. Christianity may dominate, but this nation of immigrants is also a nation of religions,” with dozens of world religions represented. Therefore, it is important for response plans and engagement with communities to include religious literacy and competency. Those who are committed to enhancing their religious literacy and competency skills are more likely to be effective caregivers and responders to the whole community than those who are not.

This primer provides information on basic religious literacy for more than 20 of the largest religious communities in the United States. It is geared toward enabling emergency managers and their public and behavioral health partners to understand how faith communities and emergency management intersect. The reference structure should allow a reader to be quickly oriented to the content.

The information is written in a broad overview format so care should be taken to not over-generalize. Each individual in a faith community is unique in how they understand and interpret the mandates and the teachings of their faith tradition. While this primer has been deeply reviewed by many religious scholars, there will always be differing opinions and interpretations, even within a single tradition. We define and classify religious traditions as they define themselves, not by how others may view them. With this in mind, this guide best serves as a baseline for basic religious literacy that should be augmented by field experience working with religious communities and individuals in emergency management settings.


Reliable statistics on religious affiliation in the United States are notoriously difficult to obtain. Population statistics for each religious group were collected from several different sources. These numbers are often the subject of intense debate, so they should be considered estimates based on sources in the Works Referenced section.

We are indebted to the U.K. Home Office and Cabinet Office resource: *The Needs of Faith Communities in Major Emergencies: Some Guidelines*. Their work was the inspiration for developing this guide.

RELIGIOUS LITERACY IS THE BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF EACH FAITH COMMUNITY, ITS THEOLOGY, RITUALS, PRACTICES AND SACRED TEXTS.

RELIGIOUS COMPETENCY IS KNOWING HOW TO NAVIGATE AND ENGAGE EACH FAITH COMMUNITY AS A TRUSTED, KNOWLEDGEABLE, AND EFFECTIVE PARTNER.

¹ Prothero (2007) page 32.



This project was funded in part by the California Emergency Management Agency working in collaboration with the National Disaster Interfaiths Network (NDIN) and the University of Southern California Center for Religion and Civic Culture (USC CRCC). We endeavor to ensure the document is as accurate and comprehensive as possible. Therefore, please send any comments, edits, or corrections to crcc@usc.edu and info@n-din.org. We will review the emails and issue periodic updates.

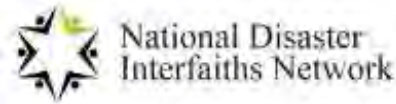
For the latest version of this document please visit www.n-din.org or crcc.usc.edu.

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1. *The American Religious Identity Survey* (2008), accessible through the Statistical Abstract of the United States 2012: <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/population/religion.html>
2. *Cultural Approaches to Pediatric Palliative Care*, Available at <http://libraryguides.umassmed.edu/content.php?pid=94770&sid=731606>
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6. *The World Christian Database and World Religion Database*, as presented in tables via the Encyclopædia Britannica online: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1731588/Religion-Year-In-Review-2010/298437/Worldwide-Adherents-of-All-Religions> (last accessed 3/21/2013). To access the World Christian Database: www.worldchristiandatabase.org;
To access the World Religion Database: www.worldreligiondatabase.org

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2. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: <http://www.cem.va.gov/hmm/emblems.asp>
3. Religious-Symbols.net: <http://www.religious-symbols.net/>



BE A READY CONGREGATION PARTNER
Tip Sheets for Faith Community Partners

Competency Guidelines: Sheltering & Mass Care for Buddhists

These guidelines are provided to inform cultural competency and reasonable religious accommodation mandates for U.S. Mass Care providers, and to assist staff and volunteers in competently meeting the needs of Buddhists during disaster response or recovery operations—whether at a government or private shelter, or a shelter in a Buddhist temple or any other house of worship.



In Mass Care registration or service settings, a Buddhist person may or may not choose to self-identify and, despite common assumptions, their outward dress or appearance may not identify them as Buddhist. Typically, Buddhists conform to the clothing styles of country where they live. However, recent immigrants as well as Buddhist monks and nuns may wear ethnic clothing or robes, respectively. Therefore, given the geographic origins of Buddhism many adherents are Asian or South Asian. However, Asian or South Asian garb does not necessarily indicate religious observance. For example, Christians, Shinto, Taoists and members of other faith communities from Asia and South Asia may also wear the same/similar ethnic clothing. Although some Buddhist may feel comfortable raising concerns about their religious needs, others may not voice their concerns regarding any or all of the following issues.

SHELTERING

- **Greetings and Physical Interaction:** Upon entering a Mass Care setting, families and individuals who self-identify as Buddhist, or Buddhist monastics (monks and nuns), will feel most welcome if staff demonstrate an understanding of and attempt to accommodate their cultural and religious needs. Though Buddhist monastics will not necessarily expect staff to be knowledgeable of their customs, a recognition of and an attempt to observe certain practices will be appreciated by them as well as lay Buddhists. A greeting common to all Buddhist traditions is to put the palms together in *anjali* (the gesture of prayer) and bow the head. Most Buddhists do welcome handshakes with an embrace, but preferably between same sexes. Staff and other guests should understand that this is more customary than religious.
Special Note: Buddhist monks and nuns should typically not be touched by laypersons. Especially in the Theravada tradition of the Southeast Asian countries of Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos, they should also never touch others. In all Buddhist traditions, an acceptable form of address when speaking to a monk or nun is "Venerable."
- **Shelter Setting:** For lay Buddhists, there are no specific religious restrictions regarding sleeping or arrangements. However, for monastics, monks should have sleeping quarters separately from nuns and other women. Nuns should be sheltered separately from monks and men. In addition, a monk should never be alone with a woman (lay or monastic) and a nun should never be alone with a man (lay or monastic). Generally speaking, a gender segregated sleeping space, divided into same-gender areas by a curtain or partition (acceptable), or separate rooms (preferable), is required.

PRAYER

- **Prayer Rituals:** Shelter operators and residents should be made aware that observant Buddhists are encouraged to pray or meditate daily—upon rising and before going to bed.
- **Preparing a Buddhist Prayer Space:** Particularly at a time of disaster or crisis, prayer is important to all people of faith. Although Buddhist contemplative practice, chanting, and other forms of prayer and veneration can be offered at any place and time, a designated space (shrine) is preferable. A Buddhist shrine will typically include an image of the Shakyamuni Buddha (the image of the historical Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama). Shrines may also include flowers, candles, incense, and bowls for offering water, food, or other items that may be distributed and consumed later. Images or icons of other important Buddhist figures may be included/substituted depending on the specific tradition or traditions of the local Buddhist community. Images and items may be displayed for rituals and respectfully stored for later use.

Generally speaking, Buddhist practitioners will be comfortable sharing such a space with religious others without requiring much in the way of specific items. Buddhists are usually comfortable meditating in chairs, though meditation cushions (or blankets) are best. (In sitting meditation, if the knees are above the waist, sitting for extended periods becomes uncomfortable.) Cushions or blankets would also be helpful for kneeling while chanting. In addition, a clear space for full-body prostrations might be appreciated.

In keeping with disaster chaplaincy best practices, a Mass Care chapel or prayer room should be established as a multi-faith space, without images or statues of any specific faith tradition. The area should be a quiet designated space with removable chairs, a plain table, and perhaps candles.

FEEDING

- **Vegetarian Food or Not:** Despite assumptions, there are no set dietary laws in Buddhism. Buddhist dietary restrictions are structured very differently than those of the Abrahamic (Christian, Jewish and Muslim) religions. There is no such clear distinction between permitted and forbidden foods in Buddhism. Therefore, there is a great deal of diversity in traditional Buddhist practice. It is always best for Mass Care providers to ask a local Buddhist community about their dietary needs, rather than to assume they are vegetarians or that they will eat meat. However, traditionally, many Buddhists are vegetarians.

Vegetarian diet is often interpreted as “do not harm,” and many Buddhists choose to be vegetarian as a result of this precept. However, a basic tenet of Buddhism is that of reincarnation and the belief that animals can be reincarnated as humans and vice versa. As a result, most Buddhists do not kill animals, and many do not eat meat or fish because this is considered to be bad for their karma. Buddhism gives utmost importance to *ahimsa* (non-violence), so there is a relationship between this concept and vegetarian practice in Buddhism.

- **Alms and Offerings:** Buddhist monastics thrive on donations and offerings from their local communities. For Theravada monastics, going on “alms-rounds” to receive the generous offerings (*dāna*) of the local community, even in a Mass Care setting this is an important practical and symbolic gesture. When offering food to monastics it is customary to present it with your hands on the table, saying something like, “Please accept this offering of food.” Vietnamese, Chinese, and Taiwanese monks and nuns are strict vegetarians, though others may not be. Practically speaking, Mass Care staff may find it helpful to leave food for monastics with lay Buddhists to disperse. This is a meritorious action for practicing Buddhists.

HOLIDAYS

- There are many Buddhist holy days held throughout the year. Many celebrate the birthdays of *Bodhisattvas* (deities) or other significant dates in the Buddhist calendar. The most significant celebration happens every May on the night of the full moon: Buddha Day, a celebration of the birth, enlightenment and death of the historical Buddha over 2,500 years ago.

MEDICAL, EMOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL CARE

- When possible, some Buddhists may be more comfortable seeking and/or receiving assistance from same-gender service providers. Some may have difficulties in communicating openly or forthrightly with those of the opposite gender.
- **Special Note:** Given the restrictions regarding monastics’ being alone with persons of the opposite gender, Buddhist monks and nuns will only seek and/or receiving assistance from same-gender service providers. In addition, their medical treatment rooms and bed wards should be gender segregated by curtain or partition (acceptable), or separate rooms (preferable).

BUDDHIST DRESS

- Buddhist dress is usually a combination of culture and ethnicity, not religious requirement. Lay Buddhists usually do not wear distinctive clothing or haircuts, but sometimes may have stoles, pins, or vestments to denote lay leadership responsibilities within their respective communities. Typically, Buddhists conform to the clothing styles of the country where they live. However, recent immigrants, as well as Buddhist monks and nuns, may wear ethnic clothes or robes, respectively. Buddhist dress does not indicate a person’s level of education or reflect on a particular conservative (or liberal) religious or political orientation.
- Buddhist monks and nuns usually wear distinctive robes or clothing, which will look different depending on region and tradition. In addition, in certain traditions, their heads are shaved.

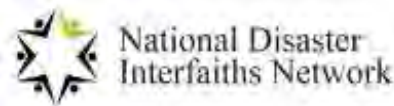
BUDDHISM

Buddhism is one of the five major world religions, with at least 500 million adherents worldwide. There are 3–4 million Buddhists in the United States (two-thirds of whom are Asian American). Adherents follow the teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama, the historical Buddha (“Awakened One”) who lived in India around the fifth century BCE. He taught four “noble truths”: (1) the truth that life is suffering/anxiety/dissatisfaction/stress; (2) the truth of its cause; (3) the truth of its cessation; and (4) the truth of the path toward its cessation. Typically, three schools of Buddhism are spoken of: the Theravada of South and Southeast Asia, the Mahayana of East Asia, and the Vajrayana of Central Asia—each having many traditions, variations, and communities). In the Theravada tradition, the Pali texts are canonical; in the Mahayana, the Sanskrit Buddhist *sutras* and commentarial literature and Chinese *Āgamas*; and in Vajrayana Buddhism, the *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*, as well as vast commentarial literature in the Tibetan language. The religion is called Buddhism in English, and adherents are Buddhists.



This Tip Sheet was written in collaboration with:
 Rev. Danny Fisher—Coordinator the Buddhist Chaplaincy Department at University of the West
 University of Southern California—Center for Religion and Civic Culture





BE A READY CONGREGATION PARTNER
Tip Sheets for Faith Community Partners

Competency Guidelines: Sheltering & Mass Care for Hindus

These guidelines are provided to inform cultural competency and reasonable religious accommodation mandates for U.S. Mass Care providers, and to assist staff and volunteers in competently meeting the needs of Hindus during disaster response or recovery operations—whether at a government or private shelter, or a shelter in a Mandir (Hindu Temple) or any other house of worship.



In Mass Care registration or service settings, a Hindu person may or may not choose to self-identify and, despite common assumptions, their outward dress or appearance may not identify them as Hindu. Moreover, ethnic South Asian garb does not necessarily indicate religious observance. For example, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and members of other faith communities from South Asia may also wear the same/similar ethnic clothing. Although some Hindus may feel comfortable raising concerns about their religious needs, others may not voice their concerns regarding any or all of the following issues.

SHELTERING

- **Greetings and Physical Interaction:** Upon entering a Mass Care setting, families and individuals who appear in Hindu cultural dress (see next page) or self-identify as Hindu will feel most welcome if staff demonstrate a willingness to respect and meet their cultural and religious needs. These first impressions matter. Staff must also recognize greeting customs. Hindus may prefer to be greeted by others who say “hello” while bringing their palms together at chest level and uttering the reverential salutation *Namaste* (translated as, “I bow to you,” in Sanskrit). Most Hindus do welcome handshakes with an embrace, but preferably between same sexes. Staff and other guests should understand that this is more customary than religious. Therefore, when greeting a Hindu of the opposite gender, one should wait until after the *Namaste* greeting to see if a hand is offered first before initiating a handshake.
- **Shelter Setting:** Hindu families and individuals will be most comfortable in sleeping settings where men are separated from women. When a communal sleeping space is the only option, it is customary for Hindu men and women to remain fully clothed and take turns sleeping in order to watch over their resting family. A gender segregated sleeping space, divided into same-gender areas by a curtain or partition (acceptable), or separate rooms (preferred), is advised. Preadolescent Hindu children may accompany either parent or guardian, wherever they are most comfortable.

PRAYER

- **Prayer Rituals:** Shelter operators and residents, should be made aware that many observant Hindus pray twice a day—upon rising and before going to bed. These daily prayers are preceded by a ritual washing in running water. If the bathroom space is limited, posted signs can alert residents of potential ritual use and indicate times this ritual use will take place. It is also appropriate to post signs that instruct all residents to keep the floor and sink areas dry, clean and safe.
- **Preparing a Hindu Prayer Space:** Particularly at a time of disaster or crisis, prayer is important to all people of faith. Although Hindu prayers can be offered at any place and any time, a designated prayer space is preferable. It is customary for floors to be covered and it is a religious requirement that the space contain images, religious iconography, or statues of Hindu gods and goddesses. Even a single religious picture (Rama, Krishna, Ganapati, Lakshmi, etc.) of a deity would suffice in most cases. Any images, religious iconography or statues can be displayed for worship and then respectfully stored between religious rituals. In keeping with disaster chaplaincy best practices, a Mass Care chapel or prayer room should be established as a multi-faith space, without images or statues of any specific faith tradition.

FEEDING

- Vegetarian Food: Traditionally observant Hindus follow a *Brahman* (vegetarian) diet in accordance with Hindu tradition. Therefore, many Hindus will only eat food from trusted vegetarian or vegan sources, including caterers, purveyors, and MREs (Meals Ready to Eat). The most orthodox Hindus also avoid onion, garlic, and gelatin byproducts. Ideally, Mass Care meals should include a traditional vegetarian or vegan option.

Most Hindus follow a balanced vegetarian diet. *The Mahabharata*, one of four sacred texts, explains “meat-eating has a negative influence on existence, causing ignorance and disease.” It also states “a healthy vegetarian diet is *sattvic*, i.e., under the influence of goodness, able to increase purity of consciousness and longevity.”

“Having well considered the origin of flesh-foods, and the cruelty of fettering and slaying corporeal beings, let man entirely abstain from eating flesh.” *The Manu-smṛiti* (5.49)

HOLIDAYS

- Observant Hindus may set aside time for contemplation and quiet reflection during special festival days should they fall during their stay in a shelter. Shelter staff should be sensitive to those who may sleep more than normal, be found reading from religious texts, or offering extra prayers.

MEDICAL, EMOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL CARE

- When possible, religiously observant Hindus may be more comfortable in seeking and/or receiving assistance from same-gender service providers. Some may have difficulties in communicating openly or forthrightly with those of the opposite gender. Medical treatment rooms and bed wards must be gender segregated by curtain or partition (acceptable), or separate rooms (preferable).

HINDU DRESS

- Religious Hindus (especially women) may dress in clothing that may fall outside of American/Western fashion norms. Females may wear a *Salwar Kameez* (a long shirt and pant set) or *Saree* (a 6 yard by 44 inch light weight cloth) draped over a draw string ankle length petticoat) and blouse. Hindu dress is usually a combination of culture and ethnicity, not a religious requirement. It is a false assumption that females are forced or required to dress traditionally, and most would be deeply offended by that assumption. Hindu dress does not indicate a person’s level of education or reflect on a particular conservative (or liberal) religious or political orientation.

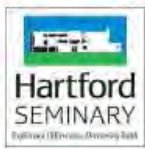
HINDUISM

Hinduism is the world’s oldest organized religion and the third largest. It has an estimated one billion adherents. Approximately 2 million Hindus live in the U.S. and worship at over 1,000 *Mandirs* (Hindu temples). Hindus believe in the *Vedic* (scriptural) mandate that “Truth is One,” but the wise may express that truth in different ways. Therefore they believe that all paths to divinity are valid. A Hindu holy book, the *Bhagavad Gita*, emphasizes one’s duty to family, community, nation and the world in a selfless manner. Although Hinduism has sects, (e.g., Shaivites and Vaishnavites) these differences will not matter in most contexts.

Hinduism is not a singular system of beliefs and ideas, but a conglomerate of diverse beliefs and traditions in which the prominent themes include:

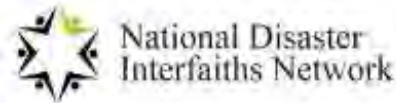
- *Dharma* (ethics and duties)
- *Samsara* (rebirth)
- *Karma* (right action)
- *Moksha* (liberation from the cycle of Samsara)

Hinduism teaches that there is only one supreme Absolute called “Brahman.” However, it does not advocate the worship of any one particular deity. The gods and goddesses of Hinduism amount to thousands or even millions, all representing the many aspects of Brahman. Therefore, it is characterized by the multiplicity of deities. Fundamental to many Hindus is the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—creator, preserver, and destroyer, respectively.



This Tip Sheet was written in collaboration with:
 Dr. Amrutur V. Srinivasan, Author of *Hinduism for Dummies* by Wiley Publishers
 Hartford Seminary and the University of Southern California-Center for Religion and Civic Culture





BE A READY CONGREGATION PARTNER
Tip Sheets for Faith Community Partners

Competency Guidelines: Sheltering & Mass Care for Jews

These guidelines are provided to inform cultural competency and reasonable religious accommodation mandates for U.S. Mass Care providers, and to assist staff and volunteers in competently meeting the needs of Jews during disaster response or recovery operations—whether at a government or private shelter, or a shelter in a Shul/Synagogue (Jewish Temple) or any other house of worship.



In Mass Care registration or service settings, a Jewish person may or may not choose to self-identify and, despite common assumptions, their outward dress or appearance may not identify them as Jewish. Moreover, ethnic Eastern European or Middle Eastern garb does not necessarily indicate religious observance. Although some Jews may feel comfortable raising concerns about their religious needs, others may not voice their concerns regarding any or all of the following issues. Please note that some of the following issues are more significant in the Orthodox and traditionally observant communities.

Special Note: When traditional Jews need to make a decision related to Jewish law (shelter arrangements, food or medicine), they often entail consulting with their rabbi, or at least a rabbi they can trust. For example, in deciding whether to eat something that is not certified “kosher” (when that is the only option), they will depend on the ruling of a rabbi. So Mass Care providers are advised to reach out to and involve a respected local rabbi.

SHELTERING

- **Greetings and Physical Interaction:** Upon entering a Mass Care setting, families and individuals who appear in Jewish dress (see next page) or self-identify as Jewish will feel most welcome if staff demonstrate a willingness to respect and meet their cultural and religious needs. These first impressions matter. Staff must also recognize greeting customs, especially between males and females. Some Orthodox Jews do not exchange handshakes with, or embrace, people of the opposite gender. Staff and other guests should understand that this is not a sign of rudeness, but a cultural and religious requirement. Therefore, when greeting a Jewish person of the opposite gender, one should wait until or if they extend their hand to shake, rather than first extending one’s own.
- **Shelter Setting:** Jewish families and individuals from traditional sects will be most comfortable in sleeping settings where men are separated from women. A gender segregated sleeping space, divided into same-gender areas by a curtain or partition (acceptable), or separate rooms (preferred), is advised. Preadolescent Jewish children may accompany either parent or guardian, wherever they are most comfortable.

PRAYER

- **Prayer Rituals:** Shelter operators and residents, should be made aware that many observant Jews pray three times in every 24-hour period. These prayers are preceded by a ritual washing. In public prayer, there is a requirement to have a *minyan* (a quorum of ten) Jewish adults (usually bar mitzvah males over the age of 13—many non-Orthodox sects count females in the *minyan*). Men are required to wear a skullcap, called a *kippah* (Hebrew) or *yarmulke* (Yiddish) during prayer and religious women may wear head coverings including wigs, hats, or shawls. Before morning prayer, it is traditional for Jewish men to put on a *tallit* (prayer shawl) and *tefillin* (a set of small black leather boxes with long straps also known as phylacteries). Each box contains scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah (Old Testament). Hand-tefillin are placed on the upper arm, and then strap wrapped around the arm, hand, and fingers. Head-tefillin are placed above the forehead. When at prayer, men may bow vigorously and murmur their prayers. Public readings of a set of passages from a Torah scroll take place on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays as well as Jewish holy days.
- **Preparing a Jewish Prayer Space:** Particularly at a time of disaster or crisis, prayer is important to all people of faith. Although Jewish prayers can be offered at any place and any time, a designated prayer space is preferable. It is a religious requirement that the space be free of images or religious iconography. In keeping with disaster chaplaincy best practices, a Mass Care chapel or prayer room should be established as a multi-faith space, without images or statues of any specific faith tradition. The area should be a quiet designated space with removable chairs facing East. (Jews are required to pray facing East, towards Jerusalem). Orthodox Jews will only pray in gender segregated groups within a common prayer space. Orthodox men and women must be separated by a partition or curtain. It is preferable that no one walks in front while people are praying.

Special Note: If Jews are evacuated with a Torah (biblical parchment scroll). Under rabbinic authority, the Torah would need a special designated and secure Ark (cabinet) to rest in, except for the times it is being used for rituals.

FEEDING

- **Kosher Food:** Traditionally observant Jews follow dietary rules in accordance with *halakha* (Jewish law). These dietary laws are defined by the terms *kosher* (permitted) and *treif* (prohibited). Food that is acceptable meets the standards of *kashrut*. Reasons for food not being kosher include the presence of ingredients derived from non-kosher animals (pig, shellfish, etc.) or of kosher animals that were not slaughtered in the ritually proper manner. Other reasons include mixing meat and milk, producing wine or grape juice (or their derivatives) without rabbinic supervision, or using produce from Israel that has not been *tithed* (the process of removing a little over 10% of the product, reciting certain Torah passages, and discarding the removed portion), or cooking with non-Kosher cooking utensils and machinery. Many religious Jews will only eat packaged food that contains a *hechsher* (Kosher approval). The *hechsher* is the special certification mark found on the packages of products (usually foods) that have been certified as kosher (view symbols at www.yrm.org/koshersymbols.htm). Therefore, many Jews will only eat food from kosher food sources, including caterers, purveyors, and MREs (Meals Ready to Eat). Preventing the mixing of *fleischic* (meat products) and *milchic* (milk products) has led to the practice of maintaining separate sets of cookware, tableware, and flatware for meat and dairy. If a food is neither meat nor dairy (i.e., non-dairy bread), it is considered *parve* and can be mixed with dairy and meat products, including kosher fish. The most orthodox Jews will only eat *glatt kosher* meals that are prepared with kosher food under strict rabbinic oversight in accordance with *kashrut*. Ideally, Mass Care meals should include a kosher option, prepared under supervision of a Rabbi or a trusted member of the community. Use disposable utensils (to avoid mixing non-kosher products) and keep meat and milk separated. Holiday and Shabbat meals also require a small portion of wine for ritual use.

SABBATH AND HOLIDAYS

- **Shabbat** (sabbath), the day of rest, is the seventh day of the Jewish week. Shabbat is observed from about 18 minutes before sunset on Friday evening until the appearance of three stars in the sky on Saturday night. Shabbat observance entails refraining from a range of activities, including using electricity, cooking, carrying objects outside of the home, showering, traveling, writing, working, and tearing objects. Rabbinic tradition mandates three Shabbat meals, two of which begin with a special *kiddush* (sanctification) recited over wine. All foods prepared by Jews must be prepared before Shabbat begins; in emergency settings Jews may eat meals prepared by non-Jews. Please note that several lights should be left on throughout the day and should not be turned off until the end of Shabbat. Shabbat begins and ends with the ritual lighting of candles. Mass Care shelters should provide a safe space where those observing Shabbat can light candles and let them burn out—they cannot be extinguished. Electronic candles will not suffice. A brief ceremony called “Havdallah” (separation) ends the Shabbat on Saturday night (sunset) involving a braided candle, a spice box, and a small amount of wine.

MEDICAL, EMOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL CARE

- Observant male Jews may be more comfortable in seeking and/or receiving assistance from service providers of the same gender. Some may have difficulties in communicating openly or forthrightly with those of the opposite gender.

JEWISH DRESS

- Religious Jews may dress in clothing that may fall outside of American/Western fashion norms. Orthodox Jews may dress in 16th century Eastern European dress. Males may wear a black hat, felt hat, or *kippah* (skullcap). Some may wear long jackets. Some males may wear *tzitzit* (fringes) which hang out of their shirts. Married Orthodox females may wear a wig or a head covering over their hair. Some may wear loose fitting clothing, long skirts and/or long sleeves. It is a false assumption that Orthodox females are forced to dress modestly, and most would be deeply offended by that assumption. Men and women are required to dress modestly within certain sects. Jewish dress does not indicate a person’s level of education or reflect on a particular conservative (or liberal) religious or political orientation. However, Hasidic and Orthodox Jews can be categorized as conservative, and tend to adhere rigidly to gender roles and responsibilities and conservative social norms.

JUDAISM

Judaism, the oldest present monotheistic religion, has an estimated thirteen million adherents. Approximately 42% of Jews live in the U.S. and worship at over 3,700 synagogues. The largest Jewish religious movements are Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism, and Reform Judaism. Also, Reconstructionism and Renewal, although space does not permit us to explain the nuances of these. A major source of difference between these groups is their approach to Jewish law.

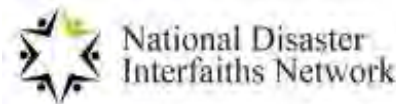
- Orthodox Judaism maintains that the Torah & Jewish law are divine in origin, eternal, unalterable, and be strictly followed.
- Hasidic Judaism is a popular movement within Orthodox Judaism. Hasidic Jews are called *Hasidim* in Hebrew. This word derived from the Hebrew word for loving kindness (*chesed*). The Hasidic movement is unique in its focus on the joyful observance of God’s commandments (*mitzvot*), heartfelt prayer and boundless love for God and the world He created. Many ideas for Hasidism derived from Jewish mysticism (*Kabbalah*).
- Conservative and Reform Judaism are more liberal in terms of religious practice, with Conservative Judaism generally promoting a more “traditional” interpretation of Judaism’s requirements than Reform Judaism.
- A typical Reform position is that Jewish law should be viewed as a set of general guidelines rather than as a set of restrictions and obligations whose observance is required of all Jews.

The religion is called Judaism, and adherents are Jews.



This Tip Sheet was written with Rabbinic oversight and in collaboration with:
 Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW-Rabbinic Director at the Jewish Board of Family & Children’s Services, New York City
 Jewish Disaster Response Corps and the University of Southern California-Center for Religion and Civic Culture





BE A READY CONGREGATION PARTNER
Tip Sheets for Faith Community Partners

Competency Guidelines: Sheltering & Mass Care for Muslims

These guidelines are provided to inform cultural competency and reasonable religious accommodation mandates for U.S. Mass Care providers, and to assist staff and volunteers in competently meeting the needs of Muslims during disaster response or recovery operations—whether at a government or private shelter, or a shelter in a Mosque (Masjid, in Arabic) or any other house of



In Mass Care registration or service settings, Muslims may or may not choose to self-identify and, despite common assumptions, their outward dress or appearance may not identify them as Muslims. Moreover, ethnic or regional garb does not necessarily indicate religious observance. For example, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and members of other faith communities from the Middle East or South Asia may also wear the same/similar ethnic clothing. Although some Muslims may feel comfortable raising concerns about their religious needs, others may not voice their concerns regarding any/all of the following issues.

SHELTERING

- **Greetings and Physical Interaction:** Upon entering a Mass Care setting, families and individuals who appear in Islamic dress or self-identify as Muslim will feel most welcome if staff demonstrate a willingness to respect and meet their cultural and religious needs. These first impressions matter. Staff must also recognize greeting customs, especially between males and females. Muslims greet one another, and can be greeted by, the Arabic salutation—As-Salamu Alaykum ("peace be upon you"). Muslims do not generally exchange handshakes with, or embrace, people of the opposite gender. Staff and other guests should understand that this is not a sign of rudeness, but a cultural and/or religious custom. Therefore, when greeting a Muslim of the opposite gender, one should wait until or if they extend their hand to shake, rather than first extending one's own.
- **Shelter Setting:** Due to religious prohibitions, Muslim families and individuals will be most comfortable in sleeping settings where men are segregated from women and children. When a communal sleeping space is the only option, it is customary for Muslim men and women to remain fully clothed and take turns sleeping in order to watch over their resting family. A gender segregated sleeping space, divided into same-gender areas by a curtain or partition (acceptable), or separate rooms (preferable), is advised. Preadolescent Muslim children may accompany either parent or guardian, wherever they are most comfortable. However, where the family includes only an adult male and a preadolescent girl, shelter operators should attempt to allow the two to sleep in an area without women or adolescent boys.

PRAYER

- **Ritual Washing for Prayer:** Shelter operators and residents, should be made aware that many Muslims pray three to five times (or more) in every 24-hour period. These daily prayers (*Salat*) are preceded by a gender segregated washing ritual (*wudu*), which includes the washing of feet, hands, and face in clean running water—not a wash basin or bowl. If possible, and for the comfort of all shelter residents, it is preferable to have one designated wudu bathroom for men and one for women (an "out of view" distance from one another is preferable). If the bathroom space is limited, posted signs can alert residents of potential ritual use and indicate times this ritual use will take place. It is also appropriate to post signs that instruct all residents to keep the floor and sink areas dry, clean and safe.
- **Preparing a Muslim Prayer Space:** Particularly at a time of disaster or crisis, prayer is important to all people of faith. Although Islamic prayers can be offered at any place and any time, a designated prayer space is preferable. Muslims remove their shoes before entering a prayer room. It is customary for floors to be covered and it is a religious requirement that the space be free of images or religious iconography. In keeping with disaster chaplaincy best practices, a Mass Care chapel or prayer room should be established as a multi-faith space, without images or statues of any specific faith tradition. The area should be a quiet designated space with removable chairs, a plain table, and perhaps candles. Muslims will only pray in gender segregated groups within a common prayer space—men in front and women behind. On rare occasion, a partition or curtain separating males and females may be requested.

FEEDING

- **Halal Food:** Many Muslims follow religious dietary laws written in the Quran, the Muslim holy book. These dietary laws are defined by the Arabic terms *halal* (permitted) and *haram* (prohibited). In accordance with the Quran, pork and alcohol are examples of items considered to be haram. Therefore, many Muslims will only eat food from halal food sources, including caterers, purveyors, and MREs (Meals Ready to Eat). Halal food sources include meat that has been ritually slaughtered (*zabiha*). Ideally, Mass Care meals should include a zabiha/halal option, or, if unavailable, a vegetarian option. In addition, snacks should not contain gelatin, meat, meat byproducts, or lard.
- **Ramadan Fast:** Muslims often fast from sunrise to sunset during the lunar month of Ramadan, the most sacred month in the Muslim religious calendar. Ramadan, a period of self-reflection and charitable acts or giving, includes ritual prayer, daytime fasting, and communal pre-dawn and sunset meals. While it can fall at anytime during the year, Ramadan will fall within the U.S. hurricane season for the next several years. During this month, shelter operators and feeding staff may need to offer adjusted/alternative mealtimes to accommodate their Muslim residents' dietary needs. During Ramadan, Muslims eat breakfast (*suhr/suhoor*) before dawn and refrain from eating and/or drinking until sunset, when they break their daily fast by eating dates with water (prescribed within the Quran) if available. Dinner (*iftar*) is followed by sunset prayers (*salatalMaghrib*) and a late night set of prayers, *Isha*, and then *Taraweeh*. Emergency managers and shelter staff should be aware of the physiological impact of fasting. Though many Muslims feel spiritually empowered during Ramadan, others also note that fasting takes its toll on their physical and mental acuity. Shelter staff should be sensitive to those who may sleep more than normal, be found reading from religious texts, or offering extra prayers.

MEDICAL, EMOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL CARE

- When possible, religiously observant Muslims may be more comfortable in seeking and/or receiving assistance from same-gender service providers. Some may have difficulties in communicating openly or forthrightly with those of the opposite gender. Medical treatment rooms and bed wards must be gender segregated by curtain or partition (acceptable), or separate rooms (preferable).

ISLAMIC DRESS

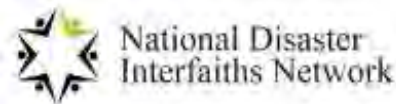
- Muslims may dress in clothing that may fall outside of American/Western fashion norms. Males may wear a small hat (*kufee*) or turban. Some may wear long robes (*thobes*) or a long shirt and pant set (*shalvar-kameese*). Some males may wear their pant-legs slightly shorter than the standard fashion. Females may wear a head covering (*hijab*) over their hair, ears, and neck. Some may cover their entire bodies with loose fitting clothing, covering all of their body, except for their face, feet, and hands, called an *abaya*. Though rare in the United States, some females may veil their faces, using what is called a *niqab*, wear elbow length gloves, or a *burka*, if covering the body from head to toe. Islamic dress is usually a combination of culture and ethnicity as much as piety. It is a false assumption that females are forced or required to dress modestly, and most would be deeply offended by that assumption. Islamic dress does not indicate a person's level of education or reflect on a particular conservative (or liberal) religious or political orientation.

ISLAM

Islam, the world's second largest religion, has an estimated one billion adherents. Approximately 2.6 million Muslims live in the U.S. and worship at over 2,100 masjids. Islam, which means "submission to Allah (God)," has five pillars: prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage to Mecca, and testifying on the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Mohammad. Their holy book, the Quran/Koran speaks of caring for the poor, a day of judgment, and the afterlife. Islam is comprised of two major sects, Sunnis (the majority) and Shiites, and several other smaller sects. The religion is called Islam. ("Islamic" is an adjective; adherents are called Muslim.)

*This Tip Sheet was written in collaboration with:
Islamic Circle of North American-Relief, Islamic Relief USA and the University of Southern California-Center for Religion and Civic Culture.*





BE A READY CONGREGATION PARTNER
Tip Sheets for Faith Community Partners

Competency Guidelines: Sheltering & Mass Care for Sikhs

These guidelines are provided to inform cultural competency and reasonable religious accommodation mandates for U.S. Mass Care providers, and to assist staff and volunteers in competently meeting the needs of Sikhs during disaster response or recovery operations—whether at a government or private shelter, or a shelter in a Gurdwara (a Sikh temple) or any other house of worship.



In Mass Care registration or service settings, Sikhs may or may not choose to self-identify and, despite common assumptions, their outward dress or appearance may not identify them as Sikh. Moreover, ethnic or regional garb does not necessarily indicate religious observance. The Sikh faith originates from the Punjab region of Pakistan and India. For example, aside from the Sikh turban (*Dastar*) which some Sikh men (common) and women (less common) choose not to wear, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims and members of other faith communities from South Asia may also wear the same (or similar) ethnic clothing. Although some Sikhs may feel comfortable raising concerns about their religious needs, others may not voice their concerns regarding any or all of the following issues.

SHELTERING

- **Greetings and Physical Interaction:** Upon entering a Mass Care setting, families and individuals who appear in a turban or Punjabi garb, or self-identify as Sikh, will feel most welcome if staff demonstrate a willingness to respect and meet their cultural and religious needs. These first impressions matter. Staff must also recognize greeting customs. Sikhs greet one another, and can be greeted by non-Sikhs with the Punjabi salutation—*Sat Sri Akal*: roughly translated as, "Blessed is the person who says 'God is Truth.'" Sikhs do exchange handshakes with, or embrace, people of the opposite gender.
- **Shelter Setting:** Due to culture and tradition—especially among recent Sikh immigrants, Sikh families and individuals will be most comfortable in sleeping settings where men are segregated from women and children. When a communal sleeping space is the only option, it is customary for Sikh men and women to remain fully clothed and take turns sleeping in order to watch over their resting family. A gender segregated sleeping space, divided into same-gender areas by a curtain or partition (acceptable), or separate rooms (preferable), is advised. Preadolescent Sikh children may accompany either parent or guardian, wherever they are most comfortable. However, where the family includes only an adult male and a preadolescent girl, shelter operators should attempt to allow the two to sleep in an area without women or adolescent boys.

PRAYER

- **Ritual Washing for Prayer:** Shelter operators and residents, should be made aware that Sikhs pray three to five times daily in every 24-hour period—up to three times in the morning, once in evening and once before sleeping at night. These daily prayers (*nicnam banis*), are taken from the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book) and are spoken in Gurmukhi, the Sikh language of prayer in which the Guru Granth Sahib is written. While Sikhs do not engage in a specific washing ritual for prayer, they are enjoined to wash their hands before entering a prayer space or handling scriptural texts out of respect. If possible, and for the comfort of all shelter residents, it is preferable to have one designated washing bathroom for men and one for women. If the bathroom space is limited, posted signs can alert residents of potential ritual use and indicate times this ritual use will take place. It is also appropriate to post signs that instruct all residents to keep the floor and sink areas dry, clean and safe. A wash basin or bowl can be provided in a chapel setting.
- **Preparing a Sikh Prayer Space:** Particularly at a time of disaster or crisis, prayer is important to all people of faith. Although Sikh prayers can be offered at any place and any time, a designated prayer space is preferable. Sikhs remove their shoes before entering a prayer room. It is customary for floors to be covered. In keeping with disaster chaplaincy best practices, a Mass Care chapel or prayer room should be established as a multi-faith space, without images or statues of any specific faith tradition. The area should be a quiet designated space with removable chairs, a plain table, and perhaps candles.

FEEDING

- Many Sikh follow both cultural and religious dietary practices written in the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book). Sikhs are forbidden from eating *halal* meat, kosher meat or alcohol and other intoxicants. All other foods are permissible, except those containing liquor or other intoxicants. Many Sikhs may be vegetarians out of cultural tradition or personal conviction, although such a prescription is not made by religious dietary law. Sikh Mass Care meals should include a vegetarian option. In addition, snacks should not contain gelatin, meat, meat byproducts, or lard.

MEDICAL, EMOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL CARE

- When possible, religiously observant Sikhs may be more comfortable in seeking and/or receiving assistance from same-gender service providers. Some may have difficulties in communicating openly or forthrightly with those of the opposite gender. Medical treatment rooms and bed wards must be gender segregated by curtain or partition (acceptable), or separate rooms (preferable).

SIKH DRESS

- **Clothing:** Sikhs may dress in clothing that may fall outside of American/Western fashion norms. Although it is common for Sikh men to wear western clothing with a turban, older Sikhs and recent Sikh immigrants may wear ethnic or regional Punjabi garb. Baptized males (called *Amritdhali* or *Khalsa*) are required to wear a turban (*dastar*) - boys wear thin head covering (*patka*) . Some may wear a long shirt (*kurta*) or pant set (*salvar-kameez*). Some males may wear their pant-legs slightly shorter than the standard fashion. Females may wear a head covering (*chunni*) (common) or a turban (less common) over their hair. Some may wear a long shirt and pant set (*salvar-kameez*) or a loose fitting wrapped dress (*sari*). Sikh dress does not indicate a person’s level of education or reflect on a particular conservative (or liberal) religious or political orientation.
- **Headress:** The Sikh turban (*dastar*) is a crown of commitment and dedication to service all humanity. It is an article of faith that represents honor, self-respect, courage, spirituality, and piety. Observant Sikhs also wear the turban partly to cover their long, uncut hair (*kesh*). The turban is mostly identified with the Sikh males, although some Sikh women also wear turban. The Sikh faith regards gender equality as an important part of its teachings.
- **Articles of Faith:** The five articles of faith (*Panji Kakar*) are required to be worn by baptized Sikhs at all times. They are commonly called the “Five Ks,” and are not just symbols, but articles of faith that collectively form the external identity and the devotee’s commitment to the Sikh “way of life” (*rehni*). The Five Ks include *Kesh* (uncut hair), *Kangha* (hair comb) *Kara* (steel bracelet), *Kachera* (cotton undergarments), and *Kirpan* (a strapped curved dagger/small sword). Shelter operators and security should be familiar with these articles, especially the Kirpan and recognize that it is required article of faith. Some Sikhs only wear a small replica Kirpan. Although not recommended, local authorities may require that all Kirpan be checked while in a shelter or secure area.

Sikhism

- Sikhism, the world’s fifth largest religion, has an estimated 25 million adherents. Approximately 500,000 Sikhs live in the U.S. and worship at over 250 gurdwaras (temples). Sikhs do not have clergy. Founded just over 500 years ago, Sikhism preaches a message of devotion and remembrance of God at all times, truthful living, equality of humankind, social justice and denounces superstitions and blind rituals. Sikhism is based on the teachings of its ten Gurus enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book). Sikhs are the disciples of God who follow the Guru’s writings and teachings. The word “Sikh” means “disciple” in the Punjabi language. The religion is called Sikhism. (Sikh is also an adjective; adherents are called Sikhs, pronounced “sic” or “seek.”).

*This Tip Sheet was written in collaboration with:
The Sikh Coalition, UNITED SIKHS, and the University of Southern California-Center for Religion and Civic Culture*



National Disaster Interfaiths Network | 4 West 43rd Street - Suite 407, New York, NY 10036 | www.n-din.org | info@n-din.org | 212.669.6100

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USC DORNSIFE CENTER FOR RELIGION AND CIVIC CULTURE

825 Bloom Walk, ACB 439, Los Angeles, California 90089-1483 • Tel: 213.740.8562 • Fax: 213.740.5810

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