



**OREGON YOUTH AUTHORITY**  
**Policy Statement**  
**Part II – Youth Services (Facilities)**



*Subject:*

**Religious Practice in Facilities [Offenders]**

*Section – Policy Number:*

**F: Justice – 3.7**

*Supersedes:*

**II-B-3.9 (1/02)**

*Effective Date:*

**01/18/2002**

*Date of Last*

*Revision:*

**06/17/2011**

**Related Standards and References:**

- U.S. Code: [Title 42, Section 2000bb-1 through 2000bb-4](#), Religious Freedom Restoration Act
- [Protection of Religious Exercise in Land Use and Institutionalized Persons](#) Act of 2000
- [OAR Chapter 416, Division 480](#) (Religious Practice in Facilities)
- [OAR Chapter 416, Division 450](#) (Volunteer Services in Facilities)
- [OAR Chapter 416, Division 800](#) (Criminal Records Checks)
- Performance-based Standards (PbS), *Juvenile Correction and Detention Facilities*; Programming
- American Correctional Association, *Standards for Juvenile Correctional Facilities*; 3-JTS-5G-01 through 3-JTS-5G-08 (Religious Programs)
- OYA policy: I-D-3.16 (Volunteer Services)  
 II-A-1.0 (Facility Access)  
 II-A-2.0 (Searches of Offenders and Offender Property)  
 II-D-3.0 (Facility Nutrition Services)  
 II-F-1.0 (Offender Rights)  
 II-F-1.1 (Offender Grievance Process [Facility])

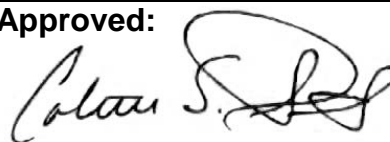
**Related Procedures:**

None

**Policy Owner:**

Facilities Services Assistant Director

**Approved:**



Colette S. Peters, Director

**I. PURPOSE:**

This policy provides guidelines for OYA staff regarding offender religious practices while in OYA facilities.

## II. POLICY DEFINITIONS:

**Religious practice:** Any exercise of religion, whether or not such exercise is compelled by, or central to, a system of religious belief. It includes access to religious publications, religious symbols, congregate worship/religious services, religious study classes and ceremonies, and adherence to dietary requirements.

## III. POLICY:

Federal law allows all persons to hold individual religious beliefs. Offenders within facilities maintain this same right.

OYA will make every reasonable effort to allow offenders the right of religious practice. However, it is within the law for OYA to restrict religious actions and rituals when:

- There is a compelling interest to do so, including, but not limited to, legitimate security and operational considerations such as safety, health and order; rehabilitation or treatment-related issues; or limitations of resources; and
- The imposed limitation is the least restrictive means of addressing the compelling interest.

## IV. GENERAL STANDARDS:

- A. While individual facilities may not offer the same programs, each facility will ensure that reasonable opportunities for religious practice are afforded to all offenders without fear of penalty.
1. Facilities will accommodate minority beliefs and practices.
  2. Each facility will designate a Religious Program Coordinator to coordinate religious programming within the facility.
  3. The facility may use staff, contract personnel or volunteers to provide religious services, considering staffing and budgets at each facility.
    - a) All religious volunteers will be screened and trained prior to service delivery in accordance with rules, policies and procedures. See related policy I-D-3.16 (Volunteer Services).
    - b) If staff are assigned to conduct such services, this responsibility must be noted in the staff's job description. Contractors will comply with the standards in their contracts.
    - c) Staff must ensure persons entering OYA facilities for religious activities comply with OYA policy II-A-1.0 (Facility Access).
  4. Offenders are not permitted to lead religious activities.

B. Religious Designation

1. Staff must allow an offender to designate any or no religious orientation as a preference upon the offender's intake to a facility.
2. Staff may only allow an offender to officially record a change of faith one time in any subsequent four months by submitting such written request to the Religious Program Coordinator.
3. The Religious Program Coordinator must ensure an offender's request for designated faith change is submitted and signed by the requesting offender.

C. Religious Activities

1. Religious activities will be coordinated with the facility's schedule and staff will notify offenders of these activities.
2. Staff will supervise all religious activities according to local supervision protocols. Supervision will be provided in a manner that reflects awareness of and sensitivity to individual religious beliefs.
3. Religious activities may include, but are not limited to:
  - a) Religious classes (lectures, instruction, discussion);
  - b) Religious forums;
  - c) Prayer groups;
  - d) Religious choirs, ensembles and singing groups;
  - e) Self-study or group studies;
  - f) Religious group counseling;
  - g) Spiritual maturity groups;
  - h) Ceremonies and rituals;
  - i) Instruction in doctrines, rituals and ideals of various religious faiths;
  - j) Access to religious publications;
    - (1) All religious material is subject to review and approval by staff prior to distribution, according to local procedure.
    - (2) Arrangements may be made through a religious representative in the community for an offender to

obtain personal copies of certain approved religious books and periodicals.

- k) Provision of religious diets: See related policy II-D-3.0 (Facility Nutrition Services);
- l) Celebration of rituals necessary to meet the practices of a given faith;
  - (1) Religious practices relating to head and/or facial hair may be allowed consistent with the facility guidelines on hygiene and grooming.
  - (2) Whenever possible, staff will arrange offender work assignments and schedules to accommodate religious practice that requires abstinence from work or participation in rituals on certain holidays. Such accommodation will not penalize the offender.
- m) Wearing or carrying a religious emblem, medal, medallion or other religious item.

#### D. Equipment and Supplies

1. Staff must ensure facility administrative staff has authorized special equipment or supplies prior to allowing these items into a facility.
2. Staff may allow special apparel to be worn during a religious activity when appropriate. Staff must ensure the apparel is stored in a designated storage area when not in use.
3. All equipment and supplies are subject to search before entering a facility, according to OYA policy II-A-1.0 (Facility Access).

Staff must conduct searches in a manner that reflects an awareness of and sensitivity to religious beliefs and respect for the object/symbols used in the religious practice.
4. Staff must ensure the facility superintendent, camp director, or designee has authorized a written exception to allow items normally considered prohibited into a facility.
5. Each situation reviewed as an exception will be considered individually. The review process will be thorough and may include:
  - a) The offender's request to participate in the practice;
  - b) The standing the requested practice has in the specified religion;
  - c) Relevant regulations;

- d) Best practices within correctional settings;
- e) Safety and security risks;
- f) OYA Director's Office guidance; and
- g) Attorney General advice.

E. Sacramental Wine

Facility staff may approve the use of sacramental wine in facilities during religious services only when all of the following conditions are met:

1. An offender placed in a facility requests to participate in a religious service that includes use of sacramental wine;
2. The superintendent or camp director has authorized the sacramental wine in writing before the sacramental wine is brought into the facility.

Staff must ensure the religious provider presents a copy of this written authorization on each visit where sacramental wine is brought into the facility;

3. The religious provider brings in and consumes only the minimum amount of sacramental wine necessary to conduct the service;
4. The sacramental wine is under the control of the religious provider at all times;
5. Only the religious provider may consume sacramental wine at the service. Offenders, guests, and other staff are prohibited from consuming sacramental wine; and
6. At the conclusion of the service, the religious provider will take the container used to transport the sacramental wine and any excess wine off site. Sacramental wine may not be stored at any facility.

Added  
6/17/2011

F. Use of Candles, Incense, or Burning Sage

Facility staff may allow candles, incense, or sage use in religious rituals when the following conditions are met:

1. Staff is present and is in charge of matches or lighters. Offenders may never handle matches and lighters;
2. If indoors, the location is equipped with pull stations, fire extinguishers, unsecured exits, and water is in close proximity;
3. Lighted materials are never left unattended;

4. Ash is collected in a fire-safe container and extinguished with water; and
5. Offenders do not have access to hot candle wax.

G. Religious Activity Request

Staff must allow an offender to ask the facility to offer a specific religious activity by submitting the following information to the Religious Program Coordinator:

1. The name of the religion or belief;
2. The title and brief description of the religious activity requested, including:
  - a) The significance of the activity in the practice of the religion;
  - b) How often or under what circumstances the religious activity would be held if it were taking place in the community;
  - c) Minimum time and any physical requirements within which the religious activity may take place;
  - d) Any materials that are required for the religious activity and their purpose or use, including a list of any items associated with the religious activity that the offender would retain, if any;
  - e) The title (if any), function, and eligibility requirements for participants in the activity;
  - f) The name, address and phone number of a recognized religious representative who can verify the above information.
3. The Religious Program Coordinator will review the request and consider:
  - a) The effects of the request on the safety, security, and order of persons and the facility;
  - b) Available resources to provide the activity;
  - c) Alternative means of meeting the request;
  - d) Similar practices in other facilities; and
  - e) Other issues specific to the request.

4. If approved, the Religious Program Coordinator will seek an individual to conduct the religious activity among the resources in the facility (including the current volunteer roster) and, if necessary, from the community. The religious activity will not be conducted until a religious provider is found and able to comply with OYA policies on religious activities and facility access.
5. The Religious Program Coordinator must notify the requesting offender in writing of a decision regarding the offender's request.
6. The Religious Program Coordinator must ensure the offender is aware of decision appeal rights delineated in OAR 416-480-0080 (Decision Appeal) and the timeframes to initiate an appeal.

**V. LOCAL OPERATING PROTOCOL REQUIRED: NO**