

Montgomery County Juvenile Court

Center for Adolescent Services

Chapter: Religion
Subject: Participation
Policy: 5F-01
Page: 1 of 2
Standards: ACA-3-JCRF-5F-01
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Authorized by: William Shaffer, Director

- I. Policy:** Written policy, procedure, and practice provide that juveniles have the opportunity to participate in practices of their religious faith in accordance with legislation of the authority having jurisdiction.

Youth will be provided access to religious resources, services, instruction, and counseling on a voluntary basis. Youth will be allowed to practice their faith so long as such practices do not jeopardize the safety and security of the facility.

II. Definition:

- A. Religious Activity – An activity conducted by or under the sponsorship of a religious representative that is designed specifically for worship, religious instruction, spiritual guidance, or counseling.

III. Procedure

- A. The Director will ensure that adequate space and time are available for religious services and programming and ensure the resolution of any conflicts between religious freedom and the facility's operational needs. Staff will never impede a youth's voluntary participation in approved services, activities, and practices.
- B. Upon admission, an attempt will be made to formally determine a juvenile's religious beliefs and practices to ensure that these beliefs are accommodated. This will be documented through the Assessment of Religious Needs form.
- C. Attendance in religious services is voluntary.
- D. The assigned Family Specialist meet with youth and parents/legal guardians during the intake admission process to review the Program Handbook. The Program Handbook is designed to provide information regarding program services, including but not limited to voluntary religious services.
1. The youth and parent/guardian sign in receipt and acknowledgement of the program handbook.
- E. Religious Programming
1. The Program Manager will be responsible for making arrangements for and coordinating religious programming.
 2. Each juvenile will have the opportunity to participate in religious activities in accordance with their own faith

3. All facility provided services will inherit a non-denominational theme in an attempt to remain sensitive to differing religious beliefs. The primary focus of religious services is to educate youth universally.
4. Religious practices may include but are not limited to the following:
 - i. Instruction in doctrines, liturgy, and ideals of various faiths;
 - ii. Classes, lectures, discussions;
 - iii. Study groups and counseling; and,
 - iv. Choirs and singing groups.

F. Spaces for Religious Programming

1. Services may be held in the gymnasium, dining room, or day room of each living unit.
2. Adequate space, equipment, and time are provided to clergy for spiritual services. The religious program allows chaplains physical access to selected areas of the facility to minister to residents.

G. Special Visitation

1. The facility will, when requested and appropriate, permit visits from representatives of resident's respective faith.
2. The juvenile's community clergy may visit at scheduled times, subject to approval of the Director and upon appropriate legal approval.
3. Requests will be made in accordance with ACA Standard 5G-07: Special Visitation.
 - i. Special Visitation requests are documented on the Special Visitation form.

H. Religious Diets

1. The facility recognizes that certain religious faiths impose dietary restrictions upon their members. Therefore, each youth is afforded with the opportunity to satisfy minimum dietary requirements of his/her religious faith consistent with the needs of the facility for safety and security.
2. Religious dietary needs will be made in accordance with ACA Standard 4A-06: Religious Diets and documented on the Provision of Special Dietary Sheet.

I. Religious Apparel

1. Liturgical apparel such as skullcaps, head shields, and prayer shawls may be worn during religious activity as long as they adhere to established procedures for maintaining security, safety, and orderly conditions in the facility.

J. Religious Preference

1. If a youth expresses a desire to change religious preference or faith, the Family Specialist should encourage youth to consider all implications of such change
 - i. If the youth still desires a change, he/she must initiate that change of faith or religion in a written statement to the Director citing current religious designation and the religious affiliation under which he/she would like to be recorded.
 - ii. The youth's parent/guardian must receive a copy of the youth's statement if the youth is under the age of 18.