

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

STANDARD NO(S):

NYSSA #

DATE:

June 1, 2007

REVISED: 04/22/2011

REVISED: 03/05/2012

REVISED: 08/16/2019

REFER TO:

Donald Borland

I. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Seneca County Correctional Facility to comply with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution by ensuring that inmates have an opportunity to exercise their legitimate religious beliefs in the affiliation of their choice.

II. DETAILS:

A. Guidelines -

1. The Seneca County Correctional Facility will recognize all legitimate religious groups and organizations. Inmates desiring to exercise the beliefs of religious groups or organizations that are generally not well known will request to do so by completing Form CF-019 (General Inmate Request) and having it forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer. The Chief Administrative Officer will make a determination to approve or deny the request based upon the following criteria for establishing that a religious foundation exists for the belief:
 - a. That there is substantial literature supporting the belief as related to religious principle; and
 - b. That there is a formal, organized worship by a recognizable and cohesive group sharing the belief; and
 - c. That there is an informal association of persons who share common ethical, moral or intellectual views supporting the belief; and
 - d. That the belief is deeply and sincerely held by the inmate.
2. Inmates will be permitted to present evidence to the Chief Administrative Officer supporting that a religious foundation for the belief exists.

3. When the Chief Administrative Officer determines to limit the exercise of the religious beliefs of any inmate, it will be done in writing using Form CF-019, stating the specific facts and reasons underlying such limitation. A copy will be provided to all affected by such a determination.
4. Inmates confined to administrative or punitive segregation will be entitled to exercise their religious beliefs providing that by doing so they do not threaten the safety, security or good order of the facility, or the health of any individual.
5. The facility will maintain supervision sufficient to ensure that the exercise of religious beliefs by inmates does not constitute a threat to the safety, security or good order of the facility, or the health of any individual. An Escort Officer will be assigned by the Shift Supervisor to the classroom area where the religious exercise is being conducted.
6. Congregate religious worship and activities will take place on Monday and Friday evenings at 1800 hours in assigned classroom areas.
7. Members of the clergy, religious groups, and/or religious organizations will be defined as any person, other than an inmate, whose ecclesiastical credentials have been approved by the Chief Administrative Officer. All such members will be required to sign in and out of the facility as outlined in subdivision "Professional Visits" in the section entitled "Visitation".
8. When regular religious advisors are not available, the Chief Administrative Officer may permit a member of an inmate religious group to conduct legitimate religious activities.
9. An approved religious group or organization will be permitted confidential consultation with an inmate upon the request of an inmate.
10. All inmates will be permitted to celebrate religious holidays or festivals on an individual or congregate basis.
11. Inmates are required to give their religious preference upon admission to the facility.
12. Inmates are entitled to observe reasonable dietary laws established by their religion. Inmates requesting religious diets will provide information to the Booking Officer upon admission or to their Housing Unit Officer any time there after. Documentation will be forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer as outlined in the policy entitled "Diets".

13. Inmates will be permitted to change their religious affiliation by completing and forwarding an application to the appropriate religious authority. The inmate and appropriate religious authority will notify the Chief Administrative Officer of the change in religious affiliation in the form of a memo. The Chief Administrative Officer will cause the inmates religious preference to be entered into their booking record. No person will be permitted access to an inmate for the purposes of converting the inmate without the consent of such inmate.
14. Inmates will be entitled to wear or possess religious medals, as outlined in the policy "Inmate Property", or other religious articles that have been approved by the Chief Administrative Officer, provided they do not constitute a threat to the safety, security or good order of the facility nor pose a risk to the health of any individual.
15. Equal status and protection will be afforded to all prisoners in the exercise of their religious beliefs, except when such exercise results in facility expenditures which are unreasonable or disproportionate to those extended to other prisoners for similar purposes.