

Name Public Correctional Policy on Religious Faith and Practice
Type Policy
Date Aug. 15, 1990; Jan. 18, 1995; Jan. 12, 2000; Aug. 16, 2000; Aug. 10, 2005
Description Introduction:

Correctional systems provide opportunities for religious faith and practice by confined persons. These opportunities, however, must not override the choice by some offenders of non-participation in such practices. Protection of religious beliefs and of their exercise is recognized in U.S. and Canadian constitutions and in other human rights documents.

Policy Statement:

Recognizing the existence of differing religious faiths, correctional systems must be guided by principles not only of voluntary participation, but of equity of opportunity for the practice of religions represented within the offender population. Limited only by reasons of security and order, institutions should:

- A. Provide for direction and supervision regarding religious issues and activities by professionally qualified and trained chaplaincy and/or religious staff, including the use of volunteers for the delivery of programs consistent with the identified religious needs of the population being served;
- B. Develop written policies and guidelines for decision-making and communication between chaplaincy staff and institutional administrators regarding religious faith and practice within the institution;
- C. Provide appropriate facilities and support services needed for individual and group religious activities;
- D. Allow the observance of periodic special or ritual activities requested by offenders and deemed essential by the respective religious judicatories or national offices of that religious group;
- E. Permit access to chaplains by all offenders and staff;
- F. Ensure that neither participation nor nonparticipation in religious activities affects evaluation processes or qualifications for other programs and opportunities by the offender;
- G. Ensure that an offender's opportunity to practice religious faith is consistent with current statutes and case law;
- H. Require that reasonable application of individual rights to exercise religious faith and practice be balanced against the necessity of maintaining safe and secure correctional facilities, accommodating religious differences among offenders of different faiths, and ensuring that such facilities are free of religious coercion; and
- I. Document the reasons for restriction of offenders' participation in religious activities or programs, or for limitations of religious practices.

This Public Correctional Policy was ratified by the American Correctional Association Delegate Assembly at the Congress of Correction in San Diego, Aug. 15, 1990. It was reviewed Jan. 18, 1995, at the Winter Conference in Dallas, with no change. It was reviewed and amended Jan. 12, 2000, at the Winter Conference

in Phoenix. It was reviewed and amended Aug. 16, 2000, at the Congress of Correction in San Antonio. It was reviewed and amended at the Congress of Correction in Baltimore, Aug. 10, 2005.