



**STATE OF MONTANA  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
POLICY DIRECTIVE**

Policy No. DOC 5.6.1	Subject: <b>RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMING</b>
Chapter 5: OFFENDER PROGRAMS	Page 1 of 3
Section 6: Religious Programs	Effective Date: May 1, 1998
Signature: /s/ Mike Batista, Director	Revised: 11/07/2014

## **I. POLICY**

It is the policy of the Department of Corrections to provide reasonable and equitable opportunities to pursue religious activities.

## **II. APPLICABILITY**

Department-owned and contracted facilities and programs, as specified in contract.

## **III. DEFINITIONS**

Religious Activities Coordinator - An individual designated to coordinate religious programming for offenders.

## **IV. DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES**

### **A. General Requirements**

1. Each facility or program will develop a procedure in compliance with this policy.
2. Facility administrators are responsible for allocating funding for religious programs within the annual budget.
3. Neither the Department, religious activities coordinator (RAC), nor staff may compel an offender to attend religious activities or attempt to influence an offender to change religious preference or faith.
4. Offenders may receive religious publications and other materials in accordance with *DOC Policy 3.3.6, Offender Mail*.
5. Offenders will be provided the opportunity to participate in activities deemed essential by the governing body of the offender's faith when consistent with safety and security requirements.
6. The facility must provide, to the extent practical, resources to support religious activities including adequate space and staff supervision.
7. Under the supervision and direction of the RAC, properly screened, interviewed, and trained volunteers and contract employees with written endorsement of their religious certifying body may provide the following:
  - a. baptism, communion, and other sacramental rituals;
  - b. religious classes, lectures, instruction, and discussions;
  - c. religious forums;
  - d. prayer therapy and religious group counseling;
  - e. religious choirs, ensembles, and singing groups;

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- f. self-taught study courses; and
  - g. spiritual maturity groups.
8. Special religious activities must be in accordance with DOC policies and local procedure, accessible to all faith groups, and authorized by an administrator, or designee.
  9. Religious articles may be worn when consistent with the safety, security, and orderly operation of the facility or program and according to facility or program procedures.
  10. Staff will notify the RAC immediately in the event of death or serious illness in an offender's family or other events that may be disturbing to the offender.
  11. When a representative of the faith to which an offender subscribes is not available in the facility, the offender must be permitted contact with a properly credentialed representative of that faith via visits, phone, or correspondence; offenders classified to a locked housing unit status may receive visits from approved, escorted representatives of the offender's faith group.

**B. Religious Activity Coordinator (RAC)**

1. In facilities with 500 or more offenders, at least one full-time RAC must be employed; facilities with less than 500 offenders must provide adequate religious staffing or access to local religious services within the community.
2. The RAC will have physical access to all areas of the institution in compliance with the facility's safety and security regulations.
3. Responsibilities and duties of the RAC include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. oversee the equitable delivery of religious activities and programs;
  - b. in cooperation with the administrator, or designee, develop and maintain communications with faith communities;
  - c. approve donations of equipment or materials for use in religious activities;
  - d. visit offenders classified to a locked housing unit status on a regularly scheduled basis;
  - e. interview and refer offenders to the appropriate representative of the offender's faith;
  - f. respond in a timely manner to requests from offenders to visit the RAC;
  - g. post scheduled religious activities in locations available to all offenders;
  - h. personally contact, or have the offender's spiritual representative contact and counsel, an offender in the event of a death or serious injury in the offender's family or other events that may be disturbing to the offender; and
  - i. ensure, to the extent practical, that representatives of all faiths are available to offenders.

**V. CLOSING:**

Questions concerning this policy shall be directed to the facility administrator.

**VI. REFERENCES**

- A. [53-1-203](#), MCA

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## VII. ATTACHMENTS

None.