

## DECEMBER ROLL CALL TRAINING

### Jail High-Risk Critical Task/Prisoner Rights-Religion

Inmates in jails and prisons make a variety of complaints based upon freedom of religion. Many cases are based on a complaint that the jail failed to provide religious meals; failed to provide religious materials; or restricted a prisoner's right to worship. The policy of the jail is to respect prisoner rights to religious practices and counseling where these practices do not impact the safety and security of the jail. Prisoners shall be granted the right to practice his or her religion within the limits necessary to maintain institutional order and security. Each prisoner shall be afforded the opportunity to participate in religious services and receive religious counseling within the jail. Prisoners shall not be required to attend or participate in religious services or discussions.

Prisoners shall be allowed a diet that meets their religious practices where the diet does not impact security or order in the jail. Under this provision, the prisoner may submit a written request to the jail administrator for an alternative diet. The jail administrator may confer with religious leaders or faith representatives in determining whether to grant any such requests.

A prisoner who requests religious documents may receive them provided they have been purchased by or donated to the inmate, or the materials have been donated to the jail for use by inmates, and the materials do not constitute a threat to the security of the jail. Hardcover books are not allowed due to their use for concealment of items or potential use as a weapon.

**Scenario:** An inmate is practicing a faith that requires a specialized meal preparation during an upcoming holiday and notifies the jail administration.

**Question:** What preparations must be made to accommodate the inmate's religious requests?

**Answer:** Generally, the inmate's request for specially prepared food to satisfy religious requirements should be met. In preparing meals, nutritional guidelines should be maintained in accordance with caloric intake.

The jail administrator may confer with religious leaders or faith representatives in determining whether to grant any such requests. Any denial of a prisoner's request with respect to a religious practice shall be documented in writing outlining why the practice would be contrary to the order, security, and safety of the jails. Religious practices may be denied when there is a compelling interest in the jail's security and order overriding the practice. When denying a religious practice, the jail shall apply the least restrictive alternative upon the practice to accomplish the goal of maintaining order and security.