
WELCOMING AFGHAN UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS

A GUIDE TO ISLAMIC PRACTICES

This is a guide for caseworkers, staff, foster parents and anyone else involved in the care of Afghan Refugee Unaccompanied Minors.

Please note that these practices may differ across faiths within the Islamic faith, based on individual beliefs, ethnicities and location. Some Muslims may be more conservative and practicing than others. It is best to ask the child.

Please reach out to a local Islamic Center for support. You may also reach out to the MFCA for questions or concerns.

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Islamic Worship

SALAH/NAMAZ: Muslims pray 5 times a day on the following times:

- Pre dawn (Fajr salah)
- Afternoon (Dhuhr Salah)
- Mid Day (Asr Salah)
- Sunset (Maghreb Salah)
- Night (Isha Salah)

The Islamic worship is a ritual that is performed on a prayer mat in a clean and relatively private area. When Muslims are together especially men, they may pray in congregation with the senior most member assuming the role of the “Imam” or religious leader, who leads the others in prayer. The prayer is preceded by “adhaan” which is a call to prayer. They will stand facing the holy city of Mecca (known as “Qibla” which in the United States would be a North -East direction), in a row with the Imam a little bit in the front. Several movements are performed including bowing down from the waist and putting the forehead to the ground.

While praying, they will not respond to your questions or comments or even appear to be listening to you. It is important to wait until the prayer is complete before asking them any questions. It is preferable to not walk in front of a praying Muslim.

Muslim women pray behind the men or in a separate room. Some may like to pray alone in the privacy of their bedrooms.

Children may need special consideration from school to ensure that they are able to perform their prayers while in school timings. You may need to speak to the school and allow them a staff room or a separate space to perform their prayers and be allowed to leave the classroom during this time. Prayers usually do not take more than 5 minutes to perform.

JUMMAH SALAH: FRIDAY CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS: Muslims pray together as a congregation on Friday in the afternoon at a mosque or Islamic Center. The service is preceded by a sermon given by the Imam, followed by a ritual prayer. Thereafter, Muslims like to socialize and perform fellowship activities – this is an important part of the entire service. The entire service including fellowship would be for about an hour.

Friday prayers are very important to all Muslims. All Muslim men are required to pray in the mosque on Fridays, but Muslim women may pray at home.

EID SALAH – PRAYERS ON THE EID HOLIDAYS: On the holy days of Eid, Muslims attend a special Eid service at the Islamic Center or a rented hall. Ritual prayers are followed by a sermon and thereafter, there may be fun activities for the family, special events for children, breakfast or brunch etc. Eid prayers are usually very early in the morning.

QURAN RECITATION: Muslims like to recite their holy book – Quran – out loud on some occasions. This is a lyrical recitation in a sing- song voice. Most practicing Muslims like to read the Quran in Arabic every day. They may also request a translation in English or in their own language.

DHIKR: Many devout Muslims like to use prayer beads to recite the praises of God. They use Islamic prayer beads for this purpose. Islamic prayer beads are different from prayer beads of other faiths. They may not be able to use prayer beads that are used by other faiths due to the specific number of count.

OTHER EVENTS AT THE ISLAMIC CENTER

The local Islamic Center may have other events including Sunday or Weekend School for children, youth programs, halaqas (Quran study), potlucks, inter-faith events and so on. It may be a good idea to speak to the Imam and find out what activities you could take the children or families to.

Islamic Hygiene Practices

WUDU: This is an ablution that is performed before the prayer. It requires them to wash their faces, arms up to the elbows, and feet up to the ankles. They will need a place where they can wash their feet without harming themselves. They may need floor towels to wipe the floor after performing ablution.

GHUSL: This is a head-to-toe bath/shower that they would like to perform on Fridays and holidays (and the girls may need to perform at the end of their menstrual period). This is a regular bath or a shower so there may not be a need to make any special arrangements. This does not mean that they do not need to take regular showers every day of course. No specific soap or shampoo is required; however, girls may request perfume-free shampoo or soap because girls are not supposed to wear perfume if they plan to attend congregational prayers where men will also be present.

ISTINJA/TAHARAT: Muslims are required to clean themselves with water after using the bathroom. A bidet or a hygiene faucet would be ideal. In the absence, they need to be provided with a bottle or a can (like a small watering can or a mug at the very least) apart from and in addition to toilet paper for drying purposes in the toilet.

CUTTING NAILS: Muslims need to cut their nails every Friday before congregational prayers and as part of their overall cleanliness along with other actions mentioned below. They will need nail trimmers or nail cutters.

SHAVING/TRIMMING PUBIC AREAS, UNDERARMS, AND TRIMMING OF MUSTACHE AND BEARD (FOR BOYS): Muslims are required to do this every Friday. This can be extended to 15 days. Beyond 40 days, it is Islamically disliked to pray without trimming these hairs. Youth may feel uncomfortable and complain that they cannot pray without doing this. We have recommended that they NOT be provided with regular razors because of the potential for self-harm and misuse of the razor. A hair removal cream (sensitive skin) for pubic hair and underarms might be a way to work around this issue. Boys, as well as girls, can be shown how to use it. For facial hair for boys, an electric razor under supervision might be a good idea for those that want to shave. However, this won't work for those who have a moustache and beard and only want to trim it (devout Muslims may like to keep their beard and moustache or trim the beard and shave the moustache). They may need to be provided safety scissors or an electric trimmer and supervised while they do it.

USING PERFUME ON FRIDAYS AND HOLIDAYS (BOYS): Boys may request cologne for use before Friday prayers as it is traditional to do so. However, their worship is still valid without it.

DENTAL HYGIENE: Muslims are required to clean their teeth as part of their WUDU (described before). Toothbrush and paste are sufficient for this purpose. Please ensure the toothpaste does not have gelatin.

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE: Girls are required to make GHUSL at the end of their period. They will not pray or fast during their period. They may need hygiene products during this time such as sanitary pads. Girls may request peri bottles to clean inside their vagina - but we do not recommend providing these as they can be harmful without supervision. Pads are better than tampons for minor girls because of the potential for injury.

GENERAL CLEANLINESS OF CLOTHES AND SPACES: Practicing Muslims are required to keep their clothes and spaces clean and hygienic in general. Youth may request cleaning products such as hand soap, or detergent from time to time. They may want to wash their hands before eating.

PETS AND ANIMALS: Pigs and dogs are considered unclean so Muslim children may be uncomfortable around these animals and may not like to touch them. They will be unable to pray in a space where a dog or a pig is present. They will not eat in a vessel that has been licked by an animal. They may want to change their clothes if they have been touched by a dog. If a dog licks their hand, they will want to wash it before praying or eating. Some children may be uncomfortable around other animals as well. Some kids may like cats.

USE OF LEFT HAND: The left hand is used for hygiene and is therefore considered unclean, while the right hand is used for eating and is considered the clean hand. Muslims eat with their right hand. They may not like to shake hands with the left hand or receive gifts with the left hand.

DISABILITY ACCOMODATIONS: Islamic hygiene practices are required especially for worship. Most rules are relaxed partially or wholly for those who are unable to apply due to medical reasons. If it is not possible for the person to apply these practices, then they may worship without ablution.

DIETARY PRACTICES

Muslims follow the practice of eating “Halal” (permissible) food. This is akin to the Jewish practice of Kosher but with slightly different guidelines. In general, here are the main points:

Halal (permissible food)

- Muslims eat beef, mutton, chicken etc. which is raised and slaughtered in a humane manner. Therefore they will eat meats purchased only from a certified halal butcher. Some Muslims may have relaxed these guidelines and may eat from a store that is not halal certified - it is best to ask them. Some stores such as Walmart may have halal certified meat or products.
- Seafood is considered halal – so in case of doubt – fish, shrimp or other seafood would be a preferred alternative to meat.
- Vegan or vegetarian food is halal.
- Kosher should be the second preference, not the first.

Haram (Not permissible foods)

- Alcohol and its products are not permissible. Alcohol may be present in foods such as cakes, puddings or vanilla essence. A conservative Muslim may be uncomfortable if alcohol is served around them.
- Pork and products derived from pigs are impermissible. This includes ham, bacon, ribs, pork chops, and gelatin etc. Gelatin is present in many products such as marshmallows, rice krispie treats, jello puddings, ice cream, cookies, cakes, icing etc. Gelatin is also present in many medications (especially capsules) as well as vitamin tablets. It is best to check the ingredients before purchasing.
- Some Muslims may not eat cheese as it contains rennet which is derived from calf stomachs.
- Blood, carrion (such as road kill), animals of prey, and food that is consecrated to other than Allah are also impermissible.

LIST OF ISLAMIC HOLIDAYS

Islamic Holidays are based on the Islamic Hijri Calendar. You may need to check the dates for each year.

RAMADAN: A month of fasting and worship. Muslims will eat a pre-dawn meal called “suhoor” or “Sehri” and then fast for the entire day with no food or water. Right at sunset, they will break their fast with fruits (dates), or milk, juice and sweets followed by their usual dinner. They may like to be at home at the time of breaking their fast. If they are going out, please make sure they have some food with them so that they can break their fast at sunset. They may like to pray their sunset prayers right after eating. Greeting: “Happy Ramadan” or “Ramadan Mubarak”.

EID UL FITR: This comes at the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Muslims celebrate this occasion with early morning worship service at the Islamic Center, followed by breakfast, fellowship with community, presents for children, fun activities for the family, and visiting friends, and relatives. The occasion involves dressing in nice clothes and eating special foods and sweets. Sometimes, girls like to celebrate the night before Eid by decorating their palms with henna tattoos. Greeting: “Happy Eid” or “Eid Mubarak”

EID AL ADHA: This commemorates the event during which Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was asked to sacrifice his beloved son. Muslims celebrate this occasion by offering animal sacrifices at local farms and donating the meat to the needy. There are special worship services at the mosque, and an opportunity to meet friends, relatives and community.

MAWLUD/MAWLID/MILAD UN NABI- a special holiday that is celebrated in many Islamic countries including Afghanistan. This is an occasion to celebrate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It is usually on the 12th of the Islamic month of Rabbi ul Awwal by the Sunnis and on the 17th of that month by Shia folks. Some other faiths within the Islamic faith may celebrate it on other dates. Some folks may not celebrate it at all depending on their personal beliefs. Greeting: Mawlut Mubarak.

ASHURA: An important day for Sunni and Shia folks alike, this day commemorates 2 special occasions – the day that Prophet Musa (Moses) broke open the red sea to allow the Children of Israel to cross to safety from the Egyptians; and the martyrdom of Imam Hussain – the beloved grandson of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that happened on the same day. It falls on the 10th of the Islamic month of Muharram. Muslims usually fast on this day, and attend special events and lectures. Shia folks attend “majlis” at the Islamic center, wear black clothes and spend the day in mourning.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Qibla Finder: Muslims pray in the direction of Mecca city, this is known as "Qibla". Here is an app that will help you find the Qibla in any location:

<https://qiblafinder.withgoogle.com/intl/en/desktop>

Scan Halal: This is an app that will help you to scan any item in the store and check whether it has any non halal ingredients

<https://www.scanhalal.com/>

Athan app: This app will help you identify and update correct prayer timings based on local sunrise and sunset timings

<https://athanpro.com/>

Tarjimly: This is a real-time interpreter/translator app - live volunteers available to translate on video call

<https://www.tarjim.ly/en>

Suggestion for a peri bottle for use in the bathroom:

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07B9N45Y7/ref=cm_sw_r_cp_api_glt_fabc_1XC73HDVHG1ACDQE6QF4

Some Halal stores in Michigan:

Dearborn Halal Meats

13750 W Warren Ave, Dearborn, MI 48126

Saad Wholesale Meats (for bulk purchase)

2814 Orleans St, Detroit, MI 48207

Mediterranean Island International Foods

4301 Kalamazoo Ave SE #7, Grand Rapids, MI 49508

International Gourmet Pantry

1514 W Michigan Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49006

Some Walmart stores may offer "Crescent" halal meat products.