



Do's & Don'ts for Faith-Based Organizations

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Guiding Principles

*Compassionate care on the same footing
as non-religious groups.*

- A level playing field
- Within Constitutional guidelines

Guiding Principles

The area of church-state relations is complicated, and this presentation is not a comprehensive authoritative statement of the law. Specific programs may have some different requirements. For more information, you may wish to consult with a lawyer or the agency that administers the program that interests you.



Limits on Federal Funding


No government money for “inherently religious” activities

“Don’t Preach on Uncle Sam’s Dollar”


No religious worship, prayer, instruction, or evangelization

- **BUT**-- you can still conduct these activities with private funds
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Tips for Keeping Religious Activities Separate

- ***Content***
 - Keep focused on program topics
 - ***Time or location***
 - Hold inherently religious activities at a different time or location than government-funded services
 - ***Careful Accounting***
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Voluntary Participation

- Program participants may be invited to join in religious services or events
 - ***BUT*** – participation must be voluntary and decision can have no bearing on services delivered
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Keeping “Faith” in Faith-Based

- Religious symbols
 - Religious name
 - Board members
 - Mission Statement
 - Religious activities – so long as they are privately funded, separate, and voluntary
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One exception: Vouchers


- A voucher (a.k.a. “indirect aid”) program allows an individual to choose from among several qualified service providers.
- If aid is distributed through a voucher, the service provider has greater freedom to integrate religious components.

BUT – Most government programs do NOT involve vouchers



Guiding Principles


**If all this sounds complicated,
remember that thousands of
faith-based organizations have
successfully partnered with the
Federal government –
without a hitch.**



Frequently Asked Questions

*If someone asks me about my faith, can I share it
with them?*

You may answer briefly. But if you wish to have a longer discussion, set up a time to speak with that person later. This keeps the program on track and avoids potentially using government funds for a religious activity.



Frequently Asked Questions

What about religious activities that we have with our staff and volunteers in the presence of those we are helping?

Staff and volunteers may engage in religious activities.

But make sure that the activity is *voluntary* for program participants.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will we have to change the way we hire employees?

In most cases, no.

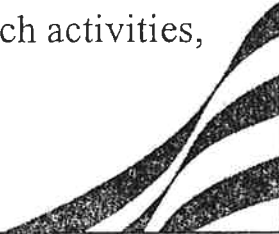
The Civil Rights Act recognizes the right of religious groups to hire employees who share their faith.

But some programs may have different rules.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can we use Federal funds to pay our staff's salary?

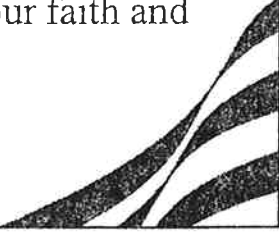
As long as the staff person spends her time on program activities – and not inherently religious activities – you can pay her salary. If a staffer splits time between program and church activities, keep careful records.



Frequently Asked Questions

If our organization receives a grant from the Federal government, can it choose not to provide services to some people?

No. If you take Federal money you *must* provide services to *all* who are eligible. For example, you may not serve only persons of your faith and turn away others.



Frequently Asked Questions

Can we buy religious materials with Federal funds?

No. Do not use government funds to buy religious materials. This applies not only to Bibles, Torahs, and Korans, but also to materials used for religious activities.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if religion is integrated throughout our program – can we still get government funds?

In most cases, no, because as a general rule inherently religious activities must be privately-funded, separate, and voluntary.

Exception: Vouchers

Frequently Asked Questions

What happens if we violate any of these rules?

- Lose grant funds
- Repay funds received
- You may be subject to legal action

But remember– thousands of faith-based organizations use Federal funds with no problems.

More Questions?

- *Review **Guidance for Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government***
- **Follow up with the Agency Program Contact or an Agency Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives**
- **Check with a lawyer**