SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE		POLICY NUMBER 500-07	PAGE NUMBER 1 OF 6
		DISTRIBUTION:	Public
		SUBJECT:	Offender Religious and Cultural Activities
RELATED STANDARDS:	**ACA 5-ACI-7F-04, 7F-05, 7F-06, 7F-07, 7F-08**	EFFECTIVE DATE:	August 01, 2026
		SUPERSESSION:	01/15/2026
DESCRIPTION: Offender Management	REVIEW MONTH: August	sec. **NICK LAMB** **SECRETARY OF CORRECTIONS**	

I. POLICY

It is the policy of the South Dakota Department of Corrections (DOC) to establish procedures for operating religious and cultural programs within adult South Dakota Department of Corrections institutions.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and consistent standards for the practice of recognized faith groups. It is also the purpose of this policy to ensure that ***offenders have the opportunity to participate in practices of their religious faith that are deemed essential by the faith's judicatory, limited only by documentation showing threat to the safety of persons involved in such activity, or that the activity itself disrupts order in the institution*** **[ACA 5-ACI-7F-05]**. Faith-based programs/observances will be accommodated, within available time and space, unless an overriding compelling governmental interest exists. Offenders will not be subjected to coercion, harassment, or ridicule due to their religious affiliation.

III. DEFINITIONS

Cultural Activities Coordinator (CAC):

The designated DOC staff member from each facility who serves as the volunteer services program coordinator for cultural, religious, and leisure activities and programs offered to offenders at the facility. This person is responsible for volunteer recruitment, maintaining volunteer records, compliance with required volunteer forms, and coordinating training for volunteers.

Cultural Activity:

Conducted under the auspices of the cultural activities coordinator (CAC) and designed specifically for instruction or to further the purpose of a cultural group.

Cultural Group:

Any group that is not religious in nature which promotes educational, social, cultural, or recreational interests of participating offenders.

Religion and Religious Activities:

A religion, religious denomination, or sect supported by literature stating religious principles and recognized by a group of persons who share common ethical, cultural, moral, or intellectual views which are not defamatory, racial, political, or derisive in nature. Permissible religious practices are practices of that religion for the purpose of worship, devotion, instruction, and spiritual development which are not contrary to the legitimate penological interests of the DOC.

Religious Activities Councils and Committees:
Organizations may be established to provide advice, counseling, and guidance for institutional religious activities. Organizations must conform to established DOC policies and directives and shall be coordinated by the cultural activities coordinator. Organizations may develop specific directions or bylaws as necessary for their respective functions.

Religious Program Committee (RPC):
A committee comprised of members of DOC senior staff along with the cultural activities coordinator and volunteer representatives. The committee generally meets quarterly to review project applications and requests that are religious or cultural in nature.

IV. PROCEDURES

1. General:

A. Upon admission to the DOC, offenders will have an opportunity to designate their religion. Offenders wishing to change their religious preference during their incarceration must complete a *Change of Religious Affiliation* form (attachment #2) and send the completed form to the cultural activities coordinator (CAC).

B. Religious denomination and tribal affiliation are documented on the booking summary.

C. Offenders may request to visit with a religious volunteer for the purpose of receiving spiritual counseling. Requests shall be in the form of a kite sent to the CAC. ***When a religious leader of an offender's faith is not represented through the chaplaincy staff or volunteers, the chaplain or designated staff member assists the offender in contacting a person who has the appropriate credentials from the faith judicatory. That person ministers to the offender under the supervision of the chaplain*** **[ACA 5-ACI 7F-06]**. ***The chaplain or designated staff develops and maintains close relationships with community religious resources*** **[ACA 5-ACI 7F-04]**.

D. Volunteers may access facilities for the purpose of providing spiritual counseling, as authorized by the warden or designee.
   1. The CAC will promptly respond to the offender's request. If approved, the respective religious volunteer will be notified of the request. The CAC may assist in arranging the meeting between the offender and volunteer.

E. The CAC's responsibilities related to offender religious or cultural property include:
   1. Reviewing orders submitted by offenders for approved offender religious or cultural property, including property purchased for a group through the group account. Once the order has been approved, this shall be forwarded to offender banking staff for processing from the offender's account or from the offender group account.
      a. The CAC will review the order to ensure all items requested are approved and the order is with an approved vendor before forwarding the request to Offender Banking for processing. A stamped envelope is required.
      b. All property sent to the facility will be inspected by property staff prior to approval for admittance into the institution. Approved items are delivered to the CAC for secure storage in the group's designated property location. Questions regarding religious or cultural property shall be directed to the CAC.
      c. All donated religious items must come from an approved vendor and/or religious organization with the exception of donated meat.
         1) All donated meat must be approved by the CAC prior to the donation.

2. Religious and Cultural Activities:

A. ***Written policy, procedure, and practice require that the institution provide space and equipment adequate for the conduct and administration of religious programs. The institution makes available non-offender clerical staff for confidential material*** **[ACA 5-ACI 7F-07]**.

B. Religious and cultural activities provided within a DOC institution will be performed in compliance with the following rules:

1. Offender attendance at any religious and cultural activity shall be voluntary.
2. The CAC will coordinate religious and cultural activities with the institution's programming and activity schedule, in cooperation with other offered programs to minimize scheduling conflicts and to ensure adequate staff supervision.
3. Offender religious and cultural activities will be conducted in designated locations within the institution. Offenders attending activities may be supervised by green tag volunteers only when regular rounds are conducted by security staff.
4. Offenders attending religious and cultural functions will be sensitive to other groups who may be meeting in the same area and will conduct themselves in a respectful manner.
5. Outside guests/visitors or red tag volunteers may not be left unsupervised during religious or cultural functions and may not independently supervise offender activities. A DOC staff member must always be present to provide direct supervision of the activity, including attending offenders and visitors.

C. Religious and cultural activities, councils, and committees may be organized to provide counseling and guidance to offenders. Such organizations must conform to established DOC policies and directives. All organizations shall be supervised by the CAC. Organizations may develop specific directions or bylaws as necessary for their respective functions. These are subject to approval by the CAC.

D. For changes to existing religious or cultural group accommodations (e.g., property, ceremonies, events, frequency, time/day), the request shall include a thorough description of the proposed change and justification for the change. All requests for new accommodations (e.g., holidays, food, property), must be submitted at least ninety (90) days in advance of the desired implementation date. Exceptions may only be made with a recommendation from the CAC and the approval of the warden.

E. The CAC will review the information and, if necessary, request clarification or additional information from the offender(s) or community resource.

F. The CAC will present the request and accompanying documentation to the Religious Programming Committee (RPC) for review. The RPC shall recommend the request be approved or denied. The CAC will inform the offender in writing of the decision. If the offender disagrees with the decision, he/she may initiate the grievance process.

3. Offender Access to Religious or Cultural Activities:

A. Offenders must sign up for each activity. An activity is considered the regular meeting of the religious group, which is typically held weekly or bi-weekly. Offenders may not sign up other offenders.

B. If an offender misses two (2) consecutive religious activities they signed up for, their name may be removed from the respective activity sign-up list they have missed for up to thirty (30) days. After thirty (30) days, the offender will once again be eligible to sign up for the specific religious activity they had previously been restricted from. If an offender is placed on a thirty (30) day restriction, it does not preclude them from signing up to attend an activity for a different religious group, nor does this preclude offenders from practicing their faith individually, within their room/cell/bunk area.

C. Offenders must be properly dressed for the activity, in accordance with the offender dress code.

D. When an activity has concluded, all offenders must directly return to their housing unit. If an offender is found loitering, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

E. Lights must remain on in the room where the religious or cultural activity is taking place.

F. Offenders on cell restriction are only permitted to attend one (1) religious activity per week.

G. Offender religious and cultural activities shall not conflict with the legitimate penological interests of the DOC or pose a risk to safety and security. Activities may be temporarily suspended by the warden. Offenders may continue to practice their faith individually, within their room/cell/bunk area.

4. Baptism, Communion, and Other Sacramental Rituals:

A. Baptism services may be offered by appropriately credentialed individuals at the institution, if approved in advance by the warden or designee. Normally this is limited to volunteers. Requests shall be routed first to the CAC, who shall consult with the warden or designee.

B. Communion services may be conducted on a regular basis.

C. Requests for other sacramental rituals will be forwarded to the CAC, who will consult with the warden or designee.

D. Clergy or religious volunteers who have been approved by the facility warden are authorized to bring three (3) ounces of wine into the institution the day of Catholic Mass to be consumed by the priest during mass. The wine must be in a clear container.

5. Group Religious and Cultural Activities:

A. Approved activities will be scheduled with reasonable frequency, based on the availability of space, time, and staff supervision. ***The chaplain, in cooperation with the institutional administrator or designee, approves donations of equipment or materials for use in religious programs*** **[ACA 5-ACI 7F-08]**.

B. Any materials a volunteer wishes to provide to an offender for their personal use must be sent directly to the CAC at least two (2) weeks prior to their intended use for inspection and approval, unless prior approval is granted by the warden or secretary of corrections.

C. Materials used for a group activity or service such as books, programs, pamphlets, etc., may be brought the day of the event to be searched prior to entry. Volunteers shall send the CAC a list of materials that will be brought into the facility at least two (2) weeks in advance of the event for coordination or planning purposes.

D. To the extent possible, each approved group will receive comparable time and space for programming, including one weekly worship opportunity and opportunities to observe religious/cultural holidays/days of significance, as approved by the CAC. In addition, each group may be afforded time for organized group study as approved by the CAC.

E. An approved group may conduct worship or study in a designated area, at a designated time, without a volunteer present. However, DOC staff must be available to supervise the group.

F. General population offenders will be provided the opportunity to attend religious or cultural activities or programming, unless the offender's presence creates a disruption, or threatens the safety or good order of the institution; or the offender is currently serving a punitive sanction which restricts access to attend such activities or programming, such as room restriction or placement on restrictive housing status. Offenders on admission and orientation (A&O) status may be excluded until they are assigned to general population.

G. Offenders on special management or restrictive housing status may request written religious educational material from the CAC.

H. The CAC will offer multiple opportunities for religious activities, cultural activities, and programming.

6. Inipi Ceremonies (Sweat Lodge Ceremonies):

A. The Inipi ceremony is a sacred ritual among Native Americans conducted inside and adjacent to a lodge constructed with willow branches. Each DOC institution has a dedicated area for offenders to erect and maintain an Inipi lodge for offender use.

B. Inipi ceremonies shall be conducted on a regular basis at times listed in the institution's weekly program/activity schedule. Each facility shall have authority to temporarily suspend ceremonies in the interest of safety and security.
   1. Each institution will establish a maximum number of offenders who may participate in an Inipi ceremony. This number shall be established given time and space limitations. In order to accommodate the needs of all offenders, offenders may only attend one (1) Inipi per week, unless granted an exception by the CAC.
   2. The CAC shall be responsible for ordering and approving supplies for the Inipi utilizing the Offender Sweat Lodge Account.

7. Food for Religious Activities:

A. All religious or ceremonial meals must be pre-approved via a *Project Application* (attachment #1). Project applications must be submitted in advance of the CAC quarterly meeting before the holiday.
   1. Meals for religious holidays or ceremonies may include the following but must be approved in advance via Project Application:
      a. One (1) entrée.
      b. Two (2) side dishes.
      c. One (1) drink.
      d. One (1) dessert.

B. A single serving per offender approved to attend the ceremony may be implemented.

C. Each religious group is permitted the following religious ceremonial meals during the course of the year:
   1. Wiccan – Beltane (5/1) and Samhain (10/31).
   2. Asatru – Yule (12/21) and Midsummer (6/21).
   3. Buddhist –Vesak and Asalha.
   4. Islam – Eid ul Adha and Eid ul Fitr (dates change each year).
   5. Judaism – Passover Seders (springtime) and Kosher for Passover meals.
   6. Native American – Pow Wows (up to four (4) per year).
   7. Christian Church Dinners as approved.

D. All religious/ceremonial meals must be purchased by the offenders or group account. Arrangements must be made with the designated food service vendor to provide the meal and must be completed at least two (2) weeks in advance of the meal.

E. All commissary food for religious activities must be pre-approved via a Project Application.

F. All religious fasts must be approved in advance by the CAC.

G. Any offender wishing to participate in a religious ceremonial meal event must have declared themselves to be a member of the religious group that is hosting the meal. This can be accomplished by either declaring the religion upon admission to the DOC, or by submitting a Change of Religious Affiliation form during any point in time of incarceration, or the offender must have attended at least three (3) religious services in the ninety (90) days preceding the sign-up deadline for the event. The religious services attended must correspond with the religion hosting the event.

H. Cultural groups are not permitted any special meals.

8. Visitor Access:

A. The warden or designee will approve requests for outside individuals or groups/visitors prior to participation in any religious or cultural activity within the institution.

B. All outside individuals must submit the required access forms as outlined in DOC policy 300-01 – *Facility Access & ID Requirements*.
   1. The completed forms must be submitted to the CAC no later than two (2) weeks before the event.
   2. The CAC will promptly notify any visitor or group that is denied access.

V. RESPONSIBILITY

The director of Prison Operations is responsible for the annual review and maintenance of this policy.

VI. AUTHORITY

None.

VII. HISTORY

August 2026
January 2026
August 2025
February 2025
February 2025
February 2024
October 2023
April 2020

ATTACHMENTS

1. Project Application (CARBONLESS)
2. Change of Religious Affiliation

PROJECT APPLICATION

Project Title: _____

Name of Individual/Group & Unit: _____

Purpose of Project: _____

_____

_____

Date of Project: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Describe the project activities (Include benefits derived from the project, timetable, security implications, number of offenders required, and any other special considerations, to include meals).

_____

_____

_____

_____

Documentation Support (if needed): _____

_____

_____

_____

Estimated Budget: _____

Project Coordinator: _____ Date: _____

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____

Housing Captain/Cultural Activities Coordinator: _____ Date: _____

Associate Warden: _____ Date: _____

Approved ☐ Denied ☐ Date: _____

Administrative Comments: _____

_____

_____

Attach program agenda (if applicable).
White: Facility CAC (Religious) or Facility AW (Non-Religious) Yellow: Organization/Offender

CHANGE OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Name: _____ Number: _____ Cell: _____

Current religious affiliation: _____

Length of time practicing current religion: _____

Religious affiliation you are requesting to be changed to: _____

How did you come to this decision?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Signature: _____ Date:_____

Please return this completed form to the cultural activities coordinator.

CAC Signature: _____ Date: _____