



U. S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Prisons

Reentry Services Division

Washington, D.C 20534

MARCH 23, 2020

TO: ALL RRC CONTRACT PROVIDERS

FROM:  JON GUSTIN, ADMINISTRATOR
RESIDENTIAL REENTRY MANAGEMENT BRANCH

SUBJECT: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Religious Accommodations

As Residential Reentry Centers (RRC) implement modified operations in response to the COVID-19 virus, it is imperative constitutionally protected religious observances are allowed to continue. Currently parishes, mosques, synagogues, and temples in the community are advising home worship or individual observance. RRCs should consider local restrictions or guidance when adopting this community standard. When necessary, observances may be modified to ensure the health and safety of residents. The following general guidelines are also provided to support safe religious observance:

Passover

- Passover begins April 8, 2020, at sundown and concludes approximately one hour after sundown on April 16, 2020.
- Since leavened food items (chometz) are forbidden during Passover, participants may ritually cleanse Passover areas of leaven on Tuesday, April 7, 2020. Tables and utensils used for non-Passover foods must be ritually cleansed or replaced.
- A microwave oven dedicated exclusively for Kosher-for-Passover food should be provided for the days of Passover. This can either be a new microwave which has never been used, or one which has been appropriately cleaned (by a participant) to ensure it contains no trace of chometz.
- The serving of Kosher-for-Passover meals, with nationally recognized kosher symbols, begins at the lunch meal on April 8th, and ends on April 16th after the evening meal. Each

inmate participating in Kosher-for-Passover meals should be provided an unopened, sealed box of Kosher-for-Passover matzoh on the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th day of Passover.

- The Seders take place on April 8th & 9th. All residents observing Passover should be offered a Seder meal including handmade shmurah matzoh and grape juice. The Seder will start nightfall and can last up to three hours.
- Because it may become necessary to isolate individuals, it is advisable to have sufficient Seder plates on hand to provide one per participant. Sharing group meals is not recommended.
- **Ramadan**
 - The projected start of Ramadan is sundown April 23, 2020, with the first day of fasting on Friday, April 24, 2020.
 - During Ramadan, Muslims customarily engage in extra study, Quranic recitation, and congregative prayer. RRCs should designate a room for small group or individual prayers and breaking of the fast.
 - The accommodation of dried dates to break the fast and other Halal items is appropriate.
 - RRCs will provide Ramadan participants a bagged breakfast for the pre-dawn morning meal, starting at dinner on Thursday, April 23, 2020, and continuing every evening until the last day of Ramadan.
 - The first evening meal is projected to be Friday, April 24, 2020. Each evening, after the sunset prayer, Ramadan participants will be accommodated with their lunch and dinner.
 - RRC should allow alternative pill line and non-emergency urinalysis after the evening prayer for Ramadan participants. This will minimize breaks during Ramadan necessitating alternative fast days.
 - Circumstances may require alternative fasting days for Ramadan participants (e.g. inmates who become ill during Ramadan or female inmates who miss fasting due to menstruation or post-partum related issues).
 - The Night of Determination, the most sacred time of Ramadan, is projected to be May 20, 2020 with prayers occurring after nightfall. The end of Ramadan is observed by the Eid-ul-Fitr which is projected to be May 23 or May 24, 2020

Questions should be directed to your designated Residential Reentry Manager or Dana DiGiacomo, Assistant Administrator, RRMB, at ddigiacomobop.gov or 202-616-5880. They will collaborate with individual RRCs to develop suggestions for local accommodations.