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Working Together

This section is designed to provide guidelines for faith communities and criminal justice agencies that plan to work together. As in any collaboration, the partners need to be sensitive to different perspectives and aware that there are different ways of addressing a problem or issue. Misunderstanding and miscommunication may be unavoidable, but they will be resolved more easily if both partners approach them with an open mind and a focus on the common goal. We hope these tips will help.

Tips for Working With Law Enforcement

Here are some suggestions for collaborating with law enforcement:

- Be sure to invite everyone who will be affected by your program to participate in planning, implementing, and evaluating your program.
- Remember that a faith-based organization and law enforcement have a common goal—to create and maintain a safe and caring community.
- You and your organization are a valuable resource for law enforcement. Explain to police officers how your program will make their job easier. Be specific.
- Respect the police department's hierarchy and chain of command.
- Know that law enforcement officers are there to help you.
- Remember that police officers, like everyone else, are busy people. For many, working on your program must be done in addition to their regular work and often on their own time.

“A lot of people are waiting for Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi to come back—but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. It is up to you.”

—Marian Wright Edelman

Adapted from *Powerful Partnerships: Twenty Crime Prevention Strategies That Work for Refugees, Law Enforcement, and Communities* (Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council, 1998), 124.

Tips for Working With Faith-based Organizations

Here are some guidelines for working with faith-based organizations:

- **Find common ground.** You and many of the faith-based groups in your community share purposes. You may find that you agree on many of the goals although you may have different ways of getting there. Work together on those elements where you find common ground, and respect those where you don't.
- **Establish clear guidelines** on the nature and extent of your collaboration. If the group will be working with prisoners, make it clear what the requirements are for entering the prison. If volunteers are working with ex-offenders, they should be familiar with parole and probation requirements.
- **See the faith community and the faith-based group as a full partner**—a natural partner of unexpected allies, such as the police department, the courts, or the correctional system. A faith-based group within the community may take on one or more roles at various times. Volunteers from a church, synagogue, or mosque may be deeply motivated by their faith and yet eager to extend services to persons of different faith or of no faith. It is important to understand the context in which faith acts to move and shape the community.
- **Demand accountability.** Treat faith-based groups as you would any partner. Agree on outcomes and timelines. Be clear about legal boundaries and constitutional issues. (The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives has published *Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government*, a comprehensive look that includes FAQs on the legal aspects of these partnerships. It's available online at www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/guidance/index.html.)
- **Stay in there for the long haul.** It may take a long time for change to happen. Be sure to give programs a chance to work.
- **Keep in mind research, track records, and plausibility** when assessing what faith-based organizations are offering. Faith-based organizations may not always take the same approach to problems as government agencies, but the energy and determination they bring to the project may make even unusual approaches succeed.

Adapted from National Crime Prevention Council, *Philanthropy and Faith: An Introduction* (Washington, DC: NCPC: 2003), 17–18.

Using “Due Diligence” To Comply With Government Regulations

The Faith and Service Technical Education Network (FASTEN) offers faith-based organizations helpful tips on collaboration, based on interviews with hundreds of faith leaders who have received government funding for their programs.⁶⁴

- **Be transparent about your religious character.** Commit yourself to open, straightforward, clear, consistent communication about your religious identity to your volunteers, service beneficiaries, donors, and government. Make it your goal to allow potential program participants and government partners to make choices about involvement with your organization on the basis of full and accurate information about your program content, ethos, goals, and methodology.
- **Separate your public funds from your private donations.** Maintain separate accounts and do not commingle funds. You will need to be able to show auditors how every dime of your government contract/grant was spent.
- **Hold explicitly religious programs at different times or in different locations than the publicly funded services.** Receiving government funding does not mean you must stop holding worship services or prayer meetings. It does mean that you must conduct those activities in a way that makes them clearly distinct from the social services you are offering that are paid for by public dollars. . . .
- **Clearly communicate that client participation in explicitly religious activities is voluntary and optional.** Feel free to inform participants in your government-funded program about the various religious services your organization may sponsor, just be sure that they understand that their attendance is not mandatory. . . .
- **Be intentional, deliberate, specific, and public about articulating to clients what their rights are.** Consider posting a sheet that lists clients' rights in a prominent, public part of your facility.
- **Have a client's grievance procedure in place.** . . . Have an intentional, published process that indicates what steps a disgruntled client can take. . . .
- **Provide specialized training for staff and volunteers about the rules governing the government grant or contract, so that everyone knows what activities are permissible.** This training should be formal and documented.
- **Have a brief, written policy about how to respond to spiritual inquiries from clients, and inform all staff and volunteers involved in the government-funded program of this policy.** One good approach is to train staff and volunteers that if a query is raised . . . during the government-funded program, they should respond briefly and politely and then invite that person to have a more in-depth conversation with them at a time outside the . . . times of the government-funded program. . . .
- **If your organization has required behavioral standards for paid staff, be sure that your written literature (e.g., personnel policy manual) and verbal communication about those standards links them explicitly to your character as [a faith-based organization].** You may assume the link between your religious beliefs and certain behavioral practices, but for those outside your creed, the connection may not be readily understandable. . . . Be sure that your personnel policies make it explicit that the required behaviors (or impermissible behaviors) are rooted in the religious beliefs of the organization. . . .

Excerpted from Amy L. Sherman, "Due Diligence Tips," Hudson Institute, 2004.