



# SERVICE PROVIDER TOOLKIT: MATTERS OF CULTURAL SENSITIVITY TOWARDS SENIOR MUSLIMS

**REH'MA**  
COMMUNITY SERVICES



An agency of the Government of Ontario.  
Relève du gouvernement de l'Ontario.



# Overview

- Diversity of the Muslim population
- Communication
- Gender preferences
- Eligibility and entitlement
- Personal hygiene
- Performing ablution
- Prayer in Islam
- Religious leaders
- Fasting during Ramadan
- Festive occasions
- Food & Drink in Islam
- Dressing in Islam
- Family and community support
- Cultural beliefs beyond religious requirements
- Ornamentation

# COMMUNICATION

- Muslim elderly have limited language and literacy skills.
- Muslim elderly should be provided with service providers who speak the same language .

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اردو

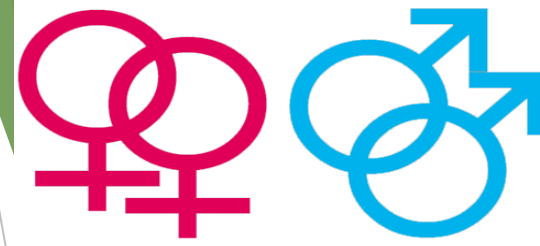
- Make use of an interpreter to facilitate communication.
- Please **DO NOT SHOUT!** at elders who do not speak English.



- Information should be provided in print and explained in the language preferred by elderly individuals.



# GENDER PREFERENCES & PERSONAL SPACE



- It is preferable that Service Providers be the same gender as Muslim elderly clients.
- Prior to any physical contact, Service Providers should explain to the elderly individual what they intend to do.
  - Example:
    - I am going to help you get up
    - I am going to help you take off your coat
- Service Providers should establish boundaries with Muslim elders regarding their personal space.

# SYSTEM ELIGIBILITY & ENTITLEMENT

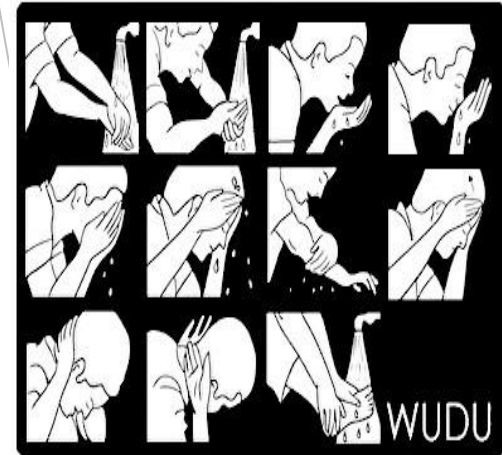
- Information regarding various Canadian systems (i.e., health care, legal, financial, immigration, housing, transportation etc.) should be provided for elderly.
- Information pertaining to Canadian systems should be explained to elderly so they are aware of their rights.
- Promote connections with the local community resources that facilitate this knowledge.

The logo for Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a black serif font with a small red maple leaf icon above the letter "a".

Canada

# PERSONAL HYGIENE

- According to the religious scriptures of Islam, good personal hygiene is an important and essential component of devoutness.
- Muslim elders should be allowed to perform ablution (*wudhu*).
- Muslim elders should be provided a vessel with water when they utilize the washroom in order to preform *Istinja* (the careful and thorough cleaning of one's self after using the washroom); as some elders do not feel comfortable in only using toilet paper. Service providers should provide both instruments for cleaning.



# PERFORMING ABLUTION (PURIFICATION BEFORE PRAYER)

- Muslim elderly may require ablution before every prayer.
- In order to preform ablution (*Wudu*) water must be running and not stagnant.
- Ablution in Islam can not be preformed in a bath tub or sink filled with water.
- Ablution is normally preformed in a washroom with running water. However, if incapacitated, the individual may preform dry ablution (*Tayammum*)-dry ablution may be preformed with sand or dust. (Example: putting sand into a bag and completing ablution symbolically).



# PRAYER IN ISLAM (Salat/Namaaz)

Once ablution is done, Muslims may pray. Muslims are required (but not limited) to pray five times a day at various times:

1. FAJR: The dawn prayer
2. DHUR: The noon prayer
3. ASR: The afternoon prayer
4. MAGHRIB: The sunset prayer
5. ISHA'A: The night prayer



Prayer must be completed facing a specific direction, towards the QIBLA (in Canada this is facing Northeast).



# PRAYER IN ISLAM (Salat>Namaaz) Cont.

- Requirements for Prayer:

1. A quite personal room/space

2. A clean prayer mat



3. Certain dress requirements (both for men and women)

3. Beads or Tasbeeh



4. Torbah or Mohar (Sajdagah)

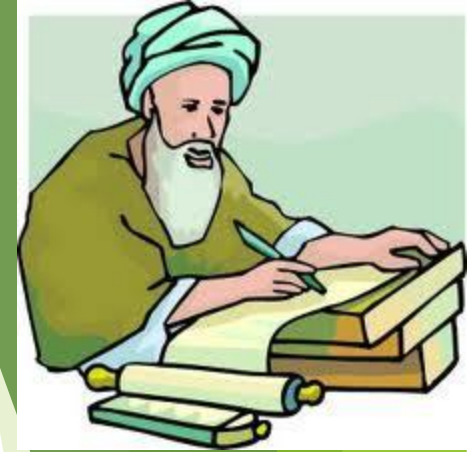
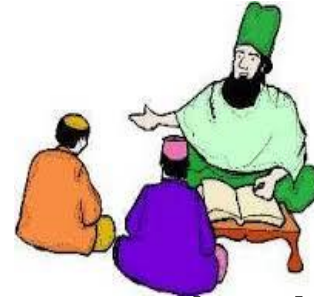
5. The Qu'ran (Holy Book)

- During the prayer ritual, kneeling and bowing down are required.

- Physically disabled elders may choose to pray sitting or laying down.

# RELIGIOUS LEADERS

- An Islamic religious leader is referred to as an Imam.
- Imams lead daily prayers in Mosques. They also lead prayers during special occasions such as *Eid* and *Taraweeh* prayer during Ramadan.



- Imams also provide services to the community. Imams visit individuals who may be ill and pray for their health. Muslim elderly may feel comforted when an Imam visits them while they are bedridden or ill.

# FASTING DURING THE HOLY MONTH OF RAMADAN

- The Muslim calendar does not correspond to the Gregorian calendar. It is based on the sightings of the moon.
- Ramadan is the 9<sup>th</sup> month in the Lunar Year and the length of the month varies according to the sightings of the moon.
- The act of fasting consists of abstaining from all food or liquid from dawn (sunrise) to dusk (sunset) and is required by all healthy Muslims.
- Pregnant women, nursing mothers, ill and the elderly are all exempt from fasting according to the Holy Book provided they make up for it in charitable ways.

Muslim elderly who choose to fast will require at least a meal prior to the fast (Sehri/Sahoor) and a meal at the end of the fast (Iftaar).



# FESTIVE OCCASIONS: EID

- Islam has two major feasts:

***Eid-ul Fitr***: Celebrated immediately after Ramadan (the first day of 10<sup>th</sup> month of the Lunar Calendar).

***Eid-ul Adha***: Celebrated on the tenth day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the Lunar Calendar, which is also the time Muslims go on pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca.

- For these festive occasions Muslim elders may choose to follow the tradition of wearing new clothes and shoes.

- Muslim elders also require access to cash money during these feasts. The money is used to pay Zakat (an obligatory donation made annually to charity) and *Idiah* which is given to their children or grandchildren. Since the elderly will be provided with access to money, service providers may want to watch out for potential financial abuse.



# FOOD & DRINK

- Muslims have certain religious dietary restrictions. According to Islam: Muslims must eat only Halal meat.
- *Halal* is the merciful slaughter of an animal. During the slaughter a dedication is made to honour Allah and specific humane slaughtering techniques are utilized. Please note, kosher is not Halal. Meat from an animal that is dead or sick prior to slaughter, blood as well as pork or pork products (gelatin/lard, etc.) are prohibited in Islam.
- Islam also prohibits the consumption of alcohol.



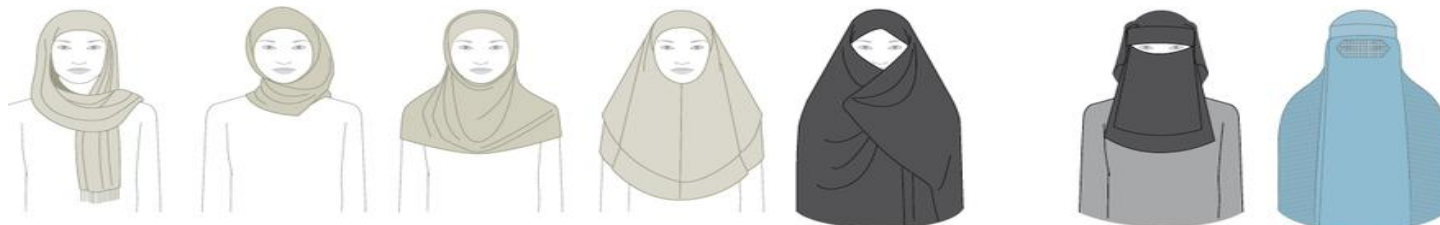
HALAL



HARAM

# DRESS CODE IN ISLAM

- Service providers and care givers must ensure that Muslim elderly are always decently dressed or covered.
- Muslims vary in their choice of dress, the various styles of attire should be respected.
- Some Muslim women may choose to wear hijabs (head coverings) or niqabs (face covering), while others may choose to wear neither.



# FAMILY & COMMUNITY AS SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- For most Muslim elders, extended family members are as important as immediate family members. While this may often contradict the concept of “next of kin”, it needs to be respected.

- Respect for this extended family pattern may aid in alleviating anxiety for Muslim elderly, especially those that are not well .



# CULTURAL BELIEFS BEYOND RELIGION

- Religious charms (*Taweez*)



- Evil eye protection





# ORNAMENTATION

- Muslim women and men have various ways of displaying cosmetics. Some include:
  - Henna: temporary tattoo used to create designs on hands or dye hair and fingernails.
  - Kajal/Kohl: Black powder used as eyeliner or for other cosmetic purposes.
  - Ittar: Perfume oil created from herbal sources.



**THANK YOU FOR USING THIS AS A GUIDE AND/OR  
TOOL-KIT TO SERVE SENIOR MUSLIMS RESIDING  
IN CANADA.**