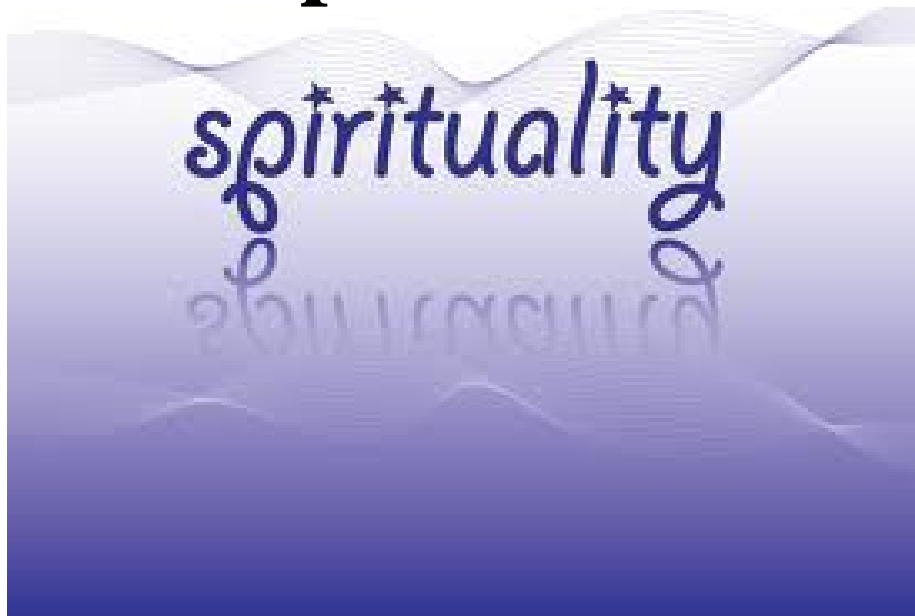




**Volunteers of America**  
*A Ministry of Service*

# **Resource Guide**

## **Supporting the Expression of**



**FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL  
DISABILITIES**

A Spiritual Expression Resource Guide of Volunteers of America

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## **SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT: *Is Spiritual Expression a Valued Outcome?***

The following resources can be used to identify whether or not spirituality and/or congregational involvement are considered a valued outcome for an individual with developmental disabilities and—if so—how services and supports might be directed toward helping that person attain/realize this outcome.

Finding out what a person wants for their lives—whether related to attending a congregation, expressing their spirituality, or any other aspect of life—comes through asking thoughtful questions, careful listening, close watching, and lots of learning. Although the primary voice that should be heard in good planning is that of the person with disabilities, it often is necessary to seek out information from a variety of sources. This is especially true when –

- a person’s own preferences and values are difficult to learn because of challenges related to speech, language, and communication; or
- a person has had limited involvement in their community in the past.

Identifying a person’s valued outcomes usually requires talking with others who may have different insights into a person’s life and know about his or her interests, preferences, values, and current involvement from different vantage points.

Below are some of the people and places you might look to help you (a) gather information about a person’s life and (b) learn about and explore whether spirituality and congregational participation are personal Valued Outcomes. Consider using one or more of the following simple tools you can use to guide you in asking questions, requesting information, or looking for indicators of interest in this area.

- Conversations with individual with disabilities. While formal assessment tools are available (see end of this section for a couple of examples) we found in our pilot project that simple conversations, guided by genuine concern and creative curiosity, were the most useful form of spiritual assessment.
- Other people you might talk with, request information from, or invite to a person-centered planning meeting:
  - Parents, siblings, or other family members
  - Advocates
  - Support, direct care, and residential staff

- Friends or other people who know the individual well
  - Others
- Documents you might review
  - Previous Individualized Program Plans
  - Past assessments or evaluations
  - Enrollment information or individual history
  - Other service and support records
    - Residential records
    - Institutional records
- Observations of and interactions with the person with disabilities
  - List of indicators to look for
  - Visiting congregations or other spiritual locations and events
  - Encouraging residential support staff to ask targeted questions or look for indicators of interest in faith and spirituality
- Assessment Approaches for people who are non-verbal

## The 7 x 7 Model for Spiritual Assessment

—adapted from "The 7 x 7 Model for Spiritual Assessment: A Brief Introduction and Bibliography," by George Fitchett, (available via [www.rushu.rush.edu/rhhv](http://www.rushu.rush.edu/rhhv))

### HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT:

- Medical (Biological) Dimension
- Psychological Dimension
- Family Systems Dimension
- Psycho-Social Dimension
- Ethnic, Racial, Cultural Dimension
- Social Issues Dimension
- Spiritual Dimension



### SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT:

- Beliefs and Meaning
- Vocation and Obligations
- Experience and Emotions
- Courage and Growth
- Rituals and Practice
- Community
- Authority and Guidance

**HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT:** The holistic assessment looks at six dimensions of a person's life. **Medical Dimension** — What significant medical problems has the person had in the past? What problems do they have now? What treatment is the person receiving?

**Psychological Dimension** — Are there any significant psychological problems? Are they being treated? If so, how?

**Family Systems Dimension** — Are there at present, or have there been in the past, patterns within the person's relationships with other family members which have contributed to or perpetuated present problems?

**Psycho-Social Dimension** — What is the history of the person's life, including, place of birth and childhood home, family of origin, education, work history and other important activities and relationships. What is the person's present living situation and what are their financial resources?

**Ethnic, Racial or Cultural Dimension** — What is the person's racial, ethnic or cultural background. How does it contribute to the person's way of addressing any current concerns?

**Social Issues Dimension** — Are the present problems of the person created by or compounded by larger social problems?

### SPIRITUAL DIMENSION →

**SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT:** The spiritual assessment looks at seven dimensions of a person's spiritual life.

**Belief and Meaning** — What beliefs does the person have which give meaning and purpose to their life? What major symbols reflect or express meaning for this person? What is the person's story? Do any current problems have a specific meaning or alter established meaning? Is the person presently or have they in the past been affiliated with a formal system of belief (e.g., church)?

**Vocation and Obligations** — Do the persons' beliefs and sense of meaning in life create a sense of duty, vocation, calling or moral obligation? Will any current problems cause conflict or compromise in their perception of their ability to fulfill these duties? Are any current problems viewed as a sacrifice or atonement or otherwise essential to this person's sense of duty?

**Experience and Emotion** — What direct contacts with the sacred, divine, or demonic has the person had? What emotions or moods are predominantly associated with these contacts and with the person's beliefs, meaning in life and associated sense of vocation?

**Courage and Growth** — Must the meaning of new experiences, including any current problems, be fit into existing beliefs and symbols? Can the person let go of existing beliefs and symbols in order to allow new ones to emerge?

**Ritual and Practice** — What are the rituals and practices associated with the person's beliefs and meaning in life? Will current problems, if any, cause a change in the rituals or practices they feel they require or in their ability to perform or participate in those which are important to them?

**Community** — Is the person part of one or more, formal or informal, communities of shared belief, meaning in life, ritual or practice? What is the style of the person's participation in these communities?

**Authority and Guidance** — Where does the person find the authority for their beliefs, meaning in life, for their vocation, their rituals and practices? When faced with doubt, confusion, tragedy or conflict where do they look for guidance? To what extent does the person look within or without for guidance?

## OTHER APPROACHES FOR EXPLORING SPIRITUAL INTEREST AND EXPRESSION

### Structured Approaches:

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#### *HOPE Approach*

- H** Sources of **H**ope, Meaning, Comfort, Strength, Peace, Love, and Connection      What are your basic spiritual resources? What gives you support? What sustains you in difficult times?
- O** Organized Religion      What role does organized religion play in your life? What aspects are most and least important to you?
- P** Personal Spirituality and Practices      What spiritual practices are important to you? How would you describe your relationship with God?
- E** Effects on Care      How should your spiritual needs, strengths, and resources impact the supports and opportunities we provide?

#### *FICA Approach*

- F** Faith and Belief      What brings you meaning? Do you consider yourself to be spiritual or religious?
- I** Importance and Influence      How important are those beliefs in your life? What influence do they have on the decisions you make?
- C** Community      Do you belong to a congregation or other spiritual community? How important is this community to you?
- A** Address or Application      How (if at all) would you like us to address these issues through our supports and services?

#### *SPIRIT Approach*

- S** Spiritual belief system      How do you describe your formal religious affiliation?
- P** Personal spirituality      Are there particular beliefs and practices that are more or less important to you?
- I** Integration with a spiritual community      Are you a member of a particular congregation or community group? What supports do they provide?
- R** Ritualized practices and restrictions      What activities and behaviors are encouraged or forbidden within your personal belief system?
- I** Implications for care      What should we keep in mind as we provide services and supports to you?
- T** Terminal events planning      What should we know about how you wish to be supported and cared for? (For people nearing the end of their lives)

Source: Carter (2007)

### **Simple Conversations Starters for People with Disabilities**

The best starting place for finding out about a person and what is important to them is by asking the person. Below are a few simple questions Service Coordinators, Advocates, or others might use to start this conversation prior to or as part of a planning meeting. The answers people share can help you complete the profile section of the IPP and to learn whether this is a Valued Outcome. In other words: Is this an important part of their lives? Do they want it to be? Are they currently involved in a faith community? Do they want to be? Are there other ways they express their spirituality? What help do they need to make these things happen? Adapt or add to these questions as needed to make sure the wording is understandable to the person. Remember: people talk about their faith communities (e.g., church, congregation, mosque, synagogue, temple) and their spirituality (e.g., beliefs, faith, religion, etc.) using different language. Find out what words are understandable to the person with whom you are talking.

Do you go to church?

If yes...

- What do you do there?
- Are there other things you would like to do there?
- Who are your friends there? Who do you look forward to seeing?
- Are you happy going there?
- Is there another church you would like to go to?
- Do you want help to keep going or to do more things there?

If no...

- Would you like to start going?
- Do you know what kind of church?
- Do you want help finding a church?

Are there things you do at home (or other places) to feel close to God or show your faith?

If yes...

- What do you do?
- Do you want someone to help you do these things? Or to try new things?

If no...

- Do you want someone to help you try new things?

## Ideas for Extending the Conversation

Some people will be able to communicate their interests, preferences, and current/desired congregational and spiritual activities more easily than others. The questions below can help you to go a little deeper by asking about the ways that faith and spirituality are important in a person's life. Again, these questions can be added to or modified as needed so that you can get to the heart of what they value and want for their lives.

### Questions about Being Part of a Congregation

- Do you ever go to [church, mosque, synagogue, temple]?
- Tell me about it. What is it like? Why do you like to go?
- Who do you go with?
- When do you go?
- What are some of the things you do there?
- How often do you go?
- How do you get there?
- What do you like most/best about it? Why do you like to go there?
- What do you wish was different?
- Do you feel welcomed there? Are you happy there?
- Do you feel like an important part of the church?
- Who are some of your friends there? Who do you most look forward to seeing?
- Do you wish you could do more things there? Like what?
- Are you a member? Do you want to become one?
- What help do you think you need to keep going there?
- What help do you think you will need find a new [church, mosque, synagogue, temple]?
- What do you want us to know?
- Did you used to go to a [church, mosque, synagogue, temple] in the past?
- Why did you stop going?
- Would you like to go?

### Questions about Religious and Spiritual Expression

- What are some things that make you happy?
- Are there things you believe in that are very important to you?
- What are some of things you do to show or share your faith or beliefs?
- What traditions, rituals, or practices are especially important to you?
- Are there holidays (e.g., holy days, festivals, or other special events) that you celebrate?  
Tell me about them.
- What helps you when you are going through a tough time? Who do you turn to for help?
- What would you say are your gifts? What do people say you are really good at?
- Do you feel like God has a plan for you?
- What else do you want us to know about your beliefs?



## **Looking For Indicators of an Interest in Spirituality and Faith In Profound Disabilities in Communication**

Not everyone can easily verbalize or communicate their interests, preferences, and values related to spirituality and faith. But this does not necessarily mean that they have none. Silence should not automatically be interpreted as disinterest. When a person experiences substantial communication challenges or has had limited opportunities to explore this area of their lives, it is important to look for other indicators that offer hints of what he or she values. You might notice that a person seems to enjoy particular activities or his/her expression changes when a particular activity, person, or event is mentioned. Consider the following questions as you spend time interacting with the person or talk with other staff who spend time with the person.

- Have they shown an interest in religious things (*religious art, churches passed while driving by, specific holiday decorations, etc.*)?
- Do they listen to and enjoy religious music?
- Have they asked questions or had conversations about church, prayer, or other spiritual topics?
- Do they pray before meals or at other times?
- Do they own religious books, magazines, music, or other materials?
- Do they watch religious television shows?
- Do they celebrate or seem to enjoy particular religious holidays, such as Christmas, Passover, Easter, Lent, Eid, or Diwali?
- Does the symbolism and rituals of those holidays seem to be particularly appealing?
- When you are near a church, synagogue, or other place of worship, do they indicate an interest in going in?
- Are changes in countenance/affect/expression evident when someone mentions or talks about religious or spiritual issues or they see religious imagery/images?

You may also show the individual pictures of spiritual or religious items to observe changes in countenance or assist the person in understanding what you are asking. A wide variety of images spanning many faith traditions and spiritual scenes are available via the Internet. In the annotated bibliography included in the Resource Guide you will find some useful Internet resource listings. Using magazine cut outs or taking pictures yourself can be useful in determining the interest of someone with verbal limitations. While the use of pictures are intended to facilitate assessments with persons who are non-verbal, it could certainly be beneficial as a supplement to guided conversations as well. Another way to use art as a way to identify indicators of interest or areas of spiritual interest is to present the person with blank paper and a pencil or crayons and ask them to draw what they think about when you use the words “God,” or “religion,” etc. The arts, that is, fine art, music, dance and acting are all forms of expression with a spiritual dimension. In the video clip (V-HC-1) you will see ways that the Spiritual Life Team at Heritage Christian Services engages individuals in the arts for the purpose of spiritual expression. Using music as a method for observing

responsiveness is another way to see if an individual might be interested in religious or spiritual activities. Consider taking the individual to a music store to listen to gospel or hymnal music or to explore spiritual music at various community services.

**The Music Man-Jeffery's Story:** At the initial Individual Program Plan review of one of our consumers with profound intellectual disabilities and no verbal capability, I watched and listened as staff and a family member gave their reports about his care and history of care. He had only been in our care for two weeks at the time of this review of services. We were all seated around the dining room table at his group home. He was seated on the sofa in front of the television. A game show was on but he look down at his lap. As I observed him I noticed that every time music began playing on the television either during the game show or the commercials he would look up at the television momentarily then go back to gazing at his lap. When it came time for me to ask questions about his spiritual needs, I asked his family member if music was a part of his life. He said yes that it was. The routine every day was to get him dressed and ready for the day then he would sit in the family room with the television broadcasting music through his cable TV. Music was part of his entire day. The staff and particularly his advocate were immediately aware of the implications and agreed to include music in his service plan.

Included in the video clips in the Resource Guide (V-EC-2) is an interview with Erik Carter about discerning the spiritual needs of those with communication challenges. We already know that even for able-bodied persons, body language makes up most of our communication skill. Facial expression, hand gestures, muscle contraction and eye movement all have meaning in our conversations. If you ask any caregiver if they know when the individual they are caring for is unhappy you will probably hear, "Absolutely." Isn't happiness just as easy to discern? Sometimes communication through body language can be very subtle. If I greet a person with no verbal capability and they lift one hand up and grunt, how do I know if they just said, "Hello," or, "Leave me alone, stranger." Usually, it's in the tone of voice that we will first perceive emotion. In Ed Vere's wonderful children's book simply titled, "Banana!" Vere illustrates this well. There are two monkeys and one banana. The one word that is on every page is banana. Through the device of facial expressions, exclamation points, and a question mark, you understand clearly that one monkey has the banana, the other monkey wants the banana and only if they share can they both be happy. The point being that words are not the most important or even the most frequently used form of effective communication.

In approaching individuals who are non-verbal with creative curiosity and genuine interest, over time, it is possible to learn the subtlest of communication devices. In person-centered support services it is our mission to serve the expressed needs of those we serve with all of our skill and talent regardless of the manner with which those needs are communicated.

## **Gathering Input from Parents, Family Members, or Other Relatives**

Family members—including parents, grandparents, or siblings—may be able to offer unique insight into the importance of faith and spirituality to a person’s life, as well as the ways that they have been or would like to be involved in a congregation (e.g., church, mosque, parish, synagogue, or temple). Consider inviting these family members to share their perspectives on the types of congregational involvement a person might desire and the supports, services, and connections that would be needed to make it happen. The questions included on the attached questionnaire can be raised during a planning meeting, asked over the telephone, or sent to family members by mail.

### **Sample Cover Letter:**

At Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge we are committed to making sure that those whom we serve are supported in participating in a congregation and/or expressing their spirituality in ways that are important to them. By answering simple questions about an individual’s spiritual awareness, family members can help us better understand the spiritual needs and strengths of the people we serve—as well as whether and how they are interested in being part of a faith community—we are asking for input and insight from others who might know them well.

Once we assess the spiritual needs of those in our VOA Family, we still need to develop creative, sustainable methods for addressing those needs. This will take time and input from all those involved in the welfare of those we seek to help to obtain spiritual fulfillment.

To help us better understand whether this area is a personal valued outcome let us begin to explore together the value of spirituality for this individual by answering the following questions to the best of your ability. Please return the completed form to us by:

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## Questionnaire for Family Members

We are committed to making sure that those whom we serve are supported in participating in a congregation and expressing their spirituality in ways that are important to them. To help us better understand the spiritual needs and strengths of the people we serve—as well as whether and how they are interested in being part of a faith community—we are asking for input and insight from others who might know them well. Answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge.

**Describe some of the faith traditions that have been important to your family (if any).**

**How has your child/sibling with disabilities been involved in these traditions?**

**What successes and/or challenges have you experienced related to having your child/sibling with disabilities participate in these traditions (if any)?**

**Are there things that your child/sibling does that suggest to you an interest in being involved in a congregation or expressing his or her spirituality?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching religious shows on television   | <input type="checkbox"/> Praying                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to religious music             | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditating                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrating religious holidays/festivals | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading the Bible or other sacred scriptures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having quiet time alone                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative activities                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private devotions                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Random acts of kindness                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dietary practices                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Love of nature, animals, plants              |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                 |

**What is your understanding of the importance of faith or spirituality in his or her life?**

- What type of congregation? \_\_\_\_\_
- For how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- What kinds of things does he or she do there? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- How did he or she get there? \_\_\_\_\_
- What type of help or support did he or she need to attend? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Is your child/sibling currently attending a congregation?**     Yes     No     I don't know

- Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- For how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- What kinds of things does he or she do there? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- How does he or she get there? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does he or she seem to enjoy attending? \_\_\_\_\_
- What type of help or support does he or she need to attend? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Is there anything else we should know about supporting this area of your child's/sibling's life?**

## **Gathering Input from Direct Care Staff**

Direct care staff—especially residential staff—have a unique opportunity to get to know the people they serve well as they support them to participate everyday life activities. They can offer valuable insight into the importance of faith and spirituality to a person’s life, as well as the ways that they have been, currently are, or would like to be involved in a faith community (e.g., church, mosque, parish, synagogue, or temple). In addition, they can be very helpful in looking for indicators of whether spirituality might be an important outcome for a person. Invite these staff members to share at planning meetings their perspectives on the types of congregational involvement the individual might want and the supports, services, and connections that would be needed to make it happen. The questions included on the attached questionnaire can be raised during a planning meeting, asked over the telephone, or returned by mail.

### **Sample Cover Letter:**

At Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge we are committed to making sure that those whom we serve are supported in participating in a congregation and/or expressing their spirituality in ways that are important to them. By answering simple questions about an individual’s spiritual awareness, direct care staff can help us better understand the spiritual needs and strengths of the people we serve—as well as whether and how they are interested in being part of a faith community—we are asking for input and insight from those who might know them well.

Once we assess the spiritual needs of those in our VOA Family, we still need to develop creative, sustainable methods for addressing those needs. This will take time and input from all those involved in the welfare of those we seek to help to obtain spiritual fulfillment.

To help us better understand whether this area is a personal valued outcome let us begin to explore together the value of spirituality for this individual by answering the following questions to the best of your ability. Please return the completed form to your supervisor by:

---

## Questionnaire for Direct Care Staff

We are committed to making sure that the individuals whom we serve are supported in participating in a congregation and expressing their spirituality in ways that are important to them. To help us better understand whether this area is a personal valued outcome—as well as whether and how they are interested in being part of a faith community or developing their own unique spiritual expression—we are asking for input and insight from others who might know them well.

Use this tool to speak with at least one if not more direct care staff who work with this individual and answer following questions to the best of your knowledge.

**Is her or she currently attending a congregation?**    Yes    No    I don't know

- Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- For how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- What kinds of things does he or she do there? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How does he or she get there? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does he or she seem to enjoy attending? \_\_\_\_\_
- What type of help or support does he or she need to attend? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Has he or she attended in the past?**    Yes    No    I don't know

- What type of congregation? \_\_\_\_\_
- For how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- What kinds of things does he or she do there? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How did he or she get there? \_\_\_\_\_
- What type of help or support did he or she need to attend? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Why did he or she stop attending? \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you or other staff had conversations with \_\_\_\_\_**    Yes    No    I don't know  
**know this individual about their interests and values in this area?**

**Are there things that he or she does at home or elsewhere that suggest to you an interest in being involved in a congregation or expressing their spirituality?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching religious shows on television     | <input type="checkbox"/> Praying                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to religious music               | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditating                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrating religious holidays/festivals   | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading the Bible or other sacred scriptures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having quiet time alone                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative activities                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private devotions                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Random acts of kindness                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dietary practices                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Love of nature, animals, plants              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking with others about spiritual issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                 |

What is your understanding of the importance of faith or spirituality to his or her life?

Is there a particular faith tradition, religious practices, or forms of spiritual expression that you think are important to him or her?

Is there anything else we should know about planning for and supporting this dimension of the person's life?



## Path to Supporting Spiritual Expression

This graphic describes the basic process of assessing and addressing the spiritual needs of an individual. A variety of tools are available to help staff begin to explore whether spiritual expression is something an individual considers to be important to their lives. If it is determined that spiritual expression is a valued outcome for that individual the focus of services and supports may take several forms

**Spiritual Assessment** =====> **Valued Outcome?** =====> **Focus of Services & Supports**

Assessment Tools	Is Spiritual Expression or Religious Practice a valued outcome?	Is there an identifiable faith tradition or spiritual practice?	Is he or she currently involved in desired ways?	What might be the FOCUS of services & supports? (see page 18 for explanations)
-Direct Conversation -Observation & interaction -Family, Friends & Staff -Documents & Records	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Yes	No	Unclear	Exploring
	Yes	Yes	No	Connecting
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maintaining
	Yes	Yes	No	Changing or Deepening

## *Possible Levels of Interest in Spiritual Expression*

*What might you discover when you invest time exploring whether spirituality or faith are valued outcomes for person? Every person is different. Consider the following possibilities...*

<b><i>No Interest</i></b>	Being part of a faith community or expressing spirituality may not be an important part of a person's life and might not be considered a valued outcome.
<b><i>Exploring</i></b>	Some people may identify spirituality or attending a congregation as important or something they would like to consider, but they may not yet identify with a particular faith tradition or are just beginning to explore this dimension of their lives. Perhaps they have never been to a religious service or have never been given the opportunities or supports to explore their spirituality in other ways. In these situations, a valued outcome may focus on exploring different areas of spirituality and faith.
<b><i>Connecting</i></b>	Some people may share that they would really like to do be part of a faith community, but they currently are not connected with a local church, mosque, synagogue, temple, or other place of worship. Perhaps they attended a congregation in the recent past or when they were younger; or, this may simply be a new interest for them. Making these connections may be the focus of helping someone realize their valued outcome of being part of a congregational community.
<b><i>Maintaining</i></b>	Some people are currently involved in a community or some other form of spiritual expression and are satisfied with the experience. Receiving the supports and services needed to maintain this currently level of involvement may be listed as a valued outcome.
<b><i>Changing or Deepening</i></b>	At different times in their lives, people may decide they want to become more or less involved in their church, find a new congregational home, or even explore a new faith tradition. Finding a new congregation or becoming more meaningfully involved in a one's congregation could be listed as a valued outcome.

## ***IS SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION A VALUED OUTCOME?***

### *Examples of Valued Outcomes in the Area of Faith and Spirituality*

A valued outcome is a reflection of a person's needs, wants, or aspirations. What might a valued outcome in the area of spirituality and congregational involvement look like? Here are some examples:

- Marissa would like to be more connected to the synagogue she attended as a youth.
- Alicia wants to meet/make new friends at church.
- Bob will enhance his natural support system through increased involvement in the church of his choice.
- Erik's spiritual needs will be addressed by pursuing connections to God through nature.
- Roderick would like to become a member of his congregation.
- Malika would like to participate in her community by contributing her musical skills.
- Sean wants to learn how to serve as a greeter at his church.
- John wants to explore spiritual connections that help him increase a sense of belonging.
- Helen would like to be given quiet time at her group home to pray and meditate.
- Audrey wants to be more observant of kosher dietary rules.

### *Including Spirituality in a Person's Profile*

The Profile section of the Individualized Program Plan (IPP) is the starting point for discussion and exploration of how to plan the supports and services needed to help the person reach the valued outcome. . The individual should determine the information that is actually listed on the profile. Here are some examples of how references to spirituality and faith might be included in the profile section of the IPP.

- Tanya loves to sing as part of the church choir
- Cedric is a great listener and enjoys giving people advice about their problems.
- Ethan looks forward to helping sort and count the offering each week at church.
- Celebrating Passover meals with family is an important tradition for Joseph.
- Paula loves to pray and values being able to pray for other people in her life.
- Lana wants to find a way to help others.
- Helen volunteers serving meals at the homeless shelter run by the local parish.
- Geoff goes to monthly potluck dinners and other social events at his church.
- Sarah can travel independently to work, shopping, and church using the local bus system.
- Brandon attends a friendship class on Wednesday evenings with his roommates.

In each of the previous samples, planning services and supports can be qualified and reported using the following sample forms.

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**IDENTIFYING SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR EXPLORING, CONNECTING, MAINTAINING OR DEEPENING/CHANGING SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION**

What kind of help will people need to achieve their valued outcomes in the area of spirituality and congregational involvement? What skills might a person learn? What connections should be made? For every valued outcome identified by a person, a written plan must address the steps that will be taken to help them achieve those personal interests and aspirations. Below are some examples of skills, supports, and connections that might be addressed as part of a meaningful support plan.

<p align="center"><b>Examples of Skills That Might Be Addressed</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Example Supports and Connections That Might be Offered</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to call a friend from church</li> <li>• Arranging one’s own transportation to attend worship services, social events, or other congregational events</li> <li>• Mobility training to get to and from church using public transportation</li> <li>• Learning needed information a church membership class</li> <li>• Learning hygiene and grooming skills that match social expectations for their synagogue</li> <li>• Budgeting and money management skills to give financially to a congregation or other ministry</li> <li>• Social interaction skills to meet others at church or to serve as a greeter or usher</li> <li>• Learning to participate in routines and traditions common to their congregation</li> <li>• Functional communication training to decrease challenging behaviors</li> <li>• Traveling to social events through church</li> <li>• Training in appropriate social behavior</li> <li>• Basic reading skills to better understand the bulletin, congregation newsletter, scriptures, or other written information</li> <li>• Learning social behaviors that are expected at the congregation.</li> <li>• Learning skills that would enable them to volunteer in outreach ministries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing or arranging rides to and from church or other activities</li> <li>• Finding a companion or someone from the congregation the person can sit with</li> <li>• Identifying or coordinating a circle of support within a congregation</li> <li>• Developing a behavioral support plan that can be used to address worship time or other congregational activities</li> <li>• Arranging for counseling with pastoral staff</li> <li>• Help from a Spiritual Inclusion Partner to find and connect to a church</li> <li>• Help finding a new congregation</li> <li>• Assistance with visiting a congregation for the first time</li> <li>• Attending a community class, workshop, or talk about religion</li> <li>• Visiting with a pastor, clergy, priest, or other person to talk about spiritual interests</li> <li>• Visiting congregations in the area to find one that feels welcoming</li> <li>• Talking with someone at church about volunteering or helping during worship service</li> <li>• Developing an emergency plan for ____ (<i>getting to or from services when plans fall through; behavior interventions during services, etc.</i>)</li> </ul>

## Spiritual EXPRESSION Plan

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Desired Type of Involvement/Spiritual Expression

- Exploration       Connecting       Maintaining       Changing or Deepening

**Please briefly describe the valued outcome, goal, and or activities for this Spiritual Inclusion Plan**

**What types of exploration activities should be considered (if any)?** *Exploration activities should be planned when a person would like to learn more about spirituality, religions, and specific practices and/or experience different types of spiritual activities to assist in making an informed decision about what spiritual direction and/or faith tradition they would like to select in the long term.*

**For each of the following congregational and other religious activities, indicate the desired level of involvement, need for support, and provider of support.**

	<i>What involvement would he or she like? If <b>none</b>, indicate this.</i>	<i>What supports are needed to make this happen meaningfully?</i>	<i>How will these supports be provided? Who will take primary responsibility?</i>
<b>Worship services</b>			
<b>Sunday/Sabbath school or other religious education programs</b>			
<b>Small groups or Bible studies</b>			
<b>Fellowship, recreational, and other social activities</b>			

	<i>What involvement would he or she like? If <b>none</b>, indicate this.</i>	<i>What supports are needed to make this happen meaningfully?</i>	<i>How will these supports be provided? Who will take primary responsibility?</i>
<b>Opportunities to serve within the congregation</b>			
<b>Outreach, service, and ministry opportunities outside of the congregation</b>			
<b>Other activities:</b>			

**Will transportation need to be arranged or provided?**

No

Yes: .

**Back Up:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Will direct support from staff need to be provided?**       No       Yes:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Back Up:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Will a behavior support plan need to be developed?**       No       Yes:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Back Up:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Who has been a part of this conversation? (Name/Relationship)**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Who else should we invite to be part of this conversation?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**When will this plan be revisited to determine whether it is working or needs to be strengthened?**

We will update this plan in \_\_\_\_ months. Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**What future needs should be considered or might be anticipated when this plan is updated?**

\_\_\_\_\_

Previous forms adapted and used with permission from the New York Developmental Disabilities Planning Council and The Consortium for Innovative Practice

## Explanation of terms in Spirituality and Faith

### Spirituality:

"**Spirituality** exists wherever we struggle with the issues of how our lives fit into the greater scheme of things. This is true when our questions never give way to specific answers or give rise to specific practices such as prayer or meditation. We encounter spiritual issues every time we wonder where the universe comes from, why we are here, or what happens when we die. We also become spiritual when we become moved by values such as beauty, love, or creativity that seem to reveal a meaning or power beyond our visible world. An idea or practice is "spiritual" when it reveals our personal desire to establish a felt-relationship with the deepest meanings or powers governing life." Wikipedia In a broad perspective, spirituality deals fundamentally with how we approach the unknowns in life and how we relate to the sacred. One can be spiritual without belonging to a particular religious institution. (Huitt & Robbins, 2003)

### Ecology:

**Ecology** is the scientific study of the relations that living organisms have with respect to each other and their natural environment. Ecology is a human science as well. There are many practical applications of ecology in conservation biology, wetland management, natural resource management (agriculture, forestry, fisheries), city planning, community health, economics, basic and applied science and human social interaction (human ecology). Ecosystems sustain every life-supporting function on the planet, including climate regulation, water filtration, soil formation, food, fibers, medicines, erosion control, and many other natural features of scientific, historical or spiritual value. Wikipedia

### Social Justice:

**Social justice** generally refers to the idea of creating a society or institution that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being. Wikipedia

### Sacred Texts:

**Sacred Texts** or religious texts, also known as scripture, scriptures, holy writ, or holy books, are the texts which various religious traditions consider to be sacred, or of central importance to their religious tradition. Many religions and spiritual movements believe that their sacred texts are divinely or supernaturally revealed or inspired. In the study of sacred text we are asking the following questions: What is sacred? How do we extract meaning from sacred texts? Where do religious stories come from? How are these stories relevant to people today?

### Litany:

A **litany**, in Christian worship and some forms of Jewish worship, is a form of prayer used in services and processions, and consisting of a number of petitions

### Meditation:

**Meditation** is generally an inwardly oriented, personal practice, which individuals can do by themselves. Prayer beads or other ritual objects may be used during meditation. Meditation may involve invoking or cultivating a feeling or internal state, such as *compassion*, or *attending to a specific focal point*. The term can refer to the state itself, as well as to practices or techniques employed to cultivate the state.

Affinity:

**Affinity** is a spontaneous or natural liking or sympathy for someone or something.

Compassion:

**Compassion** is a virtue — one in which the emotional capacities of empathy and sympathy (for the suffering of others) are regarded as a part of love itself, and a cornerstone of greater social interconnection and humanism — foundational to the highest principles in philosophy, society, and personhood.

Congregation:

**Congregation** is an assembly of persons brought together for common religious worship.

Spiritual Gifts:

In Christianity, **spiritual gifts** are endowments given by the Holy Spirit. These are the supernatural graces which individual Christians need to fulfill the mission of the church. They are described in the New Testament, primarily in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. 1 Peter 4 also touches on the spiritual gifts. The gifts are related to both seemingly "natural" abilities and seemingly more "miraculous" abilities, but all spiritual gifts are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are distinguished from other graces of the Holy Spirit, such as the fruit of the Spirit and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, in that the *spiritual gifts* are to be used for the benefit of others

Valued Outcome:

In person-centered planning, a **valued outcome** is an outcome that cultivates an individual's gifts and strengths, champions their preferences, enhances their full participation and sense of belonging and increases their quality of life.

Real Choices:

**Real choices** provide people with the opportunities to make meaningful choices about what they want in their lives. Services and supports provided for **Real Choices** should truly reflect the aspirations of the people we serve and not the convenience of the service provider.

**Table 2. Pathways to the Soul**

<b>Pathway</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Found in Other Theories</b>
Yearning for Deep Connection	Describes a quality of relationship that is profoundly caring, is resonant with meaning, and involves feelings of belonging, or of being truly seen and known; may experience deep connection to themselves, to others, to nature, or to a higher power.	Erikson (1950) —Need for Belongingness (especially to something larger than oneself); Gardner (2000) —Interpersonal Intelligence (connection to others)
Longing for Silence and Solitude	As a respite from the tyranny of “busyness” and noise, silence may be a realm of reflection, of calm or fertile chaos, an avenue of stillness and rest for some, prayer or contemplation for others.	Gardner (2000) —Intrapersonal Intelligence
Search for Meaning and Purpose	Exploration of big questions, such as “Why am I here?” “Does my life have a purpose?” “What is life for?” “What is my destiny?” and “Is there a God?”	Gardner (2000) —Existential Intelligence
Hunger for Joy and Delight	Can be satisfied through experiences of great simplicity, such as play, celebration, or gratitude; also describes the exaltation students feel when encountering beauty, power, grace, brilliance, love, or the sheer joy of being alive.	Csikszentmihalyi (1998) — Flow in Consciousness
Creative Drive	Is part of all the gateways; students feel the awe and mystery of creating, whether developing a new idea, a work of art, a scientific discovery, or an entirely new lens on life.	Sternberg (1988) — Creative Intelligence
Urge of Transcendence	The desire to go beyond perceived personal limits; includes not only the mystical realm, but experiences of the extraordinary in the arts, athletics, academics, or human relations.	Maslow (1983) —Transcendence
Need for Initiation	Deals with rites of passage for the young—guiding adolescents to become more conscious about the irrevocable transition from childhood to adulthood.	Campbell (1972); Schlegel & Barry (1980) – Initiation

**From: An Introduction to Spiritual Development**, William G. Huitt Jennifer L. Robbins, 2003, page 8

## Other Tools to Support Spiritual Inclusion

There is a role for supporting spiritual inclusion for almost everybody who is involved in the life of a person with developmental disabilities. The provider agency has a role, not only in arranging the resources necessary to support the person's involvement directly, but also from an organizational standpoint. A congregation can install a lift to make available access to the congregation, but there are a host of other things a church or synagogue could do behind the scenes and in visible ways to promote the successful inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities in the congregation. Much information can be gained about how best to support the spiritual inclusion of the individual from those who know him or best.

To follow are sample tools that can be used to not only gather valuable information but also to encourage organizations to be thoughtful about how they can enhance the spiritual inclusion they offer to people with developmental disabilities.

### **Reflecting on Our Organization's Support of Spiritual/Religious Valued Outcomes**

Organizations must be thoughtful and intentional about identifying and supporting the preferences, strengths, values, and dreams of people in meaningful ways. Because this part of people's lives historically has been overlooked, it is important for organizations to take time to reflect on their current policies, priorities, and practices in this area.

The Agency Reflection Tool can guide you in reflecting on the ways that your organization is addressing spiritual and religious supports throughout your program. Talk with administrators, direct care staff, individuals, family members, and others to self-assess where you are doing well and what next steps you might take.

Other Helpful Tools include:

Four simple questions (Forest & Pearpoint, 1997)

1. What are we doing well right now?
2. What could we be doing better?
3. What could we be doing differently?
4. What can we begin doing right now to get us started moving toward these goals?

Questionnaires adapted from the *What about Faith? Good Practice Guide* (Hatton et al., 2004)  
(*Note that these tools were developed in the United Kingdom where they use the term "Learning Disabilities" like we use the term "developmental disabilities."*)

- Questionnaire for senior managers
- Staff survey

Other questionnaires are available from *What about Faith?* including the following:

- Questionnaire for training departments
- Questionnaire for staff

## Reflection Tool for Agencies

It can be valuable to reflect on the extent to which your agency views spirituality and religion as being important to people with disabilities and takes intentional steps to support this aspect of people's lives. The following indicators can help prompt discussion among staff about this area of your services and supports.

Indicators	How well does this describe our agency?			What steps can we take to improve in this area?
Our mission statement reflects a commitment to support the choices of people with disabilities, including those related to spiritual exploration and religious expression.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
Our written policies explain the importance of supporting people's spiritual and/or religious preferences, as well as point to practical strategies for doing this well.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
Our staff <i>and</i> the people with disabilities whom we serve are aware of and familiar with these policies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We can identify someone (e.g., staff person, board member, advocate) who is responsible for ensuring that spiritual supports are addressed and that our policies are evidenced in practice.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We understand the different ways that we should be addressing the spiritual and religious needs of the people whom we serve.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We discuss with new staff the importance of listening for, seeking out, and supporting people's choices and preferences, including their spiritual and/or religious preferences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We provide staff with the training they need to do this effectively and with confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We ask about the spiritual needs, strengths, and connections of people with disabilities when they first begin receiving our services and supports.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We orient people with disabilities and their families/advocates to the types of supports we make available for individuals interested in being involved in a faith community or other expression of spirituality.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	

Indicators	How well does this describe our agency?			What steps can we take to improve in this area?
We provide the opportunities, space, and support people need to explore and express their spirituality at home, within a congregation, or elsewhere, if they so choose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We periodically assess and seek to remove potential barriers that hinder us from addressing the spiritual and religious needs of people with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
It is clear that the people whom we serve are involved in the faith community of <i>their choice</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
Participation in community activities, including attending congregational activities, is not used to reinforce good behavior or punish inappropriate behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We have established relationships with local congregations and faith-based organizations as partners in this work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We recognize and affirm the sense of calling and vocation held by our staff providing direct support to people with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
We respect the religious values of our staff and strive to define support roles and responsibilities that align with those values.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
Other: We understand that a person's spirituality is a basic aspect of human existence (like physical, emotional, social and intellectual aspects) and our policies, assessment process and support services reflect that.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely	

- Adapted from Carter, E. W. (2007). *Including people with disabilities in faith communities: A guide for service providers, congregations, and families*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

The following forms were adapted from existing forms presently being used by the QMRP for person-centered planning of services and supports for individuals with intellectual disabilities to include spiritual needs assessments, skills assessments and support services.

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA Greater Baton Rouge  
INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM PLAN  
 For

Name	Residence
EFFECTIVE FROM _____ THROUGH _____	
Age _____	Birthdate _____
Gender _____	Race _____
Religion _____	
Marital Status _____	Legal Status _____
Medicaid No. _____	Social Security/Medicare Nos _____
Admission Date _____	Admitted from _____
Day/School Program _____	Date Begun _____
Next-of-Kin/Guardian _____	

DATE OF ID TEAM MEETING \_\_\_\_\_

ID TEAM MEMBERS PRESENT

<u>Signature</u>	<u>Title/Agency/Relationship</u>

Evaluations/Assessments Completed

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Social        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Medical | <input type="checkbox"/> Vision                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dental          | <input type="checkbox"/> Occupation Therapy        | <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing         | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Therapy          | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreational  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychiatric     | <input type="checkbox"/> Nutritional               | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neurological    | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational/Vocational    | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speech/Language | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Living Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____   |



## SUMMARIES OF EVALUATIONS/ASSESSMENTS

1. MEDICAL
2. DENTAL
3. NURSING
4. VISION
5. NUTRITIONAL
6. PSYCHOLOGICAL
7. SOCIAL
8. INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS ASSESSMENT
9. RECREATIONAL
10. FINANCIAL
11. SPIRITUAL

STATUS OF CURRENT IPP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES  
(Based on Monthly QMRP Reviews, Latest )

SUMMARY OF ID TEAM DISCUSSION/AGREEMENTS

PRIORITIZED TRAINING NEEDS

RELATED STRENGTHS/SKILLS

ANNUAL GOAL

## Spiritual Needs Assessment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Assessing: \_\_\_\_\_ Materials: \_\_\_\_\_

- Code: 1. Independent                      4. Considerable Prompting      7. No Interest  
       2. Occasional Reminders          5. Maximum Assistance  
       3. Verbal Prompting                6. Beyond Ability

<b>A. Spiritual Interests</b>	Code	Comments
Shows compassion to others		
Enjoys helping others		
Enjoys nature		
Enjoys quiet time alone		
Enjoys creative activities		
Expresses unique spiritual gifts		
Shows affinity for a particular faith tradition		
<b>B. Religious Interests</b>		
Listens to religious/spiritual music		
Shows interest in religious/spiritual television or radio programs		
Prays for self and others		
Leads prayers or blessings		

Interested in religious holidays		
Reads sacred text, i.e. Bible, Qur'an, etc		
Has an Attachment to the Sacred Text		
Knows lyrics to hymns, chants, litany		
<b>C. Congregational Participation</b>		
Attends Worship Service		
Participates in community studies of Sacred Text, i.e., Bible, Torah, Qur'an		
<b>Congregational Participation Continued</b>		
Attends church functions		
Offers financial support to chosen congregation		
Sings in choir		
Volunteers for church activity		
Serves on church committee		
Prepares post service refreshments		
Helps with elderly, children or disabled		
Has a role in the worship service, i.e., as usher, greeter, lights candles or performs other support role		

## Spiritual Life Skills Assessment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Staff Assessing: \_\_\_\_\_ Materials: \_\_\_\_\_

Code: 1. Independent    2. Occasional Reminders    3. Verbal Prompting  
 4. Considerable Prompting    5. Maximum Assistance    6. Beyond Ability

Skills for Spiritual Life	Code	Comments
Orients to day and time of related event		
Dresses appropriately for related functions		
Arranges transportation		
Budgets money for faith community needs		
Has social interaction skills to greet others		
Basic reading skills		
Has mobility skill to negotiate ramp/steps		
Knows appropriate behavior for setting		
Can learn prayers, hymns and responses		
Is able to explore new spiritual experiences		
Can travel independently to related events		
Can request help when needed		
Makes new friends easily		
Has skill to volunteer in related activities		
Can communicate desire for solitude		
Responds positively to sensory experience in nature		
Respects the spiritual expression of others		
Responds positively to music and/or exposure to the arts		
Knows purpose in life, spiritual gifts		

### Social/Spiritual Interest Survey/Participation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Client: \_\_\_\_\_ IPP Period \_\_\_\_\_

Key: ++=Strong Interest += Interest --=Dislike ? = unknown - = No Interest x= Not Applicable

Activity	Interest	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Church, Temple...													
Sunday School													
Study Sacred Text, Bible, Torah, Qur'an													
Choir													
Potluck/Social													
Prayers, litanies													
Hymns, chants													
Outreach													
Nature													
Solitude													
Meditation													
Related Art, Crafts													
Helping													
Listening													
Caregiving													
Animal Care													
Gardening													
Ecology													
Childcare													
Senior Care													
Social Justice													
Friendships													
Explores new spiritual/religious experiences													
Community \$ support													

DRAFT  
(12/30/12)

Policy Regarding the Support of Spiritual Expression  
Residential Services Program  
Of the  
Community Living and Vocational Services Division  
Of  
Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge

**Introduction:**

Volunteers of America is a Christian church. Its members and ministers publicly and proudly affirm the traditional doctrines that have been the witness of the Christian church for millennia. Our written formulation of those doctrines is called “The Cardinal Doctrines.” (see attached) We understand and profess that the primary expression of our ministry comes in the form of service: practical, hands-on service that reflects the love of God for his creation; honors the redemptive sacrifice of the Cross; and bears witness to the hope of the Easter miracle.

Volunteers of America is also a not-for-profit human services organization that provides a wide variety of services in an environment characterized by a high degree of government regulation and the intense competition of modern corporate health-care.

Because of our unique identity as both church and service provider, Volunteers of America has a special responsibility to ensure that the spiritual needs and goals of those we serve are fully addressed. Our mission statement, calling us to “reach and uplift **ALL** people,” makes no distinctions about level of intellectual or emotional functioning or conscious expression in helping our fellow human beings to reach their full potential physically, mentally and especially spiritually.

We serve people---not populations. The people we serve are each unique and whole (body, mind and spirit) individuals---not “cases,” or bundles of needs to be met and problems to be solved. Our mission statement requires that we reach out to each of those individuals in a way that affirms their humanity, recognizes their innate spirituality and supports their desires and choices for the development and expression of that spirituality. This approach to serving reflects what is called in the social services arena a “person-centered philosophy,” but which also reflects the method of Christ’s ministry.

Even if we did not receive government funding for many of our programs and services we would still respect and support each individuals’ right to experience and express their spirituality as they choose. There are several reasons for this. First, as a practice of Christian hospitality, we honor and practice the Golden Rule (“Do unto others as you would have them to do unto you.”) That is how we would want to be treated in similar circumstances. Second, it is consistent with our nature as a church. We are not a proselytizing church. Our gift and our special calling is to serve in love. Lastly, Volunteers of America was founded to be a uniquely American institution that protects religious freedom and celebrates religious diversity.

## **Background: Core Values and Position Statement**

Our policy regarding how we will support the spiritual expression of the people we serve is grounded in our belief in and practice of the philosophy of person-centered planning. Some of the core values\* of that philosophy that guide our approach to supporting the spiritual expression of people with intellectual disabilities are:

*Universal Aspirations:* People with disabilities have the same dreams, hopes and aspirations as their non-disabled neighbors. Every person should have the freedom and supports to pursue the life they envision for themselves. Therefore, we should support people with disabilities in pursuing life experiences similar to those pursued by other members of the community. (This idea is called the “normalization principle.”) Spiritual expression is an important facet of the lives of most Americans, both non-disabled and disabled. Thus, people who are disabled should be supported in pursuing their aspirations for spiritual expression and fulfillment.

*Community Inclusion:* Agencies and organizations should strive to support individuals with disabilities to participate fully in their communities.

*Natural Supports:* The ways in which people are assisted in pursuing their dreams and becoming fully engaged in their communities makes a difference. Cultivating and connecting people with disabilities with the same sorts of supports that non-disabled people rely on; family, friends, church members and other informal associations helps them to participate more fully in their communities than does an over-reliance on service providers and other professionals.

*Self-Determination:* People with disabilities, like people who are not disabled, should make their own decisions about their lives; where to live, learn, work and even worship. To support self-determination, people with disabilities need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to make important decisions and must be provided opportunities to act on their decisions in meaningful ways. Supporting self-determination must include consideration of people’s spiritual experiences as well as their choices about how or if they wish to express their spirituality.

*Quality of Life:* The services provided by agencies and organizations should truly improve the life satisfaction of the people we serve by improving their emotional, physical and material well-being; enhancing their social relationships and inclusion; support their personal development and self-determination; and by advancing their rights. Because spirituality is an important dimension of quality of life for many people, service providers must ensure that this dimension is being addressed and supported by someone.

Based on these values, our **Position Statement on Supporting the Spiritual Expression of the People We Serve** is as follows:

All people, disabled and non-disabled, have the right to choose their own expression of spirituality, to practice those beliefs and expressions, and to participate in the religious community of their choice or other spiritual activities. People also have a right to choose not to participate in religious or spiritual activities.

Spirituality, spiritual growth, and religious expression that respect a person's history, tradition, and current preference or choice are rights that will be honored and supported by Volunteers of America, as will the choice of non-expression or participation.

Because of the mission of Volunteers of America and because of our unique status as both church and service provider we have a special duty to address the spiritual preferences and expressions of each consumer in the routine process of conducting all assessments of individual and family needs, interests and strengths and in developing service plans in order to support them in their preferred path of spiritual growth.

Spirituality is an important part of human experience that, while often expressed through religious practice, may also be expressed in other ways that have personal meaning and value such as may be experienced in relationships, art, nature and a focus on one's inner-life. Thus, Volunteers of America will offer training and education to staff, volunteers and the community-at-large regarding the spirituality of those we serve and our role(s) in supporting the free expression of that spirituality.

**Policy:** It is the policy of the Residential Services Program that the spiritual needs, desires and preferences of every program participant will be assessed upon intake into the program, and at least annually thereafter, and that the resulting Individualized Program Plan (IPP) will identify the services and supports necessary to assist the program participant in the full expression of their spirituality.

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\*Adapted from Erik Carter, Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities, 2007



**Bibliography: The resources included in this annotated bibliography that were most valuable to our research and development of this project are noted with an asterisk.\***

**Books or Pamphlets**

**Education/Sunday School**

A Place for Everyone, Athalene McNay – a guide for religious education with children with disabilities, AAMR Religion & Spirituality Division, c/o The Boggs Center, P.O. box 2688, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Abiding in Faith, Christian Board of Publication, PO Box 179, St. Louis, MO 63166-0179. Religious education curriculum for adults with moderate to severe mental retardation.

Caring Relationships, Ronald C. Vredevelde – Helping people with mental retardation understand God’s gift of sexuality

Each One Uniquely Gifted by God, Bethesda Lutheran Homes – helps children develop inclusive, accepting attitudes & explains what God says about responding to people who have different abilities – National Christian Resource Center @ 1-800-369-4636, x. 418

Exceptional Teaching – A comprehensive guide for including students with disabilities: 77 sections on different forms of disabilities & special needs, ways to address them & teaching methods that work – Jim Pierson, Standard Publishing @ 1-800-543-1353 or [www.standardpub.com](http://www.standardpub.com)

Feed All My Sheep, Doris Clark—a guide & curriculum for adults with developmental disabilities, Geneva Press, (800) 227-2872

Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities, Barbara Newman – a guide to help children & their parents includes a peer with special needs – Faith Alive Christian Resources @ 1-800-333-8300

Reaching Out to Special People: A Resource for Ministry with Person who have Disabilities, Jim Pierson & Robert Korth – Learning characteristics of students with mental retardation, curriculum, classroom management, one-to-one relationships with persons with mental retardation (1989)

Welcoming Children With Special Needs - A Guidebook for Faith Communities, Sally Patton - A thorough and empowering resource for accepting special needs children into congregations. Includes information on common physical, mental and emotional disabilities and disorders, plus teacher training guidelines and strategies and techniques for inclusion. Designed for religious educators, ministers, lay leaders and parents. Provides list of books, videos and web sites (2004)

What Christians Believe: Confirmation Studies for Persons with Mental Retardation, Bridge Resources

## Inclusion & Welcome

A Committed Mercy: You and Your Church Can Serve the Disabled, Stan Carder – a practical guide for ministry to people with disabilities – Baker Books, 1995 – added 11/05

A Guide to Feeling Comfortable with Persons who have Disabilities, Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, 700 Hoffman Drive, Watertown, WI 53094

A Place Called Acceptance – Ministry with families of children with disabilities: challenges congregations to reach out to families of children living with physical, mental or behavioral disabilities – Kathleen Deyer Bolduc – Bridge Resources, Louisville, KY – Order @ 1-800-524-2612 or [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)

\*A Mutual Ministry: Theological Reflections & Resources with People with Mental Retardation & Other Disabilities, Dennis Schurter – a guide for pastors, teachers & congregations who would like their ministry to be more inclusive, Denton State School, PO Box 368, Denton, TX 76202-0368 or [dennis.schurter@mhmr.state.tx.us](mailto:dennis.schurter@mhmr.state.tx.us)

About Being Sensitive to People with Disabilities - A booklet put out by Channing L. Bete Co., Inc

Building a Developmental Disability Ministry – A collection of thoughts & plans from existing inclusive ministries, 2006 - \$25.00 – Bethesda National Christian Resource Center

\*Dancing With Disabilities, Brett Webb-Mitchell—opening the church to all of God's children, United Church Press, Cleveland, 1996.

Different Members, One Body, edited by Sharon Kutz-Mellem—welcoming the diversity of abilities in God's family, Witherspoon Press, Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky

Emmaus Eyes, David & Lo-Ann Trembley – Worship with the Mentally Challenged, AAMR Religion & Spirituality Division, c/o The Boggs Center, P.O. Box 2688, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Equal Access Guide for Meetings, Conferences, Large Assemblies & Worship, Committee on Disabilities-National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA – comprehensive resource enabling persons with disabilities to participate in the life of the church, 2004 – See [www.nccusa.org/elmc/disabilitiesmanual.html](http://www.nccusa.org/elmc/disabilitiesmanual.html) or call 212-870-2267

Expressing Faith in Jesus – Church Membership for People with Mental Impairments, Ronald C. Vredeveld – Faith Alive Resources

How People with Developmental Disabilities Can Access the Faith Community of Their Choice – resource book & guide to help agencies & congregations bridge the gap – Terry Fitzgerald Sieck & Rev. Rebecca Hartvigsen – order through Carol Fitzgibbons, Home of the Guiding Hands, 10025 Los Ranchitos Road, Lakeside, CA 92040

In Search of the Unchurched, Alan C. Klaas—Actions to take that will meet people on their own ground, proclaiming the faith by caring ministry rather than by theology.(1996)

\*Including People With Disabilities In Faith Communities: A Guide For Service Providers, Families & Congregations Carter, Erik W., (Excerpt), Brookes Publishing, 2007.

Interpreting Disability: A Church of and for All, Arne Fritzon & Sam Kabue – Trends in disability politics - World Council of Churches

Sacred Seasons: A Journey Through the Church Year, Brett Webb-Mitchell – stories that narrate the practices of the special days in the church calendar, Pilgrim Press, 700 Prospect Ave. E., Cleveland, OH 44115-1100 – 1-800-537-3394

**“The Stranger In Our Midst”** a congregational inclusion curriculum developed by the UJA-Federation of New York for a **Shabbat** (Sabbath) **of Inclusion** across New York City synagogues. [http://www.thecip.net/thecip\\_ny/newsletter/shabbat\\_of\\_inclusion.pdf](http://www.thecip.net/thecip_ny/newsletter/shabbat_of_inclusion.pdf)

That All May Worship, National Organization on Disability, 910 16th Street N.W. Suite 600 Washington D.C. 20006.

Unexpected Guests at God's Banquet: Welcoming People with Disabilities into the Church, Brett Webb-Mitchell

We Don't Have Any Here – Planning for ministries with people with disabilities in our communities – Anderson, Gould & Paul

Welcome! Tools and Techniques for New Member Ministry, Andrew D. Weeks—How-to book about welcoming ministries and how to integrate new members into the congregation (1992)

### **General**

Access Press Newsletter, Access Press, 1821 University Ave. West, Suite 185, North St. Paul, MN 55104 - Phone number (612) 644-2133 - Website: [www.accesspress.org](http://www.accesspress.org). The newsletter includes a regular column on religion and disability awareness.

Ad Hoc Committee on Religion and the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals - Harold H. Wilke, Convener 139 Walworth Ave., New York, New York 10606

Autism and Your Church, Barbara J. Newman - nurturing the growth of people with autism spectrum disorders (2006)

Bible Alliance P0 BOX 621 Bradenton, Florida 34206 Phone number (813) 748-3031.

Blindsided by Grace: Entering the World of Disability, Robert Molsberry – Augsburg Press – reflections by a pastor who is disabled by a hit & run accident

Brain Injury: When the Call Comes – A Congregational Resource – 2001 – 25 page booklet with articles re: brain injury, personal experiences, pastoral & theological issues & support strategies for congregations, \$5.00 – The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, 335 George St., P.O. Box 2688, New Brunswick, NJ 08903 – <http://rwjms.umdj.edu/boggscenter>

Dimensions of Faith and Congregational Ministries with Persons with Developmental Disabilities and Their Families - Bibliography and Address Listing of Resources for Clergy, Laypersons, Families, and Service Providers. A resource guide divided into areas of congregational ministry and outreach e.g. worship, outreach, pastoral care, religious education, awareness videos, with sections on respite care, community building, person-centered planning, coping with grief, and more – 2005 - 176 pages. View or download @ <http://rwjms.umdj.edu/boggscenter/products/pdf/Dimensions%20final%20August%202005.pdf>

Friends: A Manual for Connecting Persons with Disabilities and Community Members, Amado, Conklin, and Walls. From Minnesota Governors Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, 300 Centennial Office Building', 658 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55155. Phone number (612) 296-4018.

Friendships and Community Connections between People with and without Developmental Disabilities, Amado, Paul Brookes Publishing Co Especially Chapter 3 - Gift and Call. Recovering the Spiritual Foundations of Friendships.

Gentle Closings: How to say Goodbye to Someone you Love, Ted Menten

God Plays Piano Too: The Spiritual Lives of Disabled Children, Brett Webb –Mitchell

Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice – Nancy L. Eiseland, Don E. Saliers, Editors, Abingdon Press

Loving Justice – the ADA and the Religious Community – Ginny Thornburgh, Editor – Explains the relationship between the Americans with Disabilities Act, other disability legislation and the religious community – National Organization on Disability

Open Hearts: A Youth Ministry Resource on Inclusivity, Division for Congregational Ministries, ELCA—Deals with inclusion in terms of disability, gender, age & culture (1992)

Reflections from a Different Journey: What Adults with Disabilities Wish All Parents Knew, Stanley D. Klein & John D. Kemp – See [www.disabilitiesbooks.com](http://www.disabilitiesbooks.com)

Riding the Bus with My Sister – Rachel Simon – Tells the story of two sisters, one with a developmental disability & the other a college professor, and their experiences riding the city bus together for one year

Strong at the Broken Places: Persons with Disabilities and the Church, Stewart Goving

The Courage to Care: Seven Families Touched by Disabilities and Congregational Caring, Judy Ransom

\*The Disabled God: Toward a Liberation Theology of Disability, Nancy Eiesland

The Ride Together: A Brother and Sister's Memoirs of Autism in the Family – Paul & Judy Karasik

Unhandicapping Our Language, Paul Longmore and Dianna Piastro

We Are Not Alone: Learning' to Live with Chronic Illness, Sefra K. Pitzele

You Will Dream New Dreams, Stanley Klein & Kim Schive – Over sixty short essays by parents of children with varying disabilities

### Video

Believing, Belonging, Becoming – stories of faith inclusion - \$10.00 – order from Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, 201 W. Washington Ave., Suite 110, Madison, WI 53703, 608.266.7826 – [www.wcdd.org](http://www.wcdd.org)

Surprising Grace – People, Disabilities, Churches – Presbyterian Church

Ten Commandments for Communicating with People with Disabilities 25 minute video by Program Development Associates, 5620 Business Ave., Suite B, Cicero, NY 13039

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### INTERNET RESOURCES

- ❖ **American Assn. on Mental Retardation [AAMR] Religion & Spirituality Div. Cooperative Resource Exhibit** - offers a broad range of resources re: ministries, services & community supports –<http://aamr.org/Groups/div/RG/conference/2004exhibitlisting.pdf>
- ❖ Bethesda Lutheran Homes & Services – awareness & inclusion resources + “Reflections” devotions - <http://www.blhs.org/>
- ❖ **Christian Council on Persons with Disabilities** – Consortium of Christian organizations working on disability ministry to promote the spiritual well-being of people with physical, mental or emotional disabilities- [www.ccpd.org](http://www.ccpd.org)
- ❖ **Community Connections Spiritual Community** – Inclusion resources and *Welcoming Spiritual Communities* newsletter - <http://www.communityconnections.umd.edu/spiritual/index.html>
- ❖ **Congregational Resource Guide** – helps congregational leaders connect with resources to gain insight & encourage transformation in their faith community – [www.congregationalresources.org](http://www.congregationalresources.org) - click on “Specialized Ministries”, then click on “Disabilities”
- ❖ **Disabilities Concerns, General Board of Global Ministries-United Methodist Church** – information and an e-mail list for people living with physical or mental disabilities, their friends, families, caretakers, lay associates, & clergy; resources related to disability concerns with the added dimension of spiritual care-search DISC – Disabilities Concerns
- ❖ **Disability Awareness Ministries, Inc.** – promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities into faith communities & society/provides consulting services for churches to develop ministries that integrate persons with disabilities into the full life of the church - [www.mumac.org/dami](http://www.mumac.org/dami)
- ❖ **Disability is Natural** - [www.disabilityisnatural.com](http://www.disabilityisnatural.com)
- ❖ **Disability Resources-Religion & Disability** – provides information designed to encourage & support the accessibility of religious organizations & facilities- [www.disabilityresources.org/RELIGION.html](http://www.disabilityresources.org/RELIGION.html)

- ❖ **ELCA Disability Ministries** – assists congregations, synods & the church-wide organization in inclusive ministry with those of us who are persons with disabilities- [www.elca.org/dcs/disability.html](http://www.elca.org/dcs/disability.html)
- ❖ **Episcopal Disability Network** – resources on disability & accessibility: print & media materials free on loan - [www.edn4ministry.org](http://www.edn4ministry.org)
- ❖ **Family Village** – global community that integrates information, resources & community opportunities on the internet for persons with cognitive & other disabilities, for their families & those that provide services & support-[www.familyvillage.wisc.edu](http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu) click on House of Worship
- ❖ **JRG Ministries** – addresses the spiritual needs of people with developmental disabilities through friendship, inclusion, advocacy & ministry development; offers tools & resources to develop & build up disability ministry in congregations - [www.jrgministries.org](http://www.jrgministries.org)
- ❖ **Lutheran Disability Ministries** – assists congregations in ministering with persons with developmental disabilities - [www.ldminc.org](http://www.ldminc.org)
- ❖ **Mosaic** – an affiliate of ELCA which serves and advocates for people with disabilities, so they may achieve their full potential; develops innovative, community-based services for people with disabilities - [www.mosaicinfo.org](http://www.mosaicinfo.org)
- ❖ **National Organization on Disability – Religion & Disability Program** – encourages congregations of all faiths to become more accessible & welcoming to people with disabilities- [www.nod.org](http://www.nod.org) or e-mail: [religion@nod.org](mailto:religion@nod.org)
- ❖ Pathways Awareness Foundation – Creating access and inclusion in worship <http://www.inclusioninworship.org/index.php> or [www.pathwaysawareness.org](http://www.pathwaysawareness.org) and click on Open Hearts
- ❖ **Pathways to Promise** – interfaith technical assistance & resource center which offers liturgical & educational materials, program models & networking information to promote a caring ministry with people with mental illness & their families; site is intended for clergy & interested people-[www.pathways2promise.org](http://www.pathways2promise.org)
- ❖ **Religion & Spirituality Division of American Association on Mental Retardation** – interdisciplinary, interfaith association of people who journey with persons with developmental disabilities and their families; resources which foster opportunities for spiritual growth for persons with developmental disabilities while respecting their religious identity - [www.aamr.org](http://www.aamr.org)
- ❖ **Resource Packet on Disability, Spirituality & Healing** – on-line packet which includes published articles, handouts & other materials that can be used by people with disabilities & those wanting to minister with them-[soeweb.syr.edu/thechp/spirituality.html](http://soeweb.syr.edu/thechp/spirituality.html)
- ❖ **The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts – Special Needs Ministries** – provides approaches for creating faith partnerships for persons with & without disabilities and adapted age-appropriate Sunday School curricula [www.tabcom.org/SpecialNeed.html](http://www.tabcom.org/SpecialNeed.html)
- ❖ **Vision New England** – Beyond Limits curriculum – [www.VisionNewEngland.com](http://www.VisionNewEngland.com)

***FROM “INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN FAITH COMMUNITIES: A GUIDE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS, FAMILIES & CONGREGATIONS” by Erik W.Carter***

Bolduc, K. D. (1999). *His name is Joel: Searching for God in a son’s disability*. Louisville, KY: Bridge Resources.

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- Layman, R. (1998). *My child is different: A guide for Jewish parents of special children*. New York: United Synagogue of American, Commission on Jewish Education.
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- \*Fitchett, G. (1993b) *Spiritual Assessment in Pastoral Care: A guide to selected resources*. Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, Inc. Decatur
- \*Fitchett, G. (1996) *The 7X7 model for Spiritual Assessment*. Vision, March:10-11
- \*Huitt, W., & Robbins, J. (2003). *An Introduction to Spiritual Development*. Paper presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference: Applied Psychology in Education, Mental Health, and Business, Valdosta, GA, <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/papers/spirituality.pdf>
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