

Section 12: Recreation and Programming

Subject: Religion

Minimum Standard: 5120:1-8-11(E)

Revised: 07/2001, 04/2011, 10/2015

Authorized: _____ **Effective date:** _____
Sheriff Paul A. Sigsworth

POLICY

Inmates in the Erie County Jail shall be permitted to practice a recognized religion subject to limitations necessary to maintain security and order of the jail. Practicing religion includes, but is not limited to, access to religious publications, possession of religious symbols, being permitted to congregate to worship in an appropriate space, individual or group counseling, religious study classes, and adherence to dietary requirements. The Erie County Jail shall ensure that all recognized religions receive equal status and protection and that limitation placed upon religious practice further a compelling safety or security interest using the least restrictive means necessary.

PROCEDURE

A. Religious Publications and Symbols

1. Religious Materials and/or Publications are permitted in cells as long as it is not excessive.
2. Religious Symbols will also be permitted as long as they are not a threat or offensive to the jail, staff, or other inmates.

B. Individual Services

1. All persons who are recognized ministers of an organized congregation are welcome to conduct pastoral activities at the Erie County Jail.
2. Any inmate who wishes to meet with their minister may do so.
 - a. The inmate shall submit a request (using an inmate request form) that the Jail Administrator or designee contact that minister and notify them of the request.
3. Visits between ministers and inmates will take place in the Jail Visitation Rooms.
4. Minister Visits will be conducted in accordance with the Visitation – Professional / Clergy Visit Policy of this Policy Manual.
5. If an inmate expresses a desire to see a member of the clergy, but does not know who to contact, the Corrections Officer who receives the request will advise the Erie County Sheriff's Office Chaplain of the request.

C. Group Services

1. Inmates are allowed to congregate, worship, and be involved in group counseling involving religious worship.
2. Group studies are not prohibited unless a disruption of the jail activities or violation of jail policy is created.

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D. Religious Study Class

1. Eligible Inmates

- a. Inmates may request to participate in the weekly Religious Study Class by submitting a request form indicating so.
- b. The officer receiving the request will place an IPCH appointment for that month in the inmates Appointment Screen in the Jail's Record Management System (JMS).
- c. The Program's Officer will use the IPCH appointment list to create a list of eligible inmates, and place them on the approved list group (ACHURCH, ECHURCH, BCHURCH)
- d. Inmate's will be eligible for IPCH based on the following:
 1. A maximum of 15 inmates.
 2. Inmates will be placed on the listed based on how long they have been incarcerated in the jail.
 3. Inmates who have been placed on the approved list, but refuse to go will be removed from the list and will not be allowed to attend for 4 weeks, or until a spot opens again.
 4. Inmates with Keep Separates that conflict with IPCH will not be eligible.
 5. The final decision on eligible inmates is that of the ministers.

2. Schedule

- a. E Control
 1. Thursday's, 1700 – 1800 hours
- b. A Control
 1. Thursday's 1800 – 1900 hours
- c. B Control
 1. Thursday's 1700 – 1900 hours

3. Recording

- a. The Corrections Officer conducting IPCH will log it as an IPCH (Inmate Program Church) Event in the Jail Log of the JMS. This record should include:
 1. Date and time.
 2. Name of inmates going.
 3. Officer conducting the religious study class.

4. Monitoring

- a. IPCH will be conducted in the Jail Classroom for male inmates and the Jail Court Room for female inmates.
- b. The officer conducting IPCH will run a report list for the group to attend (EChurch, AChurch, BChurch) from the Report List of the JMS.
- c. Using that list the officer will escort the eligible inmates to the classroom or courtroom.

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- d. The officer assigned to the E Control Board will monitor the IPCH group in the classroom using the CCTV system.
- e. The officer assigned to A Control Board will monitor the IPCH group in the courtroom using the CCTV system.
- f. After IPCH is over, the officer conducting it will search each inmate for contraband and return the inmates to their housing unit.

E. Dietary Requirements.

1. All reasonable efforts shall be made to accommodate the dietary needs of an inmate for religious reasons.
2. Requests for such modifications shall be forwarded, in writing, to the Jail Administrator, who shall consult with an appropriate authority regarding necessary compliance.

F. Religious Freedoms

1. The Erie County Jail staff will not interfere with or comment upon an inmate's religious belief.
2. Any limitations placed on religion shall be only on religious practice and not on religious beliefs.
3. Religious practice shall only be limited when there is a compelling and reasonable safety and security issue for the facility.
4. All limitations shall be made by the Sheriff and/or Jail Administrator and shall be documented as to the nature of the limitations and the compelling safety or security issue.