

God and the Group Home:
*Moving Beyond the Nervous Relationship
of Providers and Religion*
NAQ Conference, August 3, 2022
New Orleans, Louisiana



Religious Practice is a Cultural Norm

- Religion and culture are intertwined. Religion influences culture, and culture influences religion.
- About 42% of the US population is regularly engaged with a place of worship. (2020 US Census)

Religious Practice is Protected by Law

- The First Amendment and the church/state relationship
- What is RLUIPA?
- What is the FACE Act (and what about that religious access part)?

The Home and Community-Based Services Regulations

- Passed in 2014, but implementation by states was delayed... and delayed again
- The new regulations pull no punches when it comes to answering the most fundamental questions:
 - Whose Plan Is It? *It is directed by and belongs to the individual being supported.*
 - Where does stuff happen? *In typical and ordinary community settings.*
- Five Accomplishments of Support Planning (O'Brien/Lyle O'Brien)

Relationships Contributing Ordinary places and activities

Some Common Faith Community Perceptions

- Faith communities—because they are a subset of the general population—may be deriving much of their knowledge about intellectual and developmental disabilities from social media rather than first-person experiences. Some popular misconceptions include:
 - People with I/DD are always happy and kind
 - People with I/DD are courageous in their “struggle” with the disability
 - People with I/DD are eternally children
- There is evidence that faith communities view themselves as more welcoming and inclusive than they actually are.
- Faith communities may see their role differently than people with disabilities or those who support them.
 - People with disabilities are not your mission projects
 - Proliferation of the “mercy” perspective

Where Does One Start?

- Start by asking questions... and the answer may be ‘no’.
- The pattern of questions is a familiar one
 - How important are your spiritual beliefs to you?
 - Are your spiritual beliefs something you wish to express?
 - How do you express your spiritual beliefs (e.g., alone, with others, traditional and non-traditional rituals, in your home, etc.)?
 - What is your faith preference?
 - What assistance do you need (if any) to express your faith/spiritual beliefs?
 - Is there any other information about faith or spirituality that you would like to explore?
 - Do you get enough opportunities to express your spiritual beliefs and/or faith?

- Do you wish to learn more and/or develop a deeper understanding about the spiritual beliefs/faith you have chosen?
- Is your current faith expression meeting your needs?
- Are you sharing faith life experiences with the people you wish to?

A Case for Exploring Collaboration with Faith Communities

1. They are called to do good work.
2. They are called to be inclusive—and profess to be so.
3. They are networks of community connection.
4. They already face the things that threaten people with disabilities.
5. They are a place where friendships are developed and nurtured.
6. They are accustomed to exploring the gifts that people bring.
7. They are places where justice is consistently preached.
8. They espouse human value that is inherent rather than earned.
9. They are lifespan oriented.
10. They are family oriented.

David Morstad, M.Ed., FAAIDD
David.Morstad@gmail.com

Slides, handouts, and other resources available at [LargerTable.com/Resources](https://www.largertable.com/resources).



References

The 2020 Census of American Religion. Public Religion Research Institute (2021)

<https://www.prrri.org/research/2020-census-of-american-religion/>

First Amendment and Religion. Administrative Office for United States Courts.

<https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/first-amendment-and-religion>

Place to Worship Initiative: What is RLUIPA? US Department of Justice.

<https://www.justice.gov/crt/place-worship-initiative-what-rluipa#:~:text=Protection%20against%20unreasonable%20limitation%20of,within%20a%20jurisdiction.%22%2042%20U.S.C.>

Update on the Justice Department's Enforcement of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. (2016) US Department of Justice <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/877931/download>

Home & Community Based Services Final Regulation.

<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/home-community-based-services/guidance/home-community-based-services-final-regulation/index.html>

HCBS Settings Rule Implementation: Moving Forward Toward March 2023 & Beyond.

<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/home-community-based-services/downloads/hcbs-settings-rule-imp.pdf>

Churches believe they are welcoming to those with disabilities. Lifeway Research. (2020)

<https://news.lifeway.com/2020/03/10/churches-believe-they-are-welcoming-to-those-with-disabilities/>

Ault, M., Collins, B., Carter, E., et al (2013) Congregational Participation and Supports for Children and Adults with Disabilities: Parent Perceptions. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*: February 2013, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 48-61.

Carter, E. (ed.) *Putting Faith to Work: A Guide for Congregations and Communities on Connecting Job Seekers with Disabilities to Meaningful Employment*. Vanderbilt University; 2016

Carter, E., Gaveta, B. (October 2021) *Putting Faith to Work: How Faith Communities Can Support Employment for People with Disabilities* <https://acl.gov/news-and-events/acl-blog/putting-faith-work-how-faith-communities-can-support-employment-people>

Morstad, D. *Whole Community: Introducing Faith Communities to People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. Westbow Publishing; 2018