A Practical Reference to Religious and Spiritual Diversity For Operational Police

3rd Edition

ANZPAA
Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency
For more information please refer to the Religious and Spiritual Diversity: A Guide for Police-A5 handbook
Key Topics

Protocols for dealing with strangers

Special considerations when approaching or entering a place of worship or person’s house; or acknowledging or searching sacred objects

Special clothing, jewellery or ornaments

Death, bereavement and mourning
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

• Greeting: Initially, same sex communication
• Silence: Important part of communication
• Handshaking: Not generally given
• Touching: Usually viewed as inappropriate
• Eye contact: Common to lower eyes to show respect
• Pointing: Using the finger is seen as disrespectful

• Approval from Traditional Owners, local elders and/or government authority
• Follow local protocols (eg: men attending sacred men’s sites)
• Modest attire

• Ceremonial items during secret or sacred ceremonies
• String sometimes worn by family members during bereavement
• Care when touching
• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

• Traditional Aboriginal belief that death is caused by another person (no natural death)
• Bereavement (sorry business) may take precedence over all else
  • Marigeth (in-laws) often announce a death amongst Torres Strait Islanders
• Requesting to keep the deceased for a time to prepare is common in Aboriginal communities
• Spending considerable time with the deceased is common in Torres Strait Island communities
• Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law
• Performing a smoking ceremony is common in Aboriginal communities
Bahá’í

None

- Contact guides

No

- Family members may wish to place a burial ring on the deceased
- Preference is that the deceased is not be transported more than one hour’s travelling distance
- Cremation is forbidden
- Burial is preferred to take place as soon as reasonably possible
- Burial is preferred to take place within one hour’s travelling distance
Buddhism

- **Handshaking:** Not appropriate with monks or nuns
- **Touching:** Not appropriate with monks or nuns
- **The head:** Not appropriate to touch the head

- Contact head monk or nun
- Remove weapons where safe
- Care when seated facing religious objects
- Lift religious objects by base

- Monks and nuns may have short/shaved hair, wear robes
- Threaded beads *(mala)* sometimes carried
- Care when touching
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Contact Buddhist monk or nun, and maintain a peaceful environment
- Some may request that the body be left undisturbed for up to eight hours
- Chinese, Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhists would generally prefer to stay with the deceased
Christianity

None

• Remove weapons where safe
• Modest attire
• Care when touching the altar

• Religious leaders often wear robes/other religious clothing
• Threaded beads (rosary beads) sometimes carried
• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

• Some may want a priest or other clergy member to give ‘last rites’ (prayers)
Hindu

- **Handshaking**: Not appropriate with observant Hindus
- **Eye contact**: Not appropriate in some traditions between males and females
- **Hands**: Left hand not used for general interaction
- **Pointing at people**: Usually viewed as disrespectful

- Remove hats and shoes
- Seek assistance when handling objects
- Food offered

- Married Hindu women may wear a necklace *(mangalsutra)* or wedding bangles; and a marking over third eye *(bindi or pottu)*
- Thread sometimes worn around body
- Care when touching
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Contact the Hindu community
- Place the deceased in a north-south direction with the head pointing towards the south
- Some may prefer identification by a senior male relative
- Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law
- Hindus are usually cremated, except for children under three, who are buried
- Cremation is preferred within 24 hours of death
- Some may want the deceased to go home before cremation
Islam

- **Handshaking:** Not appropriate between males and females with observant Muslims
- **Hands:** Left hand not used for general interaction
- **Eye contact:** Sustained contact often not appropriate
- **Comforting:** Avoid physical contact

- Contact Imam of mosque
- Modest attire
- Remove shoes
- Avoid walking in front of Muslims while praying

- Muslim women may wear the following: headscarf (Hijab); face veil (Niqab); covering for the whole body (Burqa); and covering for the whole body thrown over the head (Chador)
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Burial is preferred within 24 hours of death
- A mourning period of 40 days is generally observed by the family of the deceased
- Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law
Judaism

- **Handshaking:** Not appropriate with many Orthodox Jews
- **Physical contact:** Not appropriate with many Orthodox Jews

- Contact security at Synagogue

- Orthodox men may dress in black, wear hats, and grow beards and earlocks
- Orthodox women may wear wigs and long dresses
- Jewish men often wear a skullcap *(kippah)*
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Contact immediate family or a Rabbi, and the Jewish Burial Society *(Chevra Kadisha)*
- Strict observance of religious practices in relation to death and burial
- Preference that touching of the deceased is kept to a minimum, and the deceased is covered or screened
- Preference that all body parts, including tissue and blood, be retrieved for burial with the body
- Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law
- Cremation is forbidden
- Burial is preferred within 24 hours of death
Māori

- **Touching**: Not appropriate to touch the head
- **Eye contact**: Minimal eye contact common

- Remove shoes

- Green stone *(pounamu)* and/or bone necklaces sometimes worn
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Contact members of the Māori community to allow for blessing of the area before the body is moved, particularly in the event of suicides
- Preference that all body parts be kept together
- Common for the community to gather around the *tūpāpaku* (deceased) so it is not left on its own at any stage
- Pictures of the living should not be placed with the deceased
Sikhism

- **Handshaking:** Sometimes viewed as inappropriate between males & females
- **Touching:** Sometimes viewed as inappropriate between males & females
- **The head:** Not appropriate to touch the head or turban

• Contact community leaders
• Remove shoes
• Care when touching the Sikh Holy Script

• Some Sikhs wear a turban
• Some Sikhs wear 5 articles of faith (Five Ks): a small sacred sword (Kirpan); an iron bangle (Kara); a special undergarment (Kachera); a small wooden comb (Kanga); and uncut hair (Keshas)
• Care when touching these; removal from the body is viewed as a severe punishment
• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

• Contact family of the deceased
• Care when touching the deceased where the 5 Ks and/or turban are worn; preference is that the Five Ks are not removed from the deceased at the scene or during post mortem
• Where the 5 Ks are removed, care should be taken to replace them
• Sikhs are cremated, and cremation is preferred as soon as possible after death
• Some may want the deceased to go home before cremation
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