



 **Faith and Cultural Considerations for:**

1. **Persons Supported** – *Liska Stefko L'Arche*
2. **Agency** – *Neil Cudney Christian Horizons*
3. **Direct Support Professionals** – *Sandy Toben Reena*
4. **Community Partnerships** – *Mike Gilmore Bethesda*

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 **Faith and Culture**

**Persons Supported Considerations**

*The Rev'd Liska Stefko*  
Pastoral Minister  
L'Arche Daybreak



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 **Faith and Culture**

**Agency Considerations**

*Dr. Neil Cudney*  
Director Organizational and Spiritual Life  
Christian Horizons



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**Faith and Cultural by the numbers - Stats Can - 2011**

**Faith:**

- 77% of Ontarians would identify as 'religious' in some capacity.
- 64% of the population would identify as "Christian"
- 23% as "Non-religious"
- 4.6% as Muslim
- 2.9 % Hindu,
- 1.5% as Jewish
- 1.2 % Buddhist
- .04 % Aboriginal
- 2% "others"

**Culture:**

- 26% of Ontario population visible minorities make up
- 2.4% as Aboriginal.




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**Faith and Cultural by the numbers - Stats Can - 2011**

*Thesis: People supported by agencies in Ontario reflect the faith and cultures diversities of Ontarians. What is important to the general Ontarian is important in the lives and practices of the people in our services. People with disabilities are under-represented in their faith and culture communities.*




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**Inclusion or Belonging**

**Inclusion** – *"If you show up we'll make room for you"*

**Belonging** – *"If you are not there we'll go looking for you"*

Dr. John Swinton  
Aberdeen University  
"Resurrecting the Person"




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## Natural Places of Belonging

Faith and Culture play a vital role in people's life cycle. The traditions, rituals and rhythms bring constancy, comfort, relationships, meaning, belonging and support. It is important for us to note that our role (DSP) with the person supported may be transitory, while faith and culture communities (and families) remain rather constant. As agencies and direct support professionals it is critical that we see our roles as facilitators into the faith, cultural and familial life cycles of the people we support

*Dr. Neil Cudney  
Life Cycle, Faith and Culture  
Paper Presentation for DADD April 2013*



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## Almost Friends

A California research project concluded that in social service/agency settings a significant percentage of persons receiving group living supports only entertain a friend in their home once every 18 months in that State.

*Joint research project National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation and  
California Baptist University  
Article: Almost Friends From the Journal of the Christian Institute on Disability  
(JCID) Vol.2, No.1, Spring/Summer 2013*



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## Almost Friends

That same research project concluded that 77% of supporting staff had little or no training in building effective and sustainable relationships with faith and culture communities.

*Joint research project National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation and  
California Baptist University  
Article: Almost Friends From the Journal of the Christian Institute on Disability  
(JCID) Vol.2, No.1, Spring/Summer 2013*



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### Building Communities of Belonging

*Building communities of belonging is crucial for services to identify and support faith and culture needs, wishes and hopes of supported individuals well is obvious.*

- Agency and services cannot replace the qualities and opportunities afforded by faith and culture supports
- People supported are seeking fulfilment in their faith and cultural lives
- It is important to us because it is important to them.

Building Communities of Belonging  
Dr. Neil Cudney




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### A Consideration of Challenges

*It is not always so easy to unravel the culture and faith needs and desires of persons supported. This can be for numerous reason such as;*

- DSP's have little context for supporting a person's culture or faith needs
- The person themselves cannot clearly articulate their own desires or wishes.
- Competing priorities and limited staffing in the context of congregant supports
- Those who advocate for themselves tend to gain the focus.
- The assumption can be if a person does not 'talk about' or articulate a specific need it must not exist.

Building Communities of Belonging  
Dr. Neil Cudney




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### A Consideration of Challenges

- The nature of congregant living creates a pressure toward hegemony in service
- The range of faith and culture supports that could be required in one location
- Level of adherence (persons supported or supporting)
- The nature of staffing schedules, transportation, communication
- When convictions and beliefs collide
- Matters of faith are seen as "personal"
- A belief that agencies are to 'neutral' or 'value-free' zones

Building Communities of Belonging  
Dr. Neil Cudney




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### Agency Considerations

*While an agency may or may not support a particular faith or culture orientation, it is included or suggested in many of our service principle, as well as Government law to support a person in their spiritual and cultural choices*

- In value, vision, mission purpose statements
- Recruitment and hiring process/questions
- Orientation and Education
- Personal Centred Planning processes
- Agency Policy and Procedures
- Monthly staff support and evaluation process
- Shift planning, team meetings
- Organizational communications
- Etc

Building Communities of Belonging  
Dr. Neil Cudney




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### Agency Considerations

*True diversity does not mean that one sheds their own particular faith convictions. It means that individuals within that group must hold those personal convictions in tension and respect the particular conviction of others in order to discover how to work together in order to achieve a common goal(s)*

- Agencies and DSP need to be aware of their own potential biases and equipped to support the person (and/or their advocate) to dictate the practices and opportunities of that faith or cultural expression.
- The practice of diversity can potentially be mentally and emotional taxing. Agencies might consider how to create avenues for a DSP to explore the tensions, whether through counseling, on-going training or other support mechanisms.

Building Communities of Belonging  
Dr. Neil Cudney




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### Opportunities

- Faith and Culture communities are natural and authentic places for people to explore their faith and cultural lives
- Faith and Culture is a holistic in nature – in order for persons to live their whole lives faith and culture is an important consideration in all aspects of their lives
- Our human services become *humane supports*

Building Communities of Belonging  
Dr. Neil Cudney




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### Considerations

- Brief interview - Spiritual history current needs and preferences.
- Inter-disciplinary conversations and supports in the quality of life conversations
- A good faith and culture assessment tool
- Involving the person in each step (nothing about me without me)
- The role of social media/ Facebook/faith websites/ faith communities that have archived services, stream live, bulletins online, on personal email communications,
- Learning from best practices of other agencies
- KEY: Creatively and patiently listening to people and meaningfully respond to their hopes, wishes and desires.

Building Communities of Belonging  
Dr. Neil Cudney




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### Resources

- Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities:** *A Guide for Service Providers, Families and Congregations* Erik Carter
- Spiritual Indicator Guide:** *Faith Based Community Development* NYS office for People with Disabilities, Putting People first  
[http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd\\_community\\_connections/faith\\_based\\_initiatives/training\\_material](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_community_connections/faith_based_initiatives/training_material)
- Ontario Faith and Culture Inclusion Network  
<http://www.faithcultureinclusion.org>
- Division of Religion Disability and Health – AAIDD  
<http://www.aaiddreigion.org/about>
- Journal of Religion Disability and Health and other  
<http://www.aaiddreigion.org/resources>




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## SUPPORTING THE INDIVIDUALS' SPIRITUAL GROWTH:

### The Role of the Direct Support Professional

February 27, 2015

Sandy Toben  
Learning and Development Supervisor  
Reena




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### Introduction

- This presentation is intended to highlight how Reena, as an organization, carries out it's underlying principles and values in promoting spirituality in persons with developmental disabilities



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### Reena's History

- Reena is a faith based organization that was established in 1973
- It was founded by a group of concerned Jewish parents of children with developmental disabilities
- They wanted a community based setting for their family member that would recognize and foster their Jewish religion and identity



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### Reena's Mandate

*"Reena enables people with developmental disabilities to realize their full potential by forming lifelong partnerships with individuals and their families within a framework of Jewish culture and values"*



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### Reena's Philosophy

- Reena offers a Jewish environment and Judaic programming for individuals who receive supports and services
- This enables the individuals to develop their spiritually and feel a connection and a sense of belonging to their roots, culture and community



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### Reena's Philosophy

- Reena provides supports to individuals of all faiths
- Importance is placed in ensuring that all individuals remain connected to their religion, culture and heritage



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### Reena's Philosophy

- Prior to intake, the individual and the family are provided information on the principles and values of Reena
- They are made aware of the importance of maintaining a Jewish environment
- The individual and family can decide if Reena is the right choice



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### Agency's Diversity

- Reena is a wonderfully diverse agency
- Direct Support Professionals at Reena come from a wide variety of cultures, religions and backgrounds



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### The Interview

- Reena recognizes the value in having all staff come on board with an understanding and sensitivity to cultural differences
- The Direct Support Professional is screened for the Threshold Core Competency, *Values and Ethics*
- The candidate must demonstrate an understanding and openness in order to support Reena's philosophy and values in their role



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How to Prepare Direct Support Professionals in their Roles

### THE PROCESS



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### The Process

- In Judaism, as in other faiths, the home is central to religious life
- The home is where the principles of the faith are taught and where holidays are celebrated
- Therefore, it is important that Direct Support Professionals are equipped with the necessary knowledge in order for them to assist the individuals in the area of spirituality



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### The Process

Upon Hire of a Direct Support Professional:



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### Policies and Procedures

- Direct Support Professionals are expected to read and sign off on all Policies and Procedures at Reena
- The Policies and Procedures assist the new employee to understand the principles and expectations of the agency as a whole



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### Judaic Polices and Procedures

- The Judaic Policy provides the Direct Support Professional with the philosophy and practical guidance in maintaining a Jewish environment at the residential and day program locations
- Emphasis is directed at adherence to the Judaic philosophy for the strict benefit of supporting the individual
- It is never to influence a Direct Support Professional's own religion or belief system



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### Site Orientation

- A formal site orientation takes place with the Direct Support Professional at the location or day program that they will be working
- The Direct Support Supervisor provides guidance to the Judaic Practices at the specific location



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### Judaic Training

- The Learning and Development department provides the following training courses to Direct Support Professionals:



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### Faith and Culture Training

This training provides an overview of all the major religions and exploring topics such as:

- Culture and the Workplace
- Racism, tolerance and acceptance
- Cultural sensitivity
- “The Golden Rule” and how can we apply it in the workplace?



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### Judaic Training

- Judaic Policies and Procedures are reviewed in this practical and interactive training
- Topics include:
  - Basic knowledge on Judaism
  - The Sabbath (begins Friday at sundown till 1 hr after sundown on Saturday)
  - Jewish Dietary laws (Keeping kosher in the homes)
  - Holiday Celebrations
  - Synagogue Attendance



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### The Sabbath Table (how to prepare)



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### Passover and High Holiday Training

- These training offered once per year
- Available a few weeks before the holiday begins
- Designed to assist Direct Support Professionals with the specific information about the Jewish holiday and the necessary preparation involved



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### Training Resources

- Workbooks from training courses are provided as resources for the Direct Professional to access whenever necessary
- In addition, the Faith and Cultural Services department offers resources to all employees through our web based information system
- Resources includes: calendars, stories, recipes, kosher products, etc.



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### How does the Direct Support Professional Determine an Individual's Spiritual Needs



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## Individual Support Plan (ISP)

- A formalized process for individuals to plan goals, make choices and fulfil wishes regarding their spiritual growth (part of ISP)
- Direct Support Professional will assist the individual in determining what he or she would like to work towards for the upcoming year
- The Direct Support Professional plans with the individual and support team what supports or resources may be needed to achieve goals




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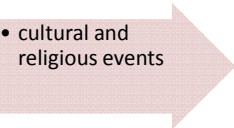
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## Individual Support Plan (ISP)

- Spirituality is discussed and explored in the Individual Support Plan under the topics:


**Community Inclusion**


• cultural and religious events



**Personal Interests and Choices**

• Place of worship/  
• Religious/cultural organizations






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COMMUNITY INCLUSION <small>(From the Individual Support Plan)</small>	PERSONAL INTERESTS AND CHOICES <small>(From the Individual Support Plan)</small>
Possible areas of discussion: Activities or events participated in for community, cultural and religious events, vacations, volunteer opportunities.	Suggested areas of discussion: Activities and hobbies of interest, social, cultural and religious events desired, decision making, self-direction, training, inform, being involved, social interests, recreational activities, discussion of public health with the user, individual choices about health, info provided with respect to self-interest and well-being which may include self-interests growth, place of worship, religious/spiritual organizations, social groups, public and local events.
My abilities and strengths:	My abilities and strengths:
I would benefit:	I would benefit:
Consideration of risks:	Consideration of risks:
Supports or Services to consider to meet my needs:	Supports or Services to consider to meet my needs:
* Revised Section on to complete the A-4 file package 8/17/2013 Package Rev. 4a, by DDC 10/1/13	* Revised Section on to complete the A-4 file package 8/17/2013 Package Rev. 4a, by DDC 10/1/13

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### The Role of the Faith and Cultural Services Department

- The Faith and Cultural Services department can assist individuals and DSP's with:
  - Finding an appropriate place of worship or religious/cultural centre or events in the community
  - Recruiting volunteers that share similar religious or cultural backgrounds to attend and celebrate events together
  - Providing resources



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### The Role of the Direct Support Professional

- The Direct Support Professional is supported and guided by the Direct Support Supervisor to carry out their role in fostering spirituality in the people they support
- Supervisions and team meetings help guide the Direct Support Professional in successfully helping the individual to grow spiritually



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### Supporting the Individuals' Spiritual Growth

- In order for the Direct Support Professional to ensure opportunities for the individual to embrace their religious/cultural choices, they are expected to use the following Core Competencies:
  - Interpersonal Relations and Respect
  - Initiative
  - Collaboration
  - Creative Problem Solving and Decision Making
  - Advocating for Others
  - Fostering Independence



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### Core Competencies

#### Interpersonal Relations and Respect:

- The Direct Support Professional listens carefully and takes the time to observe in order to truly understand the spiritual needs of the individual
- Faith and spirituality can be expressed differently by each individual




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### Supporting the Individuals' Spiritual Growth

- If you listen carefully, there will be moments when a supported individual will say
  - For example: "I am going to light the Chanukah candles next week" or
  - "It is my turn to say the prayer over the Challah (egg bread) on Friday night"
- An individual's actions can also be as powerful as words
  - The pride from getting the beautiful white Sabbath tablecloth from the cupboard as a way of marking the coming of the Sabbath




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### Core Competencies

#### Initiative:

- The Direct Support Professional thinks and plans ahead and organizes religious or cultural activities
  - ▶ So that (for example), the challah (egg bread) is purchased, so that the prayer can be made on the Sabbath
  - ▶ That staffing is in place, so that the individual can attend his or her place of worship




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### Core Competencies

**Collaboration:**

- The Direct Support Professional works together with the individual, family, team, residential or day program to ensure that spiritual needs are met



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### Core Competencies

**Creative Problem Solving & Decision Making:**

- The Direct Support Professional identifies potential barriers or challenges that may arise and come up with a creative approach
- Example: using an electric Menorah for candle lightening to avoid a live flame



[www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com)



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### Core Competencies

**Advocating for Others:**

- The Direct Support Professional speaks up or persuades others when met with resistance to inclusion

**Fostering Independence in Others:**

- The Direct Support Professional provides teaching and support to the individual to participate in religious rituals or celebrations



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## Supporting the Individuals' Spiritual Growth

A Beautiful Voice...

A story to remember



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## Conclusion

- At Reena, the emphasis is placed on ensuring the individual's choices are always recognized, respected and supported
- We continue to carry out the values of the founding families by acknowledging the significance in connecting the individuals with their spirituality and faith



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# THANK YOU



**Sandy Toben**  
[stoben@reena.org](mailto:stoben@reena.org)

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## Engaging Communities Of Faith And Culture

### A Practical Outlook

Mike Gilmore  
Chaplain  
Bethesda Services



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## Opportunities

### **For The Individual Being Supported**

1. Addressing The Whole Person
2. A sense of belonging/community
3. A new friend/family
4. A sense of ownership
5. An opportunity to serve
6. An opportunity to grow
7. An improved self esteem, purpose, self worth



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## Opportunities

### **For The Faith/Cultural Group**

1. Further build community
2. Blessing of serving others
3. Growing in knowledge/education surrounding needs of individual
4. A new friend/family
5. Addressing the whole community



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## Challenges/Barriers

### **For The Individual Being Supported**

- . Creating a culture of support and understanding
- . Staffing
- . Transportation
- . Education
- . Structural Barriers
- . Finding the right fit
- . Smoothing out the bumps

*"Persistence is your greatest weapon.  
It is in the nature of barriers that they fall."  
Quentin Crisp*



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## Engaging Our Faith and Cultural Community Is A Winning Scenario



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