



MUSLIM WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
Empowering Women - Improving Lives

Chaplaincy Code of Ethics

The Muslim Women's Organization (MWO) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering Muslim women in the Central Florida community through education, leadership training, and sisterhood building programs. We believe that community care is essential to building an authentic sisterhood through healing and compassion. Spiritual support is a vital component of our Gender Equity work and an alternate avenue of support that we believe is necessary for the women of the Muslim community to thrive.

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I. PREAMBLE

The Code of Ethics and the processes implemented to support it are motivated by concern for the safety and well-being of the MWO Board, staff, volunteers, and those whom they serve. Neither are intended to "protect" the organization or those affiliated with it from public scrutiny. Each is designed to guide the organization and those affiliated with it in recognizing norms of ethical conduct and calling people to accountability when these norms are violated.

Ethical behavior is a justice issue, which is of utmost priority in Islam and to MWO. Honesty about competency, clarity about professional roles, and the ability to articulate and keep appropriate boundaries while still entering into empathetic pastoral relationships are critical to public respect for and trust in the work of professional chaplains.

This code does not undertake to define standards of professional conduct of MWO or those affiliated with it for purposes of civil liability.

Furthermore, MWO recognizes that the development of ethical standards is an ongoing process and that it is not possible to cover every conceivable situation that may occur.

This code, a living document, is meant to give expression to the basic values and standards of the organization and its chaplains and guide decision making and professional behavior. It also seeks to provide mechanisms for professional accountability while informing the public as to what they should expect from spiritual care professionals.



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II. PURPOSE OF CODE OF ETHICS

MWO's Gender Equity Initiative maintains that any individual serving as chaplain must follow an ethics system that is firmly rooted in the principles and teachings of the Qur'an and based on the lived example of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him. We draw inspiration for our work from the statement of God The Most Compassionate, in the Qur'an: "A Messenger from among you has come to you, he is troubled over your difficulties, concerned for your well-being, kind, and merciful to the believers." (9:128)

MWO and its chaplain present the following Code of Ethics as a means by which there is clarity among themselves and the community as to some of the specific standards that fall under the general guidance of the ethical teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

III. ETHICAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

MWO Chaplains shall seek to demonstrate a commitment to these values and principles in relationships with those whom they serve, their colleagues, and their conduct in their professional roles. In situations where chaplains are faced with conflicting obligations and ethical dilemmas arise, chaplains should take into consideration Islamic values and principles and the standards in this code that are relevant to any situation which requires ethical judgment.

The absence of an explicit prohibition against a specific kind of conduct does not mean that MWO considers such conduct to be either ethical or unethical. While the specific wording of these standards is important, the spirit and intent of the principles should be taken into consideration by those utilizing or interpreting this code of ethics.

1. **SERVICE:** Chaplains place service to others above self-interest. They draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to enhance people's capacity to change and to address social and spiritual problems with people in need, as a social and professional responsibility and public service.
2. **DIGNITY AND WORTH OF HUMANITY:** Chaplains believe in the dignity and worth of a person and make every reasonable effort to respect the dignity of those persons seeking their assistance and treat each person in a caring manner.
3. **INTEGRITY:** Chaplains are consistently aware of Islamic ethical values and principles as well as their profession's ethical standards and strive to practice in a manner consistent with them. Chaplains behave in a trustworthy and responsible manner and promote ethical practices in their service.



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4. **COMPETENCE:** Chaplains serve within their areas of competence and pursue ongoing personal growth, Islamic education, and professional development in areas that enhance their professional proficiency and competency.
5. **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY:** Chaplains are mindful of individual differences and strive to understand the diverse backgrounds of those whom they serve, recognizing their strengths. Chaplains offer services free of discrimination and in accordance with MWO's Non-Discrimination policy.
6. **CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY:** Chaplains safeguard the confidentiality of clients when using materials for educational purposes or written publication. They are expected to respect the confidentiality of information entrusted to them by clients except when disclosure is required for necessary treatment, granted by client permission, for the safety of any person or when required by law.
7. **PROFESSIONAL REFERRALS:** Chaplains understand the limits of their individual expertise and make referrals to other professionals when appropriate. Chaplains, as such, provide referrals to mental health professionals in our community available for counseling when those they serve require it..

IV. ETHICAL STANDARDS

Chaplains behave in ways consistent with the MWO's values and uphold the following ethical standards that are relevant to their professional activities.

1. CHAPLAIN'S COMMITMENT TO SELF

1.1. Lifestyle and Work Ethic

- 1.1.1. Chaplains reflect personal love for God and awareness of accountability to God in their lives and in their work. They actively pursue the development and enrichment of their faith.
- 1.1.2. Chaplains maintain a lifestyle and work ethic that reflects their Islamic faith and they hold in trust Islamic traditions and practices. They strive to uphold and practice the things they teach.
- 1.1.3. Chaplains maintain self-discipline as a Muslim through engaging in activities that promote professional and personal development.

1.2. Self-Care

- 1.2.1. Chaplains are involved in the day to day emotional or physical care of others so often that they come face to face with the imperative need to "care for self", if they are to be truly able to "care for others".
- 1.2.2. Chaplains continually practice good emotional health by seeking to achieve and maintain a balance in life. There has to be a portion of life in which you need to take, rather than give.



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- 1.2.3. Chaplains recognize the need to set and maintain personal boundaries in order to maintain the aforementioned healthy balance between their professional and personal life.
- 1.2.4. Chaplains understand that the most effective way to prevent burnout and compassion fatigue is to practice self-care.

2. CHAPLAINS' ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS PROFESSIONAL

2.1. Commitment to Others

- 2.1.1. Chaplains understand that their primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of those whom they serve.
- 2.1.2. Chaplains promote dialogue in their teaching and counsel, understanding the interactive nature of counsel and advice. Chaplains invite engagement with those whom they serve, seeing the helping process as a partnership based on mutual participation.
- 2.1.3. Chaplains recognize the special authority granted to them and are aware of their influential position with respect to those whom they serve. Chaplains never use their authority in ways that violate the personhood of another human being and do not exploit the trust and dependency of such persons.

2.2. Islamic Professional Development

- 2.2.1. Chaplains look to the Qur'an, the Prophetic model, authentic traditions, and scholarly opinions in the understanding and transmission of the religion.
- 2.2.2. Chaplains take responsibility for continued Islamic and professional education to be better equipped to serve people and to perform their duties.

2.3. Competence

- 2.3.1. Chaplains maintain high standards of educational and professional competence and seek opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills and enhance the quality of Chaplaincy services provided by MWO.
- 2.3.2. Chaplains recognize the boundaries of their competence and refer questions and matters that fall outside of their religious and professional competence to others.
- 2.3.3. Chaplains seek the advice and counsel of their colleagues and MWO leadership on issues that impact the greater organization and community.
- 2.3.4. Chaplains obtain consultation and collaborate with professionals and other community resources in order to enhance the well-being of those whom they serve. They refer those individuals whom they are not able



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to assist, whether due to lack of time, expertise, or personal reasons, to other professionals that may be able to serve them.

- 2.3.5. Chaplains present themselves based solely upon those services that they are qualified and trained to provide in their area of competence. They do not misrepresent their qualifications or imply that they have experiences or capabilities which they do not possess.
- 2.3.6. Chaplains continually monitor their effectiveness as a chaplain and take steps to improve when necessary.

2.4. Impairment

- 2.4.1. Chaplains should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, or other mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment as a chaplain or to jeopardize the well-being of those whom they serve.
- 2.4.2. Chaplains whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance of responsibilities should seek consultation and take appropriate action by seeking professional help and making necessary adjustments.

3. CHAPLAIN'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH CLIENTS

Chaplains maintain their commitment to promote the best interests of those whom they serve and do not exploit their position of authority to advance their own interests.

3.1. Boundaries

- 3.1.1. Chaplains avoid any situation that may be potentially harmful to those whom they serve or that may make it difficult for them to maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- 3.1.2. Chaplains continue their relationship with those whom they serve only so long as it is reasonably clear that the client is benefitting from the relationship. Chaplains do not create or foster dependency in their relationship with those whom they serve.

3.2. Cultural Awareness and Diversity

- 3.2.1. Chaplains strive to understand and recognize the diverse cultural and experiential backgrounds of the people soliciting or receiving their counsel or advice and endeavor to provide sensitive care.

3.3. Conflicts of Interest

- 3.3.1. Chaplains recognize that their relationship with any person they serve as a Chaplain supersedes any personal, family, or friendly relationship they may have with the person.



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- 3.3.2. When Chaplains anticipate a conflict of interest (that interferes with their professional discretion) among the individuals receiving their service or anticipate having to perform in potentially conflicting roles, Chaplains clarify their role with the parties involved and take appropriate steps to minimize any conflict of interest and protect the well-being of clients.
- 3.3.3. Chaplains recognize that their primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of those whom they serve. However, their responsibility to the larger community or specific legal obligations may supersede their relationship with those whom they serve on limited occasions.

3.4. Youth Protection

- 3.4.1. Chaplains provide counsel to minors (individuals under age 18) only after obtaining written consent from the minor's parent or guardian.
- 3.4.2. Chaplains maintain transparency and accountability for the safety and security of minors by strictly adhering to the procedures outlined in the parental consent form.
- 3.4.3. Chaplains adhere to MWO's Youth Protection Policy when interacting with any under age individuals.

3.5. Sexual Relationships

- 3.5.1. Chaplains recognize their Islamic obligation to avoid situations that might lead to sexual contact or a sexual relationship with persons seeking their assistance or with that person's family members, whether such a relationship is consensual or not.
- 3.5.2. Chaplains engage with those they serve in professional settings and spaces, including in person at the MWO HUB, or online via video conferencing. Chaplains may not engage with clients in locations that are intimate or informal (ex: homes, restaurants). This applies to both female and male clients.
- 3.5.3. Chaplains appropriately use technology to enhance service provision and to advance the work of their profession. They do not engage in inappropriate sexual communication through the use of technology.

3.6. Privacy and Confidentiality

- 3.6.1. Chaplains treat their meetings with those they serve with the utmost concern for confidentiality, recognizing the importance of trust within the helping and healing relationship.
- 3.6.2. Chaplains may disclose confidential information when appropriate with valid consent or on the basis of a legal requirement. Chaplains inform those whom they serve about the disclosure of confidential information and the limitations to confidentiality set by civil laws and regulations.



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- 3.6.3. Chaplains respect the client's right to privacy and protect the confidentiality of all information obtained from all sources in the course of their service, except for compelling professional reasons when disclosure may be necessary. In these cases, Chaplains disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary.
- 3.6.4. Chaplains do not disclose identifying information when discussing clients with consultants outside of MWO unless the client has consented to the disclosure of confidential information or there is a compelling need for disclosure.
- 3.6.5. Chaplains are encouraged to carefully document significant decisions regarding those whom they serve and handle all records in a manner that protects those served.

4. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES AND MWO

4.1. Respect and Cooperation

- 4.1.1. Chaplains strive together with their colleagues to preserve the dignity, discipline, and integrity of the chaplaincy profession.
- 4.1.2. Chaplains respect their colleagues and seek to collaborate with them to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships and promote the well-being of the organization and those whom they serve.
- 4.1.3. Chaplains seek the advice and counsel of colleagues within MWO whenever such consultation furthers the interests of those whom they serve. When seeking counsel, Chaplains should consult only those colleagues who have demonstrated knowledge, skills and expertise associated with the focus of the consultation.
- 4.1.4. Chaplains work cooperatively with those of other faiths, respecting their beliefs and traditions as they respect those of the people they serve.

4.2. Disputes

- 4.2.1. Chaplains who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should seek resolution by addressing the potential concerns with that individual directly and internally before seeking redress elsewhere.
- 4.2.2. Chaplains do not take advantage of a dispute concerning a colleague to advance their own interests
- 4.2.3. Chaplains do not involve those whom they serve in disputes with colleagues or engage them in inappropriate discussions regarding internal conflicts.

4.3. Handling of Complaints

- 4.3.1. Chaplains maintain professional integrity with their colleagues, MWO, and the community they serve in handling formal complaints through the duly established process for addressing complaints.



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- 4.3.2. Chaplains report any corrupt or unethical behaviors that they personally witness to the MWO leadership. Chaplains understand that in accordance with Qur'anic injunctions, MWO will not entertain an accusation or complaint against a Chaplain on the basis of hearsay. All formal complaints must be supported by testimony or written evidence.
- 4.3.3. Chaplains recognize that in the event a formal complaint supported by written or verbal evidence is filed with the MWO, a task force will be appointed to verify the information, interview the chaplain against whom the complaint is made, and report its findings.
- 4.3.4. Chaplains understand that the Board of Directors of the MWO will determine the course of action to be taken based upon the report and agree to abide by the prescribed course of action.
- 4.3.5. Chaplains will provide MWO with immediate notice of any complaint or unethical conduct made against them in a civil, criminal, or other professional forum.

MWO's Chaplaincy Code of Ethics is drawn from the IOK Chaplaincy Code of Ethics, the Association of Muslim Chaplains Code of Ethics, and the Professional Chaplains Common Code of Ethics.