

# **Ramadan & Eid Accommodations Toolkit 2026**

**Guidance for Schools,  
Workplaces, and  
State Institutions**



**CAIR**  
PENNSYLVANIA

## About This Toolkit

At CAIR Pennsylvania, part of our mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, and empower American Muslims. This toolkit is designed for **schools, employers, service providers, and public institutions** that serve or employ Muslims and want to ensure inclusive, lawful, and respectful accommodations during **Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha**.

This guide provides:

- Clear explanations of Islamic practices
- Practical, low-burden accommodations
- Legal context for religious accommodations
- CAIR-Philadelphia accommodation letters and templates
- Tools for proactive planning and inclusion

The goal is not special treatment, but **equitable access**, ensuring Muslim students, employees, patients, and residents can fully participate while observing their faith.

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## Section 1: Key Dates for 2026 (Approximate)

*Because the Islamic calendar is lunar, all dates are subject to moon sighting.*

- **Ramadan:** Expected to begin around **February 18–19, 2026** (+/- 1 day)
- **Eid al-Fitr:** Expected around **March 20–21, 2026** (+/- 1 day)
- **Eid al-Adha:** Expected around **May 27–28, 2026** (+/- 1 day)

**Important note:** Muslim communities may observe different start or end dates based on moon sighting methods. Institutions should show flexibility and understanding.

## Section 2: Understanding Ramadan

### Introduction to Ramadan

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is one of the holiest months for Muslims worldwide. It is a time of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. This sacred month commemorates the revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In 2026, Ramadan is expected to begin around February 18th (+/- 1 day) and conclude with Eid al-Fitr, a joyous celebration marking the end of fasting, on March 20th (+/- 1 day).

The Islamic calendar is lunar and in order to determine the start of the new month, there must be a sighting of the crescent moon; thus, the start and end date for Ramadan can only be determined on the day of. Ramadan's dates shift annually by 10-11 days and the month lasts 29-30 days. During this time, fasting Muslims abstain from food, drink, and other physical needs from sunrise to sunset. Fasting hours vary by location, ranging from 12-18 hours during longer spring and summer days.

Beyond the physical fast, Ramadan is a deeply spiritual experience. Muslims strengthen their connection with Allah through extra prayers, Quran recitation, and nightly Taraweeh prayers in congregation. Additionally, during this time, many Muslims choose to become more observant to other aspects of the religion, such as increased charity, observing modesty or head coverings, choosing to eat halal, and trying to be a better person.

## Why Do Muslims Fast?

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam, essential acts of worship all Muslims must follow. Fasting furthers spiritual growth, self-discipline, and empathy for those in need. By abstaining from food, drink, and other physical needs, Muslims cultivate mindfulness and gratitude for their blessings. Exceptions to fasting include children, the elderly, the sick (both physically and mentally), travelers, pregnant or nursing women, and those menstruating.

## What Does Fasting Involve?

The fast begins at dawn and ends at sunset. During daylight hours, Muslims abstain from eating and drinking (including water) and smoking. Fasting also includes abstaining from immoral acts and behaviors, staying away from foul words and bad gestures.

- Suhoor
  - The pre-dawn meal, eaten before sunrise, provides nourishment and hydration for the fasting day.
- Iftar:
  - The evening meal breaks the fast at sunset, traditionally starting with dates and water, followed by a larger meal shared with family and friends.

Fasting start and end times vary by date and location. [Please click here](#) to view a local prayer time schedule showing the exact dawn (suhoor) and sunset (iftar) times each day.

## **Section 3: Eid Holidays Explained**

### **Eid al-Fitr**

Eid al-Fitr (Festival of Breaking Fast) marks the end of Ramadan. It begins with a special communal morning prayer, followed by family gatherings, meals, and gift-giving. It is a time of gratitude to Allah for the strength to complete the fast and a celebration of community and faith. Many Muslims request the day off from school or work.

### **Eid al-Adha**

Eid al-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice) commemorates Prophet Abraham’s devotion and willingness to sacrifice. It occurs approximately 70 days after Eid al-Fitr and also includes a special morning prayer and communal observance.

### **Moon Sighting & Date Observance**

Both Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha are determined according to the Islamic lunar calendar, meaning their exact dates depend on the sighting of the crescent moon. As a result, the precise day of Eid cannot be confirmed until shortly before the holiday.

Within the Muslim community, there are legitimate differences of opinion regarding how the start of the lunar month is determined. Some communities rely on local moon sightings, while others follow global sightings or astronomical calculations. These differences are rooted in long-standing religious interpretations and are widely respected within Islam.

Because of this, institutions may notice that:

- One Muslim student, employee, or resident requests Eid off on one day
- Another Muslim observes Eid on a different day

This is normal and should not be viewed as confusion, inconsistency, or misuse of accommodation policies.

### **Best Practice for Schools, Employers, and Institutions**

- Respect individual observance dates as sincerely held religious beliefs
- Allow flexibility when multiple Eid dates are requested
- Avoid requiring individuals to justify or “prove” their observance method
- While one day off is the most common accommodation for Eid observance, some individuals and families—particularly during Eid al-Adha—may celebrate over multiple days; such requests should be considered respectfully and assessed individually.

Providing understanding and flexibility around Eid dates helps ensure an inclusive environment that respects the diversity within Muslim communities.

## Section 4: Daily Prayers & Religious Practices

Muslims are required to pray five times a day, each at specific times. These prayers are a way to remember Allah, seek guidance, and express gratitude. The five prayers are:

1. Fajr: The pre-dawn prayer, performed before sunrise. Suhoor is eaten prior to the Fajr prayer.
2. Dhuhr: The midday prayer, performed after the sun passes its highest point.
3. Asr: The afternoon prayer, performed in the late afternoon.
4. Maghrib: The evening prayer, performed just after sunset. It is the time when Muslims break their fast during Ramadan.
5. Isha: The night prayer, performed after the twilight has disappeared.

During Ramadan, Taraweeh are optional but highly encouraged prayers performed at night after the Isha prayer. Over the course of Ramadan, the entire Quran is often completed in these Taraweeh prayers.

### Wudu (Ritual Ablution) & Bathroom Access

Before performing any of the five daily prayers, Muslims are required to complete **wudu**, a brief ritual washing that prepares a person for prayer. Wudu involves washing the hands, mouth, nose, face, arms, head, and feet using water.

Because of this requirement, Muslim students, employees, patients, or residents may request:

- Access to a restroom or sink shortly before prayer times
- Brief bathroom breaks connected to prayer observance
- Access to water (a standard restroom sink is sufficient)

Wudu typically takes 2-5 minutes and does not require privacy beyond normal restroom use. It may need to be repeated if it is broken (for example, after using the restroom).

**Practical note:** Each of the daily 5 prayers typically take about 5-10 minutes and requires a clean, quiet space, in addition to potential restroom access prior to prayer.

## **Section 5: Dietary Needs & Halal Explained**

### **What Does Halal Mean?**

Halal means "permissible" in Arabic and often refers to food and drinks that follow Islamic guidelines. In order for meat products to be considered halal:

- No Pork or Alcohol: These are always avoided. Be mindful of pork by-products such as lard or gelatin.
- Special Preparation for Meat: Animals must be treated well and slaughtered in a humane way, by a Muslim, with a blessing said in the name of Allah.

### **Best Inclusive Food Practices**

- Ask About Preferences: If unsure, just ask what they can or cannot eat.
- Check for Halal Labels on Meat Products: Many stores sell halal-certified products.
  - Clearly label pork and pork-derived products
- Avoid Cross-Contamination: Use clean utensils and surfaces when preparing halal food.
- Offer Vegetarian, Vegan, or kosher Options: These are often a safe choice.

## **Section 6: Schools (K–12 & Higher Education)**

### **Legal Overview**

#### **Do public schools have to provide religious accommodations during Ramadan?**

Public schools must permit students to express and practice their religion as long as it does not “materially and substantially” interfere with the operations of the school, which often requires schools to provide accommodations.

Students always have the right to read the Qur'an and say silent prayers during non-instructional time. If students are permitted to use school rooms and resources for secular activities during non-instructional time, then students must be permitted to use school rooms and resources for religious purposes during non-instructional time. Except in very rare instances, public schools are required to provide prayer space for students to use during non-instructional time, in addition to other accommodations that will allow students to express their religious beliefs.

#### **Are private K-12 schools subject to the same accommodation requirements as public schools?**

Private K-12 schools do not have the same legal obligations to provide religious accommodations. With this said, students should still make a request to the school in order to receive the desired religious accommodation.

Additionally, no school official should ever forcibly remove a student's religious head covering or devalue their religious beliefs. In recent cases, we observe an erroneous attempt at framing providing religious accommodations as promotion of a particular religion. This is not the case for either a charter or a denominational school setting. Additionally, we also observe a recent trend to interpret accommodations during Ramadan as a favor extended only during Ramadan. We caution private religious schools to be mindful of not harming inter-religious respect through careless statements and steps.

### **Common School Accommodations**

To foster inclusivity, consider these accommodations for Muslim students:

- Quiet Spaces: Provide a quiet area for fasting students during lunch.
- Energy Awareness: Be mindful of lower energy levels, especially in the afternoon.
- Avoid Major Events: Schedule exams or activities earlier in the day.
- Adjust Physical Education: Offer lighter activities or an exemption to prevent dehydration.
- Eid Observance: Avoid scheduling significant assignments or events on Eid al-Fitr.
- Be Mindful: An additional number of students may choose to observe head covering or pray daily prayers during the month of Ramadan.

## Section 7: Workplaces

### Legal Overview

#### Does my employer have to provide religious accommodations during Ramadan?

In most instances, the answer is yes. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects against religious discrimination, particularly as it relates to employment. Employers are required to accommodate an employee's "sincerely held religious beliefs," which includes making a religious accommodation for the employee as long as the accommodation does not impose an "undue hardship." The law defines an undue hardship as more than a "minimal burden" to the business' operation. This applies to employers with 15 or more employees and the federal government as an employer.

This means, among many things, that employers may not require the removal of religious head coverings and may not require the shaving of religious beards. Employers are obligated to provide religious accommodations that do not create an undue hardship on the employer.

### Common Workplace Accommodations

Federal and state laws protect employees' rights to religious observance. Employers can support Muslim staff by:

- Educating Staff: Ensure supervisors understand Ramadan and fasting.
- Flexible Scheduling: Allow adjusted work hours or remote work options.
- Avoid Food-Centric Events: Reschedule networking/potluck lunches.
- Provide Prayer Space: Designate a quiet area for prayer breaks.
- Be Mindful of Deadlines: Offer flexibility for tasks and meetings.
- Celebrate Eid: Accommodate time-off requests for Eid al-Fitr.

## Section 8: State Institutions & Public Services

*(Hospitals, Jails, Prisons, Shelters, Foster Care, Behavioral Health Facilities)*

### Legal Overview

#### **Do state institutions have to provide religious accommodations during Ramadan and Eid?**

Yes. Individuals in state-run or state-funded institutions retain the right to practice their religion. Federal and state laws including the First Amendment, Title VII, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), and applicable state civil rights laws protect religious exercise in public institutions.

State agencies and contracted service providers are required to make reasonable religious accommodations unless doing so would create a legitimate safety, security, or operational hardship. Religious observance may not be denied simply for administrative convenience.

This applies to individuals who are:

- Incarcerated or detained
- Hospitalized or receiving long-term care
- Living in shelters or residential facilities
- Receiving services through state agencies or state-funded programs
- Employed by state institutions

### Correctional Facilities & Detention Settings

*(Jails, Prisons, Immigration Detention Centers)*

Individuals who are incarcerated or detained maintain the right to religious practice, including fasting, prayer, dietary observance, and holiday recognition.

#### **Common Accommodations in Correctional Settings**

- Meal Timing Adjustments: Providing meals before dawn (suhoor) and after sunset (iftar) during Ramadan
- Halal Meals: Access to halal, vegetarian, or religiously appropriate alternatives
- Prayer Access: Allowing time and space for daily prayers, Friday congregational prayers, and Eid prayers when feasible
- Bathroom Access for Wudu: Reasonable access to sinks or restrooms for ritual washing prior to prayer
- Eid Recognition: Allowing religious services and recognizing Eid as a religious holiday
- Religious Items: Access to Qur'ans, prayer rugs, and approved religious materials

Under RLUIPA, restrictions must be narrowly tailored and based on legitimate safety or security needs not generalized assumptions.

## **Hospitals & Healthcare Settings**

(Hospitals, Psychiatric Facilities, Long-Term Care)

Patients and residents retain religious rights while receiving medical care. Healthcare providers should balance religious observance with medical safety.

### **Common Accommodations in Healthcare Settings**

- Halal Meals: Access to halal or vegetarian food options
- Fasting Considerations: Respecting fasting when medically appropriate and discussing alternatives when necessary
- Prayer Space: Access to a quiet space for prayer when possible
- Bathroom Access for Wudu: Allowing brief access to sinks/restrooms for ritual washing
- Modesty Accommodations: Respect for religious dress and gender sensitivity when feasible
- Eid Observance: Flexibility for religious observance, visits from clergy, or communal prayer

Medical necessity should be explained respectfully and collaboratively, not used to dismiss religious needs outright.

## **Shelters, Residential Programs & Behavioral Health Facilities**

(Homeless Shelters, Youth Programs, Group Homes, Substance Use & Mental Health Facilities)

Residents in shelters and residential programs maintain the right to religious practice and accommodation.

### **Common Accommodations in Residential & Social Service Settings**

- Flexible Meal Scheduling during Ramadan
- Halal Food Options alongside standard meals
- Prayer Space or permission to pray in personal living areas
- Bathroom Access for Wudu
- Respect for Religious Dress
- Eid Recognition, including flexibility around programming or required activities

Religious accommodations should never be framed as disruptive or preferential when they can be reasonably provided.

## **Best Practices for State Institutions & Public Agencies**

- Train staff on basic religious accommodation requirements
- Avoid blanket policies that restrict religious practice
- Evaluate accommodation requests individually
- Engage chaplaincy services or faith liaisons when available
- Consult legal counsel before denying religious accommodations

Providing reasonable religious accommodations is not an endorsement of religion - it is a legal obligation and a cornerstone of equitable public service. When in doubt, contact CAIR.

## **Section 9: Supporting Muslim Community Members**

### **How Can Non-Muslims Support Their Muslim Friends?**

Greetings: Use phrases like “Ramadan Mubarak” (Blessed Ramadan) or “Ramadan Kareem” (Generous Ramadan).

- Avoid Dismissive Comments: Refrain from saying, “It must be hard to fast” or “not even water”.
- Celebrate Together: Join Iftar meals or express appreciation for their dedication.
- Fasting Friends: Plan a fasting day with a Muslim friend.

## **Section 10: Accommodation Request Letters**

### **Eid Accommodation Letter**

For years, CAIR has collaborated with employers nationwide to ensure that Muslim employees are afforded reasonable religious accommodations, in accordance with both federal and state laws. This document serves as a vital tool for Muslim employees to effectively communicate their accommodation needs during the holy month of Ramadan. With a commitment to fostering inclusive workplaces, this letter empowers individuals to advocate for their rights and uphold their religious practices with dignity and respect. Visit [pa.cair.com/eid-letter](https://www.cair.com/eid-letter) for editable template letters.

### **School Accommodation Letter**

CAIR has long been committed to supporting Muslim students in accessing necessary religious accommodations within educational settings, in alignment with federal and state laws. Our letter templates are a valuable resource for parents of students to effectively communicate their accommodation needs during the sacred month of Ramadan. As part of our ongoing efforts to promote equality and inclusivity in schools, CAIR has provided guides and toolkits to educators and administrators, offering insights into Islamic religious practices and facilitating the creation of equitable learning environments for all students. Visit [pa.cair.com/eid-letter](https://www.cair.com/eid-letter) for editable template letters

### **Ramadan & Eid Resolution and Letter**

In the United States, the onset of Ramadan is often recognized by lawmakers in Congress, state legislatures, and cities nationwide through the introduction of resolutions honoring this sacred month. These resolutions, alongside welcoming statements, videos, and social media posts, serve to acknowledge and celebrate the significance of Ramadan within our diverse communities. CAIR is proud to offer this template letter as a resource for Muslim community members to engage with local and state officials, encouraging the introduction of resolutions that reflect the importance of Ramadan and promote inclusivity and understanding. Visit [pa.cair.com/officials-ramadan-eid](https://www.cair.com/officials-ramadan-eid) for a template letter to your elected officials.

## **Section 12: Pennsylvania School Districts with Eid Off**

**These districts officially close schools for Eid al-Fitr (Those that also have Eid al-Adha off are noted in parentheses):**

1. Central Bucks School District
2. Coatesville Area School
3. Council Rock School District
4. Cumberland Valley School District
5. Derry Township School District (Hershey)
6. Downingtown Area School District
7. Great Valley School District
8. Lower Merion School District
9. North Penn School District
10. Owen J. Roberts School District
11. Parkland School District
12. Pennsbury School District
13. Perkiomen Valley School District
14. Radnor Township School District
15. Spring-Ford Area School District
16. Tredyffrin/Easttown School District
17. Unionville-Chadds Ford School District
18. Upper Darby School District
19. West Chester Area School District
20. Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School
21. School District of Philadelphia (also off for Eid al-Adha)

# Section 13: Frequently Asked Questions

For Educators, Employers, and Service Providers

## 1. Do all Muslims fast during Ramadan?

- a. Not necessarily. While fasting is a core religious practice, some Muslims are exempt due to age, health conditions, pregnancy or nursing, travel, or menstruation. These decisions are personal and may not be visible to others.
- b. **Best practice:** Avoid questioning or judging whether someone is fasting.

## 2. Can children or students fast during Ramadan?

- a. Yes, although fasting is not required until puberty, many children choose to fast, sometime partially (i.e. a half day), as a part of family and cultural practice
- b. **Best Practice:** Respect family decisions and provide age appropriate accommodations when requested.

## 3. Why might a student or employee ask for a quiet space during the day?

- a. Fasting individuals may prefer a quiet space to rest, pray, or avoid eating areas during lunch periods.
- b. **Best practice:** Allow access to a quiet, non-punitive space during non-instructional time.

## 4. Why are prayer breaks requested, and how long do they take?

- a. Muslims pray five times a day at set times. Each prayer typically takes 5-10 minutes and requires a clean, quiet space.

## 5. Why might someone need bathroom access before prayer?

- a. Before prayer, Muslims perform wudu, a brief ritual washing using water.
- b. **Best practice:** Allow normal restroom access without requiring explanation or documentation.

## 6. Should fasting students participate in physical education or strenuous activities?

- a. Many fasting students can participate, but some may experience lower energy or dehydration, especially later in the day.
- b. **Best practice:** Offer modified activities or alternatives when requested.

**7. Should exams, tests, or major assignments be moved during Ramadan?**

- a. Not always. However, flexibility is encouraged, particularly for afternoon exams or high-stakes assessments.
- b. **Best practice:** When possible, schedule earlier in the day or allow make-up options.

**8. Do schools or workplaces have to provide halal food?**

- a. Institutions are not required to overhaul food programs, but reasonable alternatives should be offered when possible, such as vegetarian, vegan, or halal-certified options.
- b. **Best practice:** Clearly label pork and alcohol-based ingredients.

**9. Why do Muslims request time off for Eid, and why might dates differ?**

- a. Eid dates are determined by the lunar calendar and moon sighting. Different communities may observe Eid on different days.
- b. **Best practice:** Respect individual requests and do not require justification for observance dates.

**10. Is Eid one day or multiple days?**

- a. Eid al-Fitr is one day, while Eid al-Adha spans multiple days religiously. However, most accommodation requests involve one day off, typically the first day.
- b. **Best practice:** Evaluate additional requests respectfully and individually.

**11. Can we ask for proof or documentation for Ramadan or Eid observance?**

- a. Generally, no. Religious accommodations are based on sincerely held beliefs, not proof.
- b. **Best practice:** Apply the same standard used for other religious accommodations.

**12. Why do accommodation requests sometimes increase during Ramadan?**

- a. Ramadan is a spiritually significant period when many Muslims increase their religious practice, even if they are less observant at other times of the year. Increased prayer, fasting, or visible religious expression during this month is normal and widely recognized across Muslim communities.
- b. Treat all requests as sincere and avoid comparing current observance to past

behavior.

**13. Is providing accommodations a violation of church–state separation?**

- a. No. Providing religious accommodations is legally required and does not constitute endorsement of religion.
- b. **Best practice:** Treat religious accommodations as part of equity and inclusion efforts.

**14. What if accommodating Ramadan feels inconvenient or disruptive?**

- a. In most cases, accommodations are low-cost and minimal. Inconvenience alone does not qualify as undue hardship.
- b. **Best practice:** Explore alternatives before denying requests.

**15. What if we're unsure how to handle a request?**

- a. When in doubt, ask respectfully or consult legal counsel, human resources, or [CAIR](#).
- b. **Best practice:** Err on the side of inclusion.

## Section 14: About CAIR–Pennsylvania

CAIR–Pennsylvania is committed to protecting civil rights, promoting understanding of Islam, and building inclusive communities across the Commonwealth.

If a religious accommodation request is denied or mishandled, families and employees may contact CAIR Philadelphia for guidance and support at [pa.cair.com/report](http://pa.cair.com/report).

### **Contact Information:**

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