

WILLIS DADY EMERGENCY SHELTER

Honoring freedom of religion

Willis Dady recognizes the importance of spirituality to a well-balanced and healthy lifestyle. Indeed, spiritual practices and beliefs may be central to an individual's identity and sense of purpose. As a non-sectarian organization, we honor the rights of individuals to explore and practice their beliefs whatever they may be. We recognize that there are a wide array of religions throughout the World and here in Cedar Rapids. Those we serve may include individuals who practice a particular religion or choose to explore different traditions or none at all. We do not make assumptions about any person's religion or their familiarity with traditions associated with particular religions unless they volunteer information that identifies them as a member of a particular faith or culture. We make information about local religious services and institutions available to our clients and provide information such as the location of particular churches to clients when they ask. Clients are welcome to discuss their religious beliefs with each other and to engage in religious practices so long as such practices are lawful and do not infringe on the safety or disturb the peace of others. Such practices might include Salah, reading the Bible or meditation. Client-initiated small group activities are also allowed, so long as space permits and that no one is either excluded or coerced with regard to participation.

As an agency that receives government and United Way support, we are obligated to make sure that none of our clients ever feels pressured to participate in a particular religious activity. Nor should anyone employed by or representing Willis Dady say or imply that receiving any service depends on participation in religious activities or upon holding particular beliefs. We are committed to creating an environment in which no one is made to feel uncomfortable because of their own or anyone else's religious beliefs. Toward that end, Willis Dady does not allow outside individuals or organizations to conduct religious activities on premises. We *do* invite faith-based groups who are participating in the Our Table Sunday Meals program or other volunteer activities to offer a blessing or prayer at the beginning of the meal or work project. We encourage anyone offering a prayer to honor not only the Divine but the diversity of spiritual practices and beliefs that might be held among those present. Therefore, a prayer should be brief and of a universal nature that focuses on positive messages such as hope and gratitude. We also invite such groups to leave literature about their worship services and other programs if they like.

Questions about particular activities should be directed to the executive director.