Guidelines on Religious Expression

Direct Funding (grant or subgrant)

1. “Inherently religious activities” include worship, the study of sacred writings, prayer, evangelism, and the teaching of religious doctrines.

2. Legitimate service activities can be performed out of a religious motivation.

3. An activity or decision that would be permissible in a program does not become illegitimate merely because a religion might recommend it.

4. Inherently religious activities may be announced and offered on a voluntary basis, as long as it is clear to beneficiaries that participation is not required and nonparticipation will make no difference to their status or receipt of service.

5. The organization’s staff may engage in religious activities outside of the directly funded program.

6. Inherently religious activities must be kept separate, in time or location, from the directly funded program.

7. Inherently religious activities cannot be incorporated into the directly funded program, e.g., by starting a training class with prayer or making the Bible the literacy textbook.

8. Staff may briefly respond to beneficiaries’ religious questions, but any extended religious discussion belongs outside the directly funded program.

9. Religious illustrations and stories may be used, along with other examples, provided that their use does not turn a session into religious training instead of its original purpose.

10. In accounting for income and expenditures, the organization must be able to show that the direct government funds were not spent on inherently religious activities.

Indirect Funding (mentoring scholarship, voucher)

1. Religious discussion and inherently religious activities may be part of the government-supported services.

2. Beneficiaries who object to religious activities choose a different service provider.

3. The government’s “this-worldly” goals for its spending must be achieved.