



FAQs – Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How do I become a volunteer Chaplain?

A. You send an email to abduhafiz@shuracouncil.org expressing your interest to serve as a volunteer chaplain and we will contact you to discuss further.

Q. What all is involved in becoming a volunteer Chaplain?

A. The requirements vary but in general you would be required to take two key steps. (1) Filling an application, and (2) Take a 3 to 5 hours free training program offered by the particular prison.

Q. Once I am fully approved as a volunteer Chaplain, what happens?

A. Although it varies from prison to prison but in general you will be asked to schedule a visit in coordination with your assigned coordinator for worship/education services. In most cases for the first year, a senior volunteer chaplain or a designated officer will escort you during your visit.

Q. If I am approved to volunteer in one prison can I use the same credentials and serve in another prison?

A. The answer is NO. However there could be exceptions. For example, if you are an approved volunteer chaplain in the XYZ County Jail System – they “may” also approve you for all facilities under their jurisdiction.

Q. What types of prisons can I volunteer at?

A. In Southern California, you can volunteer at (1) Federal Prisons or Federal Detention Centers, (2) State Prisons and (3) County Jails.

Q. Can I serve at a prison of opposite gender?

A. In case of Muslim volunteers, we highly recommend gender-specific volunteering although there could be some exceptions.

Q. Do I need to be an Islamic scholar to serve as a volunteer Chaplain?

A. NO. Basic knowledge of Islam is sufficient – such as how to read/recite Quran, write Arabic, lead ritual prayers, help memorize Quran and/or Duas (supplications), teach Islamic manners and etiquettes, explain Islamic beliefs and practices, etc.



Q. Would I get paid to volunteer?

A. Neither Shura Council nor a prison will compensate you for your time and talent but on occasions and when possible Shura Council may reimburse you for gas money.

Q. When can I be disqualified as a volunteer?

A. Among other reasons you can be disqualified as volunteer if the authorities find a discrepancy in your original application or if you didn't declare that your relative was serving time in the prison you chose to volunteer at.

Q. What do I need to take with me when going to prison?

A. You are required to take your government issued picture ID that you will exchange at the security desk for your volunteer badge or guest pass.

Q. What can I take inside a prison?

A. You can only take essentials – such as - a bottle of water or medicine if you are on medication (not the entire prescription but only the amount that you have to take for the duration you plan to serve inside the prison). You can also take book[s] that you may have to use for the services or your car keys.

Q. What can I NOT take inside the prison?

A. Some prisons require that you "cannot" take your phone, wallet, pen/pencil, notepad, briefcase, inside the prison. We highly recommend that you only take your government issued picture ID and your car key (leave all other keys in your car).

Q. What can I bring out of the prison?

A. Nothing, except that Prison Chaplain or designated officials may give you for official business.

Q. What can I NOT bring out of the prison?

A. Nothing. Especially if an inmate gives you a piece of paper or a phone number or a letter to be mailed, you must pointedly refuse and advise them to contact the prison officials. We also recommend that you notify your designated officer or Chaplain that you were being asked to take something out of the prison and that you have declined.



Q. I went to prison to volunteer as planned but they turned me away. What do I do?

A. Occasionally this may happen and when it does, be patient. Ask the authorities if it's a delay to enter or if the facility is shut down. You can then decide to stay or leave, depending on your and prison circumstances.

Also remember that the prison authorities is "not required" to give you any reason for turning you away but in most cases they will let you know why you can't volunteer that day. Often it is because of security reasons. We encourage all volunteers to always remember that you are volunteering for a higher purpose and your reward is secured with God, *InshaAllah*.

Q. What must I NOT do when inside the prison with the inmates?

A. Do not engage in asking personal questions or giving personal information. Always remember that you are there to offer spiritual services and teaching religion - so just do that and nothing more.