

How to support our Muslim Clients and Families during the Islamic Holy Month of Ramadan

During this month, Muslims worldwide will abstain from food & drink during daylight hours. This year, Ramadan can fall during some of the longest days of the year so please be aware that fasting Muslims will abstain from food & drink (including water) for up to 15 hours daily.

It is important that we understand what this month means to Muslims & how we can better serve our Muslim clients & families

The following are steps that we can take to better accommodate our Muslim clients & families:

1. Hold phone meetings in the morning rather than in the afternoon or early evening.
2. Ask how you can provide support during this month. This may mean pushing meetings back until a later date (after Ramadan).
3. Understand that your Muslim clients & families may sleep less during this month since they get up early in the morning (between 4-5 a.m.) for prayers & to eat breakfast. They also may stay up late to engage in optional nighttime prayers starting at 9 p.m.
4. Muslims are encouraged to be self-reflective during this time, they may be engaged in more religious-based behaviors (e.g. performing extra nightly prayers, reading the Qur'an, etc.), which may impact their sleep, energy, & overall psychiatric presentation. Thus, please be mindful when evaluating changes in their sleep, energy, or behavioral patterns, within the context of this month.
5. COVID-19: Decreasing cases have allowed some Muslim clients to have more access and comfort to go to the mosque, visit with family & break their fast with others. Others, however, may wish to be more cautious, & may experience increased anxiety, isolation & stress during this time. Clinicians can possibly help by brainstorming ways to reduce feelings of isolation such as planning zoom "iftars" (meals to break the fast) with family members or finding televised taraweeh (nightly prayers) & Jummah (Friday) prayers.
6. For prescribers: Clients may prefer to observe the fast while on their medications. Please talk with your clients about the impact of their medications while fasting & consider what measures can be taken to support them to complete their fast (e.g. adjusting their medication times, emphasizing hydration, addressing potential heightened med side effects). Exemptions from fasting exist for certain groups of people (e.g. children) or those with particular conditions (e.g. pregnancy), & includes those who have health conditions that would be severely affected (e.g. risk to life) by fasting. Thus, the clinical conversation may include whether your clients can safely fast without risk of severe health decompensation.
7. When the month of Ramadan is over, Muslims celebrate with a festival known as "Eid al-Fitr" (or just "Eid"; estimated to be in the first week of May). This festival may last a couple of days so don't hesitate to ask them about their plans for Eid & understand they may not be available for meetings at this time or kids may not attend school.
8. Because Ramadan starts & ends with the sighting of a new moon, your clients & their families may not know exactly when Eid al-Fitr will begin, so please be mindful that schedules may need to be modified at the last minute.
9. Lastly, & most importantly, do not hesitate to talk with individuals about Ramadan & their plans for the month & the celebrations that follow. Educating yourself about this month & your clients' plans are the most important tools you have to work effectively & competently with your Muslim clients & families.
10. Please feel free to forward or share this info to your clinical colleagues who might find this information helpful in serving their respective Muslim clients & families.



SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH

**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
& RECOVERY SERVICES**

Appreciation to Taha Abdelwahhab, RN MSN, Community Mental Health Nurse, North County Clinic & Muhammad Elbgal, Psychiatric Social Worker, BHRS School Based Team for thinking about & writing the above reflection & recommendations