

Ramadan Guide

For Employers, Institutions, and Service Providers

A Publication of

MERCY

Muslim Education & Resources for Community & Youth

www.mercycentre.ca



About This Guide

This booklet provides practical guidance to help Canadian workplaces, schools, healthcare providers, and community institutions support Muslim employees, students, families, and clients during **Ramadan**.

Ramadan is a sacred month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. Thoughtful planning promotes inclusion, respect, and compliance with Canadian human rights obligations.

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. During this month, Muslims:

- Fast daily from dawn to sunset (no food or drink)
- Increase prayer and spiritual reflection
- Engage in charity and community service
- Attend nightly prayers

The month concludes with **Eid al-Fitr**, a major celebration. Because the Islamic calendar is lunar, Ramadan shifts approximately 10–11 days earlier each year.

Legal Context in Canada

Freedom of religion is protected under the:

- **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**
- **Canadian Human Rights Act**
- Provincial human rights legislation

Employers and institutions have a **duty to accommodate religious practices** to the point of undue hardship.

Understanding Fasting

During Ramadan:

- Muslims do not eat or drink from dawn to sunset.
- Medication schedules may be adjusted (where medically appropriate).
- Energy levels may vary, particularly during long summer fasts in Canada.
- Fasting individuals continue fulfilling their responsibilities.

Not all Muslims fast (e.g., children, elderly, pregnant individuals, or those with medical conditions).

Practical Accommodation Guidelines

1. Workplace & Staff Accommodations

Consider:

- Flexible start/end times where feasible & adjust break schedules
- Sensitivity around physically demanding tasks
- Providing quiet space for prayer

Before Ramadan Begins:

- Share an internal Ramadan accommodation guide with staff.
- Provide brief manager training on religious accommodation.
- Encourage early scheduling discussions.

2. Schools & Educational Institutions

Students who are fasting may:

- Request alternative physical education arrangements
- Need quiet space during lunch periods
- Experience temporary changes in concentration or energy

Recommended Actions:

- Inform teachers and school staff about Ramadan in advance.
- Communicate with parents about available accommodations.

3. Healthcare & Service Providers

Patients or clients who are fasting may:

- Adjust appointment times
- Request scheduling earlier in the day
- Have questions about medication timing

Best Practices:

- Ask respectfully about fasting preferences.
- Provide culturally sensitive care & avoid assumptions

Communication & Inclusion Ideas

1. Share Ramadan & Eid Greetings

- Post a Ramadan greeting on your website and social media.
- Display a “Ramadan Mubarak” or “Ramadan Kareem” message.
- Share an Eid greeting before **Eid al-Fitr**.

This signals respect, inclusion, and cultural awareness.

2. Night Before Ramadan & Eid

- Share a reminder message acknowledging the beginning of Ramadan.
 - Send a short Eid greeting to staff, students, families, or clients.
 - Recognize Eid similarly to other major religious holidays observed in Canada.
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3. Inform Individuals of Their Rights

Before Ramadan:

- Inform employees of their right to request religious accommodation.
- Notify students and parents of available school supports.
- Remind patients and service recipients of their right to respectful and inclusive care.

Clear communication prevents misunderstandings and builds trust.

4. Train Supervisors & Frontline Staff

Provide brief guidance on:

- What fasting involves
- Common accommodation requests
- Respectful communication
- Duty to accommodate under Canadian law

Even short awareness sessions can significantly reduce conflict and confusion.

Community Engagement Opportunities

Organize an Iftar Event

You may consider organizing an **Iftar** (the meal to break the fast at sunset) to promote inclusion and community engagement.

Benefits include:

- Strengthening workplace and school culture
- Building relationships across communities
- Promoting cultural awareness

Iftar events can be hosted internally or in partnership with community organizations.

🔗 See our companion resource:

“How to Organize an Iftar or Eid Lunch/Dinner Event”

Available at: www.mercycentre.ca

Host an Eid Lunch or Recognition Event

After Ramadan, you may consider:

- Hosting an Eid appreciation lunch
- Recognizing Muslim staff and students
- Sharing a short educational message about Eid

Such initiatives demonstrate meaningful inclusion and equity.

Eid al-Fitr Planning

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan.

Employees and students may request one day off.

Planning Tips:

- Allow advance leave requests
- Avoid scheduling major exams, deadlines, or mandatory events on Eid where possible
- Share a public Eid greeting

Eid is one of the most significant celebrations in Islam.

Creating a Ramadan-Ready Organization

A Ramadan-ready organization:

- Plans early
- Communicates clearly
- Trains staff
- Applies accommodations consistently
- Promotes inclusive messaging
- Engages meaningfully with the Muslim community

Most accommodations require minimal adjustment and demonstrate genuine respect.

Key Takeaways

- Ramadan is a deeply significant month for Muslims.
 - Fasting individuals continue working, studying, and receiving services.
 - Canadian law protects religious accommodation rights.
 - Proactive planning strengthens trust, morale, and community relationships.
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For consultation, training, or educational workshops, contact:

MERCY – Muslim Education & Resources for Community & Youth
www.mercycentre.ca

This guide is for educational purposes and does not constitute legal advice.