

# GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONALS WHEN WORKING WITH THE AMISH COMMUNITY

## 1. Individualize the Amish client/patient:

- ⇒ Ask which Amish group the family belongs to, on a continuum of conservative to liberal, as this will influence decisions about accepting professional care and services.
- ⇒ Remember that Amish persons value face-to-face relationships.
- ⇒ Amish clients or patients may ask personal questions of the professional, such as “Are you married?,” “Do you have children?,” “Where do you live?,” and, “Are you related to certain persons?” This helps them to individualize you and determine your place in the overall community. Respond to these questions briefly, but be open and honest.
- ⇒ Don’t be concerned if formal titles are not used to address you. This is not meant to be disrespectful, only to establish a genuine relationship.

## 2. Start where the Amish client/patient is, physically, intellectually, and emotionally:

- ⇒ Accept Amish values, beliefs, customs, and attitudes.
- ⇒ Modify service delivery to accommodate Amish preferences and to overcome the barriers of distance, transportation, and cost. Taking services to the Amish community is appreciated, for example, offering childhood immunizations at a local livestock auction barn.
- ⇒ Provide a hitching rail for the Amish horse and buggy at public buildings, professional offices, and business places.
- ⇒ Observe Amish holidays and respect that Sunday is a day of rest.

## 3. Move at the Amish client’s/patient’s pace:

- ⇒ Remember the pace of Amish life is slow-an Amish buggy travels at about 10 to 20 miles per hour.
- ⇒ Learn the art of “chit-chat” and spend a few minutes initially talking about the weather, crops, local news, and events.
- ⇒ Talk slowly and allow enough time for discussion of an issue.
- ⇒ Remember that language is not a barrier between Amish and non-Amish, except for preschool children who may not speak English. Don’t “talk down” to an Amish client/patient.

# GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONALS WHEN WORKING WITH THE AMISH COMMUNITY (continued)

## 4. Remember that Amish client's/patient's right to self-determination:

- ⇒ Accept parallel health care practices using home remedies and folk practitioners in addition to professional care.
- ⇒ Avoid aggressive legal action to force an Amish family to accept heroic medical care for a family member. They prefer to die at home and accept death as part of God's plan for their lives.
- ⇒ Involve Amish bishops or other representatives in planning programs and services targeted at the Amish community.

## 5. Above all, treat Amish clients/patients with dignity and respect:

- ⇒ Recognize the patriarchal nature of Amish society, but also be aware that Amish women will participate in decision making.
- ⇒ Dress appropriately, especially when visiting an Amish home.
- ⇒ Speak with a soft voice and do not use jargon or slang unless it is commonly used in the local community.
- ⇒ Allow a comfortable physical space between you and the Amish client/patient.
- ⇒ Avoid physical touch, especially between genders, unless appropriate and necessary for professional care.



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