

# MAS-SSF Newsletter

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## Q&A About MAS-SSF

### What is MAS-SSF?

Muslim American Society – Social Service Foundation is a non-for-profit foundation that aids families of the Sacramento community at large and the Muslim community in particular, who need social services in accordance with all applicable United States and California laws and regulations. When serving the Muslim community in particular, the Foundation abides with the principals of the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to the best of its interpretation.

### Who are the MAS-SSF counselors and what is their training?

MAS Social Service Foundation has trained volunteers from various educational and ethnic backgrounds to offer peer counseling. Training was conducted by well known experts and scholars such as Drs. Ekram and Rida Beshir who wrote numerous books on parenting and marriage; Shahina Siddique, President of the "Islamic Social Services Association" of Canada; and Dr. Sameera Ahmad, a clinical psychologist, formerly with Muslim Family Services, Detroit, MI.

Monthly training sessions were also conducted where volunteer peer counselors practiced role playing, watched counseling videos, enhanced communication skills, studied ethics code, and listened to guest speakers in the field.

### What kind of counseling does MAS-SSF offer?

MAS Social Services Foundation is providing a peer counseling service to our community in the following areas:

- Parenting Counseling;
- Marriage Counseling;
- Teen Counseling.

Peer counseling services are offered in English, Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, Fijian, French, Spanish, Somali, Sinhalese, Tamil, Farsi, Pashto, and Sign Languages.

Leave a message and a counselor will contact you shortly to assess your needs and make a convenient appointment. Strict confidentiality is maintained and referral to specialists and professionals are used for complex counseling cases.

### How much does counseling at MAS-SSF cost?

Fees: \$10 per counseling session

### What other services does MAS-SSF currently offer?

MAS Social Service Foundation is also offering a pre-marital course for engaged and/or married couples in their first year of marriage. This one-on-one course, 6 sessions – 2 hour each, deals with:

- Basis of marriage;
- Communication;
- Self-awareness;
- Spirituality;
- Finance and values.

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Leave a message and a counselor will contact you to schedule the course at your convenience. Fees: \$100 including materials

### **What are MAS-SSF's plans for 2008?**

MAS-SSF will offer a course on marriage (see page-3) The staff will facilitate a support group for parents of children with disabilities and programs for seniors. A young Muslim has volunteered to develop a website. By the end of 2008 we hope to have care from licensed mental health professional(s) available through MAS-SSF. If you are or know a licensed mental health professional who would like to volunteer to work with MAS-SSF, please contact us.

### **A Word about Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is the founding principle of the work of MAS-SSF. All MAS-SSF staff are committed to protecting privacy. If you need help, or know someone who does, you can be certain of this. The privacy policy is available in writing. In addition only one appointment is scheduled at a time. Sufficient time is given between appointments so that no one else will be coming or going from an appointment when a client arrives. Of course it is important that community members understand how important confidentiality is. Many Muslims suffer in silence because they are afraid of public embarrassment and shame. This will only change if they feel their privacy is safe when they ask for help. MAS-SSF staff will not answer questions about clients from friends and family without the client's permission. We request that friends and family not ask MAS-SSF volunteers about clients. The intention might be good, but the consequence will be not be. Clients will be afraid to seek help. ❖

### **How Children Grow - Dr. Omar Ahmed**

Children across the world experience similar developmental milestones regardless of their cultural and social exposures. Yet the interactions and experiences infants and young children encounter can enhance or delay their developmental progress. Caregivers do not need to spend a lot of money or enroll their children in specialty classes to optimize childhood development. Love, nurture, and practice can help a child thrive without resorting to fancy gimmicks. It is one of the miracles of Allah that the diversity of the world springs forth from such similar beginnings.

The development of a child progresses through some known sequences. For instance, motor skills develop from the head down and from center out. Control of the head and neck occurs before a child learns to use their arms and legs in a coordinated fashion. Similarly, before infants learn to manipulate their fingers they first figure out how to wave their arms and legs. Knowledge of this developmental progression can help parents understand why children can be so messy in attempting to feed themselves (still developing their coordination) and why toddlers fall so much (their minds tell them to go faster than their little feet are ready!). Understanding this can encourage caregivers to patiently allow their children to practice these skills.

Speech also progresses through stages, starting from the cry of a newborn, to the song-like cooing of a 3-4 month old, progressing to the babbling consonants of the 6-7 month old, and eventually becoming distinguishable words around their first birthday. This speech pattern develops regardless of the language(s) spoken at home.

However, one fascinating aspect of infant language development is the capacity of the human brain to distinguish sounds from different languages. It is often much easier for a child to learn multiple languages and create verbalizations unique to certain dialects than it is for an adult whose brain is no longer flexible.

As children grow, they become less dependent on their immediate caregivers and establish a sense of independence.

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This can lead to conflicts as power struggles develop.

Two year olds learn to say “no”□, and try to get a sense of rules, consequences, and what they are capable of doing. Consistency is key at this age, as is the flexibility to allow them to learn from their explorations. Fast-forwarding to the teenage years, these young adults become more influenced from the society around them, and often resist parental restrictions. Again, consistency in discipline and flexibility in allowing safe explorations are important, but so is the foundation of communication, love, and trust that hopefully was established in the early years.

For more information on early childhood development, please see:

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<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/A ctEarly/default.htm>

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*Dr. Ahmed is a pediatrician working at UC Davis Medical Center and a MAS-SSF counselor. ❖*

### **MAS-SSF and SALAM to present course on marriage in Islam**

MAS-SSF staff will be teaching a course on marriage at SALAM in 2008. Material will be based on respected Muslim leaders such as Sr. Shahiina Siddiqui and Dr. Rida and Dr. Ekram Bashir as well as reputable publications about the fiqh of marriage. This 12 week course will provide an overview of the various aspects related to marriage including historical perspectives of marriage in Islam, conditions of marriage, the process of marriage, rights and responsibilities of marriage, strategies for a successful marriage, and misconceptions of marriage. Materials will be presented from an Islamic perspective utilizing examples from the lives of the prophets and other Islamic references. The course will be suitable for single people 17 years of age and older, younger than 17 with parental permission, newly married, parents, and those who wish to learn more about the topic. ❖

### **MAS-SSF Reaches Out to Serve Sacramento County**

MAS-SSF now has a representative, Sr. Michelle Balkis, on the Sacramento County Mental Health Services Act Steering Committee. The services act is also known as Prop.63. The goal is to replace the current “have a crisis first and then receive help” approach to mental illness with a state-of-the-art, culturally competent system that focuses on prevention and early intervention, promotes recovery/wellness for adults and older adults with severe mental illness and resiliency for children with serious emotional disorders and their families. In its implementation responsibilities under the MHSA (Mental Health Services Act) state Department of Mental Health pledges to look beyond “business as usual” to help build a system where access will be easier, services are more effective, out-of-home and institutional care are reduced and stigma toward those with severe mental illness or serious emotional disturbance no longer exists.

The MHSA consists of five components. Community Services and supports (CSS) Workforce Education and Training (WET), Capital Facilities and Technology, Prevention and Early intervention (PEI), and Innovation. MAS-SSF is hoping to work with the county in the prevention and early intervention component. Our representative, Michelle Balkis, MAS-SSF Chief Counselor, was appointed to serve a two-year term on the Steering Committee. If anyone is interested in going to committee meetings, the website is

<http://www.sacdhhs.com/article.asp?ContentID=1324>

Please note that language interpreters and reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities will be provided if notice is given one week in advance of a meeting. ❖

## **MAS-SSF Counselors Visit the World-Famous Amen Clinic**

A famous HADITH says, "Seek knowledge unto China." Fairfield is not as far as China but important knowledge about how our brains work and affect how we feel and act is being discovered there. So MAS-SSF staff went learn more.

The Amen Clinic in Fairfield is at the forefront of psychiatric care world-wide. Doctors are actually looking at the brain and brain function. More and more it is becoming clear that the distinction between mental and physical health is not real. Both genetic and environmental causes may be responsible for illnesses. Problems in the way the brain works cause treatable diseases such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia. Dr. Daniel Amen, a Lebanese-American, uses state-of-art SPECT scans to look at the brain to diagnose and plan treatment for patients. Three members of the MAS-SSF were invited to a clinic open house where they were given a tour, met Dr. Amen, other clinic doctors, and the staff of counselors. Dr. Amen now teaches psychiatry at UC Irvine and the Amen Clinic has locations in Southern California, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., as well as Fairfield. Grants and loans (interest-free for a period of time) may be available for low-income patients without insurance. For more information, Dr. Amen's book [Change Your Brain, Change Your Life](#) is a good introduction to his work. [Making A Good Brain Great](#) is another. He also writes a free email newsletter. Go to [www.amenclinics.com](http://www.amenclinics.com) to learn more and subscribe. ❖

### **Do you Have Questions About Parenting, Marriage, and Being a Muslim Teen in America?**

Dear Readers,

Each issue of the MAS-SSF newsletter will print a thoughtful question about parenting, marriage, or teen issues submitted by a reader. MAS-SSF will seek out a qualified person to answer the question. Please submit questions to [ssf@mas-sac.org](mailto:ssf@mas-sac.org). ❖

**Teens!** Send us your news and thoughts for Muslim teens growing up in Sacramento

Each issue of the MAS-SSF newsletter will feature items of interest to teens. Anyone, including teens, wishing to submit an item should send it to [ssf@mas-sac.org](mailto:ssf@mas-sac.org).

*Muslim Girl* is a new magazine that features a combination of articles about topics of interest to teens, activities and accomplishments of young Muslim women, as well as fashion, health, and religion. Subscriptions are reasonable, about the cost of a pizza. For more information, go to the magazine's website, [www.muslimgirlworld.com](http://www.muslimgirlworld.com).

*Islamica* is another magazine suitable for older teens and adults. It is beautifully printed and contains many informative and thoughtful articles. Some are written by the new American-born generation of Muslims. To see the current issue and back issues go to [www.islamicamagazine.com](http://www.islamicamagazine.com). ❖

### **Food for Thought**

Thank you to Dr. Omar Ahmed for the following Hadith: The Prophet (saw) said, "The gates of paradise will be opened,,and every servant (of God) who does not associate anything with Him will be forgiven, except for the man who has a grudge against his brother. (About them) it will be said: 'Delay these two until they reconcile with one another.'" (Muslim) Printed in Al-Jumuah Magazine, Volume 19 Issue 02. Safar 1428 H.

Dr. Ahmed wrote, "I thought it was a nice reminder of the importance of conflict resolution in Islam, and highlights the Islamic significance of the work MAS-SSF is trying to do. ❖

### **New in 2008: Family Development Circle**

MAS-SSF is planning to start a Family Development Circle. Members will be asked to commit to supporting SSF work with a small monthly donation, about the cost of a large pizza. Members will receive certain benefits, such as receiving this newsletter by e-mail. Look for more information in the next issue. Please start thinking about how you can support MAS-SSF work in the Sacramento community in the coming year. ■

