

**Topic: Employment**  
(Original plan developed by November 2007 U.S. Cultural Orientation Professional Development Workshop participants in Worcester, MA, and further developed by the Cultural Orientation Resource Center)

**Activity: Integrating Religious Clothing and Work Uniforms for Females**

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<b>Objectives</b>	To empower group members with the skills to thoughtfully integrate religious clothing requirements with required work uniforms.
<b>Lesson Time</b>	50 minutes
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• White board</li><li>• Markers</li><li>• Culturally appropriate clothing to represent population's religious traditions and requirements</li><li>• Standards work uniform (also have participants bring in their own uniforms if possible)</li></ul>
<b>Discussion Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who here wears something because of their faith, spirituality or traditions from their home country?</li><li>• Who here has ever been asked to wear a work uniform they are not fully comfortable in?</li></ul>
<b>Practice</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Have participants dress teachers in traditional garments and explain the significance of each item.</li><li>2. Have a participant or a co-teacher be dressed in a standard uniform. Have the women brainstorm what pieces of traditional clothing could be worn with the uniform as is. Ask if there is an appropriate way to modify any articles of clothing for safety reasons while still serving the clothing article's intended purpose.</li><li>3. Explain to group members that their employers are required by law to make reasonable accommodations for them to practice their religion or tradition through wearing certain clothing. Exceptions to this rule would be explained, such as issues of personal safety or cleanliness.</li><li>4. If the participants were able to bring their uniforms, have them work in small groups to problem-solve any areas they are feeling uncomfortable with.</li></ol>

**Cultural Notes**

There are many cultural elements to consider when teaching this lesson. It is important that the teachers have some awareness of religious clothing in advance to prepare for the lesson. Also, some issues of dress may be taboo in mixed gender groups or with outsiders. For example, many clothing requirements center on modesty and ideas about sexuality. As such, the teacher may wish not to conduct this lesson with a particular group if the group is mixed-gender or if it would be culturally inappropriate to discuss these issues in public. The teacher who embarks on this lesson without considering these issues may be faced with a very silent classroom. In addition, this lesson would be inappropriate for groups who consider the articles of clothing to be sacred. Putting these on someone outside of their group may be seen as inappropriate.

The cultural considerations of this exercise also add to its strength. The exercise is flexible and can be used with a wide range of groups, religions and populations. It provides hands-on learning for those in the group with limited English skills. Further, this lesson also demonstrates cultural humility, since it begins by placing the teacher in a place of learning.

**Evaluation**

This exercise can be evaluated by examining the level of participation and collaboration. Observing whether the participants can work with their own uniform in small groups can serve as an evaluative tool. Listening to role plays and answering wrap-up questions posed by the participants will also help the teacher to gauge if the concepts have been understood and translated into practice.

**Variations**

1. Have the participants role play how to have a conversation with their supervisor regarding issues of uniforms and religious clothing. If conducting this part of the activity, teachers can first demonstrate the role play.