

AAIDD Interest Network Annual Plan & Yearly Report

Planning and reporting on Interest Network activities designed to fulfil their purpose.
(See the AAIDD *Interest Networks Leadership Manual* for the purpose of the Interest Networks.)

Interest Network:	Religion and Spirituality
Lead Contact Person(s):	Deborah Fisher, deborahmfisher@gmail.com (2023-2024) Keith Dow, kdow@karis.org (2024-2025)
Next Scheduled Election & Leadership Position(s) that will be Open for Nomination:	June 2026, President & Vice-President (Chair, Co-chair)
2023-2024 Report	For the year that just ended (July 1-June 30), indicate objectives met, activities completed, and funds used. In addition, please note if/how any activities enhanced diversity, equity, inclusion, or justice.
Continue to Broaden Interest	This goal was mostly met as evidenced by our continued focus on training and educating providers, DSP's, people with disabilities and their families and faith communities. Our active members increased with representatives from a variety of communities, but we have not yet reached a broader group of members from faiths outside of Christian and Jewish communities. Our webinar series was well received and continues to generate interest. We partnered with RespectAbility which facilitated a broader outreach. The topic followed up on our Forum topic of Trauma Informed practices. The title was, Spiritual Dimensions of Trauma, Healing, and Resiliency. In addition to experts from the field including Karyn Harvey, Ph.D., John Keesler, Ph.D., Lida Merrill, M.Th. and Pdraic Collins-Bohrer, M.Div, we partnered with the Creative Arts SIN for the final presentation by Yumi Shirai, Ph.D.
Explore R&S Certification	This goal was not achieved but continues to be an area of interest among members.
CQL Spirituality Guidelines	We were very pleased to successfully connect with CQL and begin an important dialogue. They included a piece entitled <i>Spirituality: Definitions, Barriers, and Best Practices</i> in their Capstone Newsletter and hosted an introductory webinar on the topic. They have expressed interest in continuing to build on these activities.
DSP Religion and Spirituality Education and Support	This topic continues to be an important focus for our work. Most of our activities focused on ways to engage, educate, and support DSP's role in ensuring that supported people access their faith/spiritual community of choice. Further, we have started to address the spiritual needs of DSPs, as an important component of their work.
Monthly Meetings	

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Most of the monthly meetings brought in 10-12 active participants, some of whom are new to the group. These attendees actively participated and contributed to the IN's programs and discussions.

Annual Events

- Reimagining Spirituality Leadership Award was presented to Rev Dr. Erin Raffety of Princeton Theological Seminary and Princeton University.
- The annual Forum was offered during the Monday afternoon, pre-conference time-frame. In keeping with our focus for the year, the topic was *Make it Happen: Practical Strategies for Moving from Policies, Plans and Preferences to Inclusion in Faith and/or Spiritual Communities*. Twenty-one people attended, many of them new to our group. The response was positive.
- The annual business meeting was conducted after the Forum, which resulted in a bigger turnout than in the previous year.
- The annual dinner was also held on the Monday evening prior to the official start of the conference.
- We were very pleased to provide a scholarship to a self-advocate so he could participate in the conference.

2024-2025 Plan: Goals, Objectives, Activities, and Strategies

For the **coming year** (July 1-June 30), describe the planned objectives, activities, and proposed expenditure of funds. In addition, please note if/how any activities will address diversity, equity, inclusion, or justice.

Continue to Broaden and Deepen Engagement

- **Webinars:** We will continue offering some form of a webinar series or focused training of some kind, as [these series](#) have been well-attended and, in partnership with [Disability Belongs](#) are also accessible (CART, sign language interpretation available).
- **Newsletters:** Our network has a subscriber base of over 600 contacts who wish to follow along with what we do. We will begin offering occasional newsletters to this base while continuing to build into our core steering committee through monthly meetings.
- **Promotional Material:** We have had good success with a poster at the Annual Meetings and occasional handouts, promos in emails through AAIDD, and other forms of getting the word out. This year we endeavour to release a short teaser video that encourages people to join our network/the AAIDD. We also really like the idea of a postcard like the Creative Arts Interest Network!
- **Revise Website:** We will be reviewing our mission and goals in the coming months and work to make our website (<https://aaiddreigion.org>) more accessible through the use of plain language.

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Invite Diverse Participation: Where the Network has largely been comprised of Jewish and Christian representatives, we would love to have a wider array of participants from various faith traditions and also those who might be spiritual but not religious or who simply see the value of spirituality, generously understood. Last year we helped sponsor a self-advocate to join our network activities, and we wish to continue to offer this sponsorship if possible and encourage self-advocates to participate and contribute to our monthly meetings as well as the annual meeting/forum.

Enhance DSP Education and Support: This topic continues to be an important focus for our work. Most of our activities focused on ways to engage, educate, and support DSP's role in ensuring that supported people access their faith/spiritual community of choice. Further, we have started to address the spiritual needs of DSPs, as an important component of their work.

Develop R&S Certification: We have begun generating content toward a revised Spirituality Certification offered by our network. Where in the past it was more geared towards chaplains, we are looking at making this helpful for DSP's and other agency representatives who wish to lead in these areas. Our ideas to develop this certification:

- Generate content through webinar
- Draw on existing approaches (e.g. Stone Belt spiritual engagement coach)
- Develop additional learning.
- Test content/prototype

Continue to develop/contribute to CQL Spirituality Guidelines: We will continue to contribute to accreditation and quality-of-service guidelines that relate to spirituality and meaning-making for people with I/DD. We wish to continue investing in [our relationship with CQL](#).