



Health Communications Consultants
Knowledge, Innovation, & Equity.

Mennonites and Amish Resources July 2021

Mennonites are Anabaptists, which are a faith stream within Christianity. Anabaptists means re-baptizing. Mennonites are named from a Dutch priest who embraced Anabaptist theology as an alternative to Catholicism.

Anabaptism/Mennonite Christians tend to shape beliefs around 3 core values:

1. Jesus is the center of our faith.
2. Community is the center of our lives.
3. Reconciliation is the center of our work.

Mennonites and Amish are both Anabaptists and share common historical roots. To learn more about Mennonites visit this page:

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/who-are-mennonites/faq-about-mennonites/>

COVID-19 Outbreak in an Amish Community-Ohio, May 2020 MMWR describing outbreak of COVID-19 in an Amish community in Ohio.

[COVID-19 Outbreak in an Amish Community — Ohio, May 2020 | MMWR \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/6005a1.htm)

- Health departments should continue to build trusting relationships with Amish community institutions and leaders.
- Health education materials should be provided through local networks. The Amish rarely use electronic communication; however, well-established Amish media networks (newspapers and radio stations), local Amish steering committees (serving as liaisons to various government levels), and Amish- and non-Amish–owned businesses with Amish employees can help share COVID-19 prevention messages.
- Messages using culturally acceptable language emphasizing protection of family and community might help persuade community members to apply these strategies.
- Access to testing services needs to be timely and convenient, with active support from community leaders.
- Health departments and the community should continually share information and concerns about mitigation strategies and barriers to their use. Establishing points of contact within communities might allow health department staff members to promptly share updated or new information.

- Despite limited resources, strengthening collaboration between and across health departments and communities might help overcome cultural barriers.
- Although Amish communities might be experiencing challenges with preventing and mitigating SARS-CoV-2 transmission, leveraging Amish cultural beliefs of communal responsibility could help limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

Guidelines for Professionals When Working with the Amish Community

<http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Curriculum/522SprvsrylssslnChldSxlAbs/Hndts/HO15GdlnsFrPrfssnlSWhnWrkngWthThAmshCmmnty.pdf>

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.

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.

Bridging the Divide: Challenges and Opportunities for Public Sector Agricultural Professionals Working with Amish and Mennonite Producers of Conservation

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00267-018-0998-5>

- Study analyzes interview data from 23 Amish farmers in one region of Indiana and 18 public sector agricultural professionals.
- Educators should design outreach strategies that take into consideration that faith convictions and conservation concerns may vary greatly based on the specificities of the particular Plain church group.
- Plain (people of conservative Anabaptist faith which include Mennonite and Amish)
- Less access to electronic resources due to church regulations and are often averse to working with government agencies.
- Plain people have distinctly different social networks from Non-Plain groups as their family, church and work life networks are often highly integrated and overlapping.
- Plain communities strive to and may be discouraged from attending non-Plain people events.
- Plain farmers seek to be separate from not only the general "world," but specifically from government, as their history of persecution in Europe has established a strong feeling in favor of separation between the Christian church and the state

- Farmer decisions are embedded in the social and cultural identity of the farmer, which is particularly important when trying to conduct outreach to underserved groups like Amish and Mennonites
- they have to have trust that you're not there trying to get them to change things that are ingrained in their society that they don't think needs to be changed.
- The Amish are extremely reluctant to participate in anything that's going to take any kind of federal funding.
- Another issue with agencies working with the Amish is the personal nature in which they operate and the issue of staff turnover in the agencies. It can take a significant amount of time to develop relationships with Plain producers, and thus a retirement or movement of a trusted agency representative can be a major loss regarding conservation progress in a particular Plain community.

Mennonite Church USA shares Resources for Managing Coronavirus

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/news/mennonite-church-usa-managing-coronavirus/>

- This site contains resources shared by the Mennonite Church USA on COVID-19

In our search for Mennonite information, we found this Resource Guide for Healthcare Professionals in an Interfaith World: Caring Across Cultures and Belief Systems created by Roswell Park Cancer Institute

<https://www.roswellpark.org/sites/default/files/node-files/page/nid940-21946-caring-across-cultures-web.pdf>