



FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

*Amana, Accountability,
and Our Role*



AGENDA

- **Faith Educator** Qualities and Qualifications
- **Boundaries** of Teacher-Student Relationships
- **Parental Guidelines** for Choosing Faith Educators
- **Action Steps** to Help Your Children



FAITH EDUCATOR

Qualities and Qualifications

CONFUSING LANDSCAPE

Finding, choosing, and trusting teachers of faith education can be confusing for several reasons:

- **Terminology**
- **Accessibility**
- **Online vs. In-Person Options**



COMMON FAITH EDUCATOR TERMINOLOGY

TERM	QUALITIES
Shaykh(a)	Devoted life to research, writing, and teaching; senior in age or knowledge
Mufti(ya)	Received license to give <i>fatwa</i> (religious edict); requires rigorous study
'Alim(a)	"Scholar"; Indo-Pakistan Context: Completed 'Alim 6-Year Program
Imam	"Leader" of a congregation; does not necessarily indicate depth of religious study
Ustadh(a)	"Teacher"; often used for younger people who are not senior enough for Shaykh(a)
Sidi	"My Master"; honorific that is used more in traditional circles of knowledge
Qari (Sahib)	"Reciter"; used specifically for teachers of Quran recitation and memorization
Brother/ Sister	Generic title for someone gives religious advice; could be a student of knowledge

CREDENTIALS TERMINOLOGY

TERM	DEFINITION
Sanad/ Isnad	Chain of transmission, possessed by a teacher for a specific set of content, that connects the individual to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
Ijaza	License granted by a teacher for a person to teach or convey a specific set of content, with conditions.
Silsila	Another term for the connection between an individual and a specific tradition within Islamic History.



ACCESSIBILITY

While families used to be limited to faith educators based on geography, the internet has allowed for many families to find options for teachers:

- Courses (live or on-demand) with reputable institutions
- Courses (live or on-demand) with individuals (self-promotion)
- Online Islamic Schools
- Online tutoring services, especially for Quran

Social Media has provided access to lots of bite-sized information. Individuals or institutions utilize this to boost their online presence. This format prioritizes entertainment over substance and *sanad*.



ONLINE v. IN-PERSON

Due to the availability and ease of access of online options, many avail themselves of those services. However, there are important considerations:

- Families and students are not able to gauge a specific instructor's character and behavior outside of the classroom setting.
- Families may assume an online option is safer than in-person and be less vigilant in monitoring the teacher-student relationship.
- Online teachers may not be as forthcoming in their credentials, affiliations, and conflicts of interest, since personal connection may be absent.



BOUNDARIES

Teacher-Student Relationships

BOUNDARIES



All faith educators should uphold the following boundaries:

- Limited and appropriate physical contact with students
- Professionalism in language (talking to and about students)
- Professionalism in behavior (being on time, prepared, speaking in an appropriate tone with students)
- Avoid 1-on-1 interactions with students (same or opposite gender)

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse refers to any interaction between a child and an adult - or another child - in which the child is used for sexual stimulation or gratification of the perpetrator. This type of abuse can include:

- **Physical Contact:** touching or fondling of child, forced sexual activity, or any act that violates the child's physical boundaries
- **Non-Contact:** exposing a child to inappropriate sexual material, indecent exposure, encouraging a child to engage in sexually-explicit behavior without contact, taking videos/photos, using sexually suggestive language.
- **Grooming:** when a perpetrator builds trust and establishes a relationship with a child with the goal of abusing the child.

ABUSE TACTICS

Tactics of individuals to engage in sexual abuse of children include:

- Testing physical boundaries through touches that are initially non-threatening. After time, the types of touches escalate.
- Asking children to keep secrets, framing them as harmless.
- Offering gifts, treats, or privileges that create a sense of indebtedness or loyalty.
- Arrange private moments such as offering to babysit and giving rides, while discouraging such interactions with others.
- Faith educators: distortion of religious authority to claim their actions are sanctioned religiously; framing inappropriate behavior and secrecy as a means of protecting their “honor”; threatening religious consequences

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS

Indicators given by a child that may point to abuse can be:

- **Behavioral** : child withdrawal, increased aggression, regressive behavior, fear of people or places; avoiding normal physical contact
- **Physical** : bruising, injury, discomfort or pain, frequent headaches, stomach aches, avoidance, unexplained panic attacks, etc.
- **Emotional** : persistent sadness, lack of energy, unexplained mood swings, excessive clinginess or separation anxiety



PARENTAL GUIDANCE

for Choosing Faith Educators

VETTING

When considering a faith educator, consider teacher openness in admitting their qualifications :

- Who are their teachers? *Sanad & Ijāza*
- Where did they study? *Institutions*
- With whom are they affiliated? *Organizational reputation*
- Are there any potential conflicts of interest?
- Are they teaching a subject they are qualified to teach?

Imam Al-Shafi'i said: "I wish that whoever learns from me would not attribute a single *harf* back to me." [Badr al-Dīn ibn al-Jamā'a]



ENVIRONMENT

When considering a faith educator, consider the environment and medium of teaching:

- Students should never be alone (1-on-1) and inaccessible (in-person or virtual)
- Teachers and students should maintain proper attire
- Physical contact should be limited and appropriate such as side hugs, high fives, and handshakes
- Children and families should feel a sense of professionalism when communicating (e.g. using institution email, avoid referring to students with words like “darling” “sweetheart,” etc.), as this creates an environment of safety and expectations for behavior



CONTENT

When considering a faith educator, consider the content being covered by the teacher. Parents should:

- know the scope and sequence of content
- feel comfortable requesting review of materials
- regularly check student progress and/or work
- trust their intuition when hearing of something that seems 'off'

Parents should work towards their personal literacy of religious content so they can monitor their children's study of faith education.



ACTION STEPS

to Help Your Children

TALKING TO CHILDREN

It is important to speak to your children about bodily safety. parents should talk to their children about:

In general,

- Proper names of private parts
- “No, Go, Tell” strategy
- Identifying trusted adults
- Secrets (Safe vs. Unsafe examples)
- Responding to your child if they relay a concern (not ignoring or minimizing it)



CHILD DISCLOSURE

If a child discloses abuse (or any warning signs), parents should:

- Avoid expressing strong emotional reactions
- Avoid blaming or negative questioning
(e.g., *why didn't you tell me earlier?*)
- Avoid making promises you cannot keep
(e.g., *this will never happen again*)
- Avoid confronting the perpetrator
- Avoid pushing for details → give child space to disclose at their pace
- Avoid dismissing their feelings



ACTION FOR WARNING SIGNS

If a parent notices behavior from a faith educator that is not criminal, but might be a red flag or warning sign, they should:

- trust their intuition
- immediately remove their child from the course/program
- report the teacher to their institution/file a complaint (if applicable)
- consult a mental health professional
- reach out to a trusted Muslim professional



ACTION FOR ABUSE

If a parent has a suspicion about abuse or their child discloses abuse about themselves or another child, they should:

- Call 9-1-1 if fearing immediate harm
- contact local child protection services or law enforcement
- immediately remove their child from the course/program
- report the teacher to their institution/file a complaint (if applicable)
- consult mental health professional
- reach out to a trusted Muslim professional



CLOSING

RESOURCES

- **Naseeha Mental Health-USA Helpline: 1 (866) 627-3342**
24/7, multiple languages offered
- **A Soulful Islamic Guide: Child Sexual Abuse Prevention**
Sameera Qureshi, MS OTR
- **InShaykhsClothing.com: Overcoming Spiritual Abuse**
- **Important Muslim Organizations**
 - Khalil Center: Psychological & Spiritual Wellness Center
 - Maristan: Mental Health Services
 - The Family & Youth Institute



CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Always be actively involved in your child's education
- Children are our *amana* as parents and educators
- Dua and istikhara are important tools for decisions
- We assume good of Allah
- We trust Him to take care of us
- We also "tie our camel" and are vigilant
- Allah will hold people accountable



وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ
أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

The believers, both men and women, are guardians of one another. They encourage good and forbid evil, establish prayer and pay Zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. It is they who will be shown Allah's mercy. Surely Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. [9:71]

QUESTIONS