

Somali Minnesota

Minnesota has the largest Somali community in the United States. Families live across the Twin Cities and in Greater Minnesota. Arrival after the 1991 collapse of the Somali state is part of the community's refugee history. DHS staff today also serve a large U.S.-born generation and work with families through disability waivers and child welfare. Counts differ by source, so include the source date with any number you cite.

Maintained by: Equity and Inclusion Operations Consultant

A story still being written

Culture lives in what people create and share. The Somali Museum of Minnesota brings Somali art, dance, and cultural traditions into Minnesota's public life. Its story began with objects collected by café owner Osman Ali—a personal collection that grew into a place for learning across generations and communities.

- **Meet the Somali Museum of Minnesota** — <https://www.mnhs.org/mnopedia/search/index/place/somali-museum-minnesota>

A different starting point

Think of a family you might meet through your work. Alongside the support they seek, what knowledge, relationships, and ambitions might they bring? What would you ask to learn more?

Community overview

The community includes people who are more or less observant, women who lead households, businesses, and finances, young people who have never lived in Somalia, and people who will not discuss clan with an outsider. No one description captures every Somali person or family.

Names and terms

Somali; Somali Minnesotan; Somali American

Also used: Somali-American; East African (umbrella; not a substitute)

Naming follows a given name, father's name, and grandfather's name. Many people do not use a family surname the way a database expects one. Do not invent a last name because a field requires it.

Ask how the person wants to be addressed and which name appears on their documents.

History and place

Origins and the Founding of a People

Somali identity is older than the 1960 republic, older than colonial borders, and older than the refugee file. Somali people are a Cushitic-speaking nation of the Horn of Africa.

Older than the state

Pastoral and urban life, Islam (overwhelmingly Sunni, with a long Sufi history), poetry as prestige speech, xeer (customary law), and clan genealogies are older than Italian and British colonial administrations and older than the Somali Democratic Republic.

Clan

Clan — qabiil — is paternal lineage. It organizes social life, marriage, and, in the homeland, political conflict. Major clan-families named in public literature include Darod, Hawiye, Dir, Isaaq, and the Digil-Mirifle (Rahanweyn) grouping associated with Maay speech in the south. That sentence is literacy for the meeting. It is not something you ask in a Minnesota lobby as an icebreaker. The civil war was organized partly along clan lines. Many Minnesota families will not discuss clan with an outsider because it divides neighborhoods and marriages. If they name it, you listen.

1960 and 1991

The modern Somali state united British Somaliland and Italian Somalia in 1960. Siad Barre's regime (1969–1991) ended in collapse. 1991 is the foundational political event of the contemporary diaspora: state failure, civil war, famine, camps, and flight. Somaliland declared independence in 1991 and is not universally recognized. Some Minnesota families will name Somaliland as a separate political project. A waiver meeting is not the place to referee that.

What people brought

Standard Somali (Maxaa Tiri) and Maay, Arabic for religion, kinship obligation, oral skill and poetry, business and improvisation, Islam as daily order for many, and a living memory of a state that failed them. What they met in Minnesota: an English form, one "African" checkbox, and often one interpreter labeled "Somali."

This is a people with a literature, a legal custom, a diaspora, and a Minnesota present. It is not a camp origin myth. History is literacy for the meeting. It is not a speech you give the family.

The Geography of the Somali World

The Somali-inhabited Horn is not one political story.

Homelands

Somalia, Somaliland (which declared independence in 1991 and is not universally recognized), Puntland, and Somali regions of Kenya and Ethiopia matter to how families name home. Some Minnesota families will name Somaliland as a separate political project. Listen if they name it.

Diaspora

The diaspora is global: Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen, the Gulf, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Canada, and

the United States. Minnesota became the largest U.S. community through refugee resettlement and secondary migration — people who landed first in another state and then moved here for work, family, mosques, and a critical mass of Somali life.

In the United States, other significant communities exist in Columbus, Seattle, San Diego, Lewiston–Portland (Maine), and parts of the Upper Midwest. Minnesota is not “all Somalis,” and Cedar-Riverside is not all of Minnesota.

Minnesota and Somali History

Minnesota holds the largest Somali community in the United States. That is not a slogan. It is why this page has to be as complete as the African American intelligence — because this department will meet this community on waivers, child welfare, health care, cash, food, and employment.

Places, not a blob

Cedar-Riverside in Minneapolis (early hub, still a hub, not the whole map); Karmel Mall and the surrounding commercial life; Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center; St. Paul; Rochester, St. Cloud, Willmar, Worthington, Owatonna, and other Greater Minnesota cities with work and housing. Compass: about one in five Somali Minnesotans lives outside the Twin Cities.

Institutions

Partners include the Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota; Somali Museum of Minnesota; mosques and Islamic civic organizations; Somali parent autism networks; culturally specific providers; CECLC as a department door — not the whole community.

Minnesota-specific evidence includes the 2014 MDH qualitative study with the University of Minnesota, Confederation of Somali Community, and SoLaHmo: shame and blame, wait lists, doctors who said nothing was wrong, English-only meetings, fear of housing loss, and parents who wanted peers who share language.

Somali staff are colleagues, not a stand-in for the community. A museum visit is optional professional development. It does not make you the expert.

Culture and everyday life

People, place, and perspective

This brief is about Somali people — Soomaali. It is a Cushitic-speaking people of the Horn of Africa and a Minnesota community: people with origins in Somalia and Somali-inhabited regions of Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti, including those who arrived after the 1991 collapse of the Somali state, those who came through other countries, and the large U.S.-born second generation.

Who this is

Minnesota holds the largest Somali community in the United States. Counts disagree. Minnesota Compass (ACS 2019–2023) puts Somali ancestry near 79,449. Other ACS-based reporting in 2024–2025 has been cited near 100,000–107,000 statewide. Date the number you use. Compass: about 78.1% Twin

Cities, 21.9% Greater Minnesota; 47.1% age 17 or younger; 3.8% age 65+; 55.8% foreign-born in that vintage. A majority of the children are U.S.-born. Cedar-Riverside and Karmel Mall are hubs, not the map.

The diversity inside this people is the point. A 70-year-old first-wave elder who arrived from the camps, a Maay-speaking mother in Worthington, a Benadiri family, a U.S.-born college student who uses English with friends and Somali with a grandmother, a woman who runs a mall stall and a waiver household in the same week, a person who left the mosque and still eats halal — share a people and do not share a Tuesday.

Who this is not

This is not a Census “Black” mash. It is not the African American cultural intelligence with a different flag. It is not Liberian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Oromo, or Eritrean. Shared race in the United States is not shared culture. Shared Islam is not shared culture.

How to read this

Read it as an orientation for educators, healthcare providers, social workers, county and state staff, and anyone whose work brings them into sustained contact with Somali individuals, families, and communities. A church is not this page. A full mosaic is not a stereotype. A stereotype is when this page becomes the person in the lobby.

Always defer to the person in front of you. This page is a hypothesis you still test on this family. There is no single Somali household.

The facts that follow are meant to help you meet people well — how family is named, what respect looks like, what a greeting carries, what a form may land on. Counts are dated. History is here so the meeting is clearer, not so you deliver a lecture.

1991, Camps, and Resettlement — Foundational Event

If the Great Migration is the foundational demographic event of modern Black America, 1991 and what followed is the foundational event of Somali Minnesota.

Collapse, camps, resettlement

State collapse, clan war, famine, and years in camps (Dadaab, Kakuma, and others) produced a refugee generation. U.S. resettlement and then secondary migration built this state's community. Churches, volunteer agencies, and kin already here pulled people north.

Who the desk meets now

The desk in 2026 does not only meet that first wave. It meets their children — U.S.-born, English-dominant with peers, still translating for parents, still unable to get Maay in the lobby. If you only know “refugee,” you will miss the 20-year-old who has never lived in Somalia and still cannot get the right interpreter for a grandmother.

Distrust of government has a source. So does the skill of making a way through systems that were not built for you. Public attacks on this community — and politics that treat Somali Minnesotans as a threat — are current structure. A DHS badge is not automatically read as help.

Family

Family is large. Elders often speak first. Decision-making may be family decision-making, not an individual consumer signing an English form.

Women and money

Civil war and resettlement also put many Somali women in work, business, and household finance. Both facts can be true in the same room: elders first, and a woman who runs the money.

Care as a network

Who cares for a disabled adult or a child may be a network, not a single legally recognized caregiver. Hour caps and “natural supports” language can dump unpaid work onto women in that network and call it culture.

A nuclear two-parent English form already has a who. It was built for a different household.

Somalinimo — the heart of a people

Somalinimo names peoplehood: language, genealogy, Islam for many, poetry, and the claim of a nation that outlasted a state.

In Minnesota

In Minnesota it sits inside another fact: many Somali Minnesotans are Black, Muslim, and immigrants or children of immigrants. Minnesota writing has named that triple. Culture does not replace it. It also does not collapse this page into the African American brief.

Two lives in one room

Double consciousness here is not Du Bois's sentence copied over. It is to be Somali and American, Muslim in a public institution that treats everyone the same, Black in a U.S. racial order that did not write this people's history, and still expected to fill an English form as if none of that were in the room.

This guide is a working orientation. Individual variation always supersedes group generalization.

Core Concepts

These concepts recur. They express differently by generation, gender, region of origin, and how this family lives Islam. They are hypotheses — not a script for the person in front of you.

Islam as daily order

For many, not all. Prayer times, Friday jumu'ah, Ramadan, Eid, halal food, modesty (xishood), and honor (sharaf) shape daily life for many families. Variation is the point: observant, less so, youth, women who lead, people who left the mosque and still eat halal. An imam is the case plan when this family asked.

Kinship

Family is the unit. Elders. Hospitality is a virtue, not a delay tactic.

Clan

Real in the homeland and in some Minnesota marriage and trust patterns. Many people will not discuss it with an outsider because it divides. Staff do not use it as an icebreaker. If the family names it, you listen.

Honor and modesty

What is said in a mixed-gender public lobby is not what is said in a gender-matched room.

Hospitality

Tea, food, time. Refusing everything can read as cold. You still keep the appointment clock for medical and legal time.

Nabadoonimo

Peacemaking and community dialogue are real. So is distrust of the state.

Poetry and oral skill

A long answer is not necessarily evasion. A short English yes may be exhaustion.

Xeer

Customary law and elder mediation still matter in some disputes. They do not replace Minnesota statute. They may explain who the family wants in the room.

Remittance

Sending money to kin is obligation for many, not a disposable luxury. A budget that treats it as optional has already chosen a household type.

Religion

Somali people are historically and overwhelmingly Muslim — Sunni, with Sufi history in the Horn, and with contemporary variation that includes more conservative practice, ordinary observance, and people who are culturally Muslim without being mosque-regular.

The mosque

The mosque is a center of prayer, information, mutual aid, and sometimes politics. It is not “the community.” One imam is not consultation.

The year

Ramadan changes eating, energy, and appointment timing. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha are the two major festivals. Friday midday prayer matters for many men. Halal is, for many, a condition of eating — not a preference sticker on a menu.

Help that looks like a report is not help. Religious framing of disability (trial, fate, stigma) sits next to a fierce wish for services. You can hold both. “Give it to God” is not automatically non-compliance.

Greetings

As-sal ðu +ö Æ ykum / wa +ö Æ ykumu s-sal Ò —2 F†R FV`ault Muslim greeting for many. English “hello” is also ordinary, especially with the second generation.

Hands and gender

Right hand for greeting and for food is common among observant Muslims. Some men and women will not shake hands across gender. That is not disrespect. You nod. A scene in the lobby is not required.

Elders

Elders first. Titles and respect. A first name with an elder because the form printed it is not the greeting.

The Black nod from the African American brief is not this page’s greeting. Somali Minnesota is not a module in that grammar.

Physical contact: same-gender warmth can be real; cross-gender touch is often not. Ask the room, not your training slide.

Naming Conventions

Somali names often do not match first-middle-last. A common pattern is given name, father’s name, grandfather’s name. There may be no “family surname” as the database understands it. Women do not necessarily take a husband’s name.

What the form invents

The form that demands a last name will invent one. That invented name then follows the person through MHCP, child welfare, and school. It is a gate.

Islamic names are common (Mohamed, Ahmed, Fatima, Amina, Abdi, Hassan). So are Somali names (Hodan, Waris, Degmo, and many others). Pronounce them. Ask. A shortened name for your convenience is a closed door.

Three people in one household may not share a “last name” the way a Swedish Minnesota form expects. That is a naming system. It is not fraud until you have a reason.

Dates of Significance

Ramadan — ninth month of the Islamic calendar; fasting from dawn to sunset; dates move each year. Schedule around it when you can. Energy is not a character test.

Eid and Mawlid

Eid al-Fitr — end of Ramadan; major communal prayer and visiting.

Eid al-Adha — the greater Eid; sacrifice and charity for many families.

Mawlid al-Nabi — marks the birth of the Prophet; observed by many Sunni communities, including most Somali Minnesotans. Lunar; may move a day.

Civic dates

June 26 — independence of British Somaliland (1960); July 1 — union / Italian Somalia independence. Some families mark these; Somaliland politics will change what “independence” means in the room. Listen.

1991 — collapse. Not a holiday. Literacy.

Calendar clicks on this program are literacy for scheduling. They are not community engagement.

Etiquette

Hospitality: tea, food, time. Accepting a little is courtesy. You still keep legal and medical clocks.

The house

Shoes: some homes remove them. Follow the household.

Right hand for food and greeting.

Gender and dress

Offer a gender-matched interpreter for maternal and intimate care. Mixed-gender small talk is not “warmth” if the room does not want it.

Dress: many women cover hair (hijab); some do not. Many men may not shake a woman’s hand. Covering is not oppression to police in the lobby. A woman who is not covering is not “less Somali.”

Time

Social time can run long. Work, clinic, and court time should be treated as on time. CPT jokes from another community’s intelligence do not belong here.

A mosque is not a research site. Guest, if invited.

Communication

Languages: Standard Somali (Maxaa Tiri), Maay, Benadiri and other varieties; Arabic for religion; English among the second generation.

Dialect is the door

An interpreter labeled “Somali” who does not speak Maay is still a closed door for that household.

Somali is a strongly oral language. Poetry (gabay and other forms) is prestige. A long, circling answer may be how a person thinks in public. A short English yes may be fatigue, hierarchy, or the interpreter.

Direct disagreement with a professional in the room may be muted — and then the plan is not followed because it violated the household. Ask whether they agree. A smile is not consent.

Accent is not incompetence. “Noncompliant” is the wrong word when the English exception form was not understood.

LGBTQ people

Queer and trans Somali people exist in Minnesota. Conservative family and mosque climates can mean silence, exile, or danger. That is not every family.

Duty in the room

Staff duty is the same as on the African American page: use the name; outing someone to kin is not cultural humility; EOAD and other doors still exist.

This chapter is not a raid on a household. The tension is still there.

Dress, hair, and the body

This is not the CROWN Act chapter. Hijab, jilbab, and modest dress are ordinary for many Somali women; they are not a security threat and not a consent problem. Some women do not cover. Ranking them is not the work.

Men, celebration, the body

Men's dress ranges from Minnesota casual to thobe on Friday. Piety does not come off clothing alone.

Henna, gold, and Eid clothes are celebration, not a case note.

Hair and covering are not for touching and not for policing. A covered woman can speak for herself — ask her, with a gender-matched interpreter if she wants one.

Poetry, music, and voice

Poetry is not decoration. Gabay and related forms are prestige speech. Popular hees (songs), oud, and diaspora pop exist alongside religious caution about some music in some families.

Minnesota stages

Minnesota has Somali-language media, YouTube, and stage. A playlist is not engagement. Knowing that oral art is high status will stop you from calling a long answer “rambling.”

Sports

Soccer is the default public sport for many boys and men, and increasingly girls. Basketball shows up in the second generation. Track, wrestling, and ordinary high-school sport sit here too. The kid may not play. Sport is not the only excellence you can see.

Clubs as infrastructure

Sport clubs are social infrastructure — rides, news, who is trusted. They are not a substitute for language access on a waiver. They are not consultation.

A scientist, a nurse, a trucker, a mall owner, and a varsity captain can be in the same extended family. The group is not the person. Collective identity is not the individual.

A skipped Saturday tournament is not “isn’t engaged.” Saturday may be work, mosque, or a grandmother.

Literature and story

Oral literature first. Gabay and related poetic forms are prestige speech, older as public art than the Latin orthography.

Letters

Written Somali as a mass standard is young: the Latin script was officialized in 1972. That fact is literacy. It is not a claim that this is a people without letters.

Nuruddin Farah and other novelists are world literature. Diaspora memoir, journalism, and Minnesota Somali-language media exist. You do not need to quote a novel in the lobby. You do need to know the record exists.

A long, circling answer may be how a person thinks in public — poetry and xeer both train speech that way. A short English yes may be fatigue, hierarchy, or the interpreter. “Rambling” in a case note is the wrong word because the grammar of prestige speech is not a bullet.

Second-generation English literature and Somali-language radio can live in the same household. Book the language the elder needs. A college essay is not proof the IEP can stay English-only.

Art and public culture

The Somali Museum of Minnesota is a Minnesota institution. Textiles, carved headrests, and contemporary visual work exist. Henna is art and celebration.

Guest

Guest, not researcher. A field trip is optional professional development. It is not consultation on a form.

1991, the state, and Minnesota politics

There is no U.S. Civil Rights Movement to copy onto this page. The political literacy here is: colonial partition, 1960 independence, dictatorship, 1991 collapse, war, camps, U.S. resettlement, and then Minnesota and federal politics that have repeatedly treated this community as suspect.

Pattern, not paranoia

After public attacks and after years of national rhetoric, a DHS badge is not automatically help. That is not “paranoia.” It is pattern.

The war is not over so the form is fair now. 1991 is not a personality.

Diaspora and adjacent communities

Oromo, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese, Liberian, Nigerian, and historic African American Minnesota are different cultural intelligences.

Not one Black module

Never one Black module. Never one “East African” interpreter.

Some households are mixed. Ask this household. Everyone from the Horn is not Somali because Somali is the largest community in this state.

Open the African American brief for a family from the Great Migration. Open this for a Somali household. Open the Tribal door for a Nation.

Numbers — date them

Minnesota Compass (ACS 2019–2023), dated: about 79,449 people of Somali ancestry; 78.1% Twin Cities, 21.9% Greater Minnesota; 47.1% age 17 or younger; 3.8% 65+; 55.8% foreign-born in that vintage; language (age 5+): 85.3% speak a language other than English; 36.6% speak English less than very well; median household income about \$43,600; 36.4% below poverty; 86.6% renter; average household size about 3.98.

Counts disagree

Counts disagree across vintages and definitions (ancestry vs. birthplace vs. language). MinnPost 2023 cited an earlier Compass figure near 86,610. Later ACS-based journalism has cited higher statewide counts. Date the number you cite.

A rate is not the person. Child-welfare and autism identification figures are gates. They are not a personality.

Services, opportunity, and participation

Education

U.S.-born children in English-dominant schools with parents who may not read the IEP in English — that is a gate, not a one-hour culture clash.

Two schools in one week

Islamic weekend schools and Qur'an study sit beside public school. They are not truancy by default.

Second-generation educational attainment is mixed and rising in some cohorts; a single story does not hold. A college student is not proof the waiver household needs no interpreter.

Somali-language literacy and English literacy are not the same. A parent who speaks fluent Somali and limited English is not "illiterate." The form that only exists in English is.

Other Considerations — unvarnished, not Minnesota Nice

Female genital cutting is widespread in Somalia. Diaspora practice and Minnesota law are not the same sentence. You follow mandated reporting and health law. You still see a family, not a crime scene walking in. FGC is not a personality.

Queerness, khat, trauma

Stigma around queerness is real in many conservative Muslim families. You still use the person's name and pronouns. Outing them to family is not culture.

Khat is common in some male social life in the Horn and in diaspora pockets; it is illegal here. It is not romance and not the whole man.

Mental-health stigma and war trauma sit together. Naming PTSD is not the same as a family accepting a counselor.

Structure

Poverty rates are high in Compass figures — date them. A rate is not the person.

Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, and immigrant enforcement are structure. Triple jeopardy is not a metaphor.

Clan is real. It is not an icebreaker.

People who know the community may fact-check this page. A hard fact still belongs here.

Health and Mental Health

MDH 2014 qualitative study (UMN, Confederation of Somali Community, SoLaHmo): shame and blame, wait lists, doctors who said nothing was wrong, English-only meetings, fear of housing loss, parents who wanted peers who share language.

Autism identification

Hewitt et al. 2016 Minneapolis surveillance: Somali children 1 in 32 identified with ASD, similar to White 1 in 36, higher than non-Somali Black and Hispanic in that study; later clinical diagnosis (about 5.9 vs 3.7 years). MN-ADDM (UMN, CDC-funded) reported 26 September 2025 on 2022 data: 1 in 12 (8.26%) 8-year-old Somali children identified with autism in parts of Anoka, Hennepin, and Ramsey, versus 1 in 28 overall in that study. Identification is not the same as a community-wide “rate of being Somali.” Date the study. Vaccine-autism science does not support a link. Community fear clustered with age of diagnosis. Both the fear and the system's dismissals are real.

Disability stigma is real. So is a parent who has already been told nothing was wrong while the child waits.

Pain and the room

War trauma, depression, and somatic presentation exist. A smile is not a PHQ-9.

Believe pain. Gender match in maternal and intimate care. Family in the room if they want them — not if you want a witness.

Work, business, and money

Entrepreneurship is a documented Minnesota pattern: mall stalls, trucking, childcare, home care, restaurants, import. A small-business owner and a waiver recipient may be the same extended family.

Obligation and staff

Remittances to kin are obligation for many.

Somali staff exist inside DHS and counties. They are not unpaid interpreters and not “the community.” Identity is not a staffing plan.

Relationship and hospitality may precede a signature. That is not delay. The clock still exists for legal time.

Health-care encounters

Confirm language and dialect. Offer gender match. Ask who should be in the room. A handshake is not required.

Believe the concern

Believe reported pain and developmental concern. Thin English is not a reason to close the file.

Church is not the default spiritual support here — mosque and family may be, if this family asked.

Tuskegee is African American literacy. This community's medical mistrust also runs through camps, dismissals, and child-protection fear. The histories are not the same. The pattern is: help-seeking that becomes a report.

Resources — learn on your own time

Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota. Somali Museum of Minnesota. Culturally specific providers. Parent autism networks. CECLC. Minnesota Compass Somali profile. MDH 2014 qualitative study. MN-ADDM / UMN autism surveillance — date the release.

Other doors

Office of Indian Policy is not this page. EOAD is a discrimination door, not this page.

A Somali colleague is not an unpaid tutor. A mosque BCC is not consultation. Pay partners. Report back.

Connections to human services

Workplace culture and service delivery are both candidates.

Language: an interpreter labeled Somali who does not speak Maay is a closed door. Gender match is often requested in maternal and intimate care.

Names: the database that invents a last name is a gate that follows the person.

Hour caps, exception processes, and life-sharing matches without language are not culturally neutral.

Child welfare: help-seeking that becomes a report is part of this history. Mandated reporting still exists. So does the duty not to treat a whole community as a risk score.

Notices and comment: an eList and an English PDF is not how this community was reached. Empty follow-up calls are theater. Nations are governments — they are not this page — but the same comment period that BCCs a tribe and skips Maay has already chosen who counts.

Workforce: Somali staff are not the interpreter pool and not the community.

Legislation, funding, rule: you cannot advocate for a channel you will not study. This cultural intelligence exists so the 40% has a household in it — not a paternalistic program designed in a building that never learned the names.

Practice considerations

A Somali interpreter who does not speak Maay, a form that cannot accept a three-part name, or an exception process offered only in English can prevent meaningful access. This community's history with public systems also includes times when seeking help led to a child-protection report.

What to ask

- Which language and dialect should we book: Standard Somali, Maay, or Benadiri?
- Would you like a gender-matched interpreter?
- Who should be in the room for this decision?
- How are your names written on your documents, and how would you like us to address you?
- What has already been hard about working with an agency, so we do not repeat it?

Access considerations

- Interpreter request names the dialect and any gender-match request.
- Vital notices are translated with human review, and exception processes are available to people who do not use English.
- Forms accept three-part names; no invented surname.
- Timing respects Friday prayer, Ramadan, and Eid where relevant; ask rather than assume observance.
- A phone or in-person path exists for people without broadband or comfort with online accounts.

Who to involve

- Language access lead or interpreter services, with the dialect written on the request.
- Equity Director for the administration or the person responsible for the program.
- Community partner organizations identified in this brief, with a clear purpose, role, compensation, and plan to report back.
- Involve community-based Somali organizations and mosques named by the family as partners. Include an imam in case planning only when the family asks.
- Do not expect Somali-speaking colleagues to interpret without compensation or to represent the entire community.

Assumptions to examine

- Do not assume Cedar-Riverside or the metro; Greater Minnesota is part of the map.
- Do not ask about clan as an icebreaker or treat it as a risk factor; if the family names it, listen.
- Do not assume that a smile, silence, or hospitality is consent to a plan.
- Do not fold this household into an African American or Oromo brief because both are Black or East African.
- Do not treat religious observance as uniform; ask this family.

More context for your work

Language access

Standard Somali, Maay, and Benadiri may require different interpreters. Arabic is used for religion, and many second-generation people use English. When an exception is available only in English, a household that cannot use English may not be able to access it.

Disability, autism, and public systems

Community concern about autism identification in Minneapolis is public. A 2014 Minnesota Department of Health qualitative study with Somali parents described shame and blame, wait lists, English-only meetings, fear of housing loss, and the wish for peers who share a language. Both the fear and the system's dismissals are real. Help-seeking that turned into a child-protection report is part of this history.

Faith and family in daily life

Prayer, Ramadan, Eid, halal food, modesty, and honor shape daily life for many families. Elders often speak first; decisions may be family decisions. Civil war and resettlement also put many Somali women in work, business, and household finance. Both can be true in the same room.

History, trust, and public systems

Distrust of government after war, camps, and surveillance has a clear history. After public attacks on the community, a DHS badge may not automatically be understood as a sign of help. Mental-health stigma and war trauma may both shape a person's experience. Minnesota writing has described a triple jeopardy: Black, Muslim, and immigrant. Cultural context is incomplete unless it also considers these structural conditions.

Observances at work

Observance	When	At work
Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr	Lunar calendar; dates shift each year	Avoid scheduling required meetings at fast-breaking time; ask before assuming observance.
Eid al-Adha	Lunar calendar	Ask about availability; do not assume.

Continue the connection

- **Community engagement or co-design effort** — program page </paths/gp-3>
- **New program or service concept** — program page </paths/gp-1>
- **Policy, form, or notice change** — program page </paths/gp-2>
- **Equity Analysis Toolkit** — program page </learn/equity-toolkit>
- **Community engagement and connections** — program page </learn/community-connections>
- **Learning and resources** — program page </learn>

Sources

- **Minnesota Compass, Somali cultural community profile** — Ancestry counts and geography; include the source date when citing this information. <https://www.mncompass.org/>
- **Minnesota Department of Health, 2014 Somali autism qualitative study** — Parent experience with identification and services; verify the current citation.
- **Community self-description** — Community-informed description is pending source and representation review.