

Supervisor and Manager Guidance for Religious Accommodation



- 1 Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on religion and requires employers to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of employees or prospective employees, unless doing so would create undue hardship.
- 2 Title VII defines "religion" very broadly. It includes traditional, organized religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. It also includes religious beliefs that are new, uncommon, not part of a formal church or sect, or only held by a small number of people
- 3 Examples of undue hardship include: causing a lack of necessary staffing; jeopardizing security or health; or requiring more than small administrative costs. Supervisors should make a case-by-case determination on any requested religious accommodations.

"Is religious accommodation required by law?"

"What qualifies as religion?"

"How is undue hardship determined?"

Quick Reference Guide

✗ Do Not

DO NOT disregard requests for religious accommodation

DO NOT assume an employee is asking for a religious accommodation for their convenience, not their faith

DO NOT require employees to take leave for all religious accommodation requests

DO NOT create a broad policy for all religious accommodation requests. They should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis

✓ Do

Review all preliminary information provided to you about the religious accommodation request and consult all available resources

Give careful consideration to each request; recognize that there is a wide variety of religious beliefs and generally assume that an employee's request for religious accommodation is based on a sincerely held religious belief

Be flexible. Consider a variety of solutions to include modification of workplace policies, practices, and work schedules (e.g., varied arrival and departure times, flexible work breaks, voluntary schedule swaps, etc.)

Consult appropriately. Reach out to OEEOWE if you have any questions or concerns regarding a specific religious accommodation request

Considerations for Supervisors and Managers

Examples of Religious Accommodations:

- Allowing leave to accommodate religious holidays or to attend religious services
- Changing or transferring a task that conflicts with a religious belief
- Making exceptions to policies such as dress and grooming codes
- Permitting certain religious expression such as excusing an employee from a religious invocation offered at the beginning of a function
- Flexible work scheduling options to allow prayer times during weekdays or during fasting days

Undue Hardship

A religious accommodation request can be denied if the request creates an undue hardship, if it:

- Requires significant expense or disruption that would be an undue burden. However, a sincere and diligent effort in trying to achieve religious accommodation is required.
- Diminishes efficiency in other jobs, infringes on other employees' job rights or benefits, impairs workplace safety, or causes co-workers to carry the accommodated employee's share of potentially hazardous or burdensome work.

When a religious accommodation request is denied due to an undue hardship, an alternative should be offered, if possible, and an explanation should be provided identifying why the requested accommodation cannot be granted.

Note: Customer preference, or co-workers' disgruntlement or jealousy, is not undue hardship.

Additional Support Resources

1. [Summary of CDC Religious Accommodation Policy Statement](#)
2. [Religious Garb and Grooming in the Workplace: Rights and Responsibilities](#)
3. [EEOC Compliance Manual: Religious Discrimination \(2008\)](#)
4. [Questions and Answers: Religious Discrimination in the Workplace \(2008\)](#)
5. [Best Practices for Eradicating Religious Discrimination in the Workplace \(2008\)](#)
6. [Executive Order 14035](#)

Note: There are no "magic words" required; once the employee indicates a change is needed for a religious reason, the employer is now put on notice.

For more information, please contact OEEOWE at RAInquiry@cdc.gov or call (770) 488.1525