

Religious Accommodation

The Department of the Navy's (DON) policy is to accommodate the religious beliefs, practices, and observances of its civilian employees and applicants, when requested, unless doing so would pose an undue hardship. Amplifying guidance regarding religious discrimination and religious accommodation can be found on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's online Compliance Manual on Religious Discrimination (EEOC Compliance Manual).

DON civilian employees and applicants may request a modification or adjustment to the workplace environment because of a sincerely held religious belief, practice or observance. Federal regulations state that an employer does not have to provide a religious accommodation that would pose an undue hardship; therefore, if granting a request would pose an undue hardship, then the request may be denied.

Examples that illustrate these concepts:

EXAMPLE 1

Religious Practice vs. Secular Practice

One employee might observe certain dietary restrictions for religious reasons (A Seventh-day Adventist employee follows a vegetarian diet because she believes it is religiously prescribed by scripture.) while another employee adheres to the very same dietary restrictions but for secular (e.g., health or environmental) reasons. In that instance, the same practice in one case might be subject to religious accommodation under Title VII because an employee engages in the practice for religious reasons, and in another case might not be subject to religious accommodation because the practice is engaged in for secular reasons.

EXAMPLE 2

Types of Religious Practice or Observance

The following are examples but are not all inclusive of a religious practice or observance: (1) a Catholic employee requests a schedule change so that he can attend a church service on Good Friday; (2) a Muslim employee requests an exception to the company's dress and grooming code allowing her to wear her headscarf; (3) a Hindu employee requests an

exception allowing her to wear her Bindi (religious forehead marking); (4) an employee asks to be excused from the religious invocation offered at the beginning of a ceremony because he objects on religious grounds or does not ascribe to the religious sentiments expressed; (5) an adherent to Native American spiritual beliefs seeks unpaid leave to attend a ritual ceremony; and (6) an employee who identifies as Christian, but is not affiliated with a particular sect or denomination, requests accommodation of his religious belief that working on his Sabbath is prohibited. Each of these requests relates to a “religious” belief, observance, or practice within the meaning of Title VII.

EXAMPLE 3

Supervisor Considers Belief Illogical

Morgan asks for time off on October 31st to attend the “Samhain Sabbat,” the New Year observance of Wicca, her religion. Morgan’s supervisor refuses, saying that Wicca is not a “real” religion but an “illogical conglomeration” of “various aspects of the occult, such as faith healing, self-hypnosis, tarot card reading, and spell casting, which are not religious practices.” The supervisor’s refusal to accommodate Morgan on the ground that he believes her religion is illogical or not a “real religion” violates Title VII, unless the employer can show her request would impose an undue hardship. The law applies to religious beliefs even though others may find them “incorrect” or “incomprehensible.”

Attachment 3: Notification of Request for Religious Accommodation

Name of Requester:	Position Title:	Pay Plan- Series-Grade:
Email:		Phone Number:
EDIPI:		Alt Phone Number:
Name of Supervisor/ Manager:	Supervisor's Email:	Supervisor's Phone:
Requested Accommodation:		
Length of Time Accommodation is Needed:		
Describe the Religious belief, practice or observance that necessitates this request:		
Describe any alternate accommodations that might address your needs:		

With my signature below, I confirm my religious beliefs and practices, which result in this request for religious accommodation, are sincerely held. I understand that the command will attempt to provide a religious accommodation if it does not create an undue hardship to the organization. I understand the organization may need to obtain supporting documentation regarding my religious practice and beliefs to further evaluate my request for religious accommodation.

Signature of Requester:	Date Submitted:
Signature of Supervisor:	Date Received: