

Code of Federal Regulations Currentness

Title 29. Labor

Subtitle B. Regulations Relating to Labor

▣ Chapter XIV. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

▣ Part 1605. Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Religion

Authority: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.

Source: 45 FR 72612, Oct. 31, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

C. F. R. T. 29, Subt. B, Ch. XIV, Pt. 1605, Refs & Annos, CFR T. 29, Subt. B, Ch. XIV, Pt. 1605, Refs & Annos

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■ Part 1605. Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Religion (Refs & Annos)

→ **§ 1605.1 “Religious” nature of a practice or belief.**

Comment [J1]: This is included in the new MHRC Reg.

In most cases whether or not a practice or belief is religious is not at issue. However, in those cases in which the issue does exist, the Commission will define religious practices to include moral or ethical beliefs as to what is right and wrong which are sincerely held with the strength of traditional religious views. This standard was developed in *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965) and *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333 (1970). The Commission has consistently applied this standard in its decisions. [FN1] The fact that no religious group espouses such beliefs or the fact that the religious group to which the individual professes to belong may not accept such belief will not determine whether the belief is a religious belief of the employee or prospective employee. The phrase “religious practice” as used in these Guidelines includes both religious observances and practices, as stated in Section 701(j), 42 U.S.C. 2000e(j).

[FN1] See CD 76–104 (1976), CCH ¶ 6500; CD 71–2620 (1971), CCH ¶ 6283; CD 71–779 (1970), CCH ¶ 6180.

SOURCE: 45 FR 72612, Oct. 31, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

AUTHORITY: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.

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→ § **1605.2 Reasonable accommodation without undue hardship as required by section 701(j) of title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.**

Comment [J2]: This is included in the new MHRC Reg.

(a) Purpose of this section. This section clarifies the obligation imposed by title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, (sections 701(j), 703 and 717) to accommodate the religious practices of employees and prospective employees. This section does not address other obligations under title VII not to discriminate on grounds of religion, nor other provisions of title VII. This section is not intended to limit any additional obligations to accommodate religious practices which may exist pursuant to constitutional, or other statutory provisions; neither is it intended to provide guidance for statutes which require accommodation on bases other than religion such as section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The legal principles which have been developed with respect to discrimination prohibited by title VII on the bases of race, color, sex, and national origin also apply to religious discrimination in all circumstances other than where an accommodation is required.

Comment [J3]: This is not included because it is deemed unnecessary.

(b) Duty to accommodate.

(1) Section 701(j) makes it an unlawful employment practice under section 703(a)(1) for an employer to fail to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of an employee or prospective employee, unless the employer demonstrates that accommodation would result in undue hardship on the conduct of its business. [FN2]

² See *Trans World Airlines, Inc. v. Hardison*, 432 U.S. 63, 74 (1977).

(2) Section 701(j) in conjunction with section 703(c), imposes an obligation on a labor or-

ganization to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of an employee or prospective employee, unless the labor organization demonstrates that accommodation would result in undue hardship.

(3) Section 1605.2 is primarily directed to obligations of employers or labor organizations, which are the entities covered by title VII that will most often be required to make an accommodation. However, the principles of § 1605.2 also apply when an accommodation can be required of other entities covered by title VII, such as employment agencies (section 703(b)) or joint labor-management committees controlling apprenticeship or other training or retraining (section 703(d)). (See, for example, § 1605.3(a) "Scheduling of Tests or Other Selection Procedures.")

(c) Reasonable accommodation.

(1) After an employee or prospective employee notifies the employer or labor organization of his or her need for a religious accommodation, the employer or labor organization has an obligation to reasonably accommodate the individual's religious practices. A refusal to accommodate is justified only when an employer or labor organization can demonstrate that an undue hardship would in fact result from each available alternative method of accommodation. A mere assumption that many more people, with the same religious practices as the person being accommodated, may also need accommodation is not evidence of undue hardship.

(2) When there is more than one method of accommodation available which would not cause undue hardship, the Commission will determine whether the accommodation offered is reasonable by examining:

(i) The alternatives for accommodation considered by the employer or labor organization; and

(ii) The alternatives for accommodation, if any, actually offered to the individual requiring accommodation. Some alternatives for accommodating religious practices might disadvantage the individual with respect to his or her employment opportunities, such as compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment. Therefore, when there is more than one means of accommodation which would not cause undue hardship, the employer or labor organization must offer the alternative which least disadvantages the individual with respect to his or her employment opportunities.

(d) Alternatives for accommodating religious practices.

(1) Employees and prospective employees most frequently request an accommodation because their religious practices conflict with their work schedules. The following subsections are some means of accommodating the conflict between work schedules and religious practices which the Commission believes that employers and labor organizations should consider as part of the obligation to accommodate and which the Commission will consider in investigating a charge. These are not intended to be all-inclusive. There are often other alternatives which would reasonably accommodate an individual's religious practices when they conflict with a work schedule. There are also employment practices besides work scheduling which may conflict with religious practices and cause an individual to request an accommodation. See, for example, the Commission's finding number (3) from its Hearings on Religious Discrimination, in appendix A to §§ 1605.2 and 1605.3. The principles expressed in these Guidelines apply as well to such requests for accommodation.

(i) Voluntary Substitutes and "Swaps".

Reasonable accommodation without undue hardship is generally possible where a voluntary substitute with substantially similar qualifications is available. One means of substitution is the voluntary swap. In a number of cases, the securing of a substitute has been left entirely up to the individual seeking the accommodation. The Commission believes that the obligation to accommodate requires that employers and labor organizations facilitate the securing of a voluntary substitute with substantially similar qualifications. Some means of doing this which employers and labor organizations should consider are: to publicize policies regarding accommodation and voluntary substitution; to promote an atmosphere in which such substitutions are favorably regarded; to provide a central file, bulletin board or other means for matching voluntary substitutes with positions for which substitutes are needed.

(ii) Flexible Scheduling.

One means of providing reasonable accommodation for the religious practices of employees or prospective employees which employers and labor organizations should consider is the creation of a flexible work schedule for individuals requesting accommodation.

The following list is an example of areas in which flexibility might be introduced: flexible arrival and departure times; floating or optional holidays; flexible work breaks; use of lunch

time in exchange for early departure; staggered work hours; and permitting an employee to make up time lost due to the observance of religious practices. [FN3]

³ On September 29, 1978, Congress enacted such a provision for the accommodation of Federal employees' religious practices. See Pub.L. 95-390, 5 U.S.C. 5550a "Compensatory Time Off for Religious Observances."

(iii) Lateral Transfer and Change of Job Assignments.

When an employee cannot be accommodated either as to his or her entire job or an assignment within the job, employers and labor organizations should consider whether or not it is possible to change the job assignment or give the employee a lateral transfer.

(2) Payment of Dues to a Labor Organization.

Some collective bargaining agreements include a provision that each employee must join the labor organization or pay the labor organization a sum equivalent to dues. When an employee's religious practices do not permit compliance with such a provision, the labor organization should accommodate the employee by not requiring the employee to join the organization and by permitting him or her to donate a sum equivalent to dues to a charitable organization.

(e) Undue hardship.

(1) Cost. An employer may assert undue hardship to justify a refusal to accommodate an employee's need to be absent from his or her scheduled duty hours if the employer can demonstrate that the accommodation would require "more than a de minimis cost". [FN4] The Commission will determine what constitutes "more than a de minimis cost" with due regard given to the identifiable cost in relation to the size and operating cost of the employer, and the number of individuals who will in fact need a particular accommodation. In general, the Commission interprets this phrase as it was used in the Hardison decision to mean that costs similar to the regular payment of premium wages of substitutes, which was at issue in Hardison, would constitute undue hardship. However, the Commission will presume that the infrequent payment of premium wages for a substitute or the payment of premium wages while a more permanent accommodation is being sought are costs which an employer can be required to bear as a means of providing a reasonable accommodation. Further, the Commission will presume that generally, the payment of administrative costs necessary for providing the

accommodation will not constitute more than a de minimis cost. Administrative costs, for example, include those costs involved in rearranging schedules and recording substitutions for payroll purposes.

⁴ Hardison, *supra*, 432 U.S. at 84.

(2) Seniority Rights. Undue hardship would also be shown where a variance from a bona fide seniority system is necessary in order to accommodate an employee's religious practices when doing so would deny another employee his or her job or shift preference guaranteed by that system. Hardison, *supra*, 432 U.S. at 80. Arrangements for voluntary substitutes and swaps (see paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this section) do not constitute an undue hardship to the extent the arrangements do not violate a bona fide seniority system. Nothing in the Statute or these Guidelines precludes an employer and a union from including arrangements for voluntary substitutes and swaps as part of a collective bargaining agreement.

SOURCE: 45 FR 72612, Oct. 31, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

AUTHORITY: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.

29 C. F. R. § 1605.2, 29 CFR § 1605.2

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→ § **1605.3 Selection practices.**

Comment [J4]: This is included in the new MHRC Reg.

(a) Scheduling of tests or other selection procedures. When a test or other selection procedure is scheduled at a time when an employee or prospective employee cannot attend because of his or her religious practices, the user of the test should be aware that the principles enunciated in these guidelines apply and that it has an obligation to accommodate such employee or prospective employee unless undue hardship would result.

(b) Inquiries which determine an applicant's availability to work during an employer's scheduled working hours.

(1) The duty to accommodate pertains to prospective employees as well as current employees. Consequently, an employer may not permit an applicant's need for a religious accommodation to affect in any way its decision whether to hire the applicant unless it can demonstrate that it cannot reasonably accommodate the applicant's religious practices without undue hardship.

(2) As a result of the oral and written testimony submitted at the Commission's Hearings on Religious Discrimination, discussions with representatives of organizations interested in the issue of religious discrimination, and the comments received from the public on these Guidelines as proposed, the Commission has concluded that the use of pre-selection inquiries which determine an applicant's availability has an exclusionary effect on the employment opportunities of persons with certain religious practices. The use of such inquiries will, therefore, be considered to violate title VII unless the employer can show that it:

(i) Did not have an exclusionary effect on its employees or prospective employees needing an

accommodation for the same religious practices; or

(ii) Was otherwise justified by business necessity.

Employers who believe they have a legitimate interest in knowing the availability of their applicants prior to selection must consider procedures which would serve this interest and which would have a lesser exclusionary effect on persons whose religious practices need accommodation. An example of such a procedure is for the employer to state the normal work hours for the job and, after making it clear to the applicant that he or she is not required to indicate the need for any absences for religious practices during the scheduled work hours, ask the applicant whether he or she is otherwise available to work those hours. Then, after a position is offered, but before the applicant is hired, the employer can inquire into the need for a religious accommodation and determine, according to the principles of these Guidelines, whether an accommodation is possible. This type of inquiry would provide an employer with information concerning the availability of most of its applicants, while deferring until after a position is offered the identification of the usually small number of applicants who require an accommodation.

(3) The Commission will infer that the need for an accommodation discriminatorily influenced a decision to reject an applicant when: (i) prior to an offer of employment the employer makes an inquiry into an applicant's availability without having a business necessity justification; and (ii) after the employer has determined the applicant's need for an accommodation, the employer rejects a qualified applicant. The burden is then on the employer to demonstrate that factors other than the need for an accommodation were the reason for rejecting the qualified applicant, or that a reasonable accommodation without undue hardship was not possible.

SOURCE: 45 FR 72612, Oct. 31, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

AUTHORITY: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.

29 C. F. R. § 1605.3, 29 CFR § 1605.3

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→ **Appendix A to §§ 1605.2 and 1605.3--Background Information**

In 1966, the Commission adopted guidelines on religious discrimination which stated that an employer had an obligation to accommodate the religious practices of its employees or prospective employees unless to do so would create a “serious inconvenience to the conduct of the business”. 29 CFR 1605.1(a)(2), 31 FR 3870 (1966).

In 1967, the Commission revised these guidelines to state that an employer had an obligation to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of its employees or prospective employees, unless the employer could prove that to do so would create an “undue hardship”. 29 CFR 1605.1(b)(c), 32 FR 10298.

In 1972, Congress amended title VII to incorporate the obligation to accommodate expressed in the Commission's 1967 Guidelines by adding section 701(j).

In 1977, the United States Supreme Court issued its decision in the case of *Trans World Airlines, Inc. v. Hardison*, 432 U.S. 63 (1977). *Hardison* was brought under section 703(a)(1) because it involved facts occurring before the enactment of section 701(j). The Court applied the Commission's 1967 Guidelines, but indicated that the result would be the same under section 701(j). It stated that *Trans World Airlines* had made reasonable efforts to accommodate the religious needs of its employee, *Hardison*. The Court held that to require *Trans World Airlines* to make further attempts at accommodations--by unilaterally violating a seniority provision of the collective bargaining agreement, paying premium wages on a regular basis to another employee to replace *Hardison*, or creating a serious shortage of necessary employees in another department in order to replace *Hardison*--would create an undue hardship on the conduct of *Trans World Airlines*'

business, and would therefore, exceed the duty to accommodate Hardison.

In 1978, the Commission conducted public hearings on religious discrimination in New York City, Milwaukee, and Los Angeles in order to respond to the concerns raised by Hardison. Approximately 150 witnesses testified or submitted written statements. [FN5] The witnesses included employers, employees, representatives of religious and labor organizations and representatives of Federal, State and local governments.

[FN5] The transcript of the Commission's Hearings on Religious Discrimination can be examined by the public at: The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 131 M Street, NE., Washington, DC 20507.

The Commission found from the hearings that:

(1) There is widespread confusion concerning the extent of accommodation under the Hardison decision.

(2) The religious practices of some individuals and some groups of individuals are not being accommodated.

(3) Some of those practices which are not being accommodated are:

- Observance of a Sabbath or religious holidays;
- Need for prayer break during working hours;
- Practice of following certain dietary requirements;
- Practice of not working during a mourning period for a deceased relative;
- Prohibition against medical examinations;
- Prohibition against membership in labor and other organizations; and
- Practices concerning dress and other personal grooming habits.

(4) Many of the employers who testified had developed alternative employment practices which accommodate the religious practices of employees and prospective employees and which meet the employer's business needs.

(5) Little evidence was submitted by employers which showed actual attempts to accommodate religious practices with resultant unfavorable consequences to the employer's business. Employers appeared to have substantial anticipatory concerns but no, or very little, actual experience with the problems they theorized would emerge by providing reasonable accommodation for religious practices.

Based on these findings, the Commission is revising its Guidelines to clarify the obligation imposed by section 701(j) to accommodate the religious practices of employees and prospective employees.

[74 FR 3430, Jan. 21, 2009]

SOURCE: 45 FR 72612, Oct. 31, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

AUTHORITY: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.

29 C. F. R. §§ 1605.2, 1605.3, App. A, 29 CFR §§ 1605.2, 1605.3, App. A

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