

Religious Exemptions for Covid 19 Vaccine

We compiled the following information over the past several days for my family members and friends seeking a religious exemption from the Covid 19 Vaccine.

We've included background information on federal discrimination law which you may find helpful as well as news articles, letter templates and guidance for employers on how they should respond and handle religious exemption requests.

In our brief research we've found a few important factors to keep in mind:

Your beliefs need to be your beliefs, not someone else's. Know what you believe and be able to articulate why taking the Covid vaccine violates your religious beliefs and/or conscience. (See Oregon Bill of Rights below.)

If you THINK you MIGHT request a Religious Exemption DO NOT get caught in a cat and mouse game with your supervisor or HR discussing vaccine effectiveness, political beliefs, etc. ONLY discuss a request for accommodation due to religious beliefs. Write out what you will say to a boss or HR and stick to the script!

Contact me if you have questions.
Mat Miles

Oregon Bill of Rights [https://ballotpedia.org/Article 1, Oregon Constitution](https://ballotpedia.org/Article_1,_Oregon_Constitution)

Article 1, section 1 & 2:

All men shall be secure in the Natural right, to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences.

No law shall in any case whatever control the free exercise, and enjoyment of religeous [sic] opinions, or interfere with the rights of conscience.

Federal Law. EEOC & Title VII

EEOC = Equal Employment Opportunity Commision. (Federal work anti-discrimination agency) Federal guidance related to discrimination and Covid. See link below. LOTS of info. Here is "section K.12" which covers exemption from Covid vaccine due to "sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance." (See link below for full text)

<https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>

Title VII and COVID-19 Vaccinations

K.12. *Under Title VII, how should an employer respond to an employee who communicates that he or she is unable to be vaccinated for COVID-19 (or provide documentation or other confirmation of vaccination) because of a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance? (12/16/20, updated 5/28/21)*

Once an employer is on notice that an employee's sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance prevents the employee from getting a COVID-19 vaccine, the employer must provide a reasonable accommodation unless it would pose an undue hardship. Employers also may receive religious accommodation requests from individuals who wish to wait until an alternative version or specific brand of COVID-19 vaccine is available to the employee. Such requests should be processed according to the same standards that apply to other accommodation requests.

EEOC guidance explains that the definition of religion is broad and protects beliefs, practices, and observances with which the employer may be unfamiliar. Therefore, the employer should ordinarily assume that an employee's request for religious accommodation is based on a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance. However, if an employee requests a religious accommodation, and an employer is aware of facts that provide an objective basis for questioning either the religious nature or the sincerity of a particular belief, practice, or observance, the employer would be justified in requesting additional supporting information. See also 29 CFR 1605.

Under Title VII, an employer should thoroughly consider all possible reasonable accommodations, including telework and reassignment. For suggestions about types of reasonable accommodation for unvaccinated employees, see question and answer K.6., above. In many circumstances, it may be possible to accommodate those seeking reasonable accommodations for their religious beliefs, practices, or observances.

As you read through federal law and guidance regarding discrimination "Title VII" is mentioned often.

This is a good explanation of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill.

<https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/title-vii-civil-rights-act-1964>

EMPLOYERS Guide for Religious Exemption

Here is an EMPLOYERS guide for religious exemption. Read #1 and #2: note that you should not HAVE to initially request an exemption in writing AND employees should be provided a form to confirm their request. Note that employers can request specific information about your religious beliefs related to Covid vaccine.

Check with your employer regarding "policy for medical and religious accommodations"
Policies may be on their website etc.

<https://www.venable.com/insights/publications/2021/06/employers-guide-to-the-religious-exemption>

News Article about Religious Exemptions

Here is a recent article about Religious exemptions. Read this paragraph carefully:

Employers are legally allowed to ask if an employee's concerns about the vaccine are due to its safety, effectiveness, or political beliefs, or even the company's authority to require the shot, and those are not considered religious beliefs, so a company can deny that exemption.

Read the statement from the Catholic Bishops and note the key words, such as "conscience" keeping in mind that "conscience" is a key word in the Oregon Bill Of Rights.

<https://www.wbay.com/2021/08/22/catholic-leaders-issue-new-guidance-those-looking-be-exempt-vaccines-religious-reasons/>

Religious Exemption Letter Templates

There are many sample letters available on the internet. Below are just a few.

Keep in mind that your beliefs need to be your beliefs, not someone else's.

Your letter to your employer should therefore reflect YOUR beliefs and not just mimic what someone else wrote. Note that some sample letters reference Texas law, etc.

Association of American Physicians and Surgeons (AAPS):

<https://aapsonline.org/exemption-from-hospital-vaccine-mandate/>

Liberty Counsel:

<https://lc.org/Site%20Images/Resources/Memo-SampleCOVID-ReligiousExemptionRequests-07262021.pdf>

<https://okhpr.com/sample-religious-exemptions/>

Helpful Bible Verses

These verses may be helpful as you seek references for your exemption request.

<https://www.openbible.info/topics/vaccinations>