

SOME POINTERS WHEN ASKING FOR A RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION

The following are some things you should keep in mind when asking for a religious exemption (religious accommodation) from the COVID-19 vaccine mandates. These were garnered mostly from the work and advice of the Liberty Counsel. We have used this approach when we craft requests for exemptions for clients and have, so far, had good success.

1. There are 2 elements that must be met by an applicant for a religious accommodation (RA). **i)** **The reason must be religious in nature.** It can't be something like: "I'm scared of needles," or "The vaccines don't work," or "We don't know the long-term effects." All these are valid reasons to not take the vaccine, but they are not reasons that are religious in nature. **ii) The particular religious belief must be deeply held.** This is dependent on the individual and does not necessarily have to be tied to a particular faith or sect. There is a sample affidavit that can be used for this purpose. It should be sworn out in front of a Notary Public.
2. Stay away from any mention of your particular faith. If you say you are Catholic, or Southern Baptist, or pretty much any faith, the people reviewing your request can trot out statements by some senior leaders in that particular faith to say, "Well, that's not what the President of the Southern Baptist Convention says," or "The Pope says that it is alright to receive the vaccine." Avoid giving HR, or whoever, this path. That's why the Affidavit and the Cover Letter stick with the general term, 'Christian'. If you are not Christian, adjust the wording to make it consistent with your faith.
3. Liberty Counsel advises an applicant for an RA to avoid quoting Scripture. The reasoning is that HR, or whoever, will pick apart the quotations or try to find contradictory quotations. We have seen, however, some good arguments from scripture made to employers. If you are very comfortable with scripture and you adhere strongly to the message of certain passages, go ahead and use them.
4. If your application is denied, ask for the reason in writing why YOUR specific application was denied. Follow the administrative procedures your employer requires for any appeal of a decision. Maybe call a lawyer.
5. DO NOT let yourself be drawn into an argument about your faith or your specific beliefs. It is sufficient that you have a religious reason to not get the vaccine, and that that conviction is deeply held and sincere.