

THOMAS J. BLUM  
VICE PRESIDENT, LABOR RELATIONS



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VICE PRESIDENTS, AREA RETAIL & DELIVERY OPERATIONS  
VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES  
VICE PRESIDENT, LOGISTICS  
VICE PRESIDENTS, REGIONAL PROCESSING OPERATIONS  
MANAGERS, FIELD HUMAN RESOURCES  
MANAGERS, LABOR RELATIONS

SUBJECT: Religious Discrimination and Accommodation

The Postal Service respects the religious beliefs of all employees, and, upon request, will continue to make a good faith effort to accommodate religious beliefs, observances, and practices. Toward this end, supervisors and managers must respond promptly to requests for religious accommodation.

### **Addressing Religious Accommodation Requests**

The steps outlined below provide guidance for addressing religious accommodation requests. The focus of religious accommodation requests is on attempting to resolve conflicts between sincerely held religious beliefs, observances, or practices and work requirements. It is critical that this information be shared with all managers and supervisors. To this end:

1. Requests for religious accommodation must be handled promptly. Delays in the process can lead to findings of liability for failure to accommodate.
2. Management must first determine whether there is a conflict between a sincerely held religious belief, observance, or practice and a work requirement.
  - Employees are not generally required to provide letters or other documentation in support of their request. They may provide such documentation on their own initiative, but management should not routinely request it. If management believes documentation is needed, they must consult their District Manager, Labor Relations ("DMLR"). The DMLR will work with a Law Department Employment Law Office ("ELO") or the Employment Law Group, as appropriate.
  - If, unlike the employee, management believes there is no conflict between the religious belief, observance, or practice and work, management must consult the DMLR. The DMLR will work with the Law Department, as appropriate.
3. If there is a conflict, management must explore possible options (i.e., accommodations) with the employee to address the conflict between the requesting employee's religion and work.

- Consider not only the specific accommodation(s) requested by the employee, but any other measures that might accommodate the employee's religious belief, practice, or observance.
  - Examples of possible accommodations for conflicts with religious observances may include:
    - Leave and/or change of rest days;
    - Flexible scheduling (such as flexible arrival/departure times, flexible work breaks, use of lunch in exchange for early departure, and/or staggered work hours);
    - Voluntary substitution and tour swaps; or
    - Reassignment.
4. One factor to consider when exploring a potential accommodation is whether offering it would cause the Postal Service to violate a provision of a valid Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) or Local Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
    - If management believes there is a conflict with the potential accommodation(s) and the applicable CBA or MOU, consult the DMLR. If the DMLR agrees there is a conflict, the DMLR will consult the Law Department for guidance.
  5. Interim accommodations should be considered, as appropriate. If there is delay, then the employee should be notified of the delay and interim accommodations, if any. It should be made clear to the employee that the accommodations are temporary in nature to allow for additional time to explore the issue and are not permanent accommodations.
  6. Before any request is denied, management must consult the DMLR for an opinion. The DMLR will consult the Law Department if the DMLR agrees with the proposed denial. The DMLR and Law Department reviews all proposed denial decisions.
    - If management determines that a request should be denied, they must assemble and retain all evidence and documentation necessary to establish both the efforts made to accommodate the employee and the determination that specific, substantial increased costs or burdens would be incurred in relation to the conduct of business, so as to support an undue hardship defense. Management should be ready to share this information with the DMLR.
  7. Once a final determination has been made, management must provide the employee with a response to their request for accommodation. The response should be in writing. A copy of the response should be shared with the DMLR whether the request is approved or denied.
  8. As many requests for accommodation are continuous in nature, such as requests to not work on a Sabbath day, the obligation to accommodate is likewise ongoing. In such cases, the written response may indicate that while management is not able to approve the accommodation on a weekly basis, management will continue to make efforts to accommodate the employee whenever possible (e.g., explore swaps, etc. each week).
  9. If there is approval of an ongoing accommodation (i.e., an accommodation that will continue to be provided; not a one-time occasion) and management determines that

continuation of the accommodation poses an undue hardship on operations, management must consult with the DMLR, who will consult with the Law Department, before discontinuing the accommodation.

**Points of Contact (POC) for Religious Accommodation Requests**

The DMLR is the POC for religious accommodation requests. Religious accommodation requests that are not granted locally must be directed or elevated to the DMLR.

- For religious accommodation requests for field employees, the ELO that covers the respective District will review and provide advice to the DMLR on religious accommodation requests.
- For religious accommodation requests for headquarters/headquarters-related employees, the Employment Law Group will review and provided advice to the DMLR on religious accommodation requests.



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