

STATE OF MAINE
POLICY ON RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

I. Policy Statement

The State of Maine prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion and is committed to providing a work environment that is respectful of the religious beliefs of all employees and applicants for employment. As part of this commitment, the State will provide reasonable religious accommodations to employees and applicants for employment who's sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance conflicts with an employment policy or work requirement unless such an accommodation would create an undue hardship.

II. Definitions

“Religion” includes not only traditional, organized religions but also spiritual beliefs, including those that are new, uncommon, not part of a formal church or sect, or only subscribed to by a small number of people. Religious beliefs and observances that are sincerely held will be considered as part of this policy. A religious practice may be sincerely held by an individual even if newly adopted, not consistently observed, or different from the commonly followed tenets of the individual's religion. A practice is religious if the employee's reason for the practice is religious, as opposed to social, political, or personal preference.

“Religious accommodation” means a reasonable change in the work environment that enables an employee to practice or otherwise observe a sincerely held religious practice or belief without undue hardship on the State.

“Undue hardship” means substantial increased costs in relation to the conduct of the agency's particular business, taking into account all relevant factors, including the particular accommodation at issue and its practical impact in light of the nature, size and operating cost of the agency. Undue hardship may refer to an accommodation that is disruptive or that would fundamentally alter the nature or operation of the agency's business, or the essential functions of the job. Accommodations which interfere with the safe and efficient operation of the workplace or with a bona fide seniority system will often present an undue hardship.

III. Requesting a Religious Accommodation

An employee whose religion conflicts with their job, work schedule, or with the State of Maine's or State Agency's policy or practice on dress and appearance, or with other aspects of employment, and who seeks a religious accommodation must

submit a request for the accommodation by contacting the person responsible for EEO in their human resources office. The request should include the type of religious conflict that exists and the employee's suggested accommodation. Human resources may need to ask an employee or applicant questions about the nature of the belief, practice, or observance in order to review the request. Human resources may also explore alternative accommodations if the requested accommodation creates an undue hardship. Request for accommodation should be made as soon as practicable.

Reasonable accommodations for employees might include granting individual leave for religious observances, providing a time and place to pray, or allowing the flexibility to wear religious attire to work. Other examples of accommodations for religious beliefs might include scheduling changes, voluntary substitutions of shifts or hours with approval, and appropriate job reassignments or lateral transfers. Reasonable accommodations are necessarily determined on an individual basis and depend on the particular circumstances.

A religious accommodation will not be granted if it creates an undue hardship. The State EEO Coordinator shall be consulted prior to denial of a religious accommodation.

IV. Discrimination and Harassment Prohibited

The State of Maine prohibits discrimination and harassment against employees or applicants for employment for requesting a religious accommodation, participating in an approved accommodation, or otherwise engaging in protected conduct.

Violations of this Policy will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including discharge. Employees are encouraged to review the State of Maine's Policy Against Harassment and Policy on Non-Discrimination in Employment.

V. Complaint Procedures

All complaints made by employees for alleged violations of this Policy shall be made in accordance with the State of Maine's Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Policy.

VI. Effective Date

The effective date of this Policy is July 1, 2024.