



Y O U T H @ W O R K

Religion & Your Job Rights

It is illegal for your employer to treat you differently or harass you because of your religious practices or beliefs (or because you do not have religious practices or beliefs). You have the right to ask for certain workplace changes (called “reasonable accommodations”) because of your religious practices or beliefs if you need them to apply for or do a job.

Examples

1 John applies to work at a coffee shop during summer break. Marcus, the manager, assigns John to work a shift that begins at 7:00 a.m. John explains that he attends Mass every Wednesday at 7:00 a.m. and asks if he can work a later shift on those days. There are other shifts available, so Marcus agrees and schedules John to work later shifts on Wednesdays, and tells other managers to do the same. Marcus responded appropriately by changing John’s schedule to accommodate his religious practice.

2 Samara applies to work as a grocery store cashier after school. Samara is Muslim and wears a hijab (a veil that covers her head) for religious reasons. Tim, the store manager, offers Samara a back room job. He tells her having “someone who prays to the same God as terrorists” working at the front of the store would make customers uncomfortable. Tim discriminated against Samara by assigning her to work in the back room, away from customers, and by not hiring her for the cashier position because she is Muslim.

3 Archana, a student, works at a clothing store. As part of her religious beliefs, Archana wears a bindi (a red dot) on her forehead. Mary, the store owner, tells her to “remove that ridiculous dot.” Archana explains that she wears the bindi because she is Hindu. Mary replies that “wearing a red dot to show your religious beliefs is silly,” and “anyone can do it.” Mary draws a circle on her forehead and says, “See, now I’m Hindu.” Over the next week, Mary hands out red dot stickers to employees and customers, telling them to put them on their foreheads because the store is offering a “red dot discount” to Hindus. Mary harassed Archana because of her religious belief.

Need to File a Complaint?

If you think you have been discriminated against, you can file a formal complaint, called a “charge of discrimination,” with EEOC. We may mediate or investigate your charge and take legal action to stop any illegal discrimination.

We accept charges from applicants, employees (full-time, part-time, seasonal, and temporary), and former employees, regardless of citizenship and work authorization status.

Our services are free, and you do not need a lawyer to file a charge. For more information about how and when to file a charge, visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/filing.html>.

Keep In Mind

The law protects traditional religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, and newer or **less common religions**, such as Rastafarianism. The law also protects people who **do not have religious beliefs**.

Some religions may be associated with a certain national origin. **It is illegal for an employer to discriminate against or harass employees because of their actual or perceived religion, national origin, or both.**

If you need a workplace change because of your religious beliefs or practices, let your employer know. Your employer has to make a workplace change because of your religious beliefs or practices if it would cause little to no burden on the business. Talk to your supervisor or review your company handbook to find out who you should contact.

Your boss can’t require you to attend prayer meetings, or prohibit you from praying during breaks. Your boss must excuse you from participation in an activity that is not religious, but conflicts with your religious beliefs, if it would pose little or no burden on the business.

Don’t harass co-workers, managers, customers, or anyone else at work because of their religious beliefs.

Report discrimination. If you believe that you were discriminated against because of your religion, or because you asked for a reasonable accommodation, tell your parents, your teacher, your employer, another trusted adult, or EEOC.

It is illegal for your employer to retaliate against you (punish you) for reporting discrimination or participating in a discrimination investigation or lawsuit.

You may have additional rights under other federal, state, or local laws or your company’s policies.

Learn more about your rights as a young worker at www.eeoc.gov/youth.

You can also email us at youth.atwork@eeoc.gov or call us at 1-800-669-4000 (TTY: 1-800-669-6820).