Religious Accommodations Policy



1. **POLICY STATEMENT**

Individual freedom of religion is a core value of ABC Company. To that end, ABC Company is committed to providing a work environment in which persons of all faiths and religions are treated with dignity and respect and nobody is forced to choose between their religious beliefs and their employment duties. In furtherance of these principles and its obligations under the Canadian Human Rights Act to avoid discrimination on the basis of religion and creed, ABC Company's policy is to make good faith efforts to make religious accommodations for employees and job applicants whose sincerely held religious beliefs and creed conflict with their employment obligations under ABC Company policies, procedures or practices to the extent such accommodations are reasonable and do not impose undue hardship.

2. **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Policy is to establish clear, fair and consistent rules and procedures for requesting, determining and implementing reasonable federal religious accommodations.

3. **DEFINITIONS**

For purposes of this Policy, the following terms are defined as follows:

1. **Creed** encompasses both religious and non-religious beliefs and practices that have a nexus or connection to an organization, community or shared system of belief, govern one's conduct and are sincerely held and integrally linked to personal identity, self-definition and fulfillment.
2. **Religion** encompasses not just traditional and organized religions but broader religious beliefs and practices, including those that are new, uncommon or not associated with a formal church or sect, including but not limited to indigenous aboriginal spirituality, provided that such beliefs are sincerely held and integrally linked to personal identity, self-definition and fulfillment.
3. **Religious** means based on religion and/or creed.
4. **Religious Accommodations** mean reasonable allowances from or revisions to employment rules, procedures or schedules and/or alterations of the work environment that enable an employee or job applicant to practice or otherwise

observe a sincerely held religious practice or belief without causing ABC Company undue hardship. Such accommodations may include, without limitation:

- Time for prayer during a work day;
- Leaves or absences for religious observances;
- Allowances to dress codes and personal appearance policies, e.g., exemptions from hairstyle or beard policies to accommodate beards (Sikhs), dreadlocks (Rastafarians) and/or peyes (Jewish orthodox).
- The display of religious symbols;
- Accommodation of religion- or creed-based dietary restrictions or fasting.

1. **Undue Hardship** means significant difficulty or expense based on ABC Company resources and circumstances affecting the cost, feasibility or difficulty of providing a specific accommodation. Examples of accommodations inflicting undue hardship include, without limitation, those that would be unduly expensive, substantially disruptive in a way that exceeds mere business inconvenience, require fundamental changes to business operations, and/or threaten any person's workplace health and safety.

4. **RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIFFERENT PARTIES**

All ABC Company employers, supervisors and employees have shared responsibilities in implementing this Policy:

1. **Employer:** As the employer, ABC Company is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all job applicants and employees are afforded equal opportunity and treated with professionalism, dignity and respect in the workplace regardless of their religion;
- Ensuring that all workplace policies and procedures are non-discriminatory;
- Furnishing the resources necessary to implement this Policy;
- Ensuring that employees and job applicants are advised of their accommodation rights;
- Ensuring that requests for religious accommodations are addressed in a timely, fair, sensitive and, if possible, confidential manner based on the individual needs and circumstances involved;
- Ensuring that reasonable accommodations are provided to the point of undue hardship;
- Reviewing and revising this Policy as necessary to ensure its effectiveness.

1. **Supervisors:** Supervisors are responsible for:

- Fostering an inclusive work environment by personally treating all employees and job applicants with professionalism, respect and dignity regardless of religion;
- Ensuring that the employees they supervise treat all employees and job applicants with professionalism, respect and dignity regardless of religion;
- Taking reasonably necessary steps to help ABC Company eliminate the barriers that prevent individuals from enjoying equal opportunity;
- Dealing with requests for religious accommodations in a timely, fair, sensitive and, if possible, confidential manner based on the individual needs and circumstances involved;
- Cooperating with individuals during the workplace or federal religious accommodations process, including but not limited, to ensuring that such individuals are notified of the information needed by ABC Company to evaluate their accommodation requests;
- Helping ABC Company implement reasonable accommodations provided;

- Helping ABC Company review and revise this Policy as necessary to ensure its effectiveness.

1. **Employees & Job Applicants:** Employees and job applicants requesting accommodations are responsible for:

- Following the religious accommodations procedures set forth in Section 5 below;
- Cooperating in all phases of the accommodations process;
- Accepting offers of accommodations that are reasonable and meet their needs even if the offered accommodations are not their first choice.

5. **ACCOMMODATIONS PROCEDURES**
6. **Requesting Accommodations:** Employees and job applicants should request religious accommodations in writing by completing the Religious Accommodations Request Form (attached to this Policy as Exhibit A). Employees should give the completed Request Form to their supervisor. Job applicants should give the completed request form to the HR Department [*Optional: list name of HR representative designated to receive requests*].
7. **Deadline for Requests Involving Absences:** Requests for accommodations involving time off from work for religious holidays and observances must be made as early as possible, and no later than 10 business days in advance of the requested day(s) off.
8. **Supporting Documentation:** Where requested, employees and job applicants will provide information to support their requests, including without limitation, documentation verifying their need for accommodation.
9. **Response:** ABC Company will respond to all requests for religious accommodations in a timely, fair, sensitive and, if possible, confidential manner.
10. **Criteria for Evaluation:** Requests for religious accommodations will be evaluated case by case based on the individual's needs and circumstances involved, including but not limited to, with regard to financial costs, feasibility of implementation, impact on business, operations, job duties, health and safety, duration and availability of reasonable alternatives. Personal feelings and perceptions of ABC Company officials with regard to the religious belief or practice are totally irrelevant and will **in no way** factor into the evaluation of religious accommodation requests. Nor will any of the following factors be used as criteria in the evaluation:

- The accommodation's impact on the morale of other employees, e.g., "if I let this employee not work on Sabbath, other employees will demand weekends off";
- Unreasonable customer or third party preferences, e.g., an employee's preference that his co-workers be Christian;
- The fact that an otherwise reasonable accommodation is banned by a contract;
- The perception that the religious belief or practice is unreasonable.

1. **Notification of Response:** ABC Company will notify all employees and job applicants who request religious accommodations of the response to their requests. If the request for accommodation is denied, the individual will be notified of the reasons and, if feasible, offered alternative accommodations.
2. **Appeals:** Employees and job applicants who are not satisfied with the response to their religious accommodations requests may file an appeal with the ABC Company HR Department. However, individuals are also expected to accept alternative accommodations that are reasonable and meet their needs, even if such alternatives are not their first preference.

6. **PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY**

ABC Company will keep all records of religious accommodations requests in a secure location, separate from employee or job applicant personnel files and kept confidential to the extent required by the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) and other applicable personal privacy laws.

7. **NO RETALIATION**

No employee or job applicant will receive adverse treatment with regard to their employment or job application in reprisal or retaliation for requesting or receiving religious accommodations. ABC Company officials and personnel who engage in retaliatory actions in violation of this Policy will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.