



PROCLAMATION 21-14, *et seq.* EMPLOYER GUIDANCE FOR RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION REQUESTS

DISCLAIMER. *This guidance is meant to be a reference for Washington employers processing religious exemptions under Proclamation 21-14, et seq. The state makes no representation that reliance on this guidance will satisfy an employer’s legal obligations or shield any employer from legal challenges. Every employment setting is unique, and you should carefully review your accommodation policies with legal counsel. In providing this guidance, the state is not requiring its use by private employers; rather, it is intended for Washington state agencies and is offered for general informational purposes only.*

Sections specific to state agencies are highlighted to help employers avoid mislabeling their forms.

[INSERT DATE]

Instructions for HR Professionals:

Provide the employee with the religious exemption request form. Once the form is completed review the answers provided. If the employee answers “yes” to both questions on the request form, you must grant the exemption request. The following questions can be used as a part of the reasonable accommodation assessment.

If the employee answers “no” to either one of the questions, the **agency** should follow up with additional questions about the employee’s strongly held religious belief(s). Please reach out to the employee for additional information. Below you will find examples of follow up questions. Document the responses.

Additional Questions:

1. Please explain how a COVID-19 vaccine conflicts with your asserted strongly held religious beliefs. Please attach additional pages if needed to document the full response.
2. How long have you held these religious beliefs?
3. Do your religious beliefs include objections to other vaccines and/or other medicines?
 - a. If yes, please explain. Please attach additional pages if needed to document the full response.
 - b. Have you ever received a vaccination in the past? If so, under what circumstances?
 - c. If your religious tenets do not include objections to all vaccines, please explain why the COVID-19 vaccine is objectionable based upon your religious beliefs while at least some others are not. Please attach additional pages if needed to document the full response.

Obtain from the employee a confirmation that the information provided is true and correct to the best of their knowledge, information, and belief. This can be achieved by emailing this completed document with a confirming statement such as

“The attached document captures the information that you provided regarding your religious beliefs. This is considered a true and accurate document. If it is not, you must immediately send to me a corrected document. If you send a corrected document, it is likely that we will schedule an additional discussion with you.”