



COMDTINST 1000.15
30 AUG 2021

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1000.15

Subj: MILITARY RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

- Ref: (a) Coast Guard Medical Manual, COMDTINST M6000.1 (series)
 (b) Immunizations and Chemoprophylaxis (Joint Publication), COMDTINST M6230.4 (series)
 (c) Uniform Regulations, COMDTINST M1020.6 (series)
 (d) Religious Ministries within the Coast Guard, COMDTINST 1730.4 (series)
 (e) U.S. Coast Guard Civil Rights Manual, COMDTINST M5350.4 (series)
 (f) Religious Liberty in the Military Services, Department of Defense Instruction 1300.17

1. PURPOSE. To promulgate policy and guidance for the accommodation of religious practices within the United States Coast Guard.
2. ACTION. All Coast Guard unit commanders, commanding officers, officers-in-charge, deputy/assistant commandants, and chiefs of Headquarters staff elements must comply with the provisions of this Commandant Instruction. Internet release is authorized.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. None.
4. DISCUSSION. The Coast Guard values the rights of its personnel to practice their religion of choice, or none at all, when it does not interfere with the ability to safely and effectively accomplish our missions. This Instruction provides the processes for consideration and resolution of requests for religious accommodation. It strives to strike a balance between consideration for the exercise of religion and ensuring military readiness, unit cohesion, good order, discipline, health and safety. This Instruction applies to all Coast Guard active duty and reserve personnel, Coast Guard Academy cadets, and applicants for accession programs. It also applies to other uniformed service members while serving within the Coast Guard. The policies and procedures in this Instruction apply solely to the accommodation of religious practices within the Coast Guard and no other context. Conscientious objectors are not covered by this Instruction and should refer to Conscientious Objectors and the Requirement to Bear Arms, COMDTINST 1900.8 (series).

DISTRIBUTION – SDL No. 170

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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION:

5. DISCLAIMER. This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide operational guidance for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended to nor does it impose legally binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.
6. MAJOR CHANGES. This is the first issuance of this Instruction. There are no prior versions. This Instruction supersedes Flag Voice 412, Religious Accommodation Policy Revision published by Assistant Commandant for Human Resources (CG-1) on 2 Feb 2014. This Instruction establishes uniform procedures and guidelines for processing requests for religious accommodations within the Coast Guard.
7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS.
 - a. The development of this Instruction and the general policies contained within it have been thoroughly reviewed by the originating office in conjunction with the Office of Environmental Management, Commandant (CG-47). This Instruction is categorically excluded under current Department of Homeland Security (DHS) categorical exclusion DHS (CATEX) A3 from further environmental analysis in accordance with the U.S. Coast Guard Environmental Planning Policy, COMDTINST 5090.1 and the Environmental Planning (EP) Implementing Procedures (IP).
 - b. This Instruction will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy or substantial change to existing environmental conditions; or inconsistencies with any Federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions resulting from the general policy in this Instruction must be individually evaluated for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions, Executive Order 12114, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) NEPA policy, Coast Guard Environmental Planning policy, and compliance with all other applicable environmental mandates.
8. DISTRIBUTION. No paper distribution will be made of this Instruction. An electronic version will be located on the following Commandant (CG-612) web sites: Internet: <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Directives/>, and CGPortal: <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/library/Directives/SitePages/Home.aspx>.
9. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. Records created as a result of this Instruction, regardless of format or media, must be managed in accordance with the records retention schedules located on the Records Resource Center CGPortal site: cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/cg61/CG611/SitePages/Home.aspx.
10. DEFINITIONS.
 - a. Religious Accommodation. A religious accommodation is any adjustment to the work environment that will allow a member or applicant to exercise his or her religious beliefs. The need for religious accommodation may arise where an individual's sincerely held religious beliefs, observances or practices conflict with a specific task or requirement of their position or an application process. Accommodation requests often relate to work

schedules, dress and grooming, or religious expression in the workplace. Requests for religious accommodation from a military policy, practice, or duty that substantially burdens a service member's exercise of religion may be denied only when the military policy, practice, or duty furthers a compelling government interest and it is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling government interest. The Coast Guard has a compelling government interest in mission accomplishment at the individual, unit, and organizational levels, including such necessary elements of mission accomplishment as military readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, and health and safety.

- b. Religious Observance. Religious observances include, but are not limited to participating in worship services, daily prayers or following other doctrinal requirements on holy days.
- c. Religious Exercise. Any exercise of religion, whether or not compelled by, or central to, a system of religious belief.
- d. Religious Practice. An action, behavior, or course of conduct constituting individual expressions of religious beliefs, whether or not compelled by, or central to, the religion concerned.
- e. Religious Dietary Observances. Religious dietary observances include doctrinal or traditional requirements on types of subsistence allowed or the means of food preparation.
- f. Religious Medical Practices. Religious medical practices include doctrinal or traditional objections to receiving immunizations and providing Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) specimen samples.
- g. Religious Apparel. Articles of clothing, jewelry or other such accoutrements worn as part of the doctrinal or traditional observances of the religious faith practiced by the service member. Hair and grooming practices required or observed by religious groups are not included within the meaning of religious apparel.
 - (1) Neat and conservative. In the context of the wear of a military uniform, items of religious apparel that:
 - (a) Are discreet, tidy, and not dissonant or showy in style, size, design, brightness, or color;
 - (b) Do not replace or interfere with the proper wear of any authorized article of the uniform; and
 - (c) Are not temporarily or permanently affixed or appended to any authorized article of the uniform.
- h. Tradition or Traditional. Recurring practices, ceremonies, customs or obligations that -- whether or not explicitly required by religious doctrine -- have historically been associated with or derived from established religious beliefs and doctrines.

- i. Pre-accession. The period of time before a prospective service member's participation in a commissioning program, warrant officer program, enlistment (or entry), reenlistment (or reentry), or enrollment in the Coast Guard Academy or College Student Pre-commissioning initiative (CSPI).

11. POLICY.

- a. General. Pursuant to the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, service members have the right to observe the tenets of their religion or to observe no religion at all. Under Section 2000bb-1 of Title 42, United States Code, also known as "The Religious Freedom Restoration Act," Section 533(a)(1) of Public Law 112-239 and other laws applicable to the accommodation of religious practices, the Armed Forces must accommodate the beliefs of a member of the armed forces reflecting the conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs of the member and, in so far as practicable, may not use such beliefs as the basis of any adverse personnel action, discrimination, or denial of promotion, schooling, training or assignment. Coast Guard policy is to provide reasonable accommodations to the observances of the religious faith practiced by individual members when these doctrines or observances will not have an adverse impact on military readiness, individual or unit readiness, unit cohesion, health, safety, discipline, or mission accomplishment. Accommodation of a member's religious practices cannot be guaranteed and is subject to operational necessity. Unit commanders are encouraged to seek input from the unit's Servicing Legal Office and Chaplain to ensure compliance with Section 533(a)(1) of Public Law 112-239, as amended.
 - (1) Requests for accommodation based on sincerely held beliefs must not be denied without consultation with the unit's Servicing Legal Office, Civil Rights Service Provider, and Chaplain.
 - (2) All requests for accommodation must be reviewed and acted upon by the appropriate approval authority and during the timelines outlined in Enclosure (1), insofar as practicable and as operations allow.
 - (3) Pre-accession members must be given the opportunity to route a religious accommodation request prior to departure for a Military Entrance Processing Station.
 - (4) All approved requests must be forwarded to the appropriate accession point and Indoctrinating Training Center (Officer Candidate School or Training Center Cape May) before the member executes his or her orders.
- b. Standards of Review for Religious Accommodation Requests.
 - (1) The Coast Guard has a compelling government interest in mission accomplishment at the individual, unit, and organizational levels, including such necessary elements of mission accomplishment as military readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, and health and safety. In accordance with the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), and Reference (f), the Coast Guard will normally accommodate practices of a service member based on a sincerely held religious belief.

- (2) Accommodation includes excluding a service member from an otherwise applicable military policy, practice or duty. In accordance with RFRA, if a military policy, practice or duty substantially burdens a service member's exercise of religion, accommodation can only be denied if:
 - (a) The military policy, practice, or duty is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and
 - (b) The policy, practice, or duty is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling government interest.

Note: In applying the standard of (a) and (b) above, the burden of proof is placed upon the Coast Guard, not the individual requesting the exemption.

- (3) A request for the accommodation of religious practices may be granted in whole or in part. The requestor will be informed in writing of the decision to grant or deny the request, and of any conditions or limitations placed on the grant.

c. Types of Accommodation Requests.

- (1) Observances of Worship and Holy Days. CO/OICs will accommodate Worship practices, Holy Days, Sabbath or similar religious observance requests except by necessity, consistent with mission accomplishment. These requests can be approved at the local unit level in accordance with operational demands.
- (2) Dietary Practices. CO/OICs should support religious dietary observances to the fullest extent possible, consistent with mission accomplishment.
- (3) Immunizations. While the Coast Guard has a compelling interest in requiring that all members receive immunizations, individual immunization requirements may be waived when requested by the member based on religious objection. The religious objection of the service member must be balanced against the medical risk to the member and the unit, and Coast Guard requirements such as alert status, deployment potential, and availability of the member for reassignment to units requiring full medical readiness, as described in Reference (a). When available, alternative immunization or treatment that does not violate the member's religious objection must be used. This accommodation may be terminated by the CO/OIC, if the individual and/or unit are at imminent risk of exposure to a disease for which an immunization is available. All requirements set forth in References (a) and (b) must be met. Commandant (CG-133) is the approval authority for all requests to be exempt from immunizations, although COs/OICs may give approval for the member to receive an alternate immunization approved by Commandant (CG-112).
- (4) Grooming. A key element of unit cohesion is establishing and maintaining uniform military grooming and appearance standards. Waivers of grooming policy for male members on all duty types to wear unshorn/long hair or beards may be submitted to through CO/OIC to PSC-PSD-mu. Approved beards must be worn in a neat and conservative manner. When a member is authorized to wear a beard of greater than

two inches in length, the beard must be rolled, tied and/or otherwise groomed to achieve a length not to exceed two inches when measured from the bottom of the chin.

- (5) Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Specimen Sampling. DNA analysis fulfills the military requirement of quickly and accurately identifying the remains of Coast Guard members under “Using the Armed Forces Repository of Specimen Samples for the Identification of Remains, COMDTINST 6510.1 (series)”. DNA sampling is performed on every accession upon arrival at the member’s accession point. Analysis of these samples are only conducted when necessary for identification of remains. Therefore, religious accommodations for DNA analysis can only be processed prior to the prospective accession’s arrival at his or her respective accession point. The cumulative impact of repeated accommodations of a similar nature and previous treatment of similar requests may set a precedent that could adversely impact other Coast Guard medical policies and programs, including mandatory pre-deployment processing, medical screening activities, Human Immunodeficiency Virus testing and medical surveillance program serum collection. The specimen sample will be destroyed at the request of the member upon completion of service.
- (6) Uniforms. When approved, such apparel will be authorized to be worn with the military uniform as long as it does not interfere with the performance of the member's military duties or is otherwise specifically prohibited in this Section. All uniform accommodations must maintain compliance with Reference (c), including maintaining a neat and conservative appearance.
 - (a) Whether an item of religious apparel interferes with the performance of the service member's military duties depends on the characteristics of the item, the circumstances of its intended wear, and the particular nature of the member's current duties. Factors in determining if an item of religious apparel interferes with the military duties include, but are not limited to, whether the item:
 - [1] Impairs the safe and effective operation of weapons, military equipment, or machinery;
 - [2] Poses a health or safety hazard to the service member wearing the religious apparel or to others;
 - [3] Interferes with the wear or proper function of special or protective clothing or equipment (e.g., helmets, flak jackets, flight suits, camouflage uniforms, gas masks, wet suits, and crash and rescue equipment); and
 - [4] Otherwise impairs mission accomplishment.
 - (b) Head Coverings. Religious accommodations for members to wear neat and conservative religious head coverings (including, but not limited to a hijab, turban, kufi, kippah, or yarmulke) may be authorized in accordance with Enclosure (1) and Reference (c). Except in the case of safety or protective headgear required by the member’s duties, position or assignment, a member

granted a religious accommodation for head coverings is not required to wear military headgear in addition to his or her religious head covering if such military headgear would violate his or her sincerely-held religious beliefs.

- (c) Jewelry bearing religious inscriptions or otherwise indicating affiliation or belief may be worn subject to the same uniform regulations prescribed for jewelry that is not of a religious nature. The Coast Guard will consider religious accommodation requests to wear jewelry that is not in compliance with uniform regulations in accordance with this policy.
 - (d) Chaplains may wear any religious apparel required by their religious organizations with the uniform while conducting public worship services and during the performance of rites and rituals distinct to their faith groups.
 - (e) Service members may wear any required religious apparel distinct to their faith group with the uniform while in attendance at public worship services.
- (7) Requests for any other types of religious accommodations can be submitted to the member's command for approval.
- (8) Accommodation Duration and Rescission of an Accommodation. An approved request for accommodation will remain in effect during follow-on duties, assignments, or locations, and for the duration of the service member's military career, including after promotions, reenlistment or commissioning, unless and until rescinded in accordance with requirements of this issuance.
- (a) An approved accommodation may be subject to review and rescission, in whole or in part, at any time, based upon a determination that the circumstances under which the grant of accommodation was approved have changed (e.g., deployment, new duties, or other material change in circumstances). The Coast Guard, and not the individual member, bears the burden of initiating a proposal to review and rescind an accommodation previously granted.
 - (b) When a command initiates a proposal to review and rescind an accommodation previously granted, the CO/OIC will forward a written summary of the nature of the materially changed circumstances that require such review and repeal to the member concerned for comment.
 - [1] The service member will be:
 - [a] Allotted no fewer than 10 business days to review and comment on the proposed rescission of the accommodation;
 - [b] Afforded the opportunity to review and comment on any endorsements of this proposal from the chain of command; and

[c] Afforded, subject to security classification requirements, the opportunity to review and comment on any documents or attachments to the proposal or subsequent endorsements.

[2] Any comments submitted by the service member will be forwarded for consideration by the appropriate official authorized to act on the matter. For example, if a religious accommodation was approved by a commanding officer at a previous unit, the comments must be considered by the commanding officer of the service member's current unit. If a religious accommodation was previously approved by the Office of Military Personnel (CG-133), comments must be considered by Commandant (CG-133).

[3] A proposal to review and rescind a previously approved accommodation must be acted on at the level of authority no lower than that at which the accommodation was granted.

[4] The standard for repealing a previously granted accommodation, in whole or in part, is the same as the standard for denying an initial request for the accommodation of religious practices, and the same factors must be considered, as appropriate.

(9) Accommodation Modification or Suspense Under Exigent Circumstances. Under exigent circumstances and in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest due to operational necessity, when time is of the essence and no less restrictive means of religious accommodation are available, a commander may temporarily modify or suspend accommodations granted, upon notice to the service member concerned and without benefit of appeal. The level of this commander must be no lower than the CO/OIC for a service member who has previously been granted an accommodation of religious practices.

(a) The service member concerned may be required to immediately comply with the modification or suspension of an accommodation, if circumstances so warrant.

(b) The modification or suspension of the accommodation will apply for only the minimum period required by the circumstances.

12. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. The following roles and responsibilities apply to current Coast Guard members. New recruits waiting to be accessed must make their requests through their recruiter.

a. Members seeking religious accommodation must submit their request in writing to the proper approval authority in accordance with Enclosure (1). Prior to submitting their request, members are required to consult with their unit's Chaplain. The request must include a notation that the member met with the chaplain, and include the date of the meeting and the name/contact information of the chaplain. Prospective accessions should submit their request through their recruiter, who is required to arrange a consultation with a Coast Guard Chaplain. A sample of a religious accommodation request memorandum can be found in Enclosure (2).

- b. The memorandum should, at a minimum, describe the specific request the member is seeking and the relation to the sincerely-held belief on which it is based.
- c. CO/OIC/Command Cadre. Commanders will respond to requests in accordance with this Instruction and its timelines and will route each request to the appropriate approval authority, or issue a decision on a request that is properly within their authority to act upon. A copy of the final decision (whether by endorsement or new memorandum) must be provided to the member and any other office as described in Enclosure (1).
 - (1) If a religious accommodation request is approved, the command must issue a CG-3307 to the member describing the nature of the religious accommodation granted. A service member whose request is granted in part will be informed by CG-3307 of the specific elements of the approval.
 - (2) In the case of immunization exemptions, the CG-3307 will be issued by the requestor's command based upon the decision memo issued by Commandant (CG-133).
- d. Chaplains. Chaplains are required to interview members requesting a religious accommodation and are responsible for informing the unit commander about such requests. Chaplains are to use the Religious Accommodation Interview Checklist, found in Enclosure (3), in order to assist the command in assessing the member's sincerely-held beliefs. Because this interview is done at the commander's request, the Chaplain must advise the member that the interview is not confidential or privileged, as found in Enclosure (4). Chaplains may use any means of communication available to ensure the interview is conducted promptly and provide commanders with their findings. Chaplains are also required to provide a memorandum or endorsement to accompany the member's request as it is routed up the chain of command. Guidance for the memorandum or endorsement from the Chaplain to the command can be found in Enclosure (5). The Chaplain of the Coast Guard (CG-00A) will annually report to the Coast Guard Commandant (CCG) on religious accommodations requested, approved and/or denied in the Coast Guard.
- e. Servicing Legal Office. The legal office serves to ensure commanders are knowledgeable about and adhere to relevant legal standards. Commands are required to consult with their servicing legal office prior to granting or denying a religious accommodation request.
- f. Civil Rights Service Provider. The Civil Rights Service Provider will advise personnel on the religious accommodation process and the Equal Opportunity complaint process.
- g. Headquarters Offices. Headquarters offices will either serve as final approval or appellate authority, and maintain records of each request and decision. All approval authorities must provide a copy of all approvals/denials to Commandant (CG-133) for submission to the Chaplain of the Coast Guard to be included in its annual report to Coast Guard Commandant (CCG).

- h. Medical Officers. A medical officer must counsel the applicant regarding accommodations for immunizations. The physician should ensure that the member is making an informed decision and should address, at a minimum, specific information about the diseases concerned, specific vaccine information (including product constituents, benefits and risks), and potential risks of infection incurred by unimmunized individuals. The medical officer consult (date of consult, name of consulting medical officer) must be noted in the member's request for the religious accommodation for immunization exemption.
- i. Training Centers. All members being accessed into the Coast Guard must be provided with information regarding religious accommodations within the Coast Guard during their initial training by a Coast Guard Chaplain. Training centers, as accession points, must also ensure all requests granted during the accession process are properly adhered to and work with the appropriate assignment officers who are also bound to adhere to such granted requests.
- j. Administrative Appeals. Any request for accommodation that is denied, in part or in full, may be appealed as follows:
 - (1) Unit commanders must inform the requesting member of the right to appeal the decision. Any notice of denial must inform members that they have the right to file an Equal Opportunity complaint by contacting a Civil Rights Service Provider within 45 calendar days of any denial. For complaint processing, see Chapter 5 of Reference (e).
 - (2) A member who has been denied a religious accommodation, in whole or in part, may submit a written appeal to the official in the chain of command or chain of supervision one level above the officer or official who took the final action on the request. The appeal must be routed through the officer or official who denied the request. The appeal must include the specific basis on which the member believes the initial denial was in error.
 - (3) The appellate authority will either overturn or uphold the contested decision, in part or in full, within 30 days of the date of appeal for cases arising within the continental United States, and within 60 days for all other cases, if practicable and as operations allow.

13. ACTION.

- a. Commandant (CG-1) is responsible for overall policy control and program execution.
- b. Commandant (CG-1) will review current regulations governing uniforms and grooming, food service, separate rations, immunizations, and DNA sampling, and revise them as necessary.
- c. Commandant (CG-133) will collect, maintain and make available to the Chaplain of the Coast Guard the data related to the approval and denial of requests for religious accommodation.

- d. Commandant (CG-133) will ensure implementation of the policies and procedures in this Instruction.
 - e. Commandant (CG-PSC-RC) will provide Instruction of this policy to applicants for commissioning, enlistment, and reenlistment, and upon completion must require the member's signature acknowledging its contents.
 - f. FORCECOM will coordinate with the program office to develop appropriate performance support for commands, judge advocates, chaplains, and similar courses of Instruction and orientation.
 - g. Office of Military Uniforms (CG-PSC-PSD-MU) will ensure the changes reflected herein are properly facilitated and incorporated into the next Uniform Regulations update through the next uniform board. Commandant (PSC-PSD-MU) will also develop processes with Coast Guard Recruiting Command to coordinate the evaluation of requests by prospective accessions.
14. FORMS/REPORTS. The Chaplain of the Coast Guard will annually report to the Coast Guard Commandant on religious accommodation requests within the Coast Guard. Commandant (CG-1) must collect, maintain and make available to the Chaplain of the Coast Guard (CG-00A) the data related to the approval and denial of requests for religious accommodation. No forms are prescribed nor required by this Instruction.
15. REQUEST FOR CHANGES. Recommendations for changes or improvements are welcome and should be submitted via the chain of command to the Office of Military Personnel, Policy and Standards Division, Commandant (CG-1331), at HQS-PolicyandStandards@uscg.mil.

/ERIC C. JONES/
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Assistant Commandant for Human Resources

- Encl: (1) Approval Process and Authorities
(2) Religious Accommodation Request Memorandum
(3) Religious Accommodation Interview Checklist
(4) Advisement About Statements Made During a Religious Accommodation Interview
(5) Guidance for Chaplain Memorandum

<u>Routing & Approval Process for Current Members</u>				
<i>Type of Religious Accommodation</i>	Approval Authority (Route to)	When to Submit	Copy of Final Decision Sent to	Notes
<i>Uniform/Apparel & Grooming</i>	To: Commandant (PSC- PSD-mu) Thru: CO/OIC	At any time.	MBR via CO/OIC	
<i>Immunizations</i>	To: Commandant (CG-133) Thru: Commandant (CG-112), CO/OIC *CO may approve alternative vaccinations. ** Requires consultation with medical officer	At any time.	CG-00A MBR via CO/OIC	* COs may only approve alternative vaccinations if such vaccination is approved by Commandant (CG-112) as an effective alternate. If no alternative vaccinations are available then route to Commandant (CG-133).
<i>Other (Dietary, Religious Observances/Holy Days, etc.)</i>	CO/OIC/Commander	At any time.	MBR	

<u>Routing & Approval Process for Prospective Accessions</u>				
<i>DNA Sampling</i>	To: Commandant (CGRC) Thru: Commandant (CG-PSC-med) Thru: Recruiter	Only during the accession process.	MBR	
<i>All others, to include uniforms/grooming, dietary, etc.</i>	To: Commandant (CGRC) Thru: Recruiter	Optional at accession process.	MBR	CGRC will consult with appropriate HQ office as would otherwise approve for current members
<i>Immunizations</i>	To: Commandant (CG-133) Thru: Commandant (CG-RC) *CO may approve alternative vaccinations.	Prior to accession.	MBR via Commandant (CG-RC)	*COs may only approve alternative vaccinations if such vaccination is approved by Commandant (CG-112) as an effective

				alternate. If no alternative vaccinations are available then route to Commandant (CG-133).
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Timelines:

- Requests that are approved by the unit CO/OIC for approval must be executed within 30 days of receipt by the Command, if practicable and as operations permit.
- Requests that are approved by other than the unit CO/OIC must be executed within 30 days (CONUS) and 60 days (OCONUS) from the date received by the decision authority, if practicable and as operations permit.
- Requests for prospective accessions and non-active duty members will be acted on within 45 days of receipt by the decision authority, if practicable and as operations permit.

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



[Requesting Member's Command]
United States Coast Guard

[Address Line 1]
[Address Line 2]
[City/State/ZIP]
Staff Symbol:
Phone:
Fax:
Email: |

6230
DD MMM YYYY

From: I. M. Coastie, SN
To: [Approval Authority]
Thru: [CO/OIC, if not approval authority]
[Chaplain]

Subj: REQUEST FOR RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Ref: (a) Military Religious Accommodations, COMDTINST 1000.15

1. Respectfully request a waiver of policy to accommodate a religious practice based on a sincerely-held religious belief in accordance with Reference (a). I request a waiver to the [immunization/uniform/grooming/etc.] policy, specifically [which part is objectionable].
2. Nature of the request. [Explain service member's waiver request and whether or not the member has previously had this or any other policy waiver request approved or denied].
3. Basis. [Identify the religious beliefs on which the exemption request and how current policy prevents the member from practicing within their beliefs.]
4. [If a request for waiver from immunization, include date of consultation with medical officer and name/contact information of medical officer.]
5. My contact information is [telephone number and e-mail address].

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PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. §552a(e)(3), this Privacy Act Statement serves to inform you of why DHS is requesting the information on this form.

AUTHORITY: 14 U.S.C. § 505

PURPOSE: To obtain information from a person seeking a military religious accommodation in order to identify the free exercise of religion asserted by the member and make a determination that balances the free exercise of religion with military readiness, unit cohesion, and good order and discipline. A Religious Accommodation Interview Checklist will be used by the Chaplain to record information provided by the member during an interview.

Enclosure (2) to COMDTINST 1000.15

ROUTINE USES: Authorized USCG officials will use this information to determine if a religious accommodation can be approved pursuant to Section 533(a)(1) of Public Law 112-239 (2013), as amended. Any external disclosures of information within this record will be made in accordance with DHS/USCG-014, Military Pay and Personnel, 76 Federal Register 66933 (October 28, 2011).

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION: Providing this information is voluntary. However, failure to provide this information may delay the administrative process.

Religious Accommodation Interview Checklist

Applicant:			Date of Interview(s):
Rate/Rank:			Chaplain Interviewer:
Phone:			Phone:
Email:			Email:
Command:			Chaplain's Command:
Interview Preliminaries:			
Yes	No	N/A	
			Review COMDTINST 1000.15 on religious accommodation.
			Notify Applicant that interview is not confidential/privileged and will be used to advise command on request.
			Obtain Applicant's signed waiver (see attached).
			Explain to Applicant that confidential support can be obtained through either 1) another chaplain or 2) a separate counseling session.
			Has the Applicant been granted a policy waiver for this practice previously?
			Does the Applicant's declared faith group reflect the belief cited in the application?
The application is for a waiver from the following:			
Yes	No	N/A	
			Uniform standards
			Grooming standards
			Immunization requirements
			DNA sampling
			Other
Interview Results:			
Yes	No	N/A	
			Applicant communicated his/her beliefs in an honest and sincere manner.
			Applicant was credible (consistently keeps tenets, practices, etc.).
			Applicant's demeanor and pattern of conduct are consistent with the request.
			Applicant participates in activities associated with the belief(s).
			Persons supporting the claim are credible.
			Applicant's request is supported by letter(s) of verification or endorsement from an organization espousing the beliefs which are the basis for the claim.
			Alternate means of accommodating the practice were explored in the interview.
Process Checklist:			
Yes	No	N/A	
			Chaplain has prepared a memorandum memorializing the interview, following the guidance, specifically identifying the religious importance of the accommodation to the Applicant.
			Chaplain reviewed memorandum with Applicant and provided a copy.
			Chaplain submitted the memorandum and this document to the command.
			Chaplain referred Applicant to command to process request.

ADVISEMENT ABOUT STATEMENTS MADE DURING A
RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION INTERVIEW

I, _____, have been advised that statements that are made during the course of my religious accommodation interview are not confidential and may be disclosed by Chaplain _____ to further my religious accommodation request.

Date

Member

Date

Chaplain

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. §552a(e)(3), this Privacy Act Statement serves to inform you of why DHS is requesting the information on this form.

AUTHORITY: 14 U.S.C. § 505

PURPOSE: To obtain information from a person seeking a military religious accommodation in order to identify the free exercise of religion asserted by the member in order make a determination that balances the free exercise of religion with military readiness, unit cohesion, and good order and discipline.

ROUTINE USES: Authorized USCG officials will use this information to determine if a religious accommodation can be approved pursuant to Section 533(a)(1) of Public Law 112-239 (2013), as amended. Any external disclosures of information within this record will be made in accordance with DHS/USCG-014, Military Pay and Personnel, 76 Federal Register 66933 (October 28, 2011).

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION: Providing this information is voluntary. However, failure to provide this information may delay the administrative process.

GUIDANCE FOR CHAPLAIN MEMORANDUM

Overview

When a chaplain learns that a service member perceives a conflict between policy and a practice associated with his or her religious beliefs or sincerely held moral or ethical principles, and would like to seek an accommodation of those beliefs or principles, the chaplain should apprise the member of the process for submitting the request and the information needed to support it. Should the service member wish to submit a waiver request, the chaplain should, as soon as possible, conduct a (non-confidential) interview of the member and submit the memorandum for the record to the chain of command in order to comply with the time requirements of DoD policy.

Description and Discussion

The following is a description and discussion of each Paragraph of the memorandum template.

- Paragraph 1 conveys the identity of the requester, the date of the interview, the explanation that confidentiality does not apply to the interview, and that confidential chaplain support is available by referral. It must be written as presented in the template with the correct name and date.
- Paragraph 2 describes the exception to policy which is being requested, to include the nature of the religious or other practice and how it conflicts with applicable policy. It should indicate whether or not policy completely prohibits the practice. Interview questions may include, but are not limited to: Can the practice be partially performed or performed at a later date? Is the prohibition the result of operational status? This Paragraph also indicates whether or not the member has previously had this or any other accommodation request approved or denied.
- Paragraph 3 communicates what the requester understands to be the underlying basis for the request. It includes a description of the religious beliefs or sincerely held moral or ethical principles on which the waiver request is based. It includes how the requester expresses those beliefs or principles in daily life. It also includes what the requester lists as a religious preference. Interview questions may include, but are not limited to: Please tell me about your faith, religion, belief system, or principles. How do you express them in your daily life? Are there regular activities associated with these beliefs or principles? What are they? Do these beliefs or principles inform how you make decisions? Do your beliefs or principles influence how you interact with other people or the environment? If so, how? Please give some examples of how your beliefs or principles impact the way you live. How do you think this practice would help you cope with the challenges of life? How does not being able to use this practice affect you? If you used this practice prior to military service, how did not being able to do so anymore affect you?
- Paragraph 4 indicates what, if any, alternate means of accommodation were discovered in the course of the interview. The chaplain will not unduly influence the requester to accept a

course of action which is not satisfactory to the requester. Interview questions might include, but are not limited to: Are there similar practices which do not require a policy waiver? Have you tried other ways of meeting the need addressed by this practice? Is there one which could accomplish the same benefit?

- Paragraph 5 contains a statement as to the chaplain's professional opinion regarding the sincerity of the requester. It should include the chaplain's opinion regarding the importance of the request to the requester in terms of beliefs or principles, given the information provided. The chaplain must not base the opinion on the chaplain's personal religious beliefs or the chaplain's interpretation of what constitutes an appropriate religious or other practice. The chaplain's role is similar to the role played in evaluating the sincerity of members submitting conscientious objection packages. It focuses on the person making the request in order to make an informed report to the commander. Interview questions may include, but are not limited to: Are you a member of a religious or other organization which uses the practice for which you are requesting a waiver? How long have you been a member? What makes the practice for which you are requesting a waiver such an important part of your religion, beliefs, or principles? If this waiver is not granted, how will this decision affect you? How is this practice integral to your beliefs or principles? Did you have this practice when you entered the Service? How and when did you determine that this particular practice was an important part of your overall religious beliefs or principles?
- Paragraph 6 provides the Chaplain's contact information.

A copy of the memorandum is provided to the requester.