



COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement Religious Exception Requests

Background

Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has developed a [frequently asked questions](#) (FAQ) about the Oregon Administrative Rule ([OAR](#)) 333-019-1030, COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements for Teachers and School Staff. Please note the listed categories in the FAQ are: Schools and school-based programs vaccine requirement, other agencies, vaccine rule enforcement, vaccine rule exemptions, Early Learning Division (ELD) staff, students, coaches, parents, substitute teachers, School Board members, district staff, school nurses, private schools, School psychologists, pathologists, counselors, and support staff, and temporary staff.

Defining Religion Exception

Religious Exception means that an individual has a sincerely held religious belief that prevents the individual from receiving a COVID-19 vaccination. A religious exception must be, on an Oregon Health Authority (OHA) [form](#). By signing this religious exception form, the individual is stating that the individual is requesting an exception from the COVID-19 vaccination requirement on the basis of a sincerely held religious belief and including a statement describing the way in which the vaccination requirement conflicts with the religious observance, practice, or belief of the individual.

Questions about an Employee's Request for Religious Exception

Federal guidance on religious exception encourages employers to presume that an employee's request for religious exception is based on a sincere belief in a religion, unless the employer has a valid, objective reason to question the employee. The employer should review the request on its own merits, initiate discussion with the employee about possible exception, and assess whether exception is possible.

Employees have an obligation to actively participate in the exception process and must cooperate with a PHSD's attempt to accommodate their needs.

According to the U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission's (EEOC) guidance on religious discrimination, because the definition of religion is broad and protects beliefs, observances, and practices with which the employer may be unfamiliar, the employer should ordinarily assume that an employee's request for religious exception is



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based on a sincerely held religious belief. If, however, an employee requests religious exception, and an employer has an objective basis for questioning either the religious nature or the sincerity of a particular belief, observance, or practice, PHSD would be justified in seeking additional supporting information.

Submission

An individual who has filled out a completed religious exception form from OHA needs to submit a copy to Courtney Wilson, the assistant to the superintendent, at cwilson@pleasanthill.k12.or.us, or in person at the district office. This information will be kept in a confidential health file here at the district office.

Deadline

After October 18, 2021, teachers, school staff, and volunteers may not teach, work, learn, study, assist, observe, or volunteer at a school unless they are fully vaccinated or have provided documentation of a medical or religious exception. A school may not employ, contract with, or accept the volunteer services of teachers, school staff or volunteers who are teaching, working, learning, studying, assisting, observing, or volunteering at a school unless the teachers or school staff are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or have a documented medical or religious exception.

Respectfully:

Scott Linenberger

Superintendent

Pleasant Hill School District