Workplace Vaccine Rights & Accommodation Guide

Understanding religious and disability-related accommodations, documenting requests, and navigating employer policies in Ohio.

1 Know the legal framework

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act generally covers employers with 15 or more employees. It requires reasonable accommodation of a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance that conflicts with a work requirement unless the accommodation would impose undue hardship. Under Groff v. DeJoy (2023), the burden must be substantial in the overall context of the employer's business.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) generally covers employers with 15 or more employees and may require reasonable accommodation for a qualifying disability, unless doing so creates undue hardship or another applicable legal limitation applies. The ADA has its own standards, distinct from Title VII.

Ohio Revised Code 4112.02 prohibits certain employment discrimination based on religion and disability. Coverage, procedures, and remedies depend on the facts and applicable law. A personal preference or nonreligious objection alone does not automatically qualify as a Title VII religious accommodation.

2 What to request

- Request the written vaccine policy, deadlines, applicable exemptions, and the employer's accommodation procedure.
- Explain the conflict with a sincerely held religious belief or qualifying disability, as applicable; do not misrepresent the basis of your request.
- Describe the accommodation you seek, such as reassignment, modified duties, schedule adjustments, remote work, or other workable alternatives.
- Ask for an individualized review and a written response. Be open to discussing effective alternatives.
- Keep copies of the policy, request, supporting documentation, correspondence, and decision.

3 Documentation checklist

☐ Current employer policy and any deadlines

☐ Date and method of request submission

☐ Copy of your written request and supporting materials, if applicable

☐ Notes of meetings and proposed alternatives

☐ Written decision and reasons provided

☐ Any internal appeal instructions and deadlines

4 Sample religious accommodation request

Date: [Date] To: [HR / Supervisor] From: [Employee]

Subject: Request for religious accommodation

I am requesting a reasonable religious accommodation from [specific vaccination requirement] under Title VII. My sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance conflicts with this requirement because [briefly explain the religious conflict in your own words]. I request [proposed accommodation], and I am willing to discuss other effective alternatives. Please confirm receipt and provide the next steps and a written decision. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely, [Name]

5 Sample disability-related accommodation request

Date: [Date] To: [HR / Accommodation Coordinator] From: [Employee]

Subject: Request for reasonable accommodation

I am requesting a reasonable accommodation related to [specific vaccination requirement] because of a medical condition that may qualify as a disability under applicable law. I request [proposed accommodation] so that I can continue performing the essential functions of my position. Please advise what information is reasonably necessary to evaluate this request and how medical documentation will be handled confidentially. I am available to discuss effective alternatives. Please confirm receipt and provide a written response.

Sincerely, [Name]

6 If your request is denied

- Request the specific reason for denial in writing, including any claimed undue hardship or other applicable legal basis.
- Ask whether alternative accommodations were considered and whether an internal appeal or reconsideration process is available.
- Keep all correspondence and review deadlines promptly. EEOC charge deadlines are often 180 or 300 days depending on jurisdiction; federal employees generally have a different process with a 45-day counselor-contact deadline.
- Consider contacting the EEOC, Ohio Civil Rights Commission, a union representative, or a qualified employment attorney for situation-specific guidance.

7 Special considerations

Healthcare, clinical, and safety-sensitive roles may involve additional patient-safety, licensing, placement-site, or contractual requirements. An employer may offer an effective accommodation different from the employee's preferred option. Accommodation is not automatically guaranteed, and the employer should evaluate requests under the applicable legal standard.

8 Official resources

- EEOC religious accommodations — https://www.eeoc.gov/fact-sheet-religious-accommodations-workplace
- EEOC religious discrimination — https://www.eeoc.gov/religious-discrimination
- EEOC vaccination and EEO guidance — https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws
- Ohio Revised Code 4112.02 — https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-4112.02
- EEOC ADA accommodation guidance — https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/enforcement-guidance-reasonable-accommodation-and-undue-hardship-under-ada

This guide provides general educational information, not legal advice. Laws and policies may change. Verify current requirements and seek individualized advice when necessary.