

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



## IN THE WORKPLACE

### LEGAL RIGHTS

[Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act](#) is a federal law that requires an employer with 15 or more employees to give an employee a “reasonable” accommodation for religious observance. The employer does not need to agree to allow religious observance if the accommodation would cause the employer undue hardship. To deny a religious accommodation request, the law requires an employer to establish that the costs of an accommodation “rise to an excessive or unjustifiable level.”

Undue hardship only exists if the burden is substantial in the overall context and conduct of an employer’s business. In other words, an employer must show that the burden of granting an accommodation would result in substantial increased costs in relation to the conduct of its particular business. Most states, and many municipalities, also have laws that protect employees—some of which offer workers additional protections.



### PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK

The law requires most employers to grant employees reasonable religious accommodations in the workplace and not discriminate or retaliate against employees seeking those accommodations. If you believe your rights may have been violated, you can file a [Charge of Discrimination](#) with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Many states and municipalities have [similar agencies](#) where you can file a complaint.

Be advised that there are strict time limits for filing EEOC complaints and/or complaints to similar state/local agencies.



## RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

A religious accommodation is an agreement with your employer that enables you to practice your religious beliefs in a manner that does not unduly interfere with your employment.

Religious accommodations may include adjustments to the work environment. Common examples include schedule changes, reassigning job responsibilities and tasks, and modifying workplace policies and practices.

## WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

### REQUESTING ACCOMMODATION FOR RAMADAN?

Prior to requesting a religious accommodation, you should familiarize yourself with your employer's policies for guidance on how to proceed. Such policies are typically contained in an employee handbook.

### IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO FIND ANY GUIDANCE, SEND YOUR REQUEST TO YOUR DIRECT SUPERVISOR AND A HUMAN RESOURCES REPRESENTATIVE, IF POSSIBLE.

When submitting your request, specify that you are seeking accommodation for a religious belief. You do not have to explain the basis for your belief or cite a source.

Your request should specify the type of religious accommodation needed, the belief whose observance the accommodation will facilitate, and the relevant time period for which you need the accommodation.

You should ensure your communications are in writing. For example, if your employer approves your request verbally, it is a best practice and can help avoid misunderstandings to send a follow-up email or letter thanking the person who approved the accommodation and briefly restating its terms.

### FACING RETALIATION FOR A REQUEST?

The law prohibits an employer from taking adverse action against an employee based on an employee's complaint about religious discrimination in the workplace or because the employee requested a religious accommodation at work.

For example: an employer isn't supposed to cut your hours or demote you because you requested an accommodation for Iftar.

[Title VII, a federal anti-discrimination law](#), directs most employers to maintain a workplace free from religious harassment. Religious harassment can take the form of: (1) coercing or pressuring an employee to abandon, alter, or adopt a religious practice as a condition of employment; and/or (2) creating a hostile work environment where the employee is subjected to unwelcome and religiously-based statements and/or conduct so severe or pervasive that the employee finds the work environment to be hostile.