



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

CPM 2025-11

## Memorandum

**To:** Heads and Acting Heads of Departments and Agencies  
**From:** Scott Kupor, Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
**Date:** July 16, 2025  
**Re:** Reasonable Accommodations for Religious Purposes

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### I. Background and Purpose

Since taking office, President Trump has made it a top priority to “ensur[e] that all executive departments and agencies (agencies) honor and enforce the Constitution’s guarantee of religious liberty” and “end[] any form of religious discrimination by the Federal Government.”<sup>1</sup> Specifically, “[i]t shall be the policy of the executive branch to vigorously enforce the historic and robust protections for religious liberty enshrined in Federal law.”<sup>2</sup> In addition, it is in the interest of the Federal government to recruit and retain highly-qualified employees of faith.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964<sup>3</sup> prohibits discrimination in employment because of an individual’s religion, among other protected characteristics. The statute requires employers to reasonably accommodate an employee’s religious observances, practices, and beliefs unless doing so would cause an undue hardship on the conduct of the employer’s business.<sup>4</sup>

In [\*Groff v. DeJoy\*](#),<sup>5</sup> the United States Supreme Court clarified that the “undue hardship” standard requires an employer to demonstrate substantial increased costs in relation to the conduct of its particular business to deny a religious accommodation. As a result of this decision, employers may not deny requests based on minor inconveniences.

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<sup>1</sup> President Trump, Executive Order 14205, [Establishment of The White House Faith Office](#) (Feb. 7, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> President Trump, Executive Order 14291, [Establishment of the Religious Liberty Commission](#) (May 1, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*; 42 U.S.C. § 2000e(j); *see also* 29 C.F.R. § 1605.1.

<sup>5</sup> 600 U.S. 447 (2023).

On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued a Presidential Memorandum (PM) titled [Return to In-Person Work](#), instructing agencies to take all necessary steps to terminate remote work arrangements and require employees to return to work in-person. The PM noted that department and agency heads shall make exemptions they deem necessary. It also noted that the PM shall be implemented consistent with applicable law.

On January 22, 2025, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued a [memorandum](#) to heads and acting heads of departments and agencies setting forth guidance and instructions to implement the PM. It provided that, in light of the PM, agency telework policies must be revised to state that “eligible employees must work full time at their respective duty stations unless excused due to a disability, qualifying medical condition, or other compelling reason certified by the agency head and the employee’s supervisor.” OPM issued further [guidance](#) on February 12, 2025, clarifying that military spouses are “categorically exempt” from agency return-to-office plans.

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide guidance concerning the roles of leave and workforce flexibilities, including telework, as religious accommodations and the responsibilities of supervisors in facilitating these arrangements. Agencies are encouraged to adopt a generous approach to approving religious accommodations, prioritizing employee needs while maintaining operational efficiency. Further, Federal agencies must adhere to the requirements of Title VII and the *Groff* clarification of the “undue hardship” standard when addressing religious accommodation requests.

## **II. Eligibility and Types of Accommodations**

This guidance is applicable to all employees in the Executive Branch who have personal religious beliefs requiring accommodations, such as abstaining from work during specific times or participating in religious observances or practices.

In accordance with applicable law and the *Groff* clarification of the “undue hardship” standard, agencies are encouraged to adopt the use of various types of leave and workforce flexibilities as religious accommodations, including: [telework](#), [religious compensatory time off](#), [flexible work schedules](#) (including [maxiflex work schedules](#)), [credit hours earned under flexible work schedules](#), [annual leave](#), [advanced annual leave](#), earned [compensatory time off for overtime work](#) and [compensatory time off for travel](#), [leave without pay](#), or other time off. Additional information is provided below on telework, religious compensatory time off, and maxiflex work schedule options.

### III. Telework as a Religious Accommodation

While implementing [Return to In-Person Work](#), agencies are strongly encouraged, where feasible, to consider telework as a reasonable accommodation for religious practices, such as Sabbath or holiday observance, scheduled prayers, services, meditation, fasting, or other religious obligations. Telework can enable employees to fulfill religious duties without compromising agency missions. Examples include:

- *Sabbath/Holiday Observance and Preparation*: Allowing employees to telework on days of religious significance, or on days immediately before such days, so as to avoid travel or commuting time which may interfere with preparation or observance.
- *Fasting*: Permitting telework to accommodate employees who wish to take breaks in the workday to engage in fasting-related practices, such as prayer or rest, in a quieter or more private setting.
- *Prayer or Religious Observances*: Enabling telework to provide flexibility for employees to engage in time-specific religious practices during breaks in the workday.

Telework is often a low-cost solution that aligns with the *Groff* standard, as on a limited basis, it typically does not impose substantial operational burdens. Agencies should assess telework requests by considering technological feasibility, job requirements, telework eligibility, and other relevant factors. Additionally, an employee must have a written telework agreement. Denials of telework accommodations for religious practices or observances must be justified with evidence of significant operational impact, per *Groff*.

### IV. Religious Compensatory Time Off as a Religious Accommodation

The religious compensatory time off authority at [5 U.S.C. § 5550a](#) and [5 C.F.R. part 550, subpart J](#), permits an employee to adjust his or her work schedule, perform overtime work, and earn religious compensatory time off to use when the employee's personal religious observances, practices, or beliefs require an absence from work. To the extent that modifications in work schedules do not interfere with the efficient accomplishment of an agency's mission, an employee must be permitted upon request to earn and take religious compensatory time off for a religious observance or practice as required by the employee's personal religious belief. An employee may earn religious compensatory time off by working overtime before and/or after the religious observance

or practice. The overtime hours worked do not create any entitlement to premium pay (including overtime pay). OPM's regulations outline additional requirements and conditions for earning and using religious compensatory time off.

## **V. Maxiflex Work Schedules as a Religious Accommodation**

A maxiflex work schedule (a type of flexible work schedule established under [5 U.S.C. chapter 61, subchapter II](#)) can provide great flexibility to an employee who requires an accommodation for a religious practice or observance. A maxiflex work schedule consists of workdays with core hours and flexible hours. Core hours refer to the designated period(s) on specified days when all employees must be at work (unless an absence during those hours is specifically approved). Flexible hours are the part of the workday when employees may (within time limits or "bands") choose their time of arrival and departure from work. A maxiflex work schedule could allow an employee to attend a religious practice or observance during the flexible hours of the work schedule and continue to perform full time work without the need to take leave or other time off, which supports productivity and providing greater service to the public. Agencies should be flexible in approving exceptions to core hours requirements when needed to provide a religious accommodation.

## **VI. The Interactive Process**

Upon receiving a request for a religious accommodation, agencies must engage in a good-faith interactive process with the employee to explore reasonable accommodations. Agencies should further assess whether an accommodation imposes a substantial burden on operations. Agencies should document their analyses to ensure compliance with Title VII and applicable law. Agencies are also reminded that religious accommodations may involve multiple, complementary or hybrid approaches to fully address an employee's religious needs. For example, combining telework and a maxiflex work schedule could be particularly effective for practices such as Sabbath observance, where religious obligations may span only part of a workday. Agencies should consider tailored solutions in ensuring compliance with Title VII.

## **VII. Additional Information**

Please email [paypolicy@opm.gov](mailto:paypolicy@opm.gov) if you have any questions regarding this guidance.

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), Deputy CHCOs, Human Resources Directors, and Chiefs of Staff