

HR Compliance Library, ¶36,800, Overview: Religious diversity issues

America is increasingly becoming a religiously diverse country. Muslim and Buddhist temples and affiliations are common in many cities and communities in addition to places of worship representative of the country's Judeo-Christian history. Increasingly, employees are demanding the freedom to speak and practice the tenants of their religion in the workplace. Valuing religion without sanctioning a specific religion is the key to balancing religious diversity in the workplace.

Religious diversity is difficult to achieve because it relates to the morals and beliefs that an employee holds, which may come into direct conflict with those of the employer or representative or other employees. As with other types of diversity, the best approach is to educate the workforce to be sensitive to the beliefs of others and to avoid stereotyping. This may mean stressing that the employer, as an organization, does not espouse one belief system over another.

Employers may be required to accommodate religious diversity in:

- observing religious holidays;
- allowing prayers breaks;
- accommodating dietary requirements or dress and grooming habits; and
- handling religiously motivated objections to training programs, patriotic programs, and national holidays.