

Guide to Writing Religious Exemption Requests to CV-19 Vaccines:

U.S. colleges/universities and some employers are starting to require COVID-19 vaccination for enrollment/employment. While medical exemptions must be supported by a letter from a medical professional, religious exemptions do not require the support or endorsement of an official clergy or recognized religious leader. Instead, it requires that the person seeking exemption explain why his/her “sincerely held religious beliefs” prevent him/her from accepting the university’s/school’s/employer’s requirement of vaccination.

Some universities/schools and employers will provide a specific document to fill out if you are requesting an exemption. Other times, you will need to submit your own letter. In either event, you can use this document as a general guide to help you think about and personalize your own request for a religious exemption. Please note that your request should not simply use a prepared template you find on the internet without revision. For religious exemptions to be successful, they must be unique to your own religious experience and beliefs – you must personalize the form so that it is personal to your own situation.

Please also note: This document is not intended to provide legal advice. It is instead a general set of suggestions or guidelines to have you thinking about how to express in writing your own sincerely held religious beliefs against vaccinating with these experimental CV-19 vaccines.

I. POINTS TO REVIEW/KNOW BEFORE YOU START:

1. A request for a religious exemption must be about religion. It is not about personal or philosophical beliefs, medical reasons for not wanting the vaccine, or legal objections to vaccine mandates. While you might be submitting other objections to taking these vaccines, do not merge those objections with your request for religious exemption.
2. The law does not require you to be a member of an organized religion, or any religion at all. However, while this is NOT required, if you are able to acquire a letter from a cleric attesting to your personal sincerity and/or your devotion to your faith and include it with your own letter, DO IT. If you can get several letters, that is even better. It is helpful to include a history of how this person knows you and your family. A one-page letter is fine. (NEVER join a “phony” church just to get a letter like this).
3. Personalize. USE YOUR OWN WORDS. This document has SOME phrasing suggestions; modify as you see fit and as it applies to your own sincerely held religious belief situation.
4. A personal religious belief means this: You are allowed to have a personal translation of the word of your God that connects to refusing vaccines. In other words, if a religious principle (that you truly believe in) translates (in your own understanding of the word of God) to refusing vaccines, then your belief fits with the definition of a legal waiver. More details/ examples on that in the following sections.

5. Most religions do not have an official stance on vaccination. That permits the employee or college student even more freedom. The broad nature of the law enables the employee or student to honestly and easily fit with law. But always remember, your claim must always circle back to a religious belief.
6. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the law that prevents employers from discriminating against an employee on the basis of their religion/religious beliefs/religious practices. It applies to employees in the workplace, rather than students in a university/college situation. However, most universities/colleges recognizing their obligation to provide religious exemptions to employees also extend this exemption option to their students, since it would violate equal protection principles and discriminate against students on the basis of their religion to fail to do so.
7. Use Words to Emphasize the Religious Nature of your Exemption Request:
 - a. Sacred
 - b. Holy
 - c. Worship
 - d. Blessed
 - e. Conviction
 - f. Faith
 - g. Religious Mandate
 - h. Translation of the word of my God/Creator
 - i. Unique understanding of the language of God/Creator
 - j. Personal understanding of God's/Creator's message to me

II. PARTS OF YOUR FORM/LETTER:

1. Part 1: Request for Exemption and Statement of the Law

State your request for religious exemption and briefly state/reference the law (Title VII) that allows you such an exemption and/or accommodation:

Example: (you must personalize, as appropriate):

Dear [Person you must address at your school or place of employment]

I am writing to formally and respectfully apply for a religious exemption to the (name of organization) Covid-19 vaccination policy that requires that all employees (or students) show proof of vaccination in order to (attend in-person school or stay employed).

I base my request on religious grounds. I hold sincere and genuine beliefs that forbid me from accepting a COVID-19 vaccination.

Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, an employer must not discriminate against an employee on the basis of that employee's sincerely held religious beliefs. Religious discrimination involves treating a person (an applicant or employee) unfavorably because of his or her religious beliefs. As you know, the law protects not only people who belong to traditional, organized religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, but also others who have sincerely held religious beliefs.

Note to Students: You should also cite to the school policy that allows religious exemptions for students here too. Most schools do allow them because they must allow for employees under Title VII.

2. Part 2: Request for Confidentiality

Ask that the letter remain confidential for good reason: first and foremost so that your letter and exemption request doesn't get read by many eyes. Generally speaking, the fewer people charged with making the decision, the better. Additionally, there are legitimate social consequences to consider (i.e. you don't want your unvaccinated status made known so that those with preconceived prejudices/strong fears will discriminate and/or encourage others to marginalize or discriminate against you).

'I ask that this request for exemption be kept 100% confidential as it contains thoughts and sentiments not shared in casual conversation and deeply personal to me....'

*'The content of this letter is of an extremely personal nature...'
'The only reason we share this with you is because the law dictates that we do...'*

'I ask that this be shared on an as-needed basis only; that is, only those charged with approving the exemption request should read our words.'

3. Part 3: Explain Your Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs that Prevent You from Taking the COVID-19 Vaccine:

You need to briefly explain your religious history and religious beliefs and why these beliefs prevent you from taking the COVID-19 vaccines. No religious exemption request letter should be taken verbatim from a form/template. Since the credibility of your letter rests largely on how you express your individual personal religious belief(s), this section that defines your religious belief is essential in placing your unique signature on your description of these religious beliefs.

- a. Keep in mind, this is about RELIGION, so the development of your connection to God/Creator has to be the central theme of your personal history. The information you offer must circle back to your personal relationship with God. This will create a foundation for the rest of your letter.

- b. There is no reason to include traumatic events that have to do with vaccine injury. While that may be true, the reader may infer that you have medical objections to vaccinations. If you mention or highlight these events, you may cast doubt on the genuinely religious nature of your request to refuse vaccination. Stay focused.
- c. While you are legally permitted to have a medical objection to vaccination and a religious objection at the same time, it is best to separate these two requests. If the school/employer has a witch hunt planned, don't buy the kindling.
- d. Stick to your central objection: COVID-19 vaccination opposes *your* personal interpretation of a religious belief(s) that you hold sacred. You believe that if you were to participate in this vaccination scheme, you would be prevented from worshipping your God/Creator in the way that you see fit. If you were to take this vaccine, you would not be practicing your First Amendment Freedom of Religion. You must connect why your religious beliefs prevent you from taking these particular vaccines.
- e. Possible considerations and religious objections to CV-19 mRNA and adenovirus vector vaccines: COVID-19 vaccines are the first mRNA (Pfizer/Moderna) or adenoviral vector (J & J) vaccines. These vaccines do not operate in the same way as "traditional" vaccines. Specifically, instead of using a fragment of dead virus and an adjuvant to help induce an immune response, these CV-19 vaccine products are genetic coding instructions that purport to instruct your body to produce a spike protein that is not natural to your own human genetic system. While some scientists/authorities claim that this does not alter a human's genetic structure and/or that the "vaccine" stays localized to the vaccination area (shoulder) and does not spread to the rest of the human body, other scientists and authorities disagree, and there is evidence to support their views. In any event, it is not fully known what these novel technologies are actually doing to our human DNA. The possibility of genetically altering the human body, the body created by God/Creator in His image, is something you might want to include in your reasons for not wanting to take these novel gene therapy products in particular.
- f. Aborted Fetal Tissue: One can also have religious objections to vaccines based on the fact that some vaccines are created using a culture from aborted fetal tissue. Many believe that using vaccines produced from aborted fetuses shows a profound disrespect for the remains of these children. Using vaccines that exploit these deaths for profit violates the teachings of the Church. Many believe that vaccination supports abortion and consequently violates conscience. Conscience is a strong force in Christianity. However, not all vaccines are created using aborted fetal tissue. Offered in combination with other religious principles, however, it presents strong support. But these beliefs should be a component of a much larger, more comprehensive set of beliefs.
- g. Use language from your applicable religious texts to support your beliefs and personal interpretation of these sacred instruction manuals – the Bible, Torah,

Koran, Buddhist doctrine, etc. For example, below are some ideas that the Bible conveys that might be useful in capturing your beliefs about how COVID-19 vaccinations would violate these religious commands:

Christian/Judeo-Christian/Biblical References:

The Book of Genesis states that G-d created man in His image. It is my belief that G-d knew what He was doing and the body of many needs no 'fixing' by mankind. I see vaccines as 'fixing' I cannot improve on G-d's creation. Numerous religious scriptures tell us we need to trust in G-d and His creation.

"Honor the Lord with your bodies." 1 Corinthians (6:20).

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Luke (16:13)

Exodus 15:26 states: "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His Commandments and keep all His statutes, I will none of the diseases on you which I brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you."

"God created us in his own image." [Genesis 1:27]

"So that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God." (1 Corinthians, 2:5)

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. That God is in you. That he is our healer." Corinthians 6:19

In Matthew 9:12, Jesus said: "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do." Jesus again repeated the same in Mark 2:17. "When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician..."

Judaism/Torah References:

You may derive your beliefs from the Torah and Judaism. Some understandings or beliefs to include might be:

The first commandment of Jewish law is, "What does G-d expect from us?" We commit ourselves to answer that question with our own well-thought out answers. These answers are evident in all our actions, thoughts and decisions.

Torah prohibits we welcome foreign material into the body and this is precisely what vaccines are. I believe that it is a contradiction to fight a poison or disease that can or does enter the body with vaccination, which is disease. We believe this contradicts the

teachings of the Jewish religion that mandates we keep our bodies and blood unpolluted and without contamination.

I consider these injections to represent defilement of the body, blood and soul and the trust we have in the healing powers of God. I believe that a body addresses disease by a good mental spirit and prayer and maintaining the purity and cleanliness of both. I do not believe that the poisons and disease of vaccines are allies in the fight against disease. I believe that our faith is our strongest support system when the body is in crisis. I believe in the healing power of prayer.

The Jewish religion dictates that man should not mix the blood of man and that of animals. It is well known that some vaccines are prepared using the tissue culture from animals. This directly contradicts the teachings of my faith as I see it.

The Book of Genesis states that G-d created man in His image. It is my belief that G-d knew what He was doing and the body of many needs no 'fixing' by mankind. I see vaccines as 'fixing' I cannot improve on G-d's creation. Numerous religious scripture tell us we need to trust in G-d and His creation.

Buddhist/Other Faiths:

Buddhism teaches, among other things, that solutions to problems and obstacles lie within our own bodies and minds- ourselves- not outside of our selves.

We believe a disease is a problem or an obstacle that must be resolved or overcome. The solution to this problem is a cure, or a successful resolution, to the disease, condition or physical crisis. The cure lies within our own bodies, our judgment or our family, The solution is not a vaccination from an outside source. Vaccination lies outside of the self. Clearly and absolutely, vaccines do not fit with the Buddhist religion and our personal translation of it.

The Buddhist faith also teaches purity of the mind in order to eliminate, hate, greed and ignorance. We believe the purity of the mind cannot be achieved without purity of the body and for this reason we forgo vaccines. We recognize, through the interpretation of our Buddhism beliefs, that vaccines make the body impure.

You may/may not want to explain why vaccines are different than other medical interventions that might be needed in a crisis for sick people.

I see a clear difference between helping a body in crisis and addressing a healthy body with medical help or intervention. (Refer to past explanations) Generally speaking, if my body were in crisis, I would consider all the options and discuss what to do with my trusted physician/healer. I would also consult with the Bible, pray to their God for help and guidance, consult with clergy and rely on the healing power of God to aid me..

Whatever God sends my way, I will seek His help for solutions and guidance. And my decisions will adhere to my personal belief in God.

I do not turn my back on all 'modern' medicine and its practices and philosophies. There is a significant difference between a body in crisis needing help and a body that is healthy accepting a medical procedure. I believe God would accept the former, He would not accept the latter.

You may/may not want to address the societal/institutional pressure to vaccinate as conflicting with your beliefs in the Higher Law of God:

The medical establishment as well as most friends and family apply pressure and guilt to others in society to participate in the vaccination process. Modern society tells us that we can hurt ourselves and other people if we do not accept this vaccine into our bodies. Society tells us we jeopardize babies, old people and everyone in between, if we do not vaccinate. Without a medical background or specific scientific knowledge, it is difficult to comment on the truth to that assertion. But the point is moot because I am certain of this; God has communicated to me that to address my flawless, healthy, God-given body with the procedure of vaccination would be a sin against my conscience.

The vaccination process has always created a feeling of anxiety and discord for me. However, I buried these feelings deep inside of me because there is so much pressure in society to vaccinate from family, friends and medical professionals. I let all this pressure hide the instinctual feeling I had that vaccination was simply contradictory to my bond with God.

End with the Emphasis on your *Personal Interpretation* Component and Reassert your Request for the Religious Exemption.

You need to affirm the fact that the law allows you to have a personal religious belief that prohibits vaccination. This is the most important aspect of the law that enables virtually endless beliefs to fit squarely with the law.

The above is an explanation of my sincerely held personal religious beliefs. I hope I have described them sufficiently. Again, these thoughts are the unique message I receive from my God. I don't ask that you, or anyone else, agree with these thoughts and personal translations. But under the law, I respectfully request that they be honored as truthful and legally permissible. Based on what I have shared, I ask this religious exemption be approved.