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Civil Rights Department Highlights New Resource to Help Prevent Religious Discrimination in the Workplace

The department investigates hundreds of religious discrimination complaints across the state

SACRAMENTO – As part of the state's proactive work to tackle discrimination in all its forms, the California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today [highlighted a new factsheet](#) to help prevent and address religious discrimination in the workplace. In recent years, CRD has investigated hundreds of religious discrimination complaints in employment across the state and secured over 80 settlements to protect workers against religious discrimination since 2020.

“Faith is a fundamental part of people’s lives all across California,” **said CRD Director Kevin Kish.** “If you’ve experienced discrimination or harassment on the job because of what you believe, you can file a complaint with the state. Employers have a responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations to allow workers to freely practice their religion. In California, religious beliefs are protected.”

Religious Discrimination Is Against the Law

California law protects job applicants, employees, interns, and volunteers from discrimination and harassment based on their perceived or actual religious beliefs. In other words, employers may not use an employee’s religious beliefs to make employment decisions, including with respect to promotions, raises, benefits, or firing. These protections apply to all aspects of a person’s religious beliefs, including observances of holy days and dress and grooming. Under California law, religion includes traditionally recognized religions, as well as beliefs, observances, or practices that an employee sincerely holds and are parallel to traditionally recognized religions.

The state has taken a range of actions to help protect the rights of Californians based on their religious beliefs. For instance, in 2020, the department [secured approval of regulations](#) related to religious creed in the workplace to help protect against employers unlawfully using religion as a basis to not hire qualified job applicants. The department has also reached settlements to address religious discrimination in a wide array of contexts, from [pushing back on a San Diego homeowners association’s alleged ban on mezuzahs](#) to [requiring training for Chipotle staff](#) after a location in Southern California allegedly sent an employee home for refusing to remove a bracelet associated with their faith. The department is also in active litigation to defend the right to religious accommodations for law enforcement in the state.

What Can Religious Discrimination Look Like?

Religious discrimination or harassment in the workplace can take many forms. A few examples include:

- Mocking an employee by making loud noises to disrupt them when they are engaged in silent prayer in the breakroom.
- Passing over a qualified employee for a promotion based on religious stereotypes about having large families and potentially making requests for parental leave.
- Refusing to let a Jewish person wear a Star of David necklace when other jewelry is allowed.
- Changing an employee's shift to an undesirable time because the employee complains that certain music played during work hours goes against their faith as a Jehovah's Witness.

Knowing Your Rights Helps Protect Your Rights

A key part of CRD's mission to enforce the state's robust civil rights laws and reduce discrimination is ensuring Californians have accurate and timely information about their rights and responsibilities. CRD does this through a range of proactive outreach efforts, including [conducting trainings and presentations](#), [publishing and disseminating guides and factsheets](#), and working directly with community partners to identify and respond to civil rights challenges faced by Californians across the state. Many of CRD's webinars and trainings [can also be watched at any time](#) on the department's YouTube channel.

If you or someone you know has experienced employment discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its [complaint process](#). The department also [provides general information and factsheets online](#) about civil rights protections for members of the public.

You can learn more about protections against religious discrimination in the workplace by [reading CRD's new factsheet](#).

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The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. CRD's mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded programs and activities, and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit calcivilrights.ca.gov.

