

GUIDELINES FOR RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION AND EXERCISE IN THE WORKPLACE

I. General

A. It is recognized that County employees have a constitutional right to freedom of religion, and they are protected from discrimination in employment on the basis of religion. In view of those rights and protections, these guidelines were developed. They are intended to provide direction to supervisors and employees regarding religious exercise and expression in the workplace.

B. It is also recognized that these guidelines cannot cover every conceivable situation which may occur involving religious expression in the workplace. In each instance, the facts should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in order to make a determination as to the appropriateness of the activity. The Pinellas County Office of Human Rights should be consulted by management for assistance in interpreting and applying these guidelines.

II. Application

These guidelines apply to all employees within the Pinellas County Unified Personnel System.

III. Guidelines

A. Except where it would interfere with the efficient provision of public services, or where expression intrudes upon the legitimate rights of other employees, or where the expression creates the appearance, to a reasonable observer, of an endorsement by County government of religion, County employees shall not be restricted from religious exercise or expression.

B. Employees will be allowed to engage in private religious expression in their personal work areas, not open to the public, to the same extent as they may engage in non-religious expression.

C. Employees are free to engage in religious expression with their co-workers. However, such expression may be restricted if it interferes with workplace efficiency, and co-workers are free to decline involvement in another employee's religious expression or discussion.

D. In areas regularly accessible to the public, employees should refrain from religious expression or exercise which creates an impression, to a reasonable observer, that the County is sponsoring, endorsing, or inhibiting religion generally, or disfavoring a particular religion.

E. Employees may wear personal religious jewelry, unless circumstances require a ban on similar non-religious jewelry.

F. Employees may display religious art or literature, in their personal work areas which are not normally accessible to the public, to the same extent as non-religious art and literature, so long as the viewing public would not interpret the display of such items as an endorsement or favoring of religion by the County.

G. Supervisors may not, explicitly or implicitly, require employees to participate in any religious activity. Nor may they require employees to refrain from participating in religious activity outside the workplace, except to the extent that otherwise neutral, legal restrictions apply to off-duty employee conduct and expression in general. However, supervisors have the right to religious expression which is not

coercive, and is understood to be their personal view, to the same extent as they are entitled to other constitutionally protected expression.

H. Employees shall not be subjected to discrimination, intimidation, ridicule, or insult because of their religious beliefs, or lack thereof.

IV. Complaint Reporting

Employees who believe they are being subjected to religious discrimination, unlawful restrictions, or other behavior in violation of these guidelines should report the activity to their supervisor, department head, appointing authority, the Personnel Department, or the Pinellas County Office of Human Rights.