

Policy Number: 03-05-037

Policy Title: RELIGIOUS EXERCISE AND RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE
AND EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Effective Date: September 17, 2012

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1. **Policy**

This policy is issued to clarify issues associated with religious exercise and religious expression in the workplace and educational environment, particularly during the holiday season; and religious exercise and religious expression while in the workplace and educational environment.

OHSU does not discriminate on the basis of religion, require religious participation or non-participation as a condition of employment or study, or permit religious harassment. OHSU administration, faculty, staff, volunteers and students must treat everyone with the same respect and consideration, regardless of their religious beliefs or non-beliefs. Additionally, OHSU does not restrict or control the free exercise of beliefs, thought or ideas.

2. **Religious Expression**

A. OHSU shall not restrict personal religious expression by employees, students or others at OHSU except where the individual's interest in the expression poses an undue hardship on OHSU's business operation, or when the expression intrudes upon the rights of other employees or creates the appearance of OHSU's endorsement of religion. Any religious expression must be sensitive to our diverse community and in compliance with OHSU policies, including the Code of Conduct, Equal Opportunity Policy and Harassment Policy.

B. OHSU may regulate the time, place and manner of all speech, provided it does not discriminate on the basis of content or viewpoint. Departments are not required to permit employees to use work time to pursue religious agendas. Those seeking time off from work may request reasonable accommodation for religious beliefs pursuant to OHSU's Equal Opportunity Policy No. 03-05-030.

Employees and students are permitted to engage in private religious expression in personal work areas not regularly open to the public. This is to the same extent that they may engage in non-religious private expressions, subject to reasonable content and viewpoint that does not disrupt or interfere with the work or education of others. This religious expression is permitted as long as it does not interfere with others' ability to carry out their responsibilities or cause disruption to the work or educational environments.

- C. Employees and students may not display religious messages that convey or create the appearance of OHSU's endorsement of religion or suppression of a religion. Religious expressions done in areas shared by employees or students should be reasonable and content-neutral and not interfere or cause disruption in the workplace or educational environment.
- D. When the public has access to the workplace, all employees must be sensitive that any religious expression does not create the impression that OHSU is sponsoring, endorsing, or inhibiting religion generally, or favoring or disfavoring a particular religion. Religious art and literature in personal work area visible to the public can be displayed, so long as the viewing public would reasonably understand the religious expression to be that of the employee acting in their personal capacity, and not on behalf of OHSU, and so long as the content and viewpoint is reasonable and does not interfere with others' rights.

3. **Religious Discrimination**

OHSU administration, faculty, staff, volunteers and students may not discriminate on the basis of religion, religious beliefs or views concerning religion.

A. **Coercion to Participate or Not Participate in Religious Activities or Holiday Events**

No person in authority may explicitly or implicitly insist that an employee or student participate in religious activities or celebrations as a condition of employment or study. An employee or student is free to choose what events they will or will not participate in during or after work or study.

B. **Hostile Work Environment and Harassment**

Religious harassment is unlawful and strictly prohibited at OHSU. OHSU administration, faculty, staff, volunteers and students are responsible for assuring that OHSU maintains an environment free from a hostile environment or religious harassment. Examples of harassment may include: religious discrimination, intimidation, pervasive or severe religious ridicule or insult. OHSU administration, faculty, staff, volunteers and students are further guided by Harassment Policy No. 03-05-032 and OHSU's Code of Conduct.

C. **Establishment of Religion**

OHSU administration, faculty, staff, students and volunteers shall not engage in activities or expression that a reasonable observer would interpret as OHSU's endorsement, promotion or denigration of religion or a particular religion.

D. **Celebratory Displays, Decorations, Expressions and Holiday Music**

Religious displays, decorations, symbols or expressions that create an appearance of OHSU endorsement of a religion shall not be displayed in OHSU public spaces (including OHSU leased space) like reception areas, lobbies or other common areas

viewable by others. Secular symbols, such as holiday lights, holiday trees, Santa, snowmen/women or reindeer in public spaces, do not fall under this prohibition. The Hospital Environment of Care program sets standards regarding placement of holiday decorations in Environmental Health and Radiation Safety's Holiday Decorations Safety Policy. Exhibits may highlight diverse religious celebrations if it does not promote content and is displayed during the period of recognition or educational event.

Other than in direct patient care areas, and in order to minimize disruption in work and educational environments, holiday music is restricted to auditoriums and enclosed, dedicated spaces for invitees who desire to attend. Holiday caroling in direct patient care areas is not prohibited, but is subject to the management of Hospital Patient Relations who will set the time, place and manner of any holiday caroling.

Related Policies and Procedures:

OHSU Code of Conduct

Policy 03-05-030, Equal Opportunity

Policy 03-05-032, Harassment

Policy 03-25-090, Employee Recognition, Contests and Celebrations

Environmental Health and Radiation Safety's Holiday Decorations Safety Policy

Related Forms: AAEO Request for Reasonable Religious Accommodation Form

Responsible Office: Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity