

[Date]

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD [TEMPLATE]

From: [Chaplain's rank and name], CHC, USN

To: [Commanding Officer of requester]

Subj: REQUEST FOR AN EXCEPTION TO POLICY TO ACCOMMODATE A PRACTICE  
BASED ON RELIGIOUS BELIEF OR A SINCERELY HELD MORAL OR ETHICAL  
PRINCIPLE ICO [REQUESTER'S RANK, NAME]

Ref: (a) SECNAVINST 1730.8B change 1  
(b) SECNAVINST 1730.9

1. [Requester's rank and name] has submitted a request for a waiver of policy to accommodate a religious practice or practice based on a sincerely held moral or ethical principle in accordance with reference (a). Per DCNO (N1), I interviewed the member on [date]. I explained that this interview would not be a confidential communication as defined by reference (b) and informed the member that referral for confidential chaplain support was available.
2. Nature of the request. [Explain the service member's waiver request and whether or not the member has previously had this or any other policy waiver request approved or denied]
3. Basis. [Identify the religious beliefs, or sincerely held moral or ethical principles on which the exemption request is based, and how the requester expresses those beliefs or principles in daily life. Include the requester's religion as listed in NAVPERS 1070/602 (Page2)]
4. Alternate Means. [Indicate alternate means of meeting the request other than an exception to policy]
5. Sincerity. [Assess the sincerity of the requester.]
6. My contact information is [telephone number and e-mail address].

[Signature]

Copy to: [rank and name of requester]

## GUIDANCE FOR CHAPLAIN MEMORANDUM

### **Overview**

When a chaplain learns that a service member perceives a conflict between policy and a practice associated with his or her religious beliefs or sincerely held moral or ethical principles, and would like to seek an accommodation of those beliefs or principles, the chaplain should apprise the member of the process for submitting the request and the information needed to support it. Should the service member wish to submit a waiver request, the chaplain should, as soon as possible, conduct a (non-confidential) interview of the member and submit the memorandum for the record to the chain of command in order to comply with the time requirements of DoD policy.

### **Description and Discussion**

The following is a description and discussion of each paragraph of the memorandum template.

- Paragraph 1 conveys the identity of the requester, the date of the interview, the explanation that confidentiality does not apply to the interview, and that confidential chaplain support is available by referral. It must be written as presented in the template with the correct name and date.
- Paragraph 2 describes the exception to policy which is being requested, to include the nature of the religious or other practice and how it conflicts with applicable policy. It should indicate whether or not policy completely prohibits the practice. Interview questions may include, but are not limited to: Can the practice be partially performed or performed at a later date? Is the prohibition the result of operational status? This paragraph also indicates whether or not the member has previously had this or any other accommodation request approved or denied.
- Paragraph 3 communicates what the requester understands to be the underlying basis for the request. It includes a description of the religious beliefs or sincerely held moral or ethical principles on which the waiver request is based. It includes how the requester expresses those beliefs or principles in daily life. It also includes what the requester lists as a religious preference in NAVPERS 1070/602 (Page 2). Interview questions may include, but are not limited to: What, if any, religion is listed on your Page 2? Please tell me about your faith, religion, belief system, or principles. How do you express them in your daily life? Are there regular activities associated with these beliefs or principles? What are they? Do these beliefs or principles inform how you make decisions? Do your beliefs or principles influence how you interact with other people or the environment? If so, how? Please give some examples of how your beliefs or principles impact the way you live. How do you think this practice would

help you cope with the challenges of life? How does not being able to use this practice affect you? If you used this practice prior to military service, how did not being able to do so anymore affect you?

- Paragraph 4 indicates what if any alternate means of accommodation were discovered in the course of the interview. The chaplain will not unduly influence the requester to accept a course of action which is not satisfactory to the requester. Interview questions might include, but are not limited to: Are there similar practices which do not require a policy waiver? Have you tried other ways of meeting the need addressed by this practice? Is there one which could accomplish the same benefit?
- Paragraph 5 contains a statement as to the chaplain's professional opinion regarding the sincerity of the requester. It should include the chaplain's opinion regarding the importance of the request to the requester in terms of beliefs or principles, given the information provided. The chaplain must not base the opinion on the chaplain's personal religious beliefs or the chaplain's interpretation of what constitutes an appropriate religious or other practice. The chaplain's role is similar to the role played in evaluating the sincerity of members submitting conscientious objection packages. It focuses on the person making the request in order to make an informed report to the commander. Interview questions may include, but are not limited to: Are you a member of a religious or other organization which uses the practice for which you are requesting a waiver? How long have you been a member? What makes the practice for which you are requesting a waiver such an important part of your religion, beliefs, or principles? If this waiver is not granted, how will this decision affect you? How is this practice integral to your beliefs or principles? Did you have this practice when you entered the Service? How and when did you determine that this particular practice was an important part of your overall religious beliefs or principles?
- Paragraph 6 provides the chaplain's contact information.

A copy of the memorandum is provided to the requester.