



Supplement to:

Religious Accommodation

in the Army:

Advising the Command

This supplement includes:

- **Chaplain TTP's**
- **Memorandum Formats**
- **Regulatory Documents**
- **Army Religious Preference Codes**



Chaplain TTP's in the RA Process

Shepherd the Process:

- This is not a 'fire and forget' mission. Maintain a dialog with the Service member and command throughout the process. ****Educate the command on RA and the RA process.**
- Be the SME on the basis and sincerity of the RA and the RA process.
- Many RA requests (duty, meals, sep-rats, etc) can be approved and accommodated locally.
- RA requests impacting AR 670-1 will need to run through the command chain to a General Court Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA). ****not all AR 670-1 accommodations require GCMCA approval (for example, a Soldier that wants to wear APFU pants can be approved at the local level).**
- The GCMCA can approve or disapprove hijabs, beards, and beards/uncut hair/turbans. **Religious accommodations outside those parameters, or impacting total-Army policy need to elevate to G-1 from the GCMCA.**

Glide path for GCMCA RA requests:

1. Soldier makes request to immediate commander.
2. Immediate commander notifies HQDA, G-1.
3. Soldier meets with Unit Chaplain or chaplain identified for formal interview.
4. CO/BN Commanders in consultation with S-1 & Chaplain recommend approval/disapproval in writing.
5. Request elevated to Brigade commander for written recommendation of approval/disapproval and written legal review.
6. Request elevated to GCMCA - ****GCMCA staff will consult with HQDA G-1, OTJAG & OCCH.**
7. GCMCA Approval/Disapproval sent to G-1 for filing in Soldiers OMPF.
8. If GCMCA elevates decision to HQDA G-1, complete packet sent to HQDA, G-1 for final decision.



Chaplain TTP's in the RA Process

- **Be willing to NOT be the interviewing chaplain** - An honest and frank conversation with a Service member may create challenges and conflicts in the areas of confidentiality. While this may not be common, it is a possibility we need to remain mindful of, and to protect the sacred nature of confidential communications, particularly for the unit chaplain.
- **Confirm Religious Preference** - This is the first issue to address. A soldier's declared preference should match their request for accommodation wherever possible. See Memorandum dated 27 March 2017 for recognized faith and belief codes. Your Unit S-1 can assist in making the change.
- **Familiarize yourself with the religious group** - This may require research and further discussion with the service member, or SME consultation. The OCCH Policy cell and Religious Accommodation officer are always available for assistance.
- **Be the "honest broker"** - The Army is depending on the interviewing chaplain to determine the legitimacy (religious basis) and sincerity of religious accommodation requests. Where the Army takes the issue of Religious Accommodation seriously, we must protect the integrity of the process and guard against 'self directed' matters of conscience and moral/philosophical preferences that exist outside the mainstream of religious conviction and practice, and the sincerity of the Service member. This includes frank conversation with the Service member and command. The 3 areas that are prescient in this are: **1. Matched Religious Preference in Official Record, 2. Validity/Basis based on practices "firmly Rooted" in a faith, 3. Current activity in and connection to a local community of faith, and a lifestyle that matches the faith.**



Chaplain TTP's for Formal RA Interview

Chaplains summarize relevant facts from the religious accommodation (RA) interview in support of the assessment of religious basis and sincerity.

1.RELIGIOUS BASIS: The request must be “religious” (see template description from ATP 1-05.04, para. 2-33) rather than a philosophical/moral preference.

Helpful interview questions may include:

- Describe in detail your requested RA, and your main reason/basis for the request.
- **What is your religious preference, and is it correctly reflected in your official military record? ***If not, this needs to be addressed as part of the RA process.***
- Are you part of a religious, spiritual or philosophical group promoting this practice?
- **Describe the connection between the practice and your personal beliefs.** Why do you understand it to be encouraged or necessary?
- What book/text or spiritual leader supports this practice?
- What is the source of teaching for the practice you are requesting accommodation for?
- In what other areas of life to you look to this same leader/book/text?
- What is the practical or spiritual impact of your being denied this accommodation?



Chaplain TTP's for Formal RA Interview

2. SINCERITY: Sincerity involves truth and candor, but also whether a request is **sincerely religious, and sincerely held in the requestors life and practice.** This involves core religious conviction rather than temporary or superficial/stylistic preference. Therefore, answers to “religious basis” questions relate to sincerity.

Helpful interview questions:

- How long have you held to this religion, and the beliefs underlying your request?
- How important to you is this request?
- Have you practiced this faith in the past, and for how long?
- If this is the first time you have requested accommodation, what caused you to raise it now?
- **Are you a part of a community of believers holding similar views?** Where and how often do you meet with them? Is this group your primary religious identification?
- Do you have a spiritual leader(s) whom you are in relationship with who are specifically supporting this request as part of a spiritual/religious requirement? Would they be willing to provide some form of written support for your request? ****Ask if you may contact this religious leader or community representative.**
- If denied this accommodation request would you consider separating from the military?



Chaplains' RA Interview Memorandum:

The Interview Memorandum

Required: The appointed formal interviewing chaplain must provide a memorandum stating the interview occurred, and address:

- The **religious basis** of the request.
- The **sincerity** of the request.

Optional: The chaplain may recommend approval or disapproval, but is not required to do so. Better to state your findings on the **basis** and **sincerity** of the request.

*Sample
Formal Chaplain Interview
Memorandum*



MEMORANDUM FOR Unit Commander [or General Court Martial Convening Authority for waivers pursuant to AD 2018-19]

SUBJECT: Religious Accommodation Request Chaplain Interview – Requestor's Rank (if applicable), Name, Unit (if applicable)

1. On [date] I conducted [an in-person] [a telephonic] interview with [requestor] regarding [his] [her] request for religious accommodation.

[Use this para 2 for a request involving a beard, turban with uncut hair, or hijab]

2. [Requestor's name] requests a religious accommodation to wear [a beard] [a beard, turban, and uncut hair] [a hijab] in accordance with the standards provided in Army Directive 2018-19 (Approval, Disapproval, and Elevation of Requests for Religious Accommodation), 8 Nov 2018.

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[Use this para 2 for a request requiring a waiver of AR 670-1]

2. [Requestor's name] requests a religious accommodation to wear [describe the uniform and/or grooming accommodation requested]. This request requires a waiver of Army Regulation (AR) 670-1 standards.

-9[-

[Use this para 2 for all other religious accommodation requests]

2. [Requestor's name] requests a religious accommodation in order to [describe in detail the nature of the request to include the type as worship or dietary practice, medical, local uniform/grooming, religious speech, or religious observance/abstention].

3. Address the religious basis of the request [the request must be based on religious belief, and not merely upon moral/philosophical belief; *religious* may be considered as "professing a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs" (ATP 1-05.04, para. 2-33)].

4. Address the sincerity of the request [facts relevant to consideration of sincerity can include ability to express religious impact of denial of the request and extent of any connection with a religious group or leader supporting the religious requirement].

5. Recommendation is optional; recommendations beyond the scope of religious basis and sincerity are often best provided separate from this formal procedural requirement.

5 or 6. Point of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned at xxx-xxx-xxxx or xx.xx.mil@mail.mil.



Memorandum Templates:

Double clicking on the ICON will open the file in MS Word. From there you can save as a new file, or copy and paste into a Word document for your use.



Soldier Request Template



Commander Recommendation Tem



Chaplain Template



Chaplain Template GCMCA



GCMCA APPROVAL Templa



GCMCA APPROVAL Temp



GCMCA Elevation Template



Supplementary Materials:

Double clicking on the
ICON will open the file.
From there you can
save as a new file, or
copy and paste into a
new document for your
use.



RFRA 42 USC § 2000bb.pdf



Army Directive 2016-34 Religious Accommodation Process (003).pdf



AD 2018-19 Approval, Disapp, Elevation of Religious Accommodations.pdf



Army Religious Preference Codes.pdf

For assistance, clarification, or guidance contact:

CH (LTC) Stephen Pratel – OCCH Religious Accommodation

E-Mail: stephen.pratel3.mil@mail.mil

Phone: 571 256-8771

CH (COL) Steve Prost – OCCH Chief of Policy

E-Mail: steve.w.prost.mil@mail.mil

Phone: 703 614-5500