



U.S. AIR FORCE

# Religious Freedom and Religious Accommodation Communication Card

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## Intent

To assist commanders, supervisors, and senior enlisted advisors with questions involving religious freedoms or religious accommodations.

## Excerpts from AFI 1-1: Air Force Standards:

- The Air Force and all leaders will accommodate free exercise of religion and other personal beliefs, including freedom of expression, unless it would have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, health and safety, and mission accomplishment.
- Airmen are able to choose to practice their particular religion, or subscribe to no religious belief at all, while respecting others whose viewpoints differ from their own.
- Leaders must balance constitutional protections for their own free exercise of religion or other personal beliefs and the constitutional prohibition against governmental establishment of religion.
- Airmen must ensure that their right of religious free expression does not degrade morale, good order and discipline in the Air Force.

## Talking Points:

- Mutual respect is an essential part of the Air Force culture.
- Commanders must create an environment in which people can realize their highest potential without any consideration of one's personal religious or other beliefs.
- Air Force leaders have many resources to assist them with religious freedom and accommodation questions to include the First Amendment of the Constitution, DoD and Air Force policies and instructions, chaplains, staff judge advocates, public affairs and higher headquarters.
- Airmen can seek guidance or clarification on any religious freedom or accommodation questions through their chain of command or their Military Equal Opportunity Office.
- The Air Force thoroughly reviews all instances in which Airmen report concerns regarding religious freedoms or accommodations.
- Voluntary discussions of religion are permissible, even if conducted in uniform, where it is clear that the discussions are personal, not official, and are free of coercion or appearance of coercion.

## Commander's Incident/Issue Checklist:

- Don't rush to judgment
  - Very few situations in which questions involving religious freedom or accommodation are emergencies.
- **Assure the people involved that you and your leadership team will consider the issue seriously and deliberately.**  
*Sample statement: "Thank you for expressing your concern. We will make the appropriate agencies aware of the issue you have raised. The Air Force places a high value on the rights of its members to observe the tenets of their respective religion or to observe no religion at all. The Air Force is dedicated to maintaining an environment in which people can realize their highest potential."*
- Inform HHQ
  - Report the situation up the chain of command, as appropriate.
- Gather Information
  - Get the facts surrounding the issue and document them.
- Consult with your SMEs and determine possible COAs
  - Wing CCs should speak with their Wing Chaplains, Equal Opportunity Office, Staff Judge Advocate and Public Affairs Officers first. If more input is needed, then you and/or your HC and SJA may also consult with your MAJCOM/HC, JA, PA. The MAJCOM staff may choose to consult with AF/HC, AF/JA and SAF/PA (contact info below).
- Decide on a COA
  - After you understand the facts and have consulted with your HHQ SMEs, make your decision.
  - Ultimately, most decision authority rests on the CC; you must be able to support and defend your position based on the facts and advice made available to you.

## Resources:

- AF/HCX, Comm 571-256-7729; DSN 260-7729
- AF/EEO, Comm 240-612-4101; DSN 612-4101
- AF/JAA, Comm 703-614-4075, DSN 224-4075
- SAF/PA, Comm 703-695-0640, DSN 225-0640