**Goals: This session should help the participant:**

- Recognize that the law prohibits religious discrimination in the workplace.
- Understand the kinds of religious accommodations that may be required.
- Know how to avoid practices that could raise claims of religious discrimination.

**1. Religious Discrimination Is Prohibited by Federal Law**

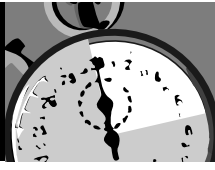
- Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, you may not treat employees or applicants less (or more) favorably because of religious beliefs or practices. For example, you may not:
 - Refuse to hire individuals of a certain religion.
 - Impose stricter promotion requirements for persons of a certain religion.
 - Impose different work requirements on employees because of religious beliefs or practices.
- It is against the law to discriminate against an employee or job applicant because of:
 - Affiliation with a particular religious group.
 - Physical, cultural, or linguistic characteristics associated with a particular religious group.
 - Perceptions about whether an individual is a member of a particular religious group.
 - Association with people or organizations that are part of a particular religious group.
- Harassment of workers by management or co-workers because of religious beliefs is also illegal.
- Make sure you understand the organization’s policy concerning religious discrimination.
 - Explain the policy to employees, and enforce it fairly and consistently.

2. Religious Practices Are Broadly Defined

- Religious practices include traditional religious beliefs, moral and ethical beliefs, and beliefs that individuals hold “with the strength of a traditional religious view.”
- It doesn’t matter if there is no established church that espouses an employee’s beliefs.
 - The issue is whether the religious belief is “sincerely held” by the individual.
- Religious practice may affect the workplace in a variety of ways. For example:
 - Employees asking for time off to observe religious holidays or Sabbath days.
 - Workers needing time and a place for daily prayers during the workday.
 - Employees following particular dress or grooming rules required by their religion.

3. Reasonable Accommodation Is Required for Employees’ Religious Practices

- You are required to accommodate religious practices unless it would cause an undue hardship.
- “Undue hardship” may be claimed when accommodating religious practices would require:
 - More than ordinary administrative costs.
 - Changing a bona fide seniority system, which would deny another employee the job or shift preference guaranteed by the seniority system.



- Reasonable accommodation might include such measures as:
 - Flexible arrival and departure times or flexible work breaks.
 - Floating or optional holidays.
 - Work during lunch break in exchange for early departure for religious reasons.
 - Permitting employees to make up time lost due to religious observances.
 - Allowing employees to trade shifts.
 - Transferring job assignments.
- If you have to reject an accommodation, be prepared to document a compelling business-related reason for doing so.

4. Take Steps to Prevent Claims of Religious Discrimination

- Don't ask applicants questions about their religious beliefs or practices.
- Avoid judging applicants by dress or grooming practices related to their religion.
- Don't ask applicants whether they are available for work on a specific date or time.
 - Instead, explain normal work hours for the job and ask the applicant whether he or she is available for work during those hours.
 - If an applicant does have a problem working normal hours because of religious practice, you must offer a reasonable accommodation, unless it would cause an undue hardship.
- Be aware of and accept different religious practices and beliefs among employees.
- Take religious diversity into account when planning work activities. For example:
 - Avoid scheduling important meetings, training sessions, etc., during times when some employees will be off work because of religious observances.
 - Don't push religious ideas, displays, or observances on employees, and don't allow employees to do so either.
- Don't allow employees to criticize or make fun of co-workers' religious beliefs or practices.
- Take immediate action to investigate and resolve religious discrimination complaints.

Applicable Regulations: Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII

Summary:

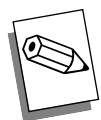
- Avoid religious discrimination in the workplace by treating all employees fairly regardless of religious beliefs and making reasonable accommodation for employees' religious practices.

Discussion Tips:



- Distribute copies of the handout and discuss frequently asked questions about religious discrimination in the workplace.

Knowledge Review:



- Have participants complete the Take Action to Avoid Religious Discrimination Quiz. It provides a useful review of their understanding of the subject.