

benefits for abortions whether directly or through a collective bargaining agreement, but if an employer decides to cover the costs of abortion, the employer must do so in the same manner and to the same degree as it covers other medical conditions.

[44 FR 23805, Apr. 20, 1979]

PART 1605—GUIDELINES ON DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF RELIGION

Sec.

1605.1 “Religious” nature of a practice or belief.

1605.2 Reasonable accommodation without undue hardship as required by section 701(j) of title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

1605.3 Selection practices.

APPENDIX A TO §§1605.2 AND 1605.3—BACKGROUND INFORMATION

AUTHORITY: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000e *et seq.*

SOURCE: 45 FR 72612, Oct. 31, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1605.1 “Religious” nature of a practice or belief.

In most cases whether or not a practice or belief is religious is not at issue. However, in those cases in which the issue does exist, the Commission will define religious practices to include moral or ethical beliefs as to what is right and wrong which are sincerely held with the strength of traditional religious views. This standard was developed in *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965) and *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333 (1970). The Commission has consistently applied this standard in its decisions.¹ The fact that no religious group espouses such beliefs or the fact that the religious group to which the individual professes to belong may not accept such belief will not determine whether the belief is a religious belief of the employee or prospective employee. The phrase “religious practice” as used in these Guidelines includes both religious observances and practices, as stated in section 701(j), 42 U.S.C. 2000e(j).

¹See CD 76-104 (1976), CCH ¶6500; CD 71-2620 (1971), CCH ¶6283; CD 71-779 (1970), CCH ¶6180.

§ 1605.2 Reasonable accommodation without undue hardship as required by section 701(j) of title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

(a) *Purpose of this section.* This section clarifies the obligation imposed by title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, (sections 701(j), 703 and 717) to accommodate the religious practices of employees and prospective employees. This section does not address other obligations under title VII not to discriminate on grounds of religion, nor other provisions of title VII. This section is not intended to limit any additional obligations to accommodate religious practices which may exist pursuant to constitutional, or other statutory provisions; neither is it intended to provide guidance for statutes which require accommodation on bases other than religion such as section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The legal principles which have been developed with respect to discrimination prohibited by title VII on the bases of race, color, sex, and national origin also apply to religious discrimination in all circumstances other than where an accommodation is required.

(b) *Duty to accommodate.* (1) Section 701(j) makes it an unlawful employment practice under section 703(a)(1) for an employer to fail to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of an employee or prospective employee, unless the employer demonstrates that accommodation would result in undue hardship on the conduct of its business.²

(2) Section 701(j) in conjunction with section 703(c), imposes an obligation on a labor organization to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of an employee or prospective employee, unless the labor organization demonstrates that accommodation would result in undue hardship.

(3) Section 1605.2 is primarily directed to obligations of employers or labor organizations, which are the entities covered by title VII that will most often be required to make an accommodation. However, the principles of

²See *Trans World Airlines, Inc. v. Hardison*, 432 U.S. 63, 74 (1977).