

Vaccine mandates and exemptions

SPEEA cannot guarantee that anyone will be approved for either of the Covid vaccine mandate exemptions. However, you can increase your chances of success if you directly address the purpose of the exemption. Examples below are grouped into the types of answer MORE likely and LESS likely to be successful. Each medical or religious exemption request needs to be tailored to the particular circumstances of the individual.

Medical Exemption

The vaccination mandate and medical exemptions are based upon recommendations from public health experts in the United States using studies showing the vaccines are generally safe and effective.

Purpose: The medical exemption protects individuals who should not receive the vaccination because of some medical contraindication. Medical exemptions will almost always require supporting medical documentation.

More Likely: Medical documentation that you have an underlying health condition that prevents you from safely being vaccinated (ex. compromised immune system, allergy to the ingredients). Ideally, this documentation is from a medical professional competent to issue such a document (ex. your primary care doctor or specialist treating the underlying health condition).

Less Likely: Requesting a medical exemption because you have your own opinion (contrary to the CDC and FDA findings) is likely to fail. A medical exemption is about your health conditions as documented by a medical provider competent to render a medical assessment. Any version of "I did my own research" is likely to fail. Any medical documentation from a provider who IS NOT competent to issue such a diagnosis (ex. a chiropractor) is likely to fail.

Religious Exemption

Purpose: The religious exemption prevents forcing someone to be vaccinated who believes that doing so violates their sincerely held religious belief. The key here is "*sincerely held religious belief*" that being vaccinated creates some type of intolerable assault or trespass upon that belief. This exemption status test is designed to weed out people who object to the vaccination for non-religious reasons disguised as religious reasons.

More Likely: Evidence that you have avoided other vaccines for religious reasons. Evidence that you belong to a faith practice that teaches the avoidance of vaccines. Note: You can have a sincerely held religious belief without belonging to an organized religion, but it will be helpful if you can gesture at supporting documentation. Your request should specifically address how being vaccinated violates your religious belief.

Less Likely: "I'm religious and I don't want to be vaccinated." Remember that you need to explain how/why the vaccination intrudes upon your "*sincerely held religious belief*." Having the two factors (being religious AND not wanting the vaccine) is not the same as "my religious belief prevents me from being vaccinated." Claiming that your opposition to the vaccination stems from a religion that itself DOES NOT oppose vaccinations is more likely to fail.

Conclusion

The process your employer will undertake in evaluating exemption requests is a difficult one. Make that job as easy as possible by clearly addressing the purpose of the exemption you're seeking and providing supporting documentation if applicable.

