 **Religious Exemption Process Information**

If you are requesting an exemption to the COVID-19 vaccination requirement because of a conflict between that requirement and your sincerely held religious beliefs, practices, or observances (hereafter called “religious beliefs”), please keep the following in mind:

* When an employee’s objection to a COVID-19 vaccination requirement is not religious in nature, or is not sincerely held, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII) does not require the employer to provide an exemption to the vaccination requirement as a religious accommodation.

* Title VII does not protect social, political, or economic views, or personal preferences. Thus, objections to COVID-19 vaccination that are based on social, political, or personal preferences, or on nonreligious concerns about the possible effects of the vaccine, do not qualify as “religious beliefs” under Title VII.

* The definition of “religion” under Title VII protects nontraditional religious beliefs that may be unfamiliar to employers. Employees should explain the religious nature of their belief and should not assume that the employer already knows or understands it.

* Sincerely held religious beliefs should be articulated in the employee’s own words and boiler plates and form letters are discouraged.

* The employee’s sincerity in holding a religious belief is “largely a matter of individual credibility.”  Factors that – either alone or in combination – might undermine an employee’s credibility include: (1) whether the employee has acted in a manner inconsistent with the professed belief; (2) whether the accommodation sought is a particularly desirable benefit that is likely to be sought for nonreligious reasons; (3) whether the timing of the request renders it suspect (e.g., it follows an earlier request by the employee for the same benefit for secular reasons); and (4) whether the employer otherwise has reason to believe the accommodation is not sought for religious reasons.

* COVID-19 vaccines do NOT contain any aborted fetal cells. Thus, objections to COVID-19 vaccination that are based strictly on that belief, do not qualify as “religious beliefs” under Title VII.  This is different than sincerely held religious beliefs related to fetal cell lines being used in testing during research and development of the mRNA vaccines and during production of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.