

Religious Discrimination Scenario

Learning objectives:

- Identify acts of potential religious discrimination in the following scenario.
- Stimulate thoughts and ideas about how to address such issues from an EO or EEO perspective.

Focus: raising leader and EO/EEO personnel's awareness

Setting: Conversation between SGT Bishara and his EO Advisor

Narrator: SGT Bishara has been feeling like his commanding officer is discriminating against him based on his religious background. Bishara comes to his EO advisor to discuss a recent situation. As you observe this scenario, think about what you would do as an EO advisor.

EO Advisor: Good morning SGT Bishara, how are you today?

Bishara: I'm okay today sir, thank you for asking.

EO: Great, what brings you in today?

Bishara: Well I'm having an issue with my one of my supervisors and I'm not sure what to do about it.

EEO: Okay, what can you tell me about what's going on?

Bishara: Well I had requested time off to celebrate an important religious holiday in my culture. This holiday is also an important tradition in my family. I didn't think it would be an issue because other members of my unit have received time off to celebrate their religious holidays. I made this request three months in advance. However, my request was denied by my supervisor without explanation and I get the feeling that I'm being discriminated against.

EO: I'm very sorry to hear this. Is this the first time you've felt this way about your supervisor?

Bishara: No

EO: Tell me more. What other things have occurred that didn't necessarily have a direct impact?

Bishara: She made several remarks in passing about "religious nuts" and when I talk about my religious practices she has commented that "some people take too much time for worship" and that it takes away from our unit cohesion. Consequently, I have significantly reduced the amount of time I spend practicing my religion and I rarely talk about it anymore. Although many other members of my unit go to church on a weekly basis and when they talk about it she makes no such remarks around them. It just seems unfair.

EO: I see. How would you like to see this situation resolved?

Bishara: I would like to find out why my request was denied, and if at all possible I would like the decision to be reconsidered. As I mentioned before, this is an important tradition for me and my family and I would like to get this time off

Narrator (Discussion Questions):

- How might you handle this situation?
- What actions should the EO practitioner take? What options does SGT Bishara have?

Target Audience: Leaders

Lesson Goals

- To identify potential religious discrimination occurrences
- To explore possible effects of religious discrimination behaviors
- Generate thoughts and ideas about how to best address this situation as a senior leader.
- To understand different approaches in addressing issues

Physical Setting

- Students seated at tables viewing VCT and transitioning into groups assigned by facilitator to discuss their observations and possible courses of action. Then, share groups' decision with all class members.

Procedures:

- **Facilitator will arrange room for members to be able to observe VCT.**
- **Facilitator will read the goals of the lesson to the members.**
- **Facilitator will show VCT to members.**

Facilitator reads: The animation you are about to view depicts a real life situation. After viewing the clip, you will answer some individual questions and then discuss the situation as a group.

Facilitator will now play the animation.

Facilitator reads: Now that you have viewed the scenario, you have 5 minutes to individually answer the following questions:

1. What behaviors did you observe in the animation? Were any exhibited behaviors discriminatory? Which ones?
2. Name some possible effects the individual may have felt after the incident.
3. As a leader, explain how you could possibly address and correct this issue.
4. How would you prevent further occurrences such as these in your unit?

After 5 minutes, the facilitator reads the following:

Now that you have had the opportunity to come up with you own responses, as a group you will now discuss your responses with each other and come up with a consensus to share with the entire class. You will have 15 minutes to discuss your responses.

After 15 minutes, ask for groups to volunteer to discuss their responses with the class.

Discussion Key: There are several areas that should be noted in this scenario. Members of other smaller religious groups often feel minimized as compared to majority religious groups. Per DoD policy requests for religious accommodation will be approved when accommodation would not adversely affect mission accomplishment, including military readiness, unit cohesion, good order, discipline, health and safety, or any other military requirement. Does it sound like the leader in this scenario

considered or was aware of this policy? What would you recommend to the service member? How would you advise the commander? Other areas to consider are the female leader's comments which seem to be derogatory in nature. How would you handle this situation?

Target Audience: EOA Course

Lesson Goals

- To identify potential religious discrimination occurrences
- To explore possible effects of religious discrimination
- Generate thoughts and ideas about how to best address this situation as a EOA/PM
- To understand different approaches in addressing issues

Physical Setting

- Students seated in horseshoe viewing VCT and transitioning into pairs assigned by instructor to discuss possible courses of action. Then sharing group's decision amongst all group members.

Procedures:

- Facilitator will arrange students in a horseshoe, then transition to circle after viewing VCT.
- Facilitator will read the goals of the lesson to the students.
- Facilitator will show VCT to students.

Instructor reads: The animation you are about to view depicts a real life situation. After viewing the clip, you will answer some individual questions and then discuss the situation as a group.

Instructor will now play the animation.

Instructor reads: Now that you have viewed the scenario, you have 5 minutes to individually answer the following questions:

1. What behaviors did you observe in the animation? Were any exhibited behaviors discriminatory? Which ones?
2. What indicators did you see that implied that discrimination might have occurred?
3. Name some possible effects the individual may have felt after the incident.
4. As a leader, explain how you could possibly address and correct this issue.

After 5 minutes, the instructor reads the following:

Now that you have had the opportunity to come up with you own responses, as a group of 2-3, you will discuss your responses with each other and come up with a consensus to share with the entire class. You will have 10 minutes to discuss your responses.

After 10 minutes, ask for groups to volunteer to discuss their responses with their group.

Discussion Key: There are several areas that should be noted in this scenario. Members of other smaller religious groups often feel minimized as compared to majority religious groups. Per DoD policy requests for religious accommodation will be approved when accommodation would not adversely affect mission accomplishment, including military readiness, unit cohesion, good order, discipline, health and safety, or any other military requirement. Does it sound like the leader in this scenario considered or was aware of this policy? What would you recommend to the service member? How

would you advise the commander? Other areas to consider are the female leader's comments which seem to be derogatory in nature. Could her personal views on religion have impacted her later decisions to deny his accommodation? As the EOA or Program Manager, how would you handle this situation? What follow-on steps would you take?