

Communication Regarding Physical Contact Between Opposite Genders

Subject: Physical Contact with the Clients of the Opposite Gender at the Workplace

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to inform you about the religious observances of practicing Muslims concerning physical contact with individuals of the opposite gender. According to Islamic jurisprudence, it is generally considered impermissible for an adult Muslim man and woman, who are not closely related, to engage in physical contact. This rule extends to professional settings such as healthcare, therapy, or educational environments, unless the contact is absolutely necessary and no reasonable alternatives are available.

In circumstances where physical contact is absolutely necessary, such as medical emergencies or therapeutic procedures that cannot be performed otherwise, Islamic law permits such contact under the principle of necessity. Nonetheless, practitioners endeavor to maintain modesty and avoid direct physical contact with clients of the opposite gender once they have reached Islamic adulthood.

This guidance is not rooted in bias, discrimination, or a lack of professionalism but is a careful adherence to sincerely held religious principles while upholding ethical and professional standards. Therefore, we respectfully request that institutions and colleagues recognize and respect these religious boundaries as part of standard workplace accommodations for faith-based observance. Hence, we thoughtfully suggest that the institution accommodate Muslim employees in non-emergency cases by employing non-contact therapeutic methods, such as using barriers (such as gloves or cloth) and requesting that clients of the same gender be assigned when a barrier does not suffice.

This communication was issued in response to the high number of requests from individuals in professional environments where physical contact is necessary for their job duties, for an official explanation of this aspect of the Islamic religion. I.M.A.M. is a non-profit religious organization that is authorized and commissioned by the supreme religious authority of Shia Muslims in the world, which has been based in the Seminary of Najaf in Iraq for more than a millennium, to support and serve the Shia Muslim community in North America.

For more information, feel free to contact us through any of the communication channels listed below.

Sincerely,
I.M.A.M.