

School & Workplace Accommodations for the Jewish High Holidays

Know Your Rights & Obligations

Rosh Hashanah: The beginning of the Jewish New Year and first of the High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of a ten-day period of penitence and spiritual renewal. Some adherents to Judaism only observe the first day of the holiday and others observe both days.

Yom Kippur: Known as the “Day of Atonement,” Yom Kippur marks the end of the Ten Days of Penitence that begin with Rosh Hashanah.

Every fall, students and employees who observe the Jewish High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (“High Holidays”) must resolve scheduling conflicts resulting from their concurrent religious obligations and school or work responsibilities.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) firmly believes that to create welcoming and respectful school and workplace environments, diligent efforts should be made to accommodate observance of the High Holidays and other religious practices with school or work responsibilities in a meaningful way. Accommodating students and employees who seek to take time off for the High Holidays is not merely a principled and worthy practice. Rather, in many instances it may be legally required. However, to obtain a religious accommodation for the High Holidays from schools or employers, students and employees often have to fulfill certain obligations.

Even if a K-12 or post-secondary school fully meets its obligations to accommodate a student's religious observance, missing the first days of school or class due to the High Holidays can raise intangible issues. The first days of the school year are a time when students establish their initial rapport with teachers or professors and learn about their educators' expectations for the coming year or class.

Absence from these days or classes could wrongly convey the message that school or a class is not important to a student or his or her family. While such an interpretation of a student's absence for religious observance is completely erroneous and unfounded, ADL strongly encourages older students and parents of younger children to advise teachers or professors in advance of the High Holidays – preferably in person – why they will be absent, and to ask for any important information or materials that will be provided during the days or classes missed.

The links below answer common questions regarding religious accommodation for observance of the High Holidays by (1) K-12 public and private schools, (2) public and private post-secondary schools, and (3) public and private employers.

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For more information or assistance in seeking a religious accommodation for observance of the High Holidays, contact your local [ADL office](#).