



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

12-22-2023

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta to Pay \$45,000 to Settle EEOC Religious Discrimination Lawsuit

Hospital Settles Claims It Fired Maintenance Assistant for Seeking Exemption to Influenza Vaccine Requirements

ATLANTA – Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Inc. (CHOA), a pediatric healthcare system in Georgia, will pay \$45,000 to settle a religious discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency announced today.

The EEOC charged in its suit that a maintenance employee requested a religious exemption to CHOA's flu vaccination requirements based on sincerely held religious beliefs, in accordance with CHOA's procedures. CHOA granted the same employee a religious exemption in 2017 and 2018. In 2019, however, CHOA denied the employee's request for a religious accommodation and fired him, the EEOC said, despite the employee working primarily outside and his position requiring limited interaction with the public or staff.

This alleged conduct violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits firing an employee because of their religion and requires that employers reasonably

accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs of their employees. The EEOC filed suit (Civil Action No. 1:22-CV-04953-MLB-RDC) in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division, after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement via its conciliation process.

Under the consent decree resolving the lawsuit, CHOA will pay \$45,000 in monetary damages to the former employee. CHOA will also adjust its influenza vaccine religious exemption policy to presume the exemption eligibility of employees with remote workstations or who otherwise work away from the presence of other employees or patients, and to protect the ability of such employees to seek alternative positions within CHOA if their religious exemption request is denied. The decree further provides that CHOA will train relevant employees on religious accommodation rights under Title VII.

“It is the responsibility of an employer to accommodate its employees’ sincerely held religious beliefs,” said Marcus G. Keegan, the regional attorney for the EEOC’s Atlanta District Office. “Unless doing so would require more than a minimal cost, an employer may not deny requested religious accommodations, let alone revoke those previously granted without issue. The EEOC is pleased that the employee has been compensated and that CHOA has agreed to take steps to ensure that it meets its obligation to evaluate religious accommodation requests in a manner consistent with federal law.”

Darrell Graham, district director of the Atlanta office, said, “The arbitrary denial of religious accommodations drives religious discrimination in the workplace. The EEOC remains committed to enforcing the laws that protect employees’ religious practices.”

For more information on religious discrimination, please visit

<https://www.eeoc.gov/religious-discrimination> (**<https://www.eeoc.gov/religious-discrimination>**).

The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available at **www.eeoc.gov** (**<http://www.eeoc.gov/>**). Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our **[email updates](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new)**. (**<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new>**)

Recent Press Releases from the Atlanta District Office

Papa John's Pizza to Pay \$175,000 to Settle Disability Discrimination Lawsuit
(<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/papa-johns-pizza-pay-175000-settle-disability-discrimination-lawsuit>)

Landry's Restaurant Chain Subsidiary Pays \$25,000 to Resolve Religious Discrimination Suit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/landrys-restaurant-chain-subsidiary-pays-25000-resolve-religious-discrimination-suit>)

Dollar General to Pay \$42,500 to Settle Pregnancy Discrimination Lawsuit
(<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/dollar-general-pay-42500-settle-pregnancy-discrimination-lawsuit>)

Recent Press Releases on the Subject of Race, Religion

EEOC Sues Wheeler Trucking for Race and Religious Discrimination, Retaliation
(<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-wheeler-trucking-race-and-religious-discrimination-retaliation>)

La EEOC Demanda a Wheeler Trucking por Discriminación Racial y Religiosa y Represalias (<https://www.eeoc.gov/es/newsroom/la-eeoc-demanda-wheeler-trucking-por-discriminacion-racial-y-religiosa-y-represalias>)

Landry's Restaurant Chain Subsidiary Pays \$25,000 to Resolve Religious Discrimination Suit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/landrys-restaurant-chain-subsidiary-pays-25000-resolve-religious-discrimination-suit>)