

1 **REGULATIONS FOR ADDRESSING REQUESTS FOR RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION TO**
2 **COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE**
3

4 Code of Virginia Section § 22.1-254 on compulsory attendance, reflected in Alexandria City
5 School Board (Board) Policy JEG, states that a school board shall excuse from attendance at
6 school: “Any student who, together with the student’s parents/legal guardians, by reason of bona
7 fide religious training or belief is conscientiously opposed to attendance at school. For the purposes
8 of this subdivision, bona fide religious training or belief does not include essentially political,
9 sociological or philosophical views or a merely personal moral code.”

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11 Home Instruction does not require a religious exemption to compulsory attendance.

12
13 Whenever there is a written request for religious exemption in lieu of compulsory school
14 attendance requirements, the following procedures are followed to establish if the request is due
15 to a bona fide religious training or belief that warrants an exception to compulsory attendance as
16 established in the Code of Virginia:

17
18 1) Within two days of receipt of such a request, the Superintendent appoints a designee to
19 coordinate the process of gathering information for consideration by the Superintendent and the
20 Board. This person also serves as the point of contact to the parent/legal guardian.

21
22 2) Within five days of appointment, the designee acknowledges, by phone or in writing,
23 confirmation of receipt of the request for religious exemption to the parents/ legal guardians. The
24 acknowledgment includes the request for an appointment with the parent/legal guardian to discuss
25 the request, validate information in the letter, and obtain specific information using the interview
26 form that will guide decision-making by the Board.

27
28 3) During the appointment, the designee interviews the parents/legal guardians to gather evidence
29 if the request is due to a bona fide religious training or belief. The designee also interviews the
30 impacted child/children over 12 years old. If the parent/legal guardian refuses to allow the child/ren
31 to be interviewed, the refusal and reason for refusal should be documented for the record and
32 shared with the Superintendent and Board.

33
34 4) Upon completion of the interview, the designee reviews the findings with the Superintendent
35 to evaluate if the requested exemption is due to a bona fide religious training or belief. After the
36 evaluation, the Superintendent contacts the Clerk of the Board (Clerk) to add the religious
37 exemption request to the agenda of the next available Board meeting. The parents/legal guardians
38 are notified of the Board meeting date, location, and time. They are also told that the Board may
39 want to meet with them and the child/ren prior to rendering a decision.

40
41 5) The Board receives copies of all correspondence and interview results including a
42 recommendation from the Superintendent prior to the scheduled Board meeting. This item is
43 placed as a Consent item with the understanding that the Board may exercise its right to meet with
44 the parents/legal guardians in a Closed Session.

45
46 6) Upon the Board reaching a decision that the request qualifies as a bona fide religious exemption

47 under the Code of Virginia, the Clerk or designee sends the parent/legal guardian a letter stating
48 the Board's decision. The Board is not required to justify its reason for approval or disapproval
49 as part of its correspondence to the parent.

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51 7) In the event that the parent/legal guardian refuses to abide by the Board's decision, the case
52 will follow the normal procedures for addressing compulsory school attendance issues.

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55 Established: June 11, 2015

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58 Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-254.
59 Va. Op. Att'y Gen. 1988

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61 Cross Ref.: JEG Exclusions and Exemptions from School Attendance

DRAFT

Alexandria City Public Schools
Religious Exemption Interview Form

Section 22.1-254(B). Religious Exemption. The Code of Virginia provides that the School Board:

"Shall excuse from attendance at school any pupil who, together with the student's parents, by bona fide religious training or belief is conscientiously opposed to attendance at school. For purposes of this subdivision, bona fide religious training or belief does not include essentially political, sociological or philosophical views or a merely personal moral code."

Name of Designee: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Name(s) of Parent or Legal Guardian: _____

Name(s) of Child(ren): _____

Birthdate: _____

Birthdate: _____

Address: _____

Phone: home () _____ cell () _____

Parent Questions:

1) Please identify the local church or organization, if any, which embodies the religious training or beliefs that you hold:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Contact Person: _____

2. Are you a member of that church or organization? ___yes ___no If yes, length of affiliation with that organization or adherence to the beliefs? ___years ___months

3. Have your children ever attended any public, private, or religiously affiliated school? If so, when?

108 4. Explain how your request for religious exemption is grounded in a bona fide religious belief?

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110

111 5. Are there specific courses or opportunities, either academic or extra-curricular, associated with
112 the Alexandria City Public Schools that conflict with your religious beliefs or training? If so,
113 explain.

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116 6. Do you, yourself, intend to educate your children in the event a religious exemption is granted?

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118

119 7. What is the source or sources of the curriculum which will be provided to your children, if any,
120 in the event the religious exemption is granted?

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123 8. Should your request for religious exemption be denied and your children compelled to attend
124 public school, what religious ramifications do you foresee?

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127 **Child Interview Questions (Attach additional sheet for more than one child)**

128

129 1) Do you participate in religious teachings? ___yes ___no If so, where?

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133 2) Do you think that attending public school is against your religious belief? ___yes ___no? Why?

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136 *****

137 Interviewer's Recommendation: _____ Support Approval

138 _____ Cannot Support Approval (Explain Why?)

139

140 ACPS 05/2014

REGULATIONS ~~PROTOCOL~~ FOR ADDRESSING REQUESTS FOR RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION TO COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Commented [1]: This is an ACPS document

Code of Virginia Section § 22.1-254 on compulsory attendance, reflected in Alexandria City School Board (Board) Policy JEG, states that a school board shall excuse from attendance at school: “Any ~~pupil~~ student who, together with ~~his~~ the student’s parents/legal guardians, by reason of bona fide religious training or belief is conscientiously opposed to attendance at school. For the purposes of this subdivision, bona fide religious training or belief does not include essentially political, sociological or philosophical views or a merely personal moral code.””

~~Home Instruction does not require a religious exemption to compulsory attendance.~~

Commented [MS2]: Added to provide clarity.

Whenever there is a written request for religious exemption in lieu of compulsory school attendance requirements, the following procedures ~~are~~ should be followed to establish if the request is due to a bona fide religious training or belief that warrants an exception to compulsory attendance as established in the Code of Virginia:

1) Within two days of receipt of such a request, the Superintendent ~~shall~~ appoints a designee to coordinate the process of gathering information for consideration by the Superintendent and the School Board. This person ~~will~~ also serves as the point of contact to the parent/legal ~~or~~ guardian.

2) Within five days of appointment, the designee ~~shall~~ acknowledges, by phone or in writing, confirmation of receipt of the request for religious exemption to the parents/~~or~~ legal guardians. ~~The acknowledgment includes the request for an appointment with the parent/legal guardian to discuss the request, validate information in the letter, and obtain specific information using the interview form that will guide decision-making by the School Board.~~

Commented [3]: Moved up to improve the flow. Removed the requirement that the appointment be in person.

3) ~~At that time, the designee shall schedules an appointment in person with the parent or guardian to discuss the request, validate information in the letter, and obtain specific information using the interview form that will guide decision-making by the School Board. During the appointment, tThe designee shall interviews the parents/legal ~~or~~ guardians to gather evidence if the request is due to a bona fide religious training or belief. The designee also interviews the ~~and~~ impacted child/children over 12 years old. If the parent/legal guardians refuses to allow the child/ren to be interviewed, the refusal and reason for refusal should be documented for the record and shared with the Superintendent and School Board.~~

4) Upon completion of the interview, the designee ~~shall~~ reviews the findings with the Superintendent to evaluate if the requested exemption is due to a bona fide religious training or belief of Schools. After the evaluation, tThe Superintendent shall contacts the Clerk of the School Board (Clerk) to add the religious exemption request to the agenda of the next available School Board meeting. The parents/~~or~~ legal guardians ~~should be~~ notified of the School Board meeting date, location, and time. They ~~should are~~ also be told that the School Board may want to meet with them and the child/ren prior to rendering a decision.

5) The ~~School~~ Board ~~shall~~ receives copies of all correspondence and interview results including a recommendation from the Superintendent prior to the scheduled ~~School~~ Board meeting. This item ~~shall be~~ placed as a Consent item with the understanding that the Board may exercise its right to meet with the parents ~~or~~ legal guardians in a Closed Session.

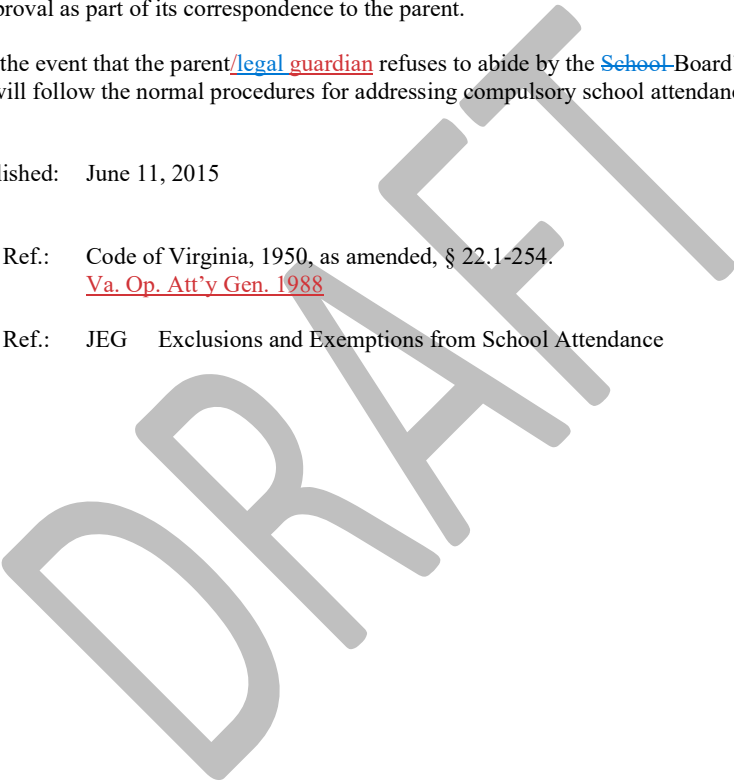
6) Upon ~~the Board~~ reaching a decision ~~that the requested qualifies as afor the bona fide religious exemption under the Code of Virginia and is consistent with the opinions of the Virginia Attorney General,~~ the Clerk ~~or designee of the Board shall~~ sends the parent ~~or~~ legal guardian a letter stating the Board's decision. The Board is not required to justify its reason for approval or disapproval as part of its correspondence to the parent.

7) In the event that the parent legal guardian refuses to abide by the ~~School~~ Board's decision, the case will follow the normal procedures for addressing compulsory school attendance issues.

Established: June 11, 2015

Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-254.
Va. Op. Att'y Gen. 1988

Cross Ref.: JEG Exclusions and Exemptions from School Attendance



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Name(s) of Child(ren): _____

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116 when?
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- 119 4. Explain how your request for religious exemption is grounded in a bona fide religious belief?
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- 123 5. Are there specific courses or opportunities, either academic or extra-curricular, associated with
124 the Alexandria City Public Schools that conflict with your religious beliefs or training? If so,
125 explain.
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- 128 6. Do you, yourself, intend to educate your children in the event a religious exemption is granted?
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136 public school, what religious ramifications do you foresee?
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Child Interview Questions (Attach additional sheet for more than one child)

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- 143
- 144
- 145
- 146 2) Do you think that attending public school is against your religious belief? ___yes ___no? Why?
- 147
- 148

149 *****
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 151 _____ Cannot Support Approval (Explain Why?)
 152

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