



Department of Human Resources
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

FIA INFORMATION MEMO

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Effective Date: Immediately

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**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS/ELIGIBILITY STAFF**

FROM: CHARLES E. HENRY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**RE: CUSTOMER'S RIGHT TO REFUSE TO WORK WITH A
RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION**

PROGRAM AFFECTED: ALL PROGRAMS

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS

SUMMARY:

Some local departments have contracted with churches and other faith-based organizations to provide services or serve as third party payees for our customers. Federal regulations as well as the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) prohibit discriminating against any individual when administering our programs. COMAR states: **An individual may not be required to accept assistance from a religious organization if acceptance would violate the individual's bona fide religious beliefs and practices.**

REQUIREMENT:

FIA staff must apply this regulation when assigning vendors who provide assistance to our customers. Once the customer states that contact with a vendor would violate his or her religious belief, the law requires that we provide alternatives to ensure they remain entitled to service. The customer and the local office should work together to designate a representative that can provide services without violating beliefs.

We must respect cultural differences, protect customer rights and make accommodations that are mutually acceptable and remain in compliance with federal and state regulations. Please direct inquiries to Stephanie Adams, Bureau of Policy and Training, on (410) 767-8121.

cc: FIA Management Staff
Constituent Services

CTF
Help Desk