



'Tis the Season to Focus on Inclusive Workplaces: A Holiday Resource for Employers

Insights

12.13.22

Employers should strive to enhance their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs year-round — but they should take additional care during the winter holiday season, which highlights the many cultural, religious, and secular traditions that employees look forward to celebrating each year. Whether your employees are celebrating Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Yule (Winter Solstice), Las Posadas, the end of a year, a different cultural practice, or no cultural practices at all, you can take steps acknowledge holiday celebrations while also remaining inclusive. Here is a quick guide for employers to help you understand the various religious and cultural practices that employees may be celebrating in December and throughout the year.

Are You Familiar with the Major Holiday Celebrations and Observances?

First things first. Here is a list of the most common upcoming holidays that your employees are likely to celebrate along with that date it will be celebrated in 2022.

- **Las Posadas (Dec. 16 – 24)**

Latin American novenario celebrating the Christmas story.

- **Hannukah (Dec. 18 – 26)**

Jewish Festival of Lights commemorating the recovery of Jerusalem and subsequent rededication of the Second Temple.

- **Yule/Winter Solstice (Dec. 21)**

Yule was originally celebrated by the Norse and Scandinavian peoples. Winter Solstice is a Pagan celebration on the longest night of the year.

- **Christmas (Dec. 25)**

Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

- **Kwanzaa (Dec. 26 – Jan. 1)**

Celebration of African American culture ending in a communal feast called Karamu, typically on the sixth day.

- **Boxing Day (Dec. 26)**

Originally celebrated in Great Britain on the second day of Christmastide as a holiday to give gifts to the poor.

- **Ōmisoka (Dec. 31)**

Japanese traditional celebration on the last day of the year.

Did You Know There are Many Celebrations and Observances Throughout the Year?

You should note that the examples listed above are the most common holidays that are widely celebrated around the world this time of year. Other major cultural and religious holidays take place throughout the year — and some occur on different dates each year. For example:

- The Jewish New Year, **Rosh Hashanah**, began on September 25 in 2022 — and **Yom Kippur**, the day of atonement, began at sunset on October 4 and ended on the evening of October 5.
- **Diwali** — the five-day Hindu Festival of Lights — began on October 22 this year and will start on November 12 next year.
- **Eid al-Fitr** – the Muslim celebration that marks the end of the dawn-to-sunset fasting of **Ramadan** — was celebrated on May 1 to May 2 this year (but it sometimes falls in December).
- The **Lunar New Year** — which is observed in China and by a number of other cultures — will be observed on January 22, 2023.

Additionally, **Bodhi Day**, a Buddhist holiday marking the day that Siddhartha Guatama attained enlightenment, is generally celebrated on December 8 each year.

You may want to ensure your managers know when these holidays occur and encourage them to build a supportive workplace culture that allows employees to observe or celebrate their important holidays. It's important to also recognize that employees may participate in lesser-known holidays. For example, **Saint Nicholas Day** is celebrated on December 5, 6, or 19 in certain European cultures. Additionally, some employees may choose not to celebrate any holidays at all, either for religious or secular reasons. So, be sure to listen to your employees, refrain from making any assumptions, and follow inclusive practices.

Have You Trained Your Managers and Shared DEI Best Practices with Employees?

As we enjoy the holiday season, you should train your managers on the best practices you want your organization to demonstrate this time of year. After all, respecting the personal, religious, and

cultural practices of our colleagues and clients isn't just a smart idea to ensure compliance with the law, it's yet another way to demonstrate that you care about your workforce. Some suggestions include:

- Your managers should be aware of the best way to greet employees during December. That could mean, for example, saying Merry Christmas or Happy Hanukkah. If they are uncertain about what to say, they can simply wish employees Happy Holidays or Happy New Year.
- During major holidays now and throughout the year, make sure your managers are not scheduling important meetings or special events that may conflict with holiday celebrations.
- Train your managers not to be afraid to ask respectful questions of co-workers about their holiday practices. Taking an interest in their team's holiday plans and making them feel welcome to share is always a good idea.
- Remember that some people do not attend parties at all. Inclusion in the workplace includes making office holiday celebrations optional. No matter the reason for not wanting to partake in any office holiday parties, make sure your managers aren't forcing your team to participate.

Conclusion

Consistency is key, so be sure to apply your policies fairly for any holiday leave requests. If you have questions about best practices to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, contact your Fisher Phillips attorney or the author of this Insight. We will continue to monitor further developments in this area and provide updates accordingly, so make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to gather the most up-to-date information.

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