

TOPIC: Head Coverings and Driver's License / Identification Card Photographs
Originator: Operations

I. Effective Date. September 1, 2002

II. Description.

This policy describes the standards and procedures the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) will follow in allowing driver's license or identification card photographs of customers wearing head coverings for religious or cultural reasons, and for physical disfigurement reasons. The policy also encompasses allowing applicants to request being photographed by an MVA staff person of a particular gender for religious or cultural reasons.

III. Legislative Authority.

1. MD Transportation Article 16-111.1 [d] [2] [iv], requires that a license include a color photo taken in accordance with procedures required by the Administration.
2. MD Transportation Article 16-106 [c], requires applicants to sign and certify the license application.

IV. Relationship to Administration's Mission and Values.

This policy supports the MVA's mission to provide excellent customer service. A clear and consistent policy on driver's license or identification card photographs of customers with head coverings will make it easier for customers with religious, cultural, or physical disfigurement concerns to conduct business at MVA. The policy will promote good will between the MVA and its customers with such concerns. It also will provide needed guidance to MVA staff in serving customers requesting special consideration for religious, cultural, or physical disfigurement reasons (798).

V. Policy Statement.

1. Applicants for driver licenses and identification cards who state that their head covering or habit is worn as a religious or cultural ordinance, practice, faith or belief, may be photographed according to procedures (See Section VIII below) while wearing the religious or cultural garment/head covering.
2. An applicant citing religious or cultural reasons also may request that an MVA staff person of a particular gender take the applicant's picture.
3. An applicant citing physical disfigurement concerns may be photographed according to procedures (See Section VIII below) while wearing a head covering.

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4. All other applicants are to remove head coverings when being photographed and may not specify the gender of MVA staff taking the photograph.

VI. Purpose / Background.

The MVA is sensitive to the fact there are many religious faiths and cultures in the world, all having different means and forms of practices and (109) observances. Some require certain dress observance, including head coverings. In some religions or cultures, a person of one gender may not be allowed to make any type of contact with a person of the opposite gender outside the person's family. Because religion and cultural background is highly personal, and potentially a sensitive subject, the Administration must use both tact and diplomacy in meeting the needs of customers requiring special handling in this regard.

The MVA also is sensitive to the fact that physical disfigurement (e.g., scarring, skin discoloration, female hair loss, etc.) can be highly personal, and potentially a sensitive subject for customers. The Administration must strive to accommodate customers with such concerns.

On occasion, the MVA receives special requests from customers seeking permission to not remove their head coverings for MVA photographs. In other instances, an applicant may request being photographed by an MVA staff person of a particular gender citing religious or cultural reasons. The MVA is receptive to granting such special requests only if customers cite religious or cultural concerns, or concerns about physical disfigurement. In the absence of religious, cultural, or physical disfigurement grounds, the MVA may require the removal of head coverings for MVA photographs and not allow customers to select the gender of MVA staff providing service. This policy was created to provide guidance and consistency to MVA staff and customers in managing these special requests.

VII. Definitions.

Not Applicable.

VIII. Procedures.

Applicants for driver licenses and identification cards who cite religious, cultural, or physical disfigurement reasons may be photographed while wearing head coverings. In addition, applicants citing religious or cultural reasons may be photographed by an MVA staff person of a particular gender. All other applicants

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must remove head coverings when being photographed and may not specify the gender of MVA staff taking the photograph. The following are guidelines for MVA staff in handling these special requests:

Responsible Position	Task / Step / Action
MVA Staff Taking the Photograph	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure the applicant's garment does not cover the face, eyes, or the forehead. If requested, permit relatives or friends to shield applicant from view of others while garment is lifted (826). 2. Adjust the camera angle so that the head covering, for the most part, does not show. 3. As needed, switch places with a staff person of the opposite gender if requested by an applicant on religious or cultural grounds. 4. Ensure the applicant signs his / her own signature onto the signature card. Another member of the applicant's family is not authorized to sign for the applicant. 5. If the customers declines to comply with the above requirements or is otherwise not satisfied, refer to the supervisor / manager for assistance.
Supervisor / Manager	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide assistance to staff if customers decline to comply with the requirements or are otherwise dissatisfied. 2. Provide periodic oversight to ensure MVA staff are following proper procedures.

IX. Guidelines / Reference Material Available.

Not Applicable.

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X. Alternatives Considered but Not Selected.

An alternative to this policy is to let MVA Branches handle these special customer requests without the benefit of written guidelines and procedures. This alternative is not viable due to the potential for inconsistent handling of special requests and increased risk of related customer complaints.

XI. Similarity With Other States.

It is the policy of the following other states to allow applicants citing religious, cultural, or physical disfigurement reasons to be photographed wearing head coverings: DE, HI, IA, MT, ND, NE, NM, OK, VA, and WI.

XII. Quality Control Method.

The quality control method of this policy will be periodic oversight by the supervisor / manager to ensure MVA staff are following proper procedures (see Section VIII).

XIII. Performance Measures.

The performance measure of this policy will be the reduction or elimination of complaints involving conflict between MVA licensing requirements and the religious, cultural, or physical disfigurement concerns of customers.

XIV. Endorsements.

Administrator: Signature on file in the Office of Driver and Vehicle Policy.

XV. Change History.

Adopted	Brief Description
9999/99/9	