

LABOR RELATIONS



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February 4, 2021

Brian Wagner
President
National Association of Postal Supervisors
1727 King Street, Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314-2753

Dear Brian:

As a matter of general interest, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has provided advice to Postal Police Officer managers concerning employees wearing beards for medical reasons.

The Inspection Service requires a consistent professional appearance of its Postal Police personnel. Current Inspection Service policy in this regard is found in the IS 702 Handbook, *Postal Police Officer's Guide*, § 3-2. There are certain situations however wherein exceptions to this policy may be warranted. In order to ensure uniform compliance, the memorandum contains the process by which PPOs may submit deviations for permission to wear beards.

Enclosed is a copy of the memorandum.

Please contact Bruce Nicholson at extension 7773 if you have questions concerning this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David E. Mills".

David E. Mills
Manager
Labor Relations Policies and Programs

Enclosure

DATE: January 29, 2021

TO: Inspectors In Charge – Field Divisions
Inspector In Charge – Security Group
Inspector In Charge – Career Development Unit

CC: Dr. Tsiongas
Chief Counsel
Deputy Chief Inspectors

FROM: Patricia Martino
Occupational Nurse
Office of the Inspection Service Medical Director

The Inspection Service requires a consistent professional appearance of its Postal Police personnel, and generally, PPOs cannot have beards. Current Inspection Service policy in this regard is found in the IS 702 Handbook, *Postal Police Officer's Guide*, § 3-2. There are certain situations however wherein exceptions to this policy may be warranted. In order to ensure uniform compliance, this memorandum contains the process by which PPOs may submit deviations for permission to wear beards.

There are certain medical conditions which may preclude a clean shaven appearance for certain Postal Police Officers. These include PPOs who have been diagnosed with a medical condition known as *Pseudofolliculitis Barbae*, as well as other related skin conditions. This condition is also referred to as "Barber's Itch", "Folliculitis Barbae Traumatica", "Razor or Shave Bumps", "In-grown hairs", and "Scarring Pseudofolliculitis". The following guidelines are intended to provide a uniform policy for obtaining opinions from this Office when deviations to the above referenced policy are requested and ancillary information related to such a request.

As with other medical conditions, an accommodation may be considered for PPO's requesting permission to maintain a beard, if they provide acceptable medical documentation. In order to be able to furnish an opinion from this Office as to whether the request is properly supported, the following is required:

- A medical diagnosis from a licensed medical practitioner, i.e., a Medical Doctor (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (OD), or a Nurse Practitioner or Physician's Assistant working under the authority of a MD or DO.
- A description of the area on the face which is affected, and/or a diagram or photographic image of the affected area.
- A list of treatments which have/are being used, and the related results.
- The expected duration of the condition, as well as the prognosis for recovery or resolution.

As information, conditions such as *Pseudofolliculitis Barbae* are not always permanent, and it may be possible to be resolved or cured in a relatively short period, typically one to three months. Depending upon individual circumstances, more severe or recalcitrant situations may require an indefinite duration for the exception. Employees should be reminded to advise Division/Group management in the event their condition resolves.

For those situations requiring an exemption, whether short or long term, it is reasonable to require the beard be maintained at a length of ¼ inch or less. A longer beard does not alleviate the symptoms associated with the condition. Since each instance will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and as current Inspection Service policy requires authorizations not exceed six months, updated medical documentation should be provided accordingly.

Postal Police Officers granted authorization to maintain a beard pursuant for accepted, documented medical reasons will not be authorized to enter environments where respirators are required. This is due to the inability of the employee to achieve a successful respirator fitting while maintaining a beard. Deviations in this regard must be approved by the Inspection Service Medical Director, or authorized medical personnel assigned to that Office.

While not medical issues, and not affecting the various conditions, Division/Group management should address issues, if they arise, such as decorative patterns, whether they are dyed, shaven or both.

In those situations wherein exemptions were granted to PPOs locally, and any documentation which may have been presented, was not always reviewed or otherwise evaluated by this Office. Accordingly, a protocol should be implemented for evaluating those exemptions previously granted. This can be facilitated by requesting documentation in accordance with the above guidelines, six months from the date they were last granted.