



SCHOOL UNIFORM AND SPORTS POLICIES

Sikh Accommodations

Sikhism is the world's fifth-largest religion. There are more than 26 million Sikhs worldwide, with over 500,000 living in the United States alone. Sikhism originated in the Punjab region of South Asia in the fifteenth century. Sikhs believe in one God who is all loving, all pervading, and eternal.

Sikhs wear an external uniform to unify and bind them to the beliefs of the religion and to remind them of their commitment to Sikh teachings at all times. These articles of faith distinguish Sikhs and have deep spiritual significance. They include *kesh* (unshorn hair, including facial and body hair) covered with religious headwear; including a *dastar* (turban) or a *patka* or *rumaal* (smaller head covering for youths). Thus, the turban serves as a primary identifying feature for observant Sikhs and covers one's unshorn hair.



Sikh girl runs track

Sikh students who choose to wear their articles of faith are at times told that their articles of faith do not align with school or sports uniform policies. Students have the right to maintain unshorn hair and wear religious headwear like *dastars*, *patkas*, or *rumaals* in public schools while participating in athletic activities, and public schools have a legal obligation to provide religious accommodations for these articles of faith. If you have inquiries regarding Sikh religious accommodations, please reach out to the Sikh Coalition at contact@sikhcoalition.org.

Additionally, please note that Sikh female students may be uncomfortable wearing shorts/skirts because of their unshorn leg hair and should be allowed to wear sweats/pants instead, if requested.

Sikh students have played sports while wearing their articles of faith in the United States, including for NCAA Division 1 schools and other local youth sporting organizations. In addition, international sports associations like the International Basketball Federation and the International Boxing Association have made amendments and accommodations to their policies to allow for religious articles of faith. Thus, Sikh student athletes should be provided with religious accommodations to allow for participation while wearing their articles of faith.

Denying a Sikh student the right to wear their articles of faith in school or during school-sponsored activities would deny the student their rights under the First Amendment to freely exercise their religion. Accommodations should be made, and parents, as well as the student, should be involved in those discussions.



Banner: Sikh boy runs track with patka
Above: Darsh Singh plays NCAA basketball with turban