

Applicant Reference Checks Policy

Applicant Reference Checks

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Policy

Prior to extending an offer of employment it is required that reference check(s) be completed on the selected candidate. The candidate's signed application authorizes the State to request information pertinent to the candidate's work experience, education, and training.

Definitions

Criminal Background Check - a search of county, state, federal and/or national databases to provide information about a candidate's criminal history.

Employment Verification - process of confirming current or past employment provided by an applicant by verifying job titles and dates of employment. Per Executive Order 93, Prohibiting the Use of Salary History in the State Hiring Process (signed April 2, 2019), salary history should not be requested.

Performance Documents – Employee documents within NCVIP to include any active disciplinary actions, Interim and Annual performance appraisals for a 3-year period.

Reference Check - a process of getting information about an applicant from their previous employers, schools, and other available resources. Through reference checks, the information given by the candidate on the job application and during the interview(s) about work experience and skills can be verified.

Employment Verification

1. Verify employment with at least two recent employers or all employers with which the applicant has worked over the previous five years. Confirm:

Applicant Reference Checks Policy (cont.)

- Dates of Employment
 - Position(s) held
 - Eligibility for Rehire
2. Do not ask about salary history per Executive Order 93.
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Reference Checks

1. Call or email a minimum of two individuals listed as current or most recent prior supervisors on application (for work most related to the job being sought):
 - Overall performance
 - Attendance
 - Experience applicable for job being sought
 - Reason for leaving
 - Eligibility for rehire
2. If applicant has current or prior work history with the state agency or university, through the hiring agency Human Resources Office:
 - Obtain copies of performance documents within NCVIP pursuant to NCGS 126-24(2a). If the overall performance appraisal rating shows the employee has an active disciplinary action or is “Not Meeting Expectations” approval to extend a job offer must be obtained from the hiring Agency Head or designee.
 - Refer to the state’s HR/Payroll System to confirm whether an applicant has been involuntarily terminated from a state agency. If yes, approval to extend a job offer must be obtained from the hiring Agency Head or designee. An applicant who was terminated due to a Reduction in Force does not require approval from an agency head or designee, unless performance shows they did not meet expectations, or they have an active disciplinary action.
 - Verify reason for leaving on application reflects reason entered in the state’s HR/Payroll System.
3. If unable to obtain references from the current or former supervisors (generally due to the inability to reach the previous supervisor or the unwillingness to share information),

Applicant Reference Checks Policy (cont.)

4. others in the management chain or the prior employer's Human Resources office may be substituted.
 5. If the applicant recently finished school or has limited work history and is unable to provide contact information for two supervisors, references may be obtained from educators or organizations where the applicant has served in volunteer roles.
 6. The employment verification and reference check may be combined if applicable.
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Criminal Background Check (If Agency requires background check for position.):

1. Background checks should be done after the initial interview unless the position is one that a criminal conviction would legally preclude the person from employment in the particular position for which they applied.
 2. When assessing an applicant's background information, apply the job-related standards consistently, regardless of their race, national origin, color, sex (including sexual orientation, pregnancy, and gender identity/expression), religion, disability, genetic information (including family medical history), or age (40 or older).
 3. Any use of an applicant's background information to make an employment decision must comply with federal and State laws that protect applicants and employees from discrimination, including retaliation.
 4. Review and follow agency guidelines to ensure consistency in background check processes.
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Agencies shall create their internal processes to:

1. Follow the policy's required reference check procedures and templates, unless the agency receives written approval by OSHR to establish agency guidelines, procedures and templates that meet minimum requirements.
 - Ensure required employment verification and reference checks are completed on selected candidate.
 - Ensure background checks are conducted, as required by an agency.

Applicant Reference Checks Policy (cont.)

- Ensure approval is obtained from the hiring agency head or designee prior to extending a job offer to any applicant who has a prior involuntary termination from a state agency, has an active disciplinary action, or has received an overall performance appraisal rating of “Not Meeting Expectations” as shown in NCVIP.
2. Identify when a hiring manager can independently decide to hire an applicant whose employment verification or references indicate they are not eligible for rehire by another employer/agency due to non-performance/conduct reasons (ex. failure to provide 2 weeks’ notice).
 - Delegation to a hiring manager does not eliminate the requirement that approval must be obtained from an agency head or designee to extend an offer to a candidate with state experience who has a) a prior involuntary termination from a state agency or b) an active disciplinary action or an overall performance appraisal rating of “Not Meeting Expectations” as shown in NCVIP.
 3. Train managers on required reference check procedures and templates.
 4. Identify when an agency head or designee should review and approve hiring an individual when there is a nexus between a criminal record and the position’s duties.
 5. Conduct annual self-assessment of agency’s reference check processes to ensure standards contained in this policy.
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Office of State Human Resources Responsibilities

The Office of State Human Resources shall:

- Provide training and consultation to agency human resources staff.
- Provide required reference check procedures and templates.
- Review variation requests for agency guidelines to confirm acceptable substitute.
- Develop a self-assessment program and require that agencies periodically conduct self-assessments and report the results to the Office of State Human Resources.
- Include program review of the reference check processes in regular agency performance audits.