



## ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES MANUAL

**SUBJECT: REFERENCE CHECKS AND CREDENTIALS VERIFICATION GUIDELINES**

### **REFERENCE CHECKS ON COUNTY EMPLOYEES**

References regarding county employees must be done by the Employee Relations Division. A manager is able to provide a personal reference or letter of recommendation for an employee, but it is not to be considered as the official reference for Dane County. Any personal reference or letter of recommendation will not be written on County letterhead.

### **REFERENCE CHECKS ON APPLICANTS**

Reference checks are generally recognized as a means to evaluate the job success of an individual. A reference check can be a valid source of information for the supervisor making a hiring decision if it is done properly and the supervisor does not expect more than the reference check process can provide. Indeed, some agencies may refuse to provide more than only minimal information to supervisors requesting reference checks for fear of lawsuit by the former employee. Therefore, two cautions are in order:

1. The agency you request information from may not provide as much information as you would wish; and
2. Some of the information provided might not be relevant to the position you are filling.

Reference checks should, however, be performed to assist the supervisor in making hiring decisions; especially to verify employment history claims of the job candidate.

The following guidelines may be helpful in conducting a reference check:

1. Contact the most recent or relevant employer(s) as indicated and permitted by the candidate's application. They have the most valid observations and any changes in work behaviors (for the positive or negative) will be most apparent with the most recent employer.
2. If you wish to make a reference check with an employer but are not given the candidate's permission to do so as indicated on his/her application follow this procedure: Contact the candidate and advise him/her that contacting that employer is important to your hiring consideration and ask if the candidate will give you written signed permission to do so. If such written permission is not obtained, do not contact that employer.
3. Do not only contact those references that the candidate gives you. If other sources seem logical, go ahead and contact them; however, let the candidate know you will be checking out other sources.
4. Don't necessarily do a reference check on all the candidates certified to you. Reference checks can be time consuming and can, in some instances, jeopardize the candidate's current employment. Therefore, only do reference checks on those final candidates you are really serious about considering.
5. When performing a reference check, ask for the following, at a minimum:
  - a) length of employment
  - b) type of work performed



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5. (continued)
- c) describe the job you are filling so that the reference check can relate to it and advise of pertinent strengths or weaknesses
  - d) any incidents of a positive nature relevant to the employee
  - e) any incidents of a negative nature relevant to the employee
  - f) any record of tardiness and absenteeism
  - g) ability to get along with supervisors, peers and subordinates
  - h) technical expertise levels
  - i) any other behaviors or knowledge, skills and abilities the candidate has which are relevant to the job
  - j) any letters of commendations or awards
  - k) any disciplinary actions taken and cause; and
  - l) would the agency rehire the individual if they had the chance

Reference checks are one of several selection devices used to determine the candidate who can best perform the essential functions of the job. In all selection processes judgment must be exercised. Remember that the individuals you are asking to make judgments about the candidate(s) are only human and may be subject to misperceptions and prejudice. When negative references are given, it is always wise to check other references for verification.

### **CREDENTIALS VERIFICATION**

When contacting certified candidates to arrange employment interviews, have the candidates, as applicable, bring with him/her to the interview the following for your verification (such verification is not made by the Employee Relations Division):

- Certified copy of his/her college transcript (if applicable)
- If claiming veteran's preference points, his/her military discharge papers
- If claiming disabled veteran's preference points, U.S. Veteran's Administration certification of a military service connected disability
- If certain licensure is required for the position including a driver's license, his/her license(s)

CAUTION: Conviction records may only be used to reject candidates for clearly job related reasons (contact the Employee Relations Division for consultation in this area).

NOTE: Appointing Authorities should verify the educational degree and licensure claims of the candidate to be hired. This is not performed by the Employee Relations Division.

**END OF POLICY**