
CONDUCTING AN EMPLOYMENT REFERENCE CHECK

Policy Description

References provide valuable information about the candidate's qualifications and work experience. References should be checked in every search. The department of human resources and hiring supervisor should determine who will contact the references and when the search will be completed. Normally, references are checked near the completion of the search process when the list of final candidates has been narrowed to a small number. However, there may be occasions when the reference process is used to screen applicants before deciding which candidates to interview. Generally, references should be completed at the same time and by the same individual to ensure consistency.

All reference checks should be conducted using the following guidelines:

- Treat all candidates fairly and consistently.
- Ask only for information that is relevant to the candidate's skills and qualifications for position.
- Disregard information about which the provider does not have first-hand knowledge, or which is unrelated to the individual's skills or performance.
- Exercise caution in evaluating or weighing comments which are not for attribution (off the record).
- Protect the confidentiality of the process and the privacy of the applicant whenever possible by sharing only the information needed to secure the reference.
- Treat names of other individuals in the search, salaries, and personal information as confidential.

Securing References for Candidates

Candidates should be asked to provide the names and telephone numbers of references. Alternatively, candidates may be asked to submit letters of reference. One of the references obtained should be from the candidate's current or most recent supervisor. If the candidate indicates that the current supervisor should not be contacted, the candidate should be told that the lack of the current supervisor's reference may affect the hiring decision.

External Candidates

Generally, the department of human resources checks references for all external candidates who are finalists. Hiring supervisors who wish to check references themselves should consult with the department of human resources at the beginning of the search process.

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Internal Candidates

Generally, the hiring supervisor checks references for all internal candidates who are finalists. Before beginning the process, the hiring supervisor should contact the department of human resources who will summarize pertinent information in the candidate's personnel file.

Recordkeeping

The person completing the reference checks must retain a record of the reference process. The file should include names and titles of those who provided the references and a list of the questions asked and the information provided. The search file should be retained for three years.