

Reference Checking

It is important to let the applicant know that their references will be contacted.

Two people should be present during all telephone reference checks and notes should be taken during the conversation so that a written record of the conversation may be placed in the candidate's folder.

You may not ask questions of a reference that you are not permitted to ask of the candidate at an interview. Remember it is illegal to ask any questions that won't affect the way the candidate performs the job.

Suggested format:

- Introduce yourself and the purpose of the call.
- Describe the position for which the applicant has applied.
- Ask in what capacity they have known the applicant and for how long.
- Confirm the title the applicant held, dates of employment, and what duties he/she performed.
- Ask for a description and their assessment or evaluation of the applicant's experience and abilities relative to the qualifications of the position and go through the criteria most important. (Areas of the applicant's strengths, weaknesses).
- May conclude with: Is there anything else you would like to add that is important for us to know?

When checking references be certain that the information given is:

- not motivated by personal animosity
- factual, accurate, and job-related
- supported by personal experience or by written documentation

When reviewing reference letters it is important to read the letters carefully as it often happens that a reference will contain what initially appears to be a glowing recommendation. After reviewing the letter several times, however, it may become apparent that the former or current duties of the candidate were described but there are no qualitative assessments of how those duties were performed.

The Office of Equity & Diversity must first approve all reference check questions.