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| REFERENCE CHECK & vERIFICATION OF qUALIFICATIONS GUIDE |

*Before a candidate can be offered a position, the hiring manager or designee must conduct reference checks and verify the qualifications of the candidate.*

## **Why Conduct a Reference Check?**

Conducting reference checks to **obtain information about past performance from supervisors, colleagues, or other references**, is an important step in the selection process. Typically, past performance is a strong indicator of future performance and this step provides you with awareness of the candidate’s strengths and areas for growth. These are helpful in selecting a candidate as well as in planning the onboarding and training process.

**Hiring without conducting a reference check could lead to liability** for negligent hiring if the employee’s past performance, dangerous characteristics, or actions, are deemed to pose a risk.

## **How to Conduct Reference Checks**

Reference checks should be conducted on the top candidate(s) for the position and they may be conducted by phone or email. It is recommended that you contact three to five professional references who can give a well-rounded perspective of the candidate’s professional experience.

### **Before You Contact the References**

* **Gather feedback from your interview panel** members to help plan your reference questions for each candidate.
* **Notify the candidate** that you would like to start this process, allowing them to notify their references if they choose to.
* **Prepare your questions.** Reference check questions should focus on job-related experience, accomplishments and qualifications.
* **Plan time for the reference call,** a reference conversation can take up to an hour.

### **Managing the Reference Conversation**

* Briefly describe the position to the reference.
* Confirm the dates of employment and the reference’s relationship with the candidate.
* Verify both formal and informal job titles.
* Ask open ended questions about the candidate’s skills, experience and performance.
* Ask about the possibility of rehiring the candidate.
* Avoid questions and topics that you would avoid in an interview setting.

The Sample Reference Check Questions document includes questions for you to start from and the Reference Check Worksheet provides you with an easy way to document each reference check.

## **Reference Checks for Current or Former County of Marin Employees**

### **Contact Previous Supervisors**

If the candidate is a current or former County of Marin employee, notify them that you will be contacting their former County supervisor(s) as part of the reference check process. Reference checks conducted within the County should be done consistent with the best practices and procedures outlined above for all reference checks.

### **Review the Personnel File**

All current and past employees must have their employee file reviewed by the hiring manager prior to making an offer of promotion or employment. You can make an appointment with your department’s designated [HR Benefits representative](https://www.marincounty.org/depts/hr/divisions/benefits/benefits/contact-information) to view the personnel file at Human Resource’s offices at the Civic Center.

## **Verification of Qualifications**

*Section to be completed once internal procedures are established.*

## **Resources**

* Sample Reference Check Questions
* Reference Check Worksheet
* [Personnel Management Regulation 33.5.A](https://www.marincounty.org/depts/hr/divisions/employee-and-labor-relations/pmr/recruitment/pmr33)