

Administrative Policy No. 18.84

Subject: Employee References

Information Contact: Human Resources Division

Authorizing Source: [RCW 4.24.730](#) - Liability immunity
[RCW 9A.60-070](#) - False academic credentials
[RCW 41.06.204](#) - Use of false academic credentials
[RCW 42.56.250](#) - Employment and licensing
[WAC 357-01-025](#) - Appointing Authority
[WAC 357-19-015](#) - Basis for Appointments
[DSHS Reference Check Guidelines](#)

Effective Date: October 1, 2011

Revised: November 28, 2023^{01 Housekeeping 2/26/24}

Approved By: Original signed by Wendy Long
Senior Director, Human Resources Division

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) hiring authorities or designees conduct reference checks consistent with the [DSHS reference check guidelines](#).

Checking references is one of the most important procedures in the hiring process. It is necessary to conduct reference checks to confirm the qualifications, skill sets, and abilities of applicants, as well as avoid hiring applicants who misrepresent their backgrounds and credentials or exclude necessary information.

Scope

This policy applies to all DSHS appointing authorities, hiring managers, supervisors, or designees.

Additional Guidance

[DSHS administrative policy 18.16 hiring processes](#)
[DSHS Form 03-475 release of information](#)

Definitions

Applicants: People who apply for jobs with DSHS.

Appointing authority: An individual lawfully authorized to appoint, transfer, layoff, reduce, dismiss, suspend, or demote employees. [WAC 357-01-025](#).

Policy

- A. Reference checks must be completed prior to an employment offer, including non-permanent appointments. Reference checks are not required for non-competitive appointments such as layoff, reasonable accommodation, bids or transfers under a collective bargaining agreement reversions, reassignments, involuntary demotions, and elevations. You may make an offer of employment contingent on the outcome of pending reference checks. Prior to an offer of employment, hiring managers, supervisors, or their designees must:
1. Notify applicants that employment reference contacts are required as part of the interview process.
 2. Obtain a completed [DSHS 03-475 release of information form](#) from all applicants interviewed.
 3. Contact the employment references of the final applicant(s), including the applicant's current or last state of Washington supervisor. (See [reference check guidelines](#).)
 4. Review the personnel file of a current or former state of Washington employee. (See [reference check guidelines](#).) If the current or former employer is reluctant to provide reference information, document attempts to obtain reference information from the current or former employer and retain this documentation with the applicant's hiring documentation to be sent to the management operations document imaging system (MODIS). (See [administrative policy 18.16 hiring processes](#).)

Note: Reference check records, including notes and the [DSHS 03-475 release of information form](#), are part of the hiring packet, are confidential, and will be retained for 3 years plus 60 days in MODIS.

5. Verify job required qualifications, such as licenses, certifications, and other credentials as authentic and current. (See [reference check guidelines](#) for limitations.)

If misleading or inaccurate information is found, consult with their [human resources division business partner](#).

- B. The appointing authority who heads the administration, division, or office must hold hiring managers, supervisors, or designees accountable, up to and including termination, when they fail to conduct reference checks before an employment offer is made. Failure of an appointing authority to hold their hiring managers, supervisors, or designees accountable could result in disciplinary action, including termination, of the appointing authority.

⁰¹Link updates 2024 SharePoint move.