

**Goals: This session should help the participant:**

- Understand what reference information it's possible and desirable to seek.
- Know how to obtain references that are useful in selecting the best candidate for a job.

**1. Obtaining References Helps Make Better Hiring Decisions**

- References can verify factual information that candidates provide.
 - It's important to be sure that applicants' claims regarding jobs, education, etc., are true.
- References can sometimes reveal more in-depth information about a candidate, such as quality of performance or strengths and weaknesses.
- Check references for all applicants you're considering for a position.
 - It's discriminatory to only check certain candidates' references.
- Confer with HR to clarify organizational policies on obtaining references.
 - Know who's responsible for reference checking and any limitations on people to be contacted and questions asked.

2. Ask Applicants to Agree to Allow You to Check Their References

- Ask applicants to provide names, titles, and phone numbers for references.
 - References should be familiar with candidates' work performance, educational achievements, personal strengths related to the job, etc.
- Many employers hesitate to provide references.
 - They're concerned about legal liabilities.
- Ask applicants to sign written releases allowing you to check references and releasing prior employers who provide references from liability.
 - Provide a copy of the signed release to each reference source.

3. Learn As Much As Possible About Applicants' Job Qualifications

When you contact a candidate's reference:

- Confirm education degrees, certificates, and dates.
- Verify military service dates and discharge status.
- Confirm prior job titles and dates.
- Try to confirm salary in most recent job.
- Ask job-related questions about performance and abilities such as:
 - Would you rehire this person? If not, why not?
 - How would you describe the quality of this person's work?



- Did this person excel in any particular skills or abilities?
- How would you describe this person's work habits?
- Confer with legal staff before talking with references about an applicant's disciplinary history or convictions for a crime.

4. Limit Reference Checking to Job-Related Information

- Don't ask candidates or references about personal issues or areas that could lead to discrimination charges.
 - Don't ask about family life, personal finances, etc.
 - Don't ask about such subjects as maternity, disability, or health.
- Don't initiate or respond to gossip.

5. Use Reference Information Appropriately

- Treat references as just one factor in judging an applicant.
- Don't reject a candidate solely because of a bad reference.
 - That could lead to possible charges of discrimination or other legal problems.
 - Have other objective reasons to reject a person who receives a bad reference (e.g., availability of a more qualified candidate).

Applicable Regulations: Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Civil Rights Act Title VII

Summary:

- References play a useful role in selecting the right people to fill jobs. At the very least, you want to be sure the applicant is telling the truth about his or her background. It's not unusual for people to exaggerate. Sometimes reference checking can even provide valuable information about individual performance and contributions to the organization.

Discussion Tips:



- Review your organization's policies on obtaining references.
- Distribute copies of the handout and review it briefly.
- Ask participants if they have any questions about obtaining references; be sure to obtain any answers you don't know and get back to participants.

Knowledge Review:



- Have participants complete the Obtaining References Quiz. It provides a useful review of their understanding of the subject.