



WASHOE COUNTY BACKGROUND AND REFERENCE CHECKS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

POLICY

In keeping with Washoe County's commitment to provide the highest quality service possible, this policy establishes the County's position on reference checks for candidates for employment and on background checks for certain individuals in any category of employment defined by Washoe County Code, including existing employees, independent contractors, and volunteers. The Board of County Commissioners recognizes that in addition to statutory requirements to perform a background check on individuals seeking certain positions, that access to certain information maintained by County departments may give rise to the need to perform a background check, and that persons desiring to hold certain positions of trust with the County should also be required to have a background check performed.

The intent of this policy is:

1. To provide clear guidelines and consistent procedures for conducting background checks and reference checks.
2. To ensure that the County conforms to all state and federal regulations and requirements regarding the employment of certain individuals in specific occupational areas.
3. To ensure a thorough level of background screening for positions identified in this Policy in Attachment A, which attachment may be revised by Human Resources as appropriate.
4. To provide supervisors with consistent procedures for conducting reference checks for candidates being considered for employment and background checks for existing employees.

The essential parts of this policy are as follows:

A. REFERENCE CHECKS

All appointing authorities, through their supervisory personnel, are required and responsible for performing a complete reference check prior to making an offer of employment to a candidate. The reference check may include verification of employment, performance and any factual information represented on the application. Reference check procedures are included in Attachment B.

B. BACKGROUND CHECKS

There are different types of background checks that may be conducted depending upon the position for which the candidate is being screened. Background checks may include the following procedures:

1. A criminal history check utilizing CJIS/NCIC;
2. A complete set of fingerprints taken and forwarded to the Central Repository for Nevada Records of Criminal History for submission to the FBI;
3. A full background check, including the procedures listed in 1 and 2, above, and including but not limited to a financial history and other extensive personal background information.

Attachment C delineates the circumstances under which background checks must occur.

All offers of employment, independent contractor services and acceptance of volunteers will be subject to the results of the background check. In addition, existing employees whose positions are listed in Attachment A shall be subject to a background check every 3 years, or sooner, if deemed appropriate and necessary by the Human Resources Department. Employees occupying the positions listed in Attachment A will be subject to a background check, pursuant to the following categories:

1. All candidates seeking employment in law enforcement with the Sheriff's Department, civilian and commissioned, or District Attorney's Office;
2. All candidates who may have direct or indirect access to criminal history records or information must have a background check prior to an offer of employment. Persons within this category include all candidates for employment with the Information Technology Department and candidates for employment with the Public Works Department in the fields of building maintenance, imaging and micrographics;
3. All candidates seeking employment, independent contractors, or volunteers, who will have direct or indirect access to children or their records pursuant to NRS 179A;
4. All candidates who have been offered employment as Division Director or Department Head level positions;
5. All persons seeking employment with the County in positions where access to private homes or property of citizens is part of the regular and customary duties of the job assignment. Such positions include: Investigators for the Coroner's Office or Public Administrator, Animal Control Officers, Appraisers, etc, as listed in Attachment A;
6. All persons seeking employment with the County in positions where the regular and customary duties of the job assignment require the handling of money on behalf of the County. Such positions include: Guardian Case Manager and Probate Estate Manager, and other positions listed in Attachment A;
7. Existing employees being considered for County transfers, demotions and promotional positions within the categories listed in Attachment A;
8. Volunteers and independent contractors who are providing services to employees in the positions listed in Attachment A;
9. All contracts with temporary agencies must provide that the contractor will comply with the provisions of this Policy.

ATTACHMENT A

The following classes have been determined as having the potential for "high risk" to the County or have been determined to be positions having a high degree of public trust and therefore candidates being considered for employment in these positions will be subject to a background check:

Assessor	Appraiser I, II, III,
Building & Safety	Building Inspector, Building Inspector Trainee Building Inspection Supervisor Building Permit Technician
County Clerk	Administrative Clerk – County Commission Chief Deputy County Clerk Department Computer Applications Specialist Deputy Clerk – County Commission Deputy Commissioner of Civil Marriages Marriage Division Operations Supervisor Office Assistant II Office Support Specialist
Finance/ Collections Division	Collections Analyst, Collections Administrator
Community Development	Code Enforcement Officer
Coroner	Deputy Coroner – Investigator Deputy Coroner - Technologist
Public Works/ Regional Animal Services	Animal Control Officer Lead Animal Control Officer Animal Services Supervisor
Public Works/ Equipment Services	Automotive Mechanic
/Facilities Management	Facilities Superintendent Facility Technician Bldg Maintenance Assistant Senior Bldg Maintenance Technician Chief of Bldg Ops Carpenter Carpenter Supervisor Painter Painter Supervisor Bldg System Controls Spec Custodial Worker Lead Custodial Worker Facilities Mgmt. Contract Services Supervisor Telecommunications Manager Telephone Technician Electronics Technician
Public Works/General Services/Imaging / Micrographics	Imaging & Records Mgmt Supervisor Imaging Equipment Technician

Health	Public Health Nurse I, II, Public Health Nurse Supervisor Environmental Engineer I, II Sr. Epidemiologist Registered Nurse I Licensed Practical Nurse Community Health Aide Office Assistant II (CCHS)
Health Benefits	Benefits Specialist Employee Benefits Coordinator
Human Resources	Administrative Assistant II Benefits Administrator Employee Development & Training Specialist HR Specialist I Human Resource Analyst /Trainee/I/II Human Resources Administration Manager Human Resources Specialist II Human Resources Specialist III Labor Relations Manager Office Support Specialist Sr. Human Resources Analyst Workforce Development Manager Recruitment and Selection Manager Public Service Intern
Regional Parks & Open Space	District Park Ranger Park Ranger Maintenance Worker II Grounds/Parks Maintenance Supervisor Recreation Services Superintendent Recreation Spec I, II & III Seasonal Staff Inmate Work Program Leader Sr. Grounds/Parks Maintenance Worker
Purchasing	Storekeeper
Senior Services	Administrative Assistant II Administrative Secretary Attorney/Sr. Law Project Custodial Worker Program Assistant Public Health Nurse Supervisor Equipment Services Worker II Human Services Support Specialist Legal Secretary Office Assistant II Office Support Specialist Paralegal Sr. Law Project Social Services Supervisor Social Worker III Mental Health Counselor II Registered Nurse LPN Homemaker Service Aide Community Health Aide

Water Resources	Engineering Services Technician Engineering Technician I/II Environmental Engineer I/II Hydrogeologist I/II Senior Hydrogeologist Public Service Intern Office Assistant II (O & M) Safety Compliance Officer Sewer Systems Worker I/II/ Senior Utility Worker Sr. Sewer Systems Worker Utility Worker I/II Utility Worker Supervisor Water Meter Technician I, II Water Resources Program Manager
WINnet	Administrative Secretary Business Systems Analyst I Business Systems Analyst II IT Manager IT Project Coordinator I & II IT Systems Developer I & II IT Training Specialist Network Engineer I & II Sr. Business Systems Analyst Sr. IT Systems Developer

ATTACHMENT B

REFERENCE CHECK PROCEDURES

1. References must be checked for prospective candidates for employment in a department by the appropriate supervisor. The candidate's previous supervisors should be contacted.
2. In cases where candidates applying for employment with Washoe County have not gone through a rigorous selection process, it is especially important to assess their knowledge, skills and abilities, and experience. Supervisors should check on the candidate's experience and skills to perform the duties of the position for which they are applying, as well as the intangible factors which will lead to the best possible person-organization fit. Examples of the types of questions to ask are as follows:
 - ◆ What was the nature of the candidate's job?
 - ◆ How would you rate the candidate's overall performance?
 - ◆ Did the candidate have any difficulties completing his/her work assignments?
 - ◆ How skilled was the candidate in planning and organizing his/her work?
 - ◆ How would you rate the candidate's performances using XYZ (e.g., piece of equipment, software, particular procedure)?
 - ◆ Are there any areas in which the candidate could use some additional training or development?

In addition to asking questions regarding the candidate's previous experience and skills, reference checks are a good technique for obtaining information on job related intangible factors that are desirable in employees. Please refer to paragraph 8 for areas that are inappropriate for reference checks. Examples of appropriate intangible factors are:

- ◆ Dependability
 - ◆ Attendance
 - ◆ Ability to assume responsibility
 - ◆ Ability to take initiative
 - ◆ Ability to follow through on assignments
 - ◆ Ability to follow instructions
 - ◆ Ability to take direction and constructive criticism
 - ◆ Ability to meet pre-established deadlines
 - ◆ Ability to adapt to change
 - ◆ Flexibility
 - ◆ Overall attitude
 - ◆ Customer service
 - ◆ Interpersonal skills
 - ◆ Ability to work under pressure
3. Reference check questions must be job-related.
 4. Supervisors must keep notes of the responses they receive from the individuals providing the reference information. These notes should be kept in a secure location with other selection materials. Supervisors should consult with Human Resources concerning appropriate

reference checks inquiries and documentation procedures. Some sample forms are available for guidelines.

5. Reference checks should not be conducted as “confidential” as supervisors may not be able to keep the information confidential.
6. Supervisors should only ask for references from individuals who are familiar with the candidate’s work performance and work history. Co-workers are not appropriate references.
7. Reference checks should be conducted during business hours only. Social functions are not the appropriate setting to ask structured, job related reference questions.
8. DO NOT ask questions related to the following:
 - ◆ Age
 - ◆ Appearance -- including manner of dress, pregnancy, or grooming
 - ◆ Citizenship
 - ◆ Convictions
 - ◆ Disability -- including reasons for absences
 - ◆ Marital status
 - ◆ Child care
 - ◆ Military discharge
 - ◆ Physical requirements
 - ◆ Political beliefs, race, or religion
 - ◆ Workers Compensation claims from previous employees
9. If a department finds a discrepancy in any factual information represented on a candidate’s application, this may constitute grounds for disqualification and the Human Resources Department should be notified. In addition, any information obtained through the verification process that could constitute incompatibility for employment pursuant to Washoe County Code §5.185¹ should be reported to Human Resources for appropriate action.

¹ Washoe County Code §5.185 states: The director of human resources may refuse to examine an applicant or, after examination, may refuse to certify an eligible person who comes under any of the following categories:

1. Lacks any of the preliminary requirements established for the examination for the position or employment for which he applies.
2. Is physically so disabled as to be rendered unfit for the proper performance of the duties of the position to which he seeks appointment.
3. Is addicted to the use of habit-forming drugs.
4. Is an habitual user of intoxicating liquors to excess.
5. Has been guilty of any crime involving moral turpitude or of infamous or notoriously disgraceful conduct.
6. Has been dismissed from the public service for delinquency or misconduct.
7. Has made a false statement of any material fact.
8. Has, directly or indirectly, given, rendered or paid, or promised to give, render or pay, any money, service or other valuable thing to any person for, or on account of, or in connection with, his examination, appointment or proposed appointment.
9. Has practiced, or attempted to practice, any deception or fraud in his application, in his certificate, in his examination, or in securing his eligibility or appointment.

ATTACHMENT C

BACKGROUND CHECK PROCEDURES

1. Pursuant to Nevada Criminal Justice Information System (NCJIS) Administrative Policies, background checks must be performed on all employees or prospective employees who will have access (either directly or indirectly) to NCJIS, NCIC (National Crime Information Center), NLETS (National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System) and CLETS (California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System). Direct access is defined by NCJIS Administrative Policies as terminal access and dissemination with that terminal agency. Indirect access is a terminal agency disseminating information to an authorized non-terminal agency. Those included within this category are:
 - a. Employees and prospective employees who will be operating a control terminal with direct access to NCJIS, NCIC, NLETS and CLETS and employees and prospective employees who will be receiving and reviewing information from these systems.
 - b. All employees and prospective employees of the District Attorney's Office and the Sheriff's Office.
 - c. All employees and prospective employees of the Information Technology Department or other departments employing computer analysts, computer programmers, and computer technical support personnel, computer control technicians; maintenance personnel, such as, building maintenance personnel, records retention personnel and imaging personnel.

Such background checks will be run by either the Investigations Division of the District Attorney's Office or by the Sheriff's Office depending upon where the employee or prospective employee will be working.

All applicable Administrative Policies of NCJIS will be followed with respect to background checks for these individuals.

2. The following persons may be subject to a background check pursuant to NRS 239B.010.
Any person:
 - a. Who has applied to the County for a license as required by any statute or local ordinance which the County has the power to grant or deny;
 - b. With whom the County intends to enter into a relationship of employment or a contract for personal services;
 - c. About whom the County has a legitimate need to have accurate personal information for the protection of the agency or the people within its jurisdiction.
3. An employee, prospective employee, volunteer or independent contractor, who renders time and services to Washoe County and whose regular course of duties places that person in a position to:
 - a. Exercise supervisory or disciplinary control over children
 - b. Have direct access to or contact with children served by Washoe County, or
 - c. Have access to information or records maintained by Washoe County relating to identifiable children served by Washoe County shall be subject to a background check for information relating to sexual offenses as defined in NRS 179A.073 pursuant to the provisions of NRS 179A.180 to NRS 179A.230.
4. A candidate who has been offered employment in a Division Director or Department Head level position, or in the job classifications listed on the attached who holds a position of trust, has

access to private homes or property of citizens, or handles money on behalf of the County, will have a background check run for convictions only by the Nevada State Department of Highway Patrol and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

5. Background checks required pursuant to 2 through 4 of this policy will be processed by the hiring department. The hiring department will coordinate checks through the Nevada State Department of Highway Patrol and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Fees associated with the background checks will be paid by the prospective candidate except in those cases where the department has agreed to pay the fees. The department will receive the results, and should information be received which may appear to be disqualifying, the department will consult with Human Resources and the District Attorney Civil Division as to the impact on the candidate's potential employment. The results of these background checks will be handled on a case-by-case basis and may result in dismissal. Records received pursuant to the background check shall be filed with the hiring department and will be maintained confidentially in a secured file and may only be accessed by the appointing authority, his/her designee or Human Resources. The results of a background check will be made available only to those who demonstrate a legal need to know.

If you have any questions regarding the Background Checks Policy and Procedures, please call Human Resources at 328-2081.