

**RECRUITMENT**  
**INTERVIEWING**  
**AND**  
**SELECTION**

**A**  
**HANDBOOK**  
**FOR**  
**ALASKA COURT SYSTEM**  
**SUPERVISORS**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

This handbook was developed to assist Alaska Court System supervisors with the process of selecting well-qualified individuals to fill vacant positions.

For purposes of this handbook, there are three types of positions in the Alaska Court System: exempt, partially exempt and classified.

**Exempt employees** include judges, magistrates and law clerks. Exempt employees are subject to only limited provisions of the court system personnel rules.

**Partially exempt employees** include key policy and management positions and judicial administrative assistants. These are “at-will” employees and do not serve a probationary period.

**Classified employees** are all employees who are not otherwise designated as exempt or partially exempt. After completion of a probationary period, classified employees may only be terminated involuntarily for good cause.

## **The procedures in this handbook MUST be followed for the selection and hiring of classified employees.**

In certain instances, supervisors may choose to select partially exempt employees without following the formal selection process outlined in this handbook. However, if a supervisor does elect to initiate a formal recruitment and selection process to generate a pool of qualified applicants, the supervisor must use the procedures outlined in this handbook, **even if the position is partially exempt.** \*

It is important that all selection decisions are based upon job-related criteria and that the selection process is well documented, whether the formal selection process described in this handbook is used or not. Any selection decision may become the subject of a complaint. If you have any questions about the recruitment, interviewing or selection process, contact the Human Resources Department at 264-8242.

**\*NOTE:** Regardless of the selection process used and the status of the position, no offer of employment can be made **UNTIL** you receive notification from Human Resources that the applicant meets the minimum qualifications for the position and a background check has been completed.

# **PART ONE**

## **Listing of the Steps**

**Of the**

## **Recruitment, Interviewing, and Selection Process**

# **The Recruitment, Interviewing, and Selection Process**

Listed below is an outline of the steps that are followed when filling a position through the court system's formal selection process. Specific information about each step of the process is provided in the pages that follow. Unless otherwise stated, the actions on this list are taken by the hiring supervisor.

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>Step 1</b>  | Complete Recruitment Request Form/Develop 9 Desirable Qualification Questions/Send to HR |
| <b>Step 2</b>  | Review the Draft Recruitment Bulletin/Provide Comments to Human Resources                |
| <b>Step 3</b>  | Develop Job-Related Pre-Interview Screening Criteria                                     |
| <b>Step 4</b>  | Develop Interview Questions/Submit to HR for Review                                      |
| <b>Step 5</b>  | Select the Interview Panel   |
| <b>Step 6</b>  | Review and Screen the Applicant Information  |
| <b>Step 7</b>  | Schedule the Interviews  |
| <b>Step 8</b>  | Prepare for the Interviews   |
| <b>Step 9</b>  | Conduct the Interviews   |
| <b>Step 10</b> | Evaluate the Applicants  |
| <b>Step 11</b> | Conduct Reference Checks   |
| <b>Step 12</b> | Request a Background Check and Submit Required Documents                                 |
| <b>Step 13</b> | Request a Nepotism Waiver  |
| <b>Step 14</b> | Make the Formal Offer/Close the Recruitment Process                                      |

# **PART TWO**

**The Steps**

**of the**

**Recruitment, Interviewing, and Selection Process**

# Step 1

## **Complete the Recruitment Request Form Develop 9 Desirable Qualification Questions Send to Human Resources**

The Recruitment Request Form provides Human Resources with essential information about the position and the specific needs of the court and the hiring supervisor. This form and the 9 Desirable Qualification Questions are required to begin the recruitment process.

- A. See **Appendix A** for answers to frequently asked questions regarding the form.
- B. Submit the completed Recruitment Request Form with an updated Position Description to Human Resources. HR will contact the hiring supervisor regarding any questions about the form and provide assistance in developing the 9 Desirable Qualification Questions for the recruitment bulletin. HR will then prepare a draft recruitment bulletin based on the information provided on the Recruitment Request Form, the current Position Description of record, and the 9 Desirable Qualification Questions.
- C. Human Resources will send the draft recruitment bulletin to the hiring supervisor for review and comment prior to posting on Workplace Alaska (see Step 2).
- D. Human Resources is committed to ensuring that job requests are posted on Workplace Alaska within seven working days after receipt of the Recruitment Request Form, provided all the required information is submitted and the draft recruitment bulletin is promptly reviewed.

# Step 2

## **Review the Draft Recruitment Bulletin Provide Comments to Human Resources**

- A. When the draft recruitment bulletin is received from Human Resources, carefully review the following information:
- **Position Information** – Determine if the description of the position includes the most significant aspects of the job and portrays them in a manner that is likely to attract well-qualified applicants.
  - **Desirable Qualification Questions** – Determine if the 9 questions are related to the specific vacancy and will be an effective tool for the initial screening of applicants for consideration (Step 1).
  - **Additional Information** – Describe what, if any, additional information the applicant will need to submit if selected for an interview (i.e., copies of transcripts, copies of previous performance evaluations, letters of reference, professional certificates, typing speed certification).
  - **Opening and Closing Dates** – Make sure the dates are in accordance with expectations and schedule.
- B. Notify Human Resources that the draft recruitment bulletin is approved as is, or indicate if any changes are necessary.

# Step 3

## **Develop Job-Related Pre-Interview Screening Criteria**

A. The next step will be to develop and submit the Pre-Interview Screening Criteria. This information will be reviewed by Human Resources prior to the applicant pool being released for review. Screening criteria must be job-related, legally defensible, and must be applied consistently and in the same manner for each applicant.

- **Make a list of the primary duties and responsibilities of the position.**
- **Specify the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for each of the duties and responsibilities listed.** These include, but are not limited to, the desirable qualifications described in the recruitment bulletin. They should be attributes that can be assessed either by reviewing information provided in the Applicant Profile and Job Qualification Summary or by asking questions during the interview. (See Step 4 for developing interview questions). Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - ◆ Supervisory skills, experience with court system processes, ability to speak the primary language spoken in the location of the position, typing speed, computer-related skills, organizational skills, problem-solving skills, leadership skills, writing skills, ability to handle difficult and challenging people, customer service skills, attention to detail.
- **Develop specific criteria for screening the qualified applications for the knowledge, skills, and abilities that can be determined from information provided in the applications.** Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - ◆ Number of years of supervisory, legal, or customer service experience (e.g., “Two or more years of supervisory experience”); how an application demonstrates the applicant’s attentiveness to detail or organizational skills (e.g., “The Applicant Profile and Job Qualification Summary are complete and free of typographical errors” or “Applicant has one or more years of experience performing work involving multiple tasks”).

**B. Contact the Human Resources Department if assistance is needed in developing pre-interview screening criteria.**

**NOTE:** Developing these criteria before reviewing the applicant pool ensures that objective, job-related criteria are used for making distinctions among applicants. It also reduces the risk of allegations of discrimination by preserving the fairness, consistency, and objectivity of the selection process.

# Step 4

## **Develop Interview Questions Submit to Human Resources for Review**

- A. **Develop the job-related questions to be used in the interview process.** Contact Human Resources if you have questions or need assistance. The interview questions must be reviewed and approved before the applicant pool will be released for consideration. \*
- B. **Use the same set of questions with each applicant interviewed.** This establishes a common reference point for comparing the applicants after the interview process is completed. It is also helpful in the event an applicant makes a discrimination complaint related to the selection process.
- C. **Consider including one or more practical exercises during the interview in which the applicant is asked to actually perform a task that would be performed in the job.** For example, present the applicant with a hypothetical problem or issue and ask the applicant to outline or explain possible solutions to the problem. Another example would be to ask the applicant to produce a short writing sample. If a writing exercise is included as part of the interview process, it is recommended that you notify the applicant at the time you are scheduling the interview.
- D. Consider developing a scoring device for each interview question. A value is placed on the applicant's response to a question, based upon the duties of the position. If you need assistance, please contact Human Resources.
- E. See **Appendix B** for further information about developing interview questions.
- F. **Submit interview questions to Human Resources for review and approval. The applicant pool will not be released for consideration until the questions are reviewed and approved.** To expedite the review process, it is recommended that you submit your interview questions before the recruitment period closes. Allow up to three working days for this review and approval process.

\* **NOTE:** Developing interview questions before reviewing the applicant pool ensures that the questions are directly related to the position being filled. It also reduces the risk of allegations of discrimination by preserving the fairness, consistency, and objectivity of the selection process.

# Step 5

## Select the Interview Panel

The Alaska Court System uses panels to conduct employment interviews. Having multiple perspectives results in a fair, balanced process and more effective selection decisions.

- A. Interview panels consist of at least two people, including the hiring supervisor.
- B. Strive for diversity among the panel members:
  - Different types of jobs.
  - Different genders, races, ages, etc.
  - Different management styles.
- C. Be sure those chosen for the panel will be available for all of the interviews. The same panel must be used for each interview.
- D. Determine the role of the panel members in the interview and selection process. See **Appendix C** for additional guidance in setting up the interview panel.
- E. Emphasize to each panel member that the applications and the selection process are confidential and should not be shown to or discussed with anyone who is not involved in the process. Panel members should keep applicant information, interview questions, interview notes, and all other paperwork associated with the selection process in a secure place until the hiring supervisor collects those items from them at the end of the process.

# **Step 6**

## **Review and Screen the Applicant Information**

During and after the recruitment period, Human Resources reviews the applicant pool to determine which applicants meet the minimum qualifications for the position. The Applicant Profiles and Job Qualification Summaries of persons who meet the minimum qualifications will be released to the hiring supervisor on Workplace Alaska after the recruitment period closes. An eligibility list of names will be sent along with a memo and several forms explaining hiring procedures to be used during the process.

- A. **Screen the applications using the criteria developed in Step 3.** The hiring supervisor may have the other member(s) of the interview panel screen the applications against the same criteria, and then compare the results. If the results of the independent screenings are different, the panel members should discuss the results and come to a consensus as to which candidates to interview. This screening process should be documented in writing.
- B. **There is no need to interview all of the qualified applicants on the eligibility list.** The hiring supervisor is encouraged to interview the applicants who appear to be best qualified according to the minimum qualifications, desirable qualifications listed in the recruitment bulletin, and the pre-interview screening criteria.
- C. **It is strongly encouraged that current court system employees among the qualified applicants are interviewed.**
- D. **After the applicant pool has been screened and interviewees are identified, review the Job Qualification Summary forms again and note any “red flags” that need to be questioned in the interview:**
  - Gaps in employment history.
  - Reasons for leaving past jobs.
  - Vague or general job titles or job duties.

Questions to address “red flag” issues may be asked of individual applicants, in addition to the approved list of questions (Step 4) which are directed to all applicants.

# Step 7

## **Schedule the Interviews**

- A. Determine panel members' availability.
- B. Take into consideration travel and/or teleconference requirements, if applicable.
- C. Allow enough time for each interview.
- D. Whenever possible, conduct interviews in person. Telephonic interviews are acceptable, but it is recommended that supervisors conduct an in-person interview before extending a job offer.
- E. Contact the applicants to schedule the interview appointments. If the applicant is located somewhere other than the interview location, the applicant may travel to the interview site at the applicant's own expense. \*
- F. If a typing certification, writing sample, or other work example is required to demonstrate an applicant's ability in one or more of the technical, behavioral, or other requirements of the job, the applicant is required to bring the sample or certification to the interview. In addition, applicants are typically requested to bring copies of current performance evaluations, along with names and current contact information for their references.
- G. If an applicant certifies that they are using education to meet minimum requirements, you need to notify them that they're required to bring copies of transcripts or certifications to the interview.

\* **NOTE:** There may be some instances where the court system would pay the expenses incurred by an applicant to travel for an in-person interview. Contact Fiscal Operations for a determination about this on a case-by-case basis.

# **Step 8**

## **Prepare for the Interviews**

- A. Select a setting that is private and comfortable and where there will be no interruptions or distractions.
- B. Prepare the panel members.
  - Provide each member with copies of the interview schedule, each Applicant Profile and Job Qualification Summary, and the interview questions.
- C. Prepare yourself.
  - Be familiar with the job requirements.
  - Human Resources will provide you with a current copy of the Benefits at a Glance form.

# Step 9

## **Conduct the Interviews**

- A. Greet the applicant.
- B. Explain the panel process and introduce the panel members.
- C. Explain the format of the interview to the applicant.
- D. Give a brief explanation of the court system and the court or department where the vacancy is located. Provide the applicant with a copy of the current Position Description in advance of the interview (via e-mail) or in person before the interview begins. In addition, provide the applicant with a copy of Benefits at a Glance.
- E. Ask the interview questions. Ensure all candidates are asked the same questions based on the duties of the position. Treat all applicants the same.
- F. Take notes and document the responses of the applicant. Be sure the documentation is showing what the applicant has said, not “impressions” you have gathered from the interview.
- G. Give the applicant the opportunity to ask questions.
- H. Confirm or obtain names and current phone numbers of the applicant’s references. If the applicant indicates that a current or former employer should **not** be contacted for a reference, you will need to verify with the applicant under what conditions previous employers may be contacted.
- I. Explain when interviews will be completed and when and how the applicant will be notified of the outcome of the interview.
- J. Have the applicant sign the Background Check and Applicant Authorization & Certification Forms.
- K. Collect all required documentation, such as typing certifications, educational transcripts, and performance evaluations.

# Step 10

## **Evaluate the Applicants**

- A. Review the interview notes.
- B. Refer to the job-related criteria established in Step 3. Use of a scoring device may provide clear and easy comparison of applicants. If you elect to use a scoring device or matrix, it must be reviewed and approved by Human Resources.
- C. Discuss and rank the applicants with the other panel members.
- D. Determine if a second interview is necessary. \* If so, develop a structured interview in the same manner as for the first interview. The second interview should be used to make job-related distinctions between candidates who are deemed nearly equally well suited for the position after the first interview.

\* **NOTE:** If new interview questions or a practical exercise are developed, these should be forwarded in advance to Human Resources for review and approval.

# **Step 11**

## **Conduct Reference Checks**

- A. Reference checks are very important and can make the difference between successful and unsuccessful hiring. Reference checks should be treated like a formal interview.
- B. You can use the sample Reference Check Form provided by Human Resources and the Position Description as guides for developing the questions for reference checks. Have your written questions prepared in advance of making the phone call.
- C. Don't ask questions of a reference that are not permitted to ask of the applicant. (See Appendix B, Item E). Cover the same questions for each applicant you are conducting reference checks on.
- D. Contact a minimum of two (2) of the applicant's work supervisors, past or present. Try to contact the supervisors of the most recently held position(s). Contact only those people who have direct knowledge of the applicant's qualifications to perform the job.
- E. When a reference cannot be reached or will not provide information beyond verifying that the applicant was employed, ask the applicant to provide performance evaluations from that job or provide additional references. Contact Human Resources for assistance in reviewing prior performance evaluations for court system employees or employees of other state agencies.
- F. If necessary, reconvene the panel to discuss information obtained in the reference checks.

# Step 12

## **Request a Background Check and Submit Required Documents**

- A. The Background Check Form is provided by Human Resources and completed by each applicant at the time of interview. Ensure that Section 1 is complete and has been signed by the applicant.
- B. Complete Section 2 of the Background Check Form and submit to Human Resources via fax (907-264-8262) **along with the following:**
- Eligibility List of names indicating who was interviewed, declined interview, selected, declined job, and other comments
  - Applicant Authorization and Certification Form
  - Typing certification (if required)
  - Educational transcripts or certifications (if required)
- C. Human Resources will access one or more criminal conviction databases as appropriate to verify felony and misdemeanor conviction information provided on the Employment Application.
- If the information obtained from the databases matches the information provided on the Employment Application, HR will give notification to proceed with the job offer according to Step 14.
  - If the information on the application does not match the information in the databases, HR will give notification to discuss the situation.

Background checks are completed by Human Resources within one working day of receipt of the completed Background Check Form.

- D. No offer of employment can be made until the background check is complete and Human Resources has notified you to proceed.

# **Step 13**

## **Request a Nepotism Waiver**

- A. If the applicant selected requires a nepotism waiver, complete the Nepotism Waiver Form and submit to Human Resources via fax (907-264-8262).
- B. The Desirable Qualification Questions section of the Applicant Profile requires each applicant to answer the following question: “Do you have a spouse or any close relative(s) employed by the Alaska Court System? (Spouse includes not only a husband or wife, but also any person with whom the applicant maintains a shared household and conjugal relations). If ‘yes’, indicate name(s), location(s), and job title(s) in the Applicant Cover Letter.”

If you have any questions on an applicant’s response regarding nepotism, contact Human Resources.

- C. Human Resources will forward the Nepotism Waiver with a recommendation to the Administrative Director.
  - If the Nepotism Waiver is approved, Human Resources will give notification to proceed with the job offer according to Step 14.
  - If the Nepotism Waiver is not approved, Human Resources will give notification to discuss the situation.
- D. No offer of employment can be made until the Nepotism Waiver has been approved and Human Resources has given approval to proceed.

# **Step 14**

## **Make the Formal Job Offer Close the Recruitment Process**

- A. Make a verbal offer to the final candidate. Upon receiving notification that the offer was accepted, Human Resources will prepare a letter confirming the job offer. The letter will include specific information regarding salary and benefits in accord with ACS Personnel Rules. Human Resources will send the letter to you via e-mail along with several attachments related to employment eligibility and benefits.
- B. As a courtesy, notify the applicants who were interviewed, but not selected.
- C. Send to Human Resources a signed copy of the offer letter and the Appointment Authorization Form confirming who was selected for the position. The Appointment Authorization Form is included in the materials that Human Resources sends to you with the Eligibility List of persons who meet the minimum qualifications (normally by e-mail).
- D. Retrieve interview notes, copies of applications, and any other material related to the selection process from the other interview panel members.
- E. Retain the applicant information, interview and reference check notes, job analysis, paperwork documenting the screening of qualified applicants using the job analysis, and any other related material.
  - Retain for two years.
  - Ensure the confidentiality of applications.
  - Shred extra copies of applications used in the interview.

# **PART THREE**

## **Appendices**

# Appendix A

## Recruitment Request Form

The form and instructions are self-explanatory, but there are several questions that warrant particular attention when completing the form:

- A. Does the Position Description of record accurately reflect current job duties?**  
If the position description has been reviewed by HR within the past twelve months and is still accurate, you are not required to submit an updated version. If the position description is not current or if there has been a change in job duties, submit an updated version with the Recruitment Request Form.
- B. Because of the location or any other requirements of the position being filled, is advertising desired in specific publications or with specific organizations?**  
Examples include national court system publications, trade publications, local cable scanners in rural Alaskan communities, Native tribal councils, bar associations, etc. If so, indicate your preferences on the form.
- C. How long should the position be advertised?** External recruitments are posted for a minimum of seven calendar days and internal recruitments are posted for a minimum of five business days.
- D. Can the supervisor prefer applicants to have particular experience or skills beyond the minimum qualifications?** Yes. This would be specified in the wording of the 9 Desirable Qualification Questions. Examples include questions related to supervisory experience, legal experience, ability to speak a language other than English, typing at a faster speed than required for the minimum qualifications, computer experience, etc. The Desirable Qualification Questions must be job-related and legally defensible. They should not be significantly in excess of the minimum qualifications. Hiring managers may use the Desirable Qualification Questions as part of their Pre-Interview Screening Criteria to determine who will or who will not be selected for an interview.
- E. Is the supervisor able to change the minimum qualifications for a position?**  
No. Minimum qualifications are established by Human Resources and are not changed unless Human Resources determines the qualifications are inappropriate for all positions in the particular job class. Hiring managers develop 9 Desirable Qualification Questions that are answered by each applicant and reviewed in the initial screening. However, any applicant who meets minimum qualifications can be considered in the selection process.

# **Appendix B**

## **Developing Interview Questions**

- A. Every interview question should help you determine whether an applicant possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position (as identified in Step 3).
- B. When asking interview questions, use the “EAR” technique – **E**xample, **A**ction, **R**esult.
- “E” – “Give me an example of . . . ”  
    “A” – “What action did you take?”  
    “R” – “What was the result?”
- C. Most interview questions should be open-ended to encourage the applicant to give more than a “Yes/No” answer. Let the applicant do the talking! Most “Yes/No” questions can be modified to become open-ended questions.
- For example, instead of, “Did you like your last job?” ask, “What did you like about your last job?”
- D. The best predictor of future behavior is past experience. Design interview questions to determine what the applicant has actually done versus what the applicant thinks he or she would do in a particular situation.
- For example, instead of, “What would you do if an employee you supervised began having performance problems?” ask, “Have you ever supervised an employee who had performance problems? If so, how did you handle the situation?”
- E. Be sure interview questions are job-related and nondiscriminatory. Some specific areas to avoid include:
- Age-related information, such as date of graduation from high school, college, law school, etc.
  - Family information, such as future family plans, marital status, childcare arrangements, etc.
  - Arrest records.
  - Information regarding absences from work due to illness, because some absences from work are provided by law without penalty.

# **Appendix C**

## **Determining the Role of Panel Members in the Interview and Selection Process**

A. Determine who will ask the questions.

- One person may be designated to ask all the questions in every interview.
- One person may be designated to ask the questions in one interview, and then rotate the questioner role to another panel member in each subsequent interview.
- Each panel member may ask some questions in each interview.

B. Determine whether panel members who are not the primary questioner may ask follow-up questions during the interview.

C. Determine who will take notes in the interviews.

- Each panel member may take notes for every interview or the panel may elect to designate one member to be responsible for taking notes.

D. Determine how a final selection decision will be made.

- The hiring supervisor will make the final decision with input from the panel members.

# Appendix D

## Interviewing Tips

- A. It is recommended that you provide the applicant with detailed information about the position being filled prior to conducting the interview. A copy of the Position Description can be provided for their review in advance or at the time of the interview.
- B. Be consistent and be prepared! Ensure that the interview panel is timely and has all the materials necessary for conducting the interview. Follow the same format for each interview (both in-person and telephonic) to preserve the fairness, consistency, and objectivity of the selection process.
- C. Engage in active listening.
- Interviewers should talk less, listen more.
  - Listen for connecting themes and ideas.
  - Summarize periodically for clarification.
  - Filter out mental distractions, such as personal views and opinions, and stay focused on what the applicant is saying.
  - Control the interview by redirecting the conversation, or asking the question again. Don't allow the applicant to "ramble" in their answers.
  - Do's and Don'ts:
    - ◆ **DO** use listening time to determine if you need to ask a follow-up question or ask the applicant to clarify a response:
      - ❖ If necessary, you may need to ask follow-up questions such as:
        - ✓ Why?
        - ✓ What caused that to happen?
        - ✓ Under what circumstances did that occur?
        - ✓ Who else was involved in that decision?
        - ✓ What happened next?
        - ✓ What did you learn from that experience?
    - ◆ **DO** use listening time to:
      - ❖ Analyze what the applicant is saying.
      - ❖ Make connections between various things the applicant has said.
      - ❖ Glance at the application to review/verify information.
      - ❖ Observe body language to see if it corresponds with what is being said.
      - ❖ Consider how the applicant's background relates to the job requirements.

◆ **DON'T** use listening time to:

- ❖ Make assumptions about how the applicant will answer a question.
- ❖ Jump to conclusions too soon.
- ❖ Compare the applicant's responses with those of a previous applicant.
- ❖ Get too involved in note taking.

D. Taking notes.

- During the interview, write down only key words. By doing this, the supervisor will remember what the applicant said; yet stay focused on what the applicant is currently saying.

E. Use silence.

- Allow some silence to be sure the applicant has finished responding to a question, or to encourage the applicant to continue with a response.
- Don't let it go on so long it becomes stressful or intimidating.
- Understand that applicants from different cultural backgrounds may pause for varying lengths of time between the questions and their responses.