# State of Wisconsin
# Office of State Employment Relations

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# *Resource Guide:*
# *Conducting Interviews*

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This document is a resource tool for the State of Wisconsin. It consists of recommendations, which may be used at the discretion of the hiring agency.

The employment interview is a critical part of the hiring process. Even though the State of Wisconsin uses tests and other objective approaches to evaluate job candidates, much of the hiring decision hinges on the interview between the employer and the candidate. This document is available as a resource for those agency staff who are looking for guidance on how to plan and conduct employment interviews and how to formulate questions that elicit responses that are *essential* to making a hiring decision and avoiding illegal discrimination. This information, along with any internal agency policies and procedures, can be passed on to managers and supervisors, who ultimately conduct the interview and recommend or make the hiring decision.

**Note**: The International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) publishes an *Interview Guide*. Details on purchasing this publication can be found at http://www.ipma-hr.org/index.cfm?navid=78&id=1021&tcode=nws3&search=1or by calling (703) 684-0948.

## The Interview

The interview is essentially an information-gathering activity for both the employer and the candidate. For the hiring organization, the interview enables the hiring official to collect information to assist in making a hiring decision (e.g., reference checks, affirmative action consideration, etc.). For the candidate, the interview provides information to help him or her decide if the organization and job are a match for his or her educational/work background and career goals.

Therefore, a good employment interview should accomplish the following:

1. Provide the employer with facts and information to make a decision about whether a match exists between the position and the candidate in terms of what is required for success.

2. Provide the candidate with information to help make a decision on whether a match exists between his or her interests; goals; and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs); and the organization's needs.

3. Treat all candidates fairly, equally, and professionally. This can help the agency select the best candidate, persuade a candidate to accept a job offer, and also prevent the potential for public relations and/or legal challenges.

**Note**: Prior to conducting interviews, agencies may develop another step in the screening process to reduce the size of the applicant pool. For example, the HR staff could develop one or two questions that would prove effective in screening for applicants who are more qualified. Contact could be made by phone to ask each question or by mailing the questions to the applicants. Another option is to create a simulation exam. Regardless of the method, supervisors must receive approval from the agency's human resource office to utilize a post-certification screening method.

## Planning the Interview

A good interview elicits facts and information from the candidate so that the employer can decide if the candidate is a "best fit" for the job. The most effective interview approach is to obtain specific information that demonstrates that the candidate is likely to succeed, if hired. To do this, the interview must be carefully planned and conducted. Job-related questions should be developed and the interviewers must assess how the information they collect will be used to evaluate the candidates. To develop good interview questions:

1. Analyze the job. Identify the critical or essential elements of the job. The interviewers should focus on key job responsibilities and the person's skills and abilities to perform those key responsibilities.

2. Develop job-related questions to collect as much information from the candidate as possible. These questions can take several forms:

   a. Situational/Experience-based questions ask the candidate to provide specific examples of how and when he or she has successfully performed certain activities that are important to the job;
   b. Job knowledge questions assess whether the candidate has the required knowledge to do the job;
   c. Simulation questions require the candidate to analyze job situations and describe how he or she would react or perform;
   d. Questions that focus on job-related areas like "willingness" to meet work requirements (e.g., travel and shift work), motivation, and interest.

Prepare open-ended questions, which makes the candidate provide specific examples of when he or she has performed the activities required of the vacancy. For example, if the job requires analytical skills, the question may be: *"Please give me a specific example of how you have analyzed a problem and identified a solution which was implemented."* For a supervisory position: *"Describe a specific example where you effectively dealt with a performance problem."* Don't accept generalized or hypothetical examples (that is, a response which would probably begin, *"In a case like that I would. . . ."*).

**Note**: It may be preferable not to duplicate or cover areas already measured in the formal examination so that the interview makes a unique contribution to the hiring process.

In all cases, the supervisor must know in advance what he or she considers to be a "good" response. One approach is to develop a sample response that will enable the interviewers to systematically evaluate each candidate's responses. Sample responses are quite specific, and they clearly suggest that some answers are better than others. (See Attachment #1 for a sample question and response.) At a minimum, have some idea of how to identify a suitable candidate for the position.

Many agencies ask their Affirmative Action office to review the interview questions. Ensure that the proper review has been done.

## Selecting the Interview Panel

The next step is to decide who will be the interviewers. The people chosen should be individuals who are knowledgeable in the field and know the requirements of the position. Generally, interviewers should be equal to or above the pay range of the vacancy. However, there are situations where it may be worthwhile to have people who are at lower pay ranges participate on the panel (e.g., subordinates interviewing candidates for a supervisory position). Immediate supervisors and other officials involved in the post-certification hiring process can serve as job experts assisting with exam development; they frequently serve as hiring interviewers; but they <u>cannot</u> serve as examination raters, or screeners, or oral board members. People serving on the interview panel must not have participated in any step of the examination scoring process/application review process, i.e., exam raters cannot serve on the interview panel. The reason to keep the two areas separate is that raters have access to exam responses, scores, etc.; these items are closed records and must not be made available to hiring officials. (See ch. 230.13, Wis. Stats., and ER-MRS 6.08(3)(c) regarding closed records.)

At least a two- or three-member interview panel is recommended. A strong effort should be made to have a balanced panel particularly if the job group is underutilized. Try to include two members from targeted groups, e.g., female, minority, and/or a person with a disability. There may be situations where it is not possible to find two panel members who represent targeted groups. If this is the case, proceed with selecting other qualified panel members. However, it is strongly recommended that the reason(s) a balanced panel did not exist be documented. This documentation may be kept with the interview notes. (See DAA Bulletin AA-48, dated December 1, 1994, *Balanced Panels*.)

## Scheduling Interviews

1. Upon receipt of a certification list, contact each candidate by telephone, mail, or e-mail to ascertain his or her interest in interviewing. If this is the first contact

regarding interest, a letter must be sent if the individual cannot be reached by telephone or e-mail. The letter must indicate that any person who fails to respond to the inquiry within five workdays of the day following the mailing of the inquiry will be considered not interested in interviewing. See s. ER-MRS 11.04(1)(b), Wis. Adm. Code. (See Chapter 212–Certification of the *Wisconsin Human Resources Handbook* regarding certification procedures.)

2. Schedule the interested candidates to interview at a specific date and time. When scheduling the interviews, allow adequate time for the candidate to review the interview questions, time for the interview, time for the panel members to rate the candidates, and breaks for the panel members. Ask each candidate if he or she needs any reasonable accommodations for the interview.

3. If possible, provide each candidate with information regarding the position, e.g., copy of the Position Description (PD), organizational chart, etc. If time does not allow for mailing a PD, ask the candidate to arrive for the interview earlier than their appointment time so the person has an opportunity to review the PD prior to the interview.

4. Provide the candidate with details on where the interviews will be held (e.g., a map or directions to the building, where they can park and whether there will be a charge for parking, where to go once the person is in the building). In addition, let the person know what they should bring to the interview (e.g., resume, names of references, writing sample).

5. If desired, obtain any legally available information from the Human Resource Office (e.g., resumes, narrative responses to AHQ, essay or oral exam questions) that was obtained through the application and examination process. (See DMRS Bulletin MRS-207, dated November 1, 2000, *Notification of ER-MRS Rule Changes*.)

## Conducting the Interview

1. The first impression the panel gives is just as important as the first impression the candidate gives. This includes attire, punctuality, and physical surroundings.

2. Arrange appropriate interview space in an area free from traffic and distractions. Make sure the area is uncluttered and presentable. Have a separate waiting/holding area. Set up the room to ensure that it is not intimidating to the candidate.

3. Make the individual feel comfortable; this can be done by establishing rapport with the candidate. For example, talk about the weather, a recent sporting event, or something going on locally in the news.

4. Introduce each member of the interview panel, their name, and title/position.

5. Outline the interview procedure. Tell the candidate what is going to happen during the interview. For example, the interviewer might say that the interview will include

describing the job, then one person or all panel members will ask questions that will allow the candidate to relate his/her background to the job requirements, and then time will be allowed for the candidate to ask questions. Let the candidate know if the interview will be timed.

**Note**: It is recommended that interviewers alternate asking the questions so that the candidate feels that he/she is talking with everyone and is more comfortable. It can be difficult if just one interviewer is asking the questions because then the candidate may have a hard time deciding whom to look at when responding.

6. Explain the position. Sell the position and the agency, but do not oversell it. Provide an accurate picture of the organization, the job, training, etc. Creating unrealistic expectations will not be to the long-term benefit of the agency or the candidate. Job decisions should be based on realistic information, from the view of both the employer and the candidate. Avoid any negative comments, remarks, or personal opinions about the position, agency, or other state agencies.

7. Tell the candidate that the panel members will be taking notes during the interview, and although they may not have eye contact with them, they are listening. The purpose in taking notes is so the interviewers can recall each candidate and the interview.

8. Ask the pre-determined questions.

9. Listen. This may seem obvious, but many interviewers spend a majority of the time talking, not listening. The main objective of interviewers should be to obtain information—and that requires listening. A good guideline is that the candidate should talk for 70 to 80 percent of the time.

10. Remain in command. Make sure the interview covers the questions you need to cover. If the candidate takes too much time answering a question, politely thank him or her for the response and move on to the next question. At times, the candidate may miss the intent of the question. If necessary, ask the question again, clarify, or press for more information. In order to ensure that all interviewees are treated equally, it is important to refrain from coaching the candidate.

11. Allow the candidate to ask questions. The interview must also enable the candidate to evaluate whether the job is right for him or her.

12. Ask for permission to contact their references. If a current supervisor is listed as a contact, verify that it is okay to contact that person.

13. Describe what will happen next in the selection process. If possible, provide some time estimates of when the candidate will be contacted again.

14. Thank the candidate for their time.

**Note**: It is not uncommon to interview candidates more than once. The top candidates may be asked to return for a second or even third interview.

## Evaluating Interview Results

After the interview, the interview panel must evaluate the responses. The fundamental question is: *To what extent did the candidate demonstrate that he or she is a best fit for the job in the areas covered by the interview?* To answer that question, the interview panel should focus on job related substance.

Document the interview evaluations in some manner. At a minimum, interviewers should make detailed notes on each candidate's responses and record any significant observations of job relevant behavior (delivery, organization of responses, extent to which responses satisfy sample or desired responses, etc.) (See Attachment #2 for Common Mistakes to Avoid When Evaluating Candidates.) Interview notes/evaluations should be kept for four calendar years from the date of interview.

<u>If</u> a scoring scheme has been developed, score the results. Keep in mind that ratings or "numbers", where used, are best viewed as an aid to final decision-making, not a substitute for it. Numbers don't make decisions, however, people do.

## The Interview and Legal Issues

Poorly conducted interviews can result in legal action. Federal laws dating back to the 1960s, as well as state laws, make it illegal to discriminate on the basis of political affiliation, race, color, religion, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or national origin or ancestry (see s. 230.18, Wis. Stats.). As a result of the creation of these laws, it is incumbent upon interviewers to avoid asking questions which *in any way* relate to these factors. If questions related to these factors are asked, legal action by the candidate could result.

The best way to ensure that hiring decisions are fair and based on merit is to restrict interview questions to job-related areas. Focus on the job's requirements. For example, if travel is a requirement of the job, do not ask candidates whether they have child care responsibilities; instead, ask all candidates if there is any reason why they would not be able to travel as part of the job. If the job has a requirement like lifting or walking, do not ask a disabled person if his or her disability would be a problem; instead, ask each candidate if they can perform the required task. (See Attachment #3 for a listing of permissible inquiries.)

If the interview focuses on job-related areas and the interview panel covers the same areas with all candidates, then legal problems should be minimal or non-existent. If there is any doubt as to whether the interview question may be discriminatory, the panel should not ask the question.

**Note**: For additional information on interview questions and potential legal issues, refer to the Department of Workforce Development's (DWD's) publication, *Wisconsin's Fair Employment Law, #1 in a Series, Fair Hiring & Avoiding Loaded Interview Questions.* A copy may be requested by contacting DWD's Equal Rights Division at 608-266-6860 or viewed at http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dwd/publications/erd/pdf/ERD-4825-PWEB.pdf.

## Holding On-Site Interviews

On occasion, the agency hiring manager and the human resources office may decide that holding on-site interviews may be an efficient and cost effective recruitment method. (For non-delegated titles, the DMRS staffing specialist must approve/deny the agency request to hold on-site interviews.) Items to consider when making this decision:

1. The location of the on-site interviews (career fair or an agency open house).

2. The type of exam that will be used.

   a. The agency can conduct an oral examination on-site, which will be administered by technical experts. If the candidate passes, he or she moves on to the next step, which is the on-site interview. The requirement is that everyone who is qualified and placed on the register as a result of the examination is also certified and interviewed.

   b. An alternative is to administer an objective inventory questionnaire (OIQ). This exam can be administered at the career fair or open house and immediately scored by the human resources specialist. (See Chapter 176–Exam Development of the *Wisconsin Human Resources Handbook* for information regarding developing and administering an OIQ.)

      If the candidate passes the exam, he or she can immediately be interviewed with the hiring manager and another technical expert. Again, the requirement is that everyone who is qualified and placed on the register as a result of the examination is also certified and interviewed. It is important to ensure that a strong effort is made to balance the interview panel.

3. Effective ways to advertise so the general public knows that the agency is conducting on-site interviews. The announcement in the *WiscJobs Current Employment Opportunities Bulletin* (COB) should include this information.

"The initial screening of applicants will be conducted at the [**name**] Career Fair, [**date**], [**time**], [**site**], [**address**]. Those who are screened as being eligible will be invited to participate in an immediate on-site interview."

Include application instructions in the announcement for those applicants who are unable to attend the career fair or open house.

> "If you are not able to attend the career fair, special application materials must be submitted by [**date**] to be considered for the initial screening process. Application materials submitted after [**date**] will be considered on an as-needed basis and will be accepted until the needs of the agency are met."

## Checking References

Reference checking is frequently the final selection activity a hiring manager engages in and therefore, an important part of the selection process. Some points to follow when conducting reference checks:

1. Check at least two references. Obtaining multiple references allows the supervisor to look for consistency among comments and to demonstrate reasonable care was used in the hiring process. The best references generally come from former supervisors. Peers and subordinates are also excellent references. The most effective approach is to contact the references by telephone or in person. Generally, writing or sending e-mail to the contact is not effective, because it is more difficult to ask follow up questions or have the level of dialogue that may otherwise occur when speaking directly to the person.

   In addition, many employers may be hesitant to provide any information about past employment relationships because of the potential for allegations of slander. An option is to have the candidates sign a release that allows the reference to provide information regarding the individual without legal implications.

2. Use people to do reference checking who are familiar with the position. The individual should be prepared to ask follow-up questions where needed. For example, a reference contact may say, "She was the best employee we ever had." In this situation, follow up with a question such as, "Could you give me some examples of how her performance was so outstanding?"

3. When calling an individual for a reference, identify yourself. Assure the contact that any discussion will be held in confidence and used for hiring purposes only. Ask the person if they are available to answer your questions; if not, arrange a time to call back. Briefly explain the position and ask your prepared questions.

4. Be consistent with each contact. Ask the same questions about each candidate.

5. Ask open-ended questions about job performance. Avoid questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." Be sure that all questions relate directly to job performance. A good question to ask the contact at the end of the discussion is, "Would you hire this person for the position for which he/she has interviewed? Why or why not?" (See Attachment #4 for Sample Reference Questions.)

6. Verify licenses and degrees if important to the position. One of the most common deceptions on resumes is claiming to hold a degree that was never conferred or a license that was never issued. If appropriate, call the state licensing board or the college or university registrar's office for confirmation for those positions where the degree/license is critical.

7. Maintain documentation on all reference checks as part of the selection process materials.

Proceed with making a hiring decision after completing the reference checks. Ensure that applicant information (e.g., veterans preference, state employee status) is verified prior to making an offer of employment. (See Chapter 244–Verifying Applicant Information of the *Wisconsin Human Resources Handbook*.) Consult with the agency Affirmative Action office, if necessary.

**Note**: For some positions, a criminal history record check may be required prior to making a hiring decision. It is common practice to notify the public of the requirement in the job announcement. If a criminal history check reveals a conviction or pending charge, the hiring authority must make a determination whether it is sufficiently related to the essential functions of the position to disqualify the candidate. Decision-makers must be very careful to be objective in the evaluation of this information and to separate actual essential functions of the position from any personal feelings regarding the criminal activity.

**Attachment #1**

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTION AND RESPONSE GUIDE*

**Question –** An XYZ analyst within our agency uses a variety of analytical techniques while performing their daily duties. Please explain the training and/or experience you have had in the applied use of statistical tools and analysis techniques and give us some examples of when you applied use of those tools and techniques.

**Response –**

| | |
|---|---|
| **More than Acceptable** | Candidate has education and experience in using statistical tools and analysis techniques. An excellent candidate will have a minimum of three courses in descriptive statistics, correlation, and significance testing. Person will have experience collecting and analyzing large data sets. He/She has been able to apply this to on-the-job situations, i.e., using SPSS, SAS, SYSTAT, or Minitab or other standard commercial statistical packages to analyze data, using formulas frequently on the job, etc. Candidate will provide examples of when he/she used statistical tools and techniques and the outcome. Examples indicate a high level of usage and extensive knowledge. |
| **Acceptable** | Candidate will have a minimum of two courses in descriptive statistics, correlation, and significance testing. Person will have some hands-on experience in the use of statistical tools and analysis techniques such as via an Excel spreadsheet or similar routine. Response may indicate an interest in working with statistics. Candidate will provide examples of when he/she used statistical tools and techniques and the outcome. |
| **Less than Acceptable** | Candidate will have little or no education or experience in the use of statistical tools and analysis techniques. Candidate may have taken a Statistics course in school but will need formal or on-the-job training in order to apply this knowledge when developing exams. No real opportunity to apply what was learned in the classroom to practical problems. Candidate is unable to provide examples of when he/she used statistical tools and techniques. |

*It may be useful, but not required, for each interviewer to assign a numeric (5= more than acceptable, 3=acceptable, 1=unacceptable) or categorical (A-B-C) evaluation to each candidate's responses in each of the areas covered by the interview. This may facilitate interviewer discussion (optional), aid in sharpening their evaluations, and help in tabulating and summarizing the results. Another technique would be for each interviewer to rank order the candidates from high to low on some basis but this rank-order approach encourages a global evaluation that risks increasing not only contrast effects between candidates but halo error as well. In addition, rank-order techniques do not work well when more than a handful of candidates are to be interviewed and evaluated.

**Attachment #2**

## COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN EVALUATING CANDIDATES

<u>Do not base your evaluation on irrelevant or unimportant job or candidate characteristics</u>. Frequently, those involved in the selection process will try to interpret the candidate's information in terms of something other than its likely implications for job success. For example, they may attempt to interpret the candidate's information in terms of personality or character traits. "I get a feeling of flexibility and creativeness from her." Or they may simply focus on how the candidate "came across." "This candidate seems like a dud." While such generalizations may or may not be true, their relevance to the candidate's probable job success is unclear. To help avoid such problems, think <u>only</u> in terms of the <u>direct relevance</u> of candidate based information to probable success in the high importance job areas. Avoid the temptation to infer personality or character traits from candidate information. Avoid basing a decision on "similar to me" or how the individual compares to current employees.

<u>Do not make overall judgments</u>. Many times evaluators will make an overall judgment about the suitability of an candidate, e.g., "I was extremely impressed with this candidate." Then they use this overall judgment as the primary basis for evaluating the candidate in specific high importance areas. In other situations, the interviewer will base a decision on first impressions and physical appearances. This is technically referred to as "halo error." The result of halo error is that the candidate gets about the same evaluation in each high importance area, despite the fact that the candidate might differ considerably from one area to the next. To avoid problems, pay close attention to the broadest possible sample of candidate information, and then make careful independent evaluation of the candidate on each high importance item.

<u>Do not make quick evaluations and decisions</u>. There is evidence that evaluators often make quick judgments about job candidates. "Snap" evaluations almost certainly reduce decision quality. To avoid such problems, give the candidate a chance and review all of the person's information that has been furnished in the high importance areas. This will increase the likelihood that the broadest possible sample of high importance applicant information will be reviewed and evaluated in making predictions about job success.

<u>Do not overemphasize negative information</u>. Evaluators may place greater emphasis on negative or "bad" information than on positive or "good" information when evaluating candidates. If negative information dominates the evaluations, it is likely that the evaluators will make quick or "snap" decisions about the candidates or only pay attention to a small portion of what the candidate furnished.

<u>Do not compare the candidates with one another when evaluating them</u>. There is evidence which suggests that how a job candidate is evaluated depends upon the nature of the preceding candidates. These are termed "contrast effects," and the term means that interviewers may contrast one candidate with the other candidates. For example, a candidate might receive relatively lower evaluations if preceded by a number of "high quality" candidates than if preceded by a number of "low quality" candidates. To help avoid contrast effects, evaluate each candidate against the high importance job content rather than against other candidates.

**Attachment #3**

## INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Interview questions should elicit information that will allow the employer to determine the candidate's job-related skills and experience, availability to work the hours required, qualifications and ability to do the work, goals, intelligence, aptitude, and personality. The following guide may be helpful in defining, under federal anti-discrimination laws, what inquiries/questions are permissible and those that are not. However, agencies should consult with their legal counsel and Affirmative Action office, as needed.

| Subject | Permissible Inquiries | Suspect Inquiries |
|---|---|---|
| Address | What is your address? | Do you own or rent your home?<br>How long have you lived at your present address? |
| Age | Can you show proof of age upon hire?<br><br>Are you over 18 years of age? If not, can you produce a work permit upon hire? | Age<br>Birth date<br>Dates of attendance at elementary or high school (or college)<br>Dates of military service |
| Arrest or Criminal Record | Have you ever been convicted of a crime? (if the information has bearing on necessary job functions) | Have you ever been arrested?<br>About convictions unless the information bears on job performance. |
| Credit Ratings or Garnishments | Nothing, unless job related. | About credit ratings since it usually has little or no relation to job performance.<br>*It is a Civil Rights violation to refuse to hire an individual if the refusal is based even in part on the person's poor credit rating. |
| Citizenship | Indicate that proof of the applicant's legal right to work in the U.S. will be required after the hiring decision. Note: This statement must be made to all candidates if such a requirement exists. | Are you a U.S. citizen?<br>Where were you born?<br>Where were your parents born? |
| Disabilities | Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job?<br>About knowledge and skills necessary to perform the job requirements. | Do you have any disabilities?<br>What is the nature or severity of your disability? |
| Education | Training and experience related to job requirements. | About education that is not related to job performance. |
| Family | About freedom to travel if job requires and ability to meet work schedule requirements. | About family planning, family size, children's ages, child care plans, spouse's employment or salary. |
| Gender | Applicant's gender but only if gender is a required qualification (demonstrably related to job performance). | Questions regarding pregnancy, birth control, children, child bearing, or childcare plans.<br>Questions inquiring whether an applicant's spouse will allow him/her to travel. |

| Subject | Permissible Inquiries | Suspect Inquiries |
|---|---|---|
| Height & Weight | About ability to perform the job requirements <u>only</u> if height or weight is a qualification, which is demonstrably related to safe and efficient job performance. | How much do you weigh?<br>How tall are you? (The Civil Rights Act indicates that unless an employer proves otherwise, height requirements are discriminatory). |
| Marital Status | Nothing | Whether person is married, single, separated, divorced, engaged or widowed. |
| Military Service | Questions regarding relevant experience gained during military service. | Questions regarding military experience, e.g., dates of service and type of discharge. |
| Name | Current legal name<br>"Is additional information, such as a different name or nickname necessary in order to check job references?" | Whether person has worked under a different name. Questions which divulge marital status or ancestry. |
| National Origin | Ability to speak, read, or write English or a foreign language if the job requires. | About ancestry, birth place of applicant, place of applicant, parents or spouse. |
| Notice in Case of Emergency | Statements that the name and address of an individual to be notified in case of accident or emergency will be required upon hire. | Name, address and *relationship* of relative or other individual to be notified in case of accident or emergency. |
| Organizations | List all job-related organizations, clubs, or professional societies to which you belong. | About all organizations the person belongs to or organizations that indicate race, color, creed, gender, marital status, religion or national origin.<br>Questions related to political affiliations or union membership. |
| Pregnancy | Nothing | Are you pregnant or planning to become pregnant?<br>Are you planning to start a family? |
| Race | Statement that a photograph may be required after the hiring decision is made. | Questions requiring applicant to identify race, complexion, color of skin, hair or eyes.<br>Questions requiring applicant to identify attitudes about working with, supervising or being supervised by, a person of another race. |
| Religion | Statement of the employer's regular working hours, days, or shifts and ask whether the applicant can work that schedule. | Religion of applicant.<br>Any questions which lead to elicit information about an applicant's religious affiliation, e.g., involvement in church groups. |

Reference: National Public Employer Labor Relations Association Newsletter, Ted Clark: Tips for Lawful Interviewing, September 2001

**Attachment #4**

## SAMPLE REFERENCE QUESTIONS

1. What were the beginning and ending employment dates for this individual?
2. What position(s) did the individual hold? Salary history?
3. How long have you worked with or supervised this individual?
4. What were the individual's most recent job duties?
5. What can you tell me about the quality and quantity of this individual's work?
6. How would you describe this person's ability to meet deadlines?
7. What kind of supervision did this person require?
8. Did this individual get along well with management and peers?
9. How is this individual a team player?
10. How would you describe this individual's attitude toward work?
11. How would you describe the individual's overall performance?
12. How was this person's attendance? Was he/she punctual?
13. Why did this individual leave your company?
14. Would you reemploy this person if you had the opportunity?
15. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Additional questions that might be asked for professionals, managers, or executives:**

1. How would you describe this individual's leadership, managerial, or supervisory skills?
2. Describe the quality of this individual's written and verbal communication skills.
3. How do you rate this individual's ability to plan short-term? Long-term?
4. Provide examples in which this individual had to make sound and timely decisions. What were the results?
5. Did this person plan and administer a budget? If so, what was the size, and how did this person manage it?
6. How would you describe this individual's technical skills?
7. How well did this person manage crisis, pressure, or stress?
8. How many people did this person directly supervise, for how long, and what were their levels (professional, blue collar, technical)?

**Note:** Ensure that the questions asked relate to the position to be filled.