

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

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**POLICIES**

MDHS-ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY	
Revision Date February 1, 2011	AP - 3

**SUBJECT: PERSONNEL TRANSACTIONS POLICY**

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**PURPOSE:** To provide standardized guidelines for processing personnel transactions.

**ACTION:**

1. Division Directors shall ensure that a copy of this policy and attached forms are distributed to appropriate staff.
2. Division requesting to fill a PIN must secure fund certification and approval of Division Director and the appropriate Deputy Administrator prior to submission of personnel action.
3. Personnel Transaction Forms:
  - A. Termination Notice (MDHS-PER-217): This form will be used whenever an MDHS employee's employment is terminated for any reason.
  - B. Request for Certificate of Eligibles (MDHS-PER-218): This form will be used to request a list of eligible candidates to fill vacant positions within MDHS.
  - C. Personnel Transaction Request (MDHS-PER-219): This form will be used when requesting authority to effect a personnel transaction on a particular position within MDHS.

**APPLICATION:** This policy is applicable to all Divisions of the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

**DUPLICATION:** This policy may be duplicated as needed.

**CONTACT:** Director, Division of Human Resources

**EXCEPTIONS:** None

**EFFECT ON OTHER DIRECTIVES:** None

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**Distribution:** Deputy Executive Director  
Deputy Administrators  
Division Directors  
SAAG Section Head

**Date:** February 1, 2011

  
Executive Director

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
**MDHS RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION GUIDELINES**

These guidelines are established to provide uniform procedures to be followed in the recruiting and selecting of qualified individuals to fill vacant positions with the Mississippi Department of Human Services. These guidelines, presented in outline form for easy reference, are designed to provide general information regarding the recruitment and selection process. For those questions not addressed in these guidelines, please contact the Division of Human Resources.

**RECRUITMENT GUIDELINES**

**I. REQUEST TO ANNOUNCE A VACANCY AND/OR OBTAIN A CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBLES**

The requestor will initiate a request to announce a vacant position and/or obtain a Certificate of Eligibles by forwarding a request for certificate of eligibles, form MDHS-PER-218, to the Division of Human Resources. All appropriate staff must sign the form before the Division of Human Resources will process the request. The receipt of form MDHS-PER-218 will be the Division of Human Resources' notification to:

1. Announce the vacancy within MDHS as a promotional opportunity for ten (10) working days.
2. Forward applications received to the State Personnel Board for evaluation. Eligible applicants will be certified to the certificate of eligibles for the applicable job class.
3. Request a certificate of eligibles from the State Personnel Board after the closing date for promotional announcements.
4. If applicable, request open-recruitment through the State Personnel Board. The division should check the appropriate block on MDHS-PER-218 to request this action.
5. Upon receipt of the certificate of eligibles from the State Personnel Board, the Division of Human Resources will forward the certificate to the requesting division.

**II. SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS**

Special qualifications are specific characteristics of a particular job and may be requested for certain positions. The State Personnel Board has the final authority to approve or deny requested special qualifications. Only those job applicants who possess the special qualifications will be certified by the State Personnel Board to the certificate of eligibles.

### **III. TYPES OF CERTIFICATES OF ELIGIBLES**

Directors requesting a certificate of eligibles must indicate the type (or types) of certificate they are requesting.

Type 1 RIF RE-EMPLOYMENT ONLY\_- Applicants who were laid off from state service due to a reduction in force (RIF) who applied within twelve (12) months of their termination. Available applicants in this category will automatically be certified to the list, and must be interviewed. Non-selection of a RIF applicant must be justified.

Type 2 ALTERNATE RE-EMPLOYMENT AND/OR STATE SERVICE PROMOTION/TRANSFER - Permanent state service status and/or probationary state service employees who have completed at least six (6) months of their probationary period and employees who have voluntarily terminated in good standing within the last twelve (12) months.

Type 3 OPEN COMPETITIVE - Probationary employees with less than six months of state service, non-state service employees, and applicants outside of state government.

Type 4 AGENCY-ONLY PROMOTIONAL - State service status employees and/or probationary state service employees who have completed at least six (6) months of service and are employed with the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

More than one position (PIN) may be filled from the same certificate of eligibles provided both PINS have the same job title and county location. If a vacancy occurs for a position with the same job title and county location as is on a current valid certificate of eligibles, the director(s) may request DHR approval to fill both vacancies from the same certificate of eligibles. Approval must be obtained prior to submission of the appointment transaction.

### **IV. THE CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBLES**

A certificate of eligibles is complete when the open-competitive section consists of ten (10) names. The number of names actually appearing in the section may exceed ten (10) or may be less than ten (10). If less than ten (10) names appear in this section, certificates of eligibles will continue to be issued automatically every seven (7) days until either a total of ten (10) names have been listed in this section, the certificate of eligibles is cancelled, or an appointment is made. Each subsequent certificate of eligibles issued extends the expiration date of the certificate of eligibles. Individuals appearing on the certificate of eligibles may be removed from the certificate for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Applicant is disqualified by SPB;
2. Applicant cannot be located by postal authorities;
3. Applicant requests that his/her name be removed;
4. Applicant is not available or cannot be located for interview;
5. Applicant does not report for interview;
6. Applicant hired into a job class with the same or higher starting pay;
7. Applicant does not accept a job offer;
8. Subsequent determination by SPB that the applicant is, in fact, not qualified; or
9. Applicant accepts offer but does not report at agreed upon date and time without reasonable explanation.

Directors returning coded certificates of eligibles as indicated above may be entitled to one additional name/score for each one removed.

#### **V. PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

State service employees should be encouraged to pursue promotional opportunities for all positions for which they qualify. Promotional opportunities are available to probationary employees who have six (6) months continuous state service.

-All applicants/employees must submit a State Personnel Board Experience and Training Record (application) for each position applied for. All applications must then be submitted to the State Personnel Board in order to be processed to the certificate of eligibles.

-Applicants must meet minimum qualifications for the position applied for and obtain a score based upon evaluation by the State Personnel Board.

-Any application that is not signed or accompanied by required documents will not be accepted by the State Personnel Board.

-When positions are announced, it is the employees' responsibility to apply for positions for which they are interested and meet the minimum requirements. Applications may be submitted directly to the State Personnel Board. Applications sent to MDHS Human Resources will be forwarded to the State Personnel Board for processing.

-Time-Limited and exempt employees are defined by statute as non-state service and, therefore, may apply for promotion only through an open-competitive certificate of eligibles. A position must be on open recruitment at the State Personnel Board before applications for open-competitive certificates can be submitted. All positions are periodically advertised by the State Personnel Board for open recruitment. It is the applicants'/employees' responsibility to review the State Personnel Board's open recruitment lists and maintain their names on appropriate certificate of eligibles.

-Permanent State Service employees remain on the certificate of eligibles for one (1) year.

-If an applicant meets the minimum requirements for the job(s) applied for, the State Personnel Board will automatically notify applicants of their evaluation score(s).

-The State Personnel Board will automatically notify applicants who fail to meet the minimum requirements of the position(s) applied for.

## **INTERVIEW AND SELECTION GUIDELINES**

### **I. RECEIPT AND REVIEW OF STATE PERSONNEL BOARD (SPB) CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBLES**

Upon receipt, review the certificate of eligibles and attached applications taking note of the expiration date. Certificates of eligibles must not be allowed to expire. Certificates of eligibles are valid for a period of thirty (30) days up to one-hundred twenty (120) days.

Certificates of eligibles are printed in sections as follows:

1. The first section contains the reduction-in-force (RIF) List.
2. The second section contains the list for state service promotional/transfer/alternate re-employment.
3. The third section contains the open competitive applicants.

Note: A type 4, agency only COE is a separate COE with only eligible agency employees listed.

### **II. INTERVIEW SCHEDULES AND INTERVIEWS**

#### **A. Determining Applicants to be Interviewed**

The interviewers are encouraged to interview all applicants provided on the

certificate of eligibles, however, it is permissible to select a limited number to be interviewed, adhering to the following guidelines:

1. When interviewing employees of MDHS for two vacancies (same job class), it is appropriate to interview an employee once for both vacancies. The employee should be advised that he/she is being considered for both positions. If the employee is not advised he/she is being considered for both vacancies at the time of the interview, the employee must be given a second interview. When interviewing non-employees (applicants) for vacancies, it is appropriate to follow the above, however, if the applicant is not advised, a second interview is not required if the applicant is being considered for the vacancy within three (3) months of the first interview.
2. All applicants in the first section (RIF/Reemployment) of the certificate must be interviewed/considered before moving to the second section (Alternate Reemployment/Competitive Promotional/Transfer). Similarly, all in the second section must be interviewed/considered before moving to the third section (Open Competitive). For example, the interviewer may select from the RIF list (the first section) without interviewing/considering candidates from the other two sections, but the interviewer cannot select from the third section (Open Competitive) without having interviewed/considered all from the first two sections.
3. If not interviewing all applicants, the hiring manager must complete the certification of selection procedures form (MDHS-PER-219A) certifying that all candidates were considered for an interview. The hiring manager shall also detail on the form the criteria used to determine which candidates he/she interviewed. There shall be no exceptions to this requirement.

B. Scheduling Interviews

Interviews may be scheduled by letter or by telephone providing reasonable advance notice. If the effort to make contact by telephone is not successful, an appointment letter must be mailed to the address provided by the applicant.

When scheduling interviews, the applicant shall be provided with the following information:

1. Title of position for which interview is scheduled;
2. Date, time, and location of interview.

Copies of scheduling letters and/or documentation of telephone contacts must be maintained.

### III. CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

#### A. Interview Panel

All interviews for open positions shall be conducted by a panel of at least three current MDHS employees consisting of first and/or second level supervisors and at least one person who does not have an interest in the appointment. The panel members shall be employed in positions equal in starting salary or higher than the position to be filled. The hiring manager shall always be a member of the interview panel.

The interview panel shall be diverse in its makeup so as to eliminate the appearance of bias. To this end, the panel must be comprised of at least one member who represents the demographic of the candidate(s) to be interviewed. For example, if a woman is to be interviewed, the panel shall consist of at least one woman; if a minority (black, Hispanic, Asian, etc.) is to be interviewed, the panel shall consist of at least one minority (black, Hispanic, Asian, etc.); and, if a minority female is to be interviewed, the panel shall consist of at least one minority female. **There shall be no exceptions to this requirement.**

#### B. Questions - General Information

The interviewers shall jointly develop a set of questions to use in selecting the person best suited for the vacant position. All applicants for a specific position shall be asked the same questions, without exception. Questions asked of an applicant shall be job related in that the information solicited should help determine the person best suited for the job, keeping in mind that:

1. It is not necessary that the individual have direct knowledge of the job for which he/she is interviewing.
2. Unless the intent of a question can be established as a bonafide occupational qualification, the question should not be asked.
3. Interviewers shall not ask applicants prohibited questions including, but not limited to: age or date of birth, credit or garnishment records, family matters such as number of children, child care requirements, marital status, health history, political affiliation, or religious preference. For further guidance, speak with Human Resources.
3. Interview questions shall not be set up as oral tests which will be scored point by point. Administering any type of proficiency test may expose the agency to legal action by aggrieved applicants/employees.
4. Questions shall be developed with the objective of determining how a candidate has handled different situations and tasks in their prior work

experience. The interview questions should explore how the applicants dealt with projects, customers, other employees, etc. in their past work experiences or how they feel about relevant work related issues such as being on-call, working overtime, receiving criticism, etc. The objective of this type of question is to determine the applicant's past work behavior. It is true that the best indicator for future performance is past behavior.

5. It is acceptable to ask follow-up questions of a candidate to better clarify the answer he/she has given on a specific question. Questions such as the following are acceptable for this purpose:

Can you explain what you mean by that?

How did you handle that?

How did you react?

What was the outcome?

6. It is not acceptable to ask add-on questions or to change the content of the interview questions such as:

How would you handle it if the customer was not irate?

You said you don't like criticism, how do you feel about giving praise?

You answered that you are okay with overtime, what about if you were called in to work?

Remember that you must ask all candidates the same questions. Add-on questions may give one candidate an unfair advantage over other candidates.

#### **C. Questions - Examples**

There are many possible questions that might be asked during an interview. Answers to interview questions may reveal whether a person has the needed knowledge, skills, and abilities to do the job. Other questions may help determine whether a person will do the job.

Below are examples of the types of questions that might be asked during an interview.

1. Begin the interview with this question: "Tell me about yourself." - People will tell you a lot about themselves if given the opportunity. This is a tone-



setting question; an opportunity for the applicant to relax. The response should not be considered in making a decision except for that portion which is job related.

2. "How do you feel about . . ." - (e.g., overtime, on-call work, completing paperwork, etc.).
3. "Tell me about a time when you . . ." - (dealt with a difficult customer; dealt with a difficult employee; had to do a project; etc.)
4. "Tell me about a time when you were trying to do your job and one of your co-workers was bothering you, what did you do?"
5. "We all have to do things we don't like to do, tell me about a time when you had to do something you didn't like and how you felt about it."

D. Documentation

Interviewers shall alternate asking the pre-determined interview questions. Each interviewer shall record his/her personal impressions of the applicant's responses to the interview questions. It is important that the interviewer independently assign a "score" (for example 1 – 5, 5 being the best) to each answer so that comparing the candidates after all of the interviews are complete is an easier task. The panel shall not collectively assign scores to answers, nor shall they discuss answers after the interview in order to arrive at a common score for a question.

Taking notes during the interview is critical to insure that the decision to hire a candidate is defensible. Keep in mind that in many instances there are not right or wrong answers to the interview questions. Rather, the responses will help determine which of the applicants are best suited for the job.

IV. THE SELECTION

- A. The interview panel will select the applicant to be recommended for the position by summing up the independent interview scores assigned to each candidate by each interviewer. The candidate with the highest overall interview score shall be chosen as the candidate to be offered the job and his/her name shall be advanced to the approving authority in a recommendation memorandum containing the scores of all of the candidates and the signatures of all interview panel members. A copy of the interview score sheets and interview notes shall also be attached to the memorandum for review by the approving authority.
- B. Once approval is obtained from the approving authority, the hiring manager shall negotiate with the prospective employee an anticipated date of hire. **It is very important to inform the prospective employee to not quit their job with their current employer until they are notified of the Executive Director's approval**

**of the new hire action. No prospective employee shall be instructed to report to work on a specific date at this stage of the process. Only after the Executive Director has approved the new hire transaction may the hiring manager negotiate a start date (see below).**

- C. The certificate of eligibles shall be completed by recording the proper action code in the action section beside each applicant's name using the following codes:

A - Appointed

C - Considered

I - Interviewed

DJ - Declined Job

DI - Declined Interview

NA - Not Available

AF - Appointed - Failed to Report

FW - Failed to Reply to written Inquiry

FR - Failed to Report to Interview

WA - Wrong Address (be sure address used is that printed on certificate)

AE - Agency Exception - Justification must be attached with the returned certificate. The State Personnel Director has final approval for any agency exception.

IR - Agency Zone Request - May be used only when certificate by area/district/zone was requested and individual is not interested in the particular location. This code will entitle the agency to an additional name. CODE MAY NOT BE USED WHEN CERTIFICATION WAS MADE BY COUNTY.

- D. Send a letter to applicants who were interviewed but not selected. A rejection letter should be polite however the agency is not required by law to go into detail regarding the reason for non-selection, and it is best not to do so. The best approach is to inform the rejected applicant that another applicant has been selected who is best suited for the needs of the job. Thank the applicant for his/her interest and wish him/her the best of luck in his/her career. It is recommended that the hiring manager go no further, even with those who want to discuss the reason for non-selection. The practice of debriefing is discouraged.

Note that the phrase “best suited for the needs” is used in lieu of the “best qualified.” There may be an individual better qualified on paper but who still is not as suited to the needs of the job as is another applicant.

- E. Send completed personnel transaction request, form MDHS-PER-219, with coded certificate of eligibles to the Division of Human Resources. Do not sign in the “Agency Authorized Signature” line at the bottom left of the front page of the certificate of eligibles. This space is for the signature of the Executive Director or his/her designee. When recommending a salary higher than the starting salary for the position, the MDHS-PER-219 must be accompanied by a written justification which clearly documents the applicant’s superior education and/or experience.
- F. Once the required paperwork is completed, the new hire packet shall be forwarded to the Division of Human Resources for processing and Executive Director’s approval. **After the Division of Human Resources notifies the hiring Division of the Executive Director’s and State Personnel Board’s approval to hire, the hiring manager may notify the prospective employee of the approval and assist the new employee in completing the new hire package.**
- G. **If a prospective employee reports to work prior to the Executive Director’s and SPB’s approval and the transaction is subsequently not approved, the person who instructed the candidate to begin working as well as his her supervisory chain of command up through the Division Director may be held personally liable for any wages earned by the candidate during the unapproved work time.**
- H. Upon selection and final processing of paperwork, the Division of Human Resources will prepare and mail a formal letter acknowledging appointment of the selected individual.
- I. The hiring Division must maintain the following information for documentation/reference for a three-year period:
  - 1. Interview list detailing:
    - a. Job title for which interviews were held;
    - b. Names of interviewers and those interviewed;
    - c. Date and time of each interview.
  - 2. Copies of scheduling letters and/or documentation of telephone contact.
  - 3. Set of interview questions that were asked.
  - 4. Notes from all interviewers from all interviews conducted.

5. Copy of certificate of eligibles.
6. Copies of all applications.
7. Copies of all rejection letters.

**V. AUTOMATIC RECLASSIFICATION**

Certain positions that are a part of a classification series are eligible for automatic reclassification. The State Personnel Board annually reviews and approves requests by user agencies for certain classification series to be authorized automatic reclassification authority. Directors are responsible for submitting this type of request on form MDHS-PER-219 along with a newly completed SPB application form, a properly completed Budgets and Accounting form 5150, and the proposed organizational chart page(s).

**VI. RESIGNATION/TERMINATION/AUTHORIZED LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

The Division of Human Resources shall be notified immediately of all terminations and authorized leaves of absence. Furthermore, the Division of Human Resources shall receive prompt notification when an employee returns from an authorized leave of absence. Failure to promptly notify the Division of Human Resources may result in the employee's payroll check being delayed.

An employee resigning his/her position with the Mississippi Department of Human Services shall be instructed to complete a termination notice, form MDHS-PER-217. The employee shall also be asked to complete a Mississippi Department of Human Services Employee Exit Questionnaire.

**VII. EFFECTIVE DATES**

Appointment(s) made from a certificate of eligibles cannot be effective on a date earlier than the date the certificate was issued. The date the certificate was issued can be found on the first page of the certificate. Promotions shall be effective on the first day of the applicable month.