

Human Services Merit-Based System Step-By-Step Guide

PURPOSE: To define and specify the procedures pursuant to Human Services Merit-Based Employees. To provide a guide to those employees and managers who participate in the merit hire system for human services with Franklin County Government. This guide will cover aspects associated with hiring, promotions/transfers, and furloughs, with the understanding that all Franklin County employees, except for those covered under a collective bargaining agreement, are at-will employees and Franklin County Commissioners will adhere to the following guidelines for Human Services Merit-Hire employees.

MERIT-BASED HIRING STEPS:

STEP 1 - Vacant Position: In order to begin the hiring process there must be an open position available, either an existing vacancy or a newly created position. Positions are classified as part of the County's Employment Recruitment Policy. If essential job functions of a position change substantially, the position is reviewed to ensure it is classified in the appropriate pay range. (Please reference the County's pay policy).

STEP 2 - Approval Process:

All vacancies and new positions must be approved by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners or Salary Board, respectively. Area Agency on Aging advertisements will be placed in publications and locations widely accessible to older persons.

STEP 3 – Posting of the Vacancy: Following Salary Board approval to create a new position and/or Board of Commissioners approval to fill an existing position, recruitment of candidates to fill vacant positions will be initiated by the hiring supervisor who is responsible for completing the Personnel Requisition and Justification form and submitting it to the Human Resources Department.

The decision as to whether to post internally or County-wide externally is based on the position to be filled and the availability of candidates with the requisite skills among those promotable, transferable, and trainable within the Human Services Departments. Internal applicants will be given first consideration and will follow the same screening process as outlined in Step 4. Any preferred skills specific to the position, including the need for a bilingual employee with the ability to translate or transcribe, will be listed on the job posting in addition to the minimum education, training, and work experience requirements. Applications will be accepted during the posting period only.

1. Internal Postings: When recruiting internally within the Human Services Departments, a position will be posted on employee bulletin boards in all of the Human Services Departments. Only current County Human Services employees will be eligible to respond to this type of posting. Interested employees must complete a County Application and submit it to the Human Resources Department.
2. County-wide/Public Postings: When it becomes necessary to recruit externally to fill a position, a County-wide posting will be posted on the County's website, Human Resources Bulletin Board and as well as to resource agencies for minorities, older adults, disabled individuals and veterans, local educational institutions, and when applicable, the County Commissioners' Association of

Pennsylvania's website. Job fairs and newspaper advertisements are other approaches for recruitment. County-wide postings are for a period of five (5) business days.

Interested employees must complete a County Application, and submit to the Department of Human Resources by the deadline dates indicated on the posting. External applicants must complete a Franklin County Application for Employment to be considered for a posted position.

Applicants may also visit the Department of Human Resources to review job postings on the public bulletin board and complete applications for posted positions. A separate application must be submitted for each posted position. A resume may supplement an application but cannot be substituted for an application.

STEP 4 – Screening Candidates: The applications will be submitted to the Human Resources Generalist for screening to ensure the candidates meet the minimum education and training requirements (METs) for the vacant positions. Each MET is designed to meet the standards established by the appropriate state funding agency. Transcripts will be requested and reviewed to confirm education based upon the minimum requirements of the position. Applicants who do not meet the METs will not be considered nor advance through the selection process.

The department may use certain preferred skills to reduce the number of candidates considered for interview. These skills must be identified on the job posting for the particular vacancy. All candidates that meet the minimum qualifications and preferred skills if applicable will be interviewed. Any preferred skills that have been included in the job posting will be filtered after the METs.

Once these screenings have been completed, all remaining qualified applications will be forwarded to the requesting departments to schedule interviews/assessments for the vacant positions.

The order of criteria to screen candidates responding to a job posting is as follows:

1. The established minimum experience and training requirements for the job title listed in the position.
2. Any identified preferred skills that have been included in the job posting.
3. All candidates that pass the first two (2) filters will then proceed into one (1) of two (2) categories based on the job title as outlined in Step 5.

Assessment First

- a. Management Readiness Profile (MRP) and Management Success Profile (MSP) “non-recommended” candidates will not be included in the candidate pool for interviews.
- b. All candidates that are “recommended” consequent to the MRP or MSP will be granted an interview for the vacant position.
- c. All candidates that receive a score on the fiscal assessment will be granted an interview.

- d. The “recommended” candidates and all fiscal candidates will be given a score in the assessment column of the Interview/Assessment Score Sheet for the assessment and interview, and the top combined total of the assessment and interview score will determine which candidate is extended a conditional offer of employment.

Interview First

- a. Interviews will be rated by the interview panel and given a composite score.
- b. Assessments will be given immediately after the interviews for writing sample assessments only. Typing of skill check assessments will be scheduled in a time efficient manner by the Human Resources Department.
- c. Candidates will be given a score in the assessment score column of the Interview/Assessment Score Sheet for the assessment and interview, and the top combined total of the assessment and interview score will determine which candidate is extended a conditional offer of employment.

STEP 5 – Interviews and Assessments: Applicants within the Clerical, Social Support, Caseworker, Aging Care Manager, Treatment and Prevention Specialist and Program Specialist categories will be interviewed first followed by a position appropriate assessment.

Applicants within the Fiscal, Entry level Supervisor, and advanced Management job titles will be assessed first and then interviewed.

Additional Notes on Interview/Assessments:

The following job categories will entail interviews followed by assessments:

Clerical Staff: Assessments will consist of a timed typing test, the Office Skills Assessment Battery (OSAB) and an interview.

Social Support Staff: Process includes a department-specific writing sample provided by the candidate immediately following the interview. The writing sample will address written communications and reasoning skills. A Skill Check assessment may be selected in addition to the writing sample.

Caseworkers/Care Managers/Treatment and Prevention Specialists/Program Specialists: Process includes the interview, along with a department-specific writing sample provided by the candidate immediately following the interview. The writing sample will address written communications and reasoning skills. The scenario provided will be the same for the applicants in each specific pool.

The following job categories will entail assessments followed by interviews:

Fiscal Staff: Applicants will be assessed using an approved testing tool. Modules include: Accounting-Business Documents; Accounting-Cost Accounting; Accounting-Credits and Debits; Accounting-Math Skills; Accounting-Terminology; Accounting-Accountant; Accounting-Accounts Receivable; Accounting-Advanced Accounting and Accounting-Bookkeeper.

Entry Level Supervisors: Applicants will be assessed first using an approved testing tool (MRP). Only candidates that are “recommended” by this skills assessment will proceed

in the interview process. The candidate with the highest rating score on the Interview/Assessment Score Sheet will be awarded the position. Second level interviews will occur if there is a “tie” in the ratings and no preference has been identified. The second level interview panel may consist of the three (3) panel members that initially interviewed the candidates or a new three-member panel. Once a panel is selected to conduct second level interviews, that panel will conduct all of the second level interviews for that position. New scoring sheets and questions will be necessary for second level interviews.

Program Specialist 2s/Managers/Deputies: Applicants will be assessed first using an approved testing tool (MSP). Only candidates that are “recommended” by this skills assessment will proceed in the interview process. Second level interviews may be required for upper management positions (managers/deputies). The second level interview panel may consist of the three (3) panel members that initially interviewed the candidates or a new three-member panel. Once a panel is selected to conduct second level interviews, that panel will conduct all of the second level interviews for that position. New scoring sheets and questions will be needed for second level interviews.

Department Heads: In coordination with Human Resources, County Administration and /or Human Services Administrator, the assess the candidates following the County’s Recruitment policy. A minimum three-member panel will be utilized for the interviews. This three-member panel will serve as the panel for all of the interviews for which the particular posting applies. The questions asked in the interviews will be uniform for each candidate for the particular vacant position. The panel will use the Rating Score Sheets developed by the Human Resources Department for the particular position title unless otherwise approved, in advance, for a particular position. Job descriptions will be provided to candidates for review at the beginning of the interviews.

The Interview Rating Form will be based on competencies needed for the position in tandem with the duties outlined in the job description. Each criteria category is given a number of points based on the applicant’s response to the interview questions. Individual panel members will score each candidate on a scale from 1 to 20 based on the candidate’s answers during the interview process. Each panel member will total their scores, the panel members’ scores will then be averaged together for each candidate, that score will be reflect in the score box. The two (2) numbers will be added together to obtain the final and total score.

“Not recommended” candidates will not continue through the process.

All applicants will be assessed using the same tools for consistency and fairness in rating candidates. Assessments within each category will be periodically reviewed. Franklin County will cover the cost of the assessments.

STEP 6 – Candidate Selection: Promotions and recruitment selection are made on a competitive basis. The candidate with the highest total score will be offered the position first, followed by the next highest scoring candidate if the first candidate declines the extended employment offer. Multiple candidates may be hired for vacancies in the same job title, being extended offers in order of highest to lowest composite scores.

Consideration must be given in the following instances:

Veteran's Preference - Non-applicable to promotional actions. Veteran's Preference is applicable to all Human Services departments. If a candidate self-identifies as a veteran of the United States Armed Forces and all other things are equal in assessing and interview scores, the position must be offered to the veteran. The Human Resources Department will be responsible for verification of veteran's status.

Spousal Preference - Non-applicable to promotional actions. Spousal Preference is applicable to all Human Services departments. If a candidate self-identifies as a widow or widower of a deceased veteran or the spouse of a fully (100%) disabled veteran and all other things are equal in assessing and interview scores, the position must be offered to the spousal preferred candidate. The Human Resources Department will be responsible for verification of spousal status.

Aging Preference - Aging Preference is only applicable to the Area Agency on Aging (AAA). If a candidate self-identifies as being sixty (60) years of age or older and all other things are equal in assessing and interview scores, the position must be offered to the age preferred candidate. The Human Resources Department will be responsible for verification of age. Adherence to state requirements for Age Preference hiring in accordance with the PA Code, Chapter 5, Age Preference for positions in the Area Agency on Aging.

Franklin County Preference – Non-applicable to promotional actions. Franklin County Preference is applicable to all Human Services departments. If a candidate is a Franklin County resident and all other things are equal in assessing and interview scores, the position must be offered to the Franklin County resident. The Human Resources Department will be responsible for verification of County residence.

If there is a tie of the top total score on the Interview/Assessment Score Sheet, the following should then be granted weight in the following order for a tie-breaker:

1. Candidate qualifies for a Veteran's Preference or Age Preference (for AAA positions only).
2. Candidate qualified for a Spousal Preference.
3. Candidate qualified for Franklin County Preference.

Following interviews and assessments, the hiring supervisor will complete the Payroll Status Change Sheet with the candidate who has the highest score, he/she will also send copies of the Interview documents, Interview/Assessment Evaluation Sheets, and the writing sample results (if applicable) to the Human Resources Generalist.

A conditional offer of employment can be given once approval is given by the Human Resources Generalist to extend a conditional offer to a candidate, and after the payroll status change sheet is completed. The payroll status change sheet must be completed for transfers, promotions, and demotions and submitted to Human Resources. The Human Resources Generalist will record information from the documentation to be used in a report to the state oversight agency for that particular department.

External candidates who successfully complete the interview and assessment process, but are not selected, will be mailed a letter by the Human Resources Department and will be encouraged to re-apply to future postings.

External candidates who complete the assessment and are “not recommended” by the results will be mailed a letter by the Human Resources Department notifying them of this outcome. Scores from the assessment will be kept on file with the Human Resources Department. Candidates must wait six (6) months before being eligible to re-take the assessment for the same job title.

Internal candidates who successfully complete the interview and assessment process, but are not selected will be mailed a letter by the Human Resources Department and will be encouraged to reapply to future postings. Scores from the assessments will be kept on file with the Human Resources Department. Candidates are encouraged to apply for future postings, but must wait six (6) months before being eligible to re-take the assessment for the same job title.

When previously assessed and recommended candidates apply for positions within the same job title, copies of their current assessments will be provided to the respective Human Services departments’ directors. Interviews must be performed each time a new position opens, due to changes in the interview panel from position to position.

Assessment results are valid for two (2) years from the date of the assessment and will be retained by the Human Resources Department. Candidates who were not recommended based on the assessments may not apply for the same job title until after a six (6) month period has elapsed. The company that administers the assessments will retain the assessments for seven (7) years. All other results from the process will be retained by the Human Resources Department in conjunction with the County’s Record Retention Policy.

Candidates that are selected will be made conditional job offers by the department directors or Human Resources Generalist. When communicating to prospective employees, one must indicate that prior to a formal offers begin made, the prospective employees must first pass a background check and other essential requirements for that position to include reference, educational, and criminal background. These checks must be conducted on every selected candidate. In addition, the hires must be approved by the Commissioners at a Commissioners’ Meeting.

New employees will be scheduled to attend New Employee Orientation on the first day of County employment. Department specific training will be provided by each Human Services department in accordance with their regulations.

Job descriptions will be provided to new employees upon hire and will be made available to employees annually with the Employee Performance Reviews and throughout employment by request. Job descriptions and Performance Reviews will be completed by the employee’s immediate supervisor.

TRANSFERS, TEMPORARY & PERMANENT SEPARATIONS:

Transfers and Furloughs shall occur only because of lack of funds or lack of work.

1. For Furlough: All employees are based on job performance evaluations. For any employee covered by the terms of a Collective Bargaining Agreement, the determination of layoffs and recalls shall be a management prerogative, subject to the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, which provide, in part, as follows:

- a) Order of Layoffs: When it is necessary to reduce the work force due to a loss of state or federal grants which support the position, or due to reorganizations, temporary, probationary and least senior employees respectively within the affected job classification shall be laid off first.
 - b) Notices: Employees are to be given a minimum of two (2) weeks written notice of layoff unless an emergency situation beyond the control of the County prohibits same.
 - c) Recalls: Employees shall be recalled in the reverse order in which they were laid off, or to a lower-rated vacancy, provided they have the ability to perform the work. Employees will remain on the recall list for a length of 6 months from the date of separation.
2. For Furlough: All employees are based on job performance evaluations. For any non-union employee not covered by the terms of a Collective Bargaining Agreement, the determination of layoffs and recalls shall be a management prerogative, which provide, in part, as follows:
 - a) Order of Layoffs: When it is necessary to reduce the work force due to a loss of state or federal grants which support the position, or due to reorganizations, temporary, probationary and least senior employees respectively within the affected job classification shall be laid off first.
 - b) Notices: Employees are to be given a minimum of two (2) weeks written notice of layoff unless an emergency situation beyond the control of the County prohibits same.
 - c) Recalls: Employees shall be recalled in the reverse order in which they were laid off, or to a lower-rated vacancy, provided they have the ability to perform the work. Employees will remain on the recall list for a length of 6 months from the date of separation.
3. For employees not covered by the terms of a Collective Bargaining Agreement, layoffs and recalls, if any, are at the sole and absolute discretion of the Board of Commissioners. Individual records and employment histories are maintained for all employees that are accurate and protected from unauthorized or inappropriate access. Furloughs for non-union employees are based on affected job classifications by lowest evaluation rating being merit based, thus eliminating a position and not a person. If there are multiple employees with tied evaluations ratings, individuals with seniority will be chosen first.
4. Separations: The decision to terminate employment by the employer must be based on merit-based reasons. Employees will be supplied with written documentation outlining the reasons for the termination. This documentation will be supplied at the time of separation.

The County remains committed to the transparency and integrity of the entire process, and has intentionally crafted procedural steps that escalate both in authority and accountability. The appeal process is extended to all personnel actions affecting employment, including termination, suspension, involuntary demotion, furloughs, employee performance reviews and any personnel action that the employee believes to be based on non-merit factor or which the employee believes to stem from illegal discrimination. DPW will receive a copy of each appeal upon submission and a copy of the final written decision. The full ADR Policy and Procedure is available to employees and management via the County's intranet.

All Merit-Hire employees will receive a copy of this guide. Electronic access to this guide will be available to the public through the Franklin County's website.

The County does not prohibit collective bargaining and there is no provision against collective bargaining. In situations where a collective bargaining agreement is present, Merit Hire principles will not be infringed upon as outlined.