

## DHHS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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<b>Section V:</b>	<b>Human Resources</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Recruitment Services</b>
<b>Chapter:</b>	<b>Merit-Based Selection Program Plan</b>
<b>Current Effective Date:</b>	<b>5/26/06</b>
<b>Revision History:</b>	<b>7/1/03, 4/1/04, 2/1/06</b>
<b>Original Effective Date:</b>	<b>8/1/02</b>

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the criteria regarding recruitment and selection of employees.

### **Policy**

The Merit-Based Employment Plan for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) is designed to fill all positions subject to the State Personnel Act ([GS 126](#)), which includes career banded positions, Criminal Justice and Training Act positions, and the System for Employment for Public School Teachers ([GS 115C – 325](#)) with highly qualified individuals. The terminology of “knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs)” used throughout this policy is synonymous with “competencies” as used in career banded job specifications and recruitment standards. Under the “Recruitment,” section, items B.1 – 4 addressing trainees, informal trainees, work-againsts and full class trainee situations do not apply to career banded jobs. Also, the use of “special minimum rate” found under item B.5. does not apply to career banded jobs.

1. **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Statement**  
The DHHS will provide equal employment opportunity to all applicants without regard to race, religion, color, creed, national origin, sex, age, disability, or political affiliation/influence. All selection decisions shall be based solely on job-related criteria and comply with all federal and state employment laws, regulations and policies, and will be consistently applied to promote fairness, diversity and integrity.
2. **Statement of Commitment**  
The Secretary of the DHHS, the Director of the Division of Human Resources (HR), and executive management support the department's merit based employment plan, and the guidelines, policies and procedures governing employment practices issued by the NC Office of State Personnel (OSP). It is the commitment of the department to recruit qualified applicants and to promote the recruitment of minorities, women, individuals with disabilities, and others who may be under-represented demographically through the use of sound HR practices and principles.

3. **Ethics Statement**

The DHHS assures to the citizens of NC, the department's workforce, and the workforce of other state agencies/universities that job-related KSAs, experience, and educational requirements are the basis for employment decisions, not political patronage. To that end, every employee, especially those with responsibility for employment decisions, has a responsibility to view state employment as a public trust and to act impartially when making recruitment and selection decisions. Preferential treatment will not be given to any private organization or individual based on political affiliation or influence.

## **Implementation**

**Pre-recruitment, Recruitment and Selection Criteria** - The DHHS will strive to actively recruit from a variety of sources to achieve a diverse workforce that successfully meets the needs and demands of its agencies.

1. Pre-Recruitment

A. The hiring manager, with assistance and guidance from the division, facility or school HR office, will:

1. Assess the need for the vacant position to ensure it contributes to meeting the goals, objectives and mission of the work unit.
2. Review the duties, responsibilities, knowledge, skills, abilities, education and experience of the position to determine if they correspond with the current use of the position.
3. Revise the position description, work plan, and recruitment standards when necessary and notify HR of such revisions to determine if job evaluation is in order.
4. Review the reduction-in-force (RIF) registry and determine eligible candidates with RIF priority.

B. A job evaluation is necessary only when significant changes in the duties and responsibilities of the position are noted; and thereby change the recruitment standards for the vacancy. This differs from job analysis which is the review and validation of the most recent position description. Therefore, if the position description on file reflects the recruiting standards for the vacancy, there is no need to conduct a job evaluation as long as the most recent job information on file accurately reflects the current KSAs, education, experience, duties and preferences of the class vacancy. With consultation from the HR office, the hiring manager should ensure that relevant critical tasks, essential functions, KSAs and training and experience requirements necessary for the vacancy, which may be in addition to the class specification's minimum recruitment standards, are identified. The additional minimum

selection criteria identified by the hiring supervisor shall be posted in the vacancy announcement.

- C. If a job analysis indicates that current recruitment standards do not appropriately reflect the position to be recruited for, management, in consultation with HR, should determine if the job is appropriately classified or requires an update of the position description and recruitment standards. Any significant discrepancies in the intended recruitment standards and the current job duties must be reconciled through HR before recruitment begins.

## 2. Recruitment

### A. General:

- 1. Relevant recruitment standards that correspond to the current duties and responsibilities of the position will guide the information that management incorporates into the vacancy announcement. HR will ensure the vacancy announcement meets the requirements of the department's plan and the NC OSP policies.
- 2. The hiring manager and HR will determine the appropriate option when posting vacant positions (internal to the department, internal to state government, or external to state government). Permission to post internal to the department or state government must be approved by recruitment services, the DHHS Division of HR, prior to posting. In addition, HR will consult with the hiring manager to determine additional recruitment sources to target specific audiences, including professional journals, newspapers, and college/universities. A decision to recruit within state government or the department should be considered only when it is expected that the recruitment process will provide a sufficient number of qualified applicants and will attract applicants where there are under-represented groups of employees.
- 3. Prior to the vacancy closing date, the hiring manager shall determine any selection tool(s) (i.e., work sampling, in-basket exercise, etc.) that will be used to make the final selection decision. Any selection tool(s) used shall be objective, based on job-related KSAs and consistently applied to all applicants in the final selection pool. HR should be consulted for assistance when selection tools are used.

### B. Recruitment for Trainees, Informal Trainees, Work-Againsts and Full Class:

- 1. Trainees: Recruitment for trainee positions that have established training progressions found in the OSP salary plan, Appendix A, is permissible. When recruiting for a trainee, the vacancy announcement

shall include the minimum training and experience criteria established by OSP plus any selection criteria that are job related. The salary range posted is that for the trainee progression. Given SB 886 requires that the hiring decision be made from among the highly qualified, and therefore, if candidates who are qualified for the full class/position apply, then they must be given full consideration. However, management may make the selection from the pool of applicants for the trainee position if the applicant(s) for the full class is not deemed to be qualified (i.e., poor reference check, poor interview, falsified application). It is likely that the trainee salary range will not attract qualified applicants for the full class, but should the offer be made to a qualified applicant, his or her salary may not be set higher than the posted trainee progression, but may be adjusted to the minimum or within the range at a later date based on available funds. [Note: An example of a “full class” is a Personnel Analyst I as opposed to the Personnel Analyst Trainee class.]

2. Informal Trainees: When posting a job for which it is expected that there will be no qualified applicants, use the following phrase: *Trainee appointments may be considered in the absence of qualified applicants.* Informal trainee progressions are established when there are no qualified applicants in the applicant pool for the full class despite reasonable recruitment efforts. In such cases, individuals will normally meet the educational requirements for the class but lack the number of years of experience to qualify for the full class. Informal trainee progressions will be done on an as needed basis only and must have the approval of the Classification and Compensation section before entering into such an arrangement and before committing the position to the applicant. To be granted approval for an informal trainee progression, it is incumbent on the respective HR office to provide information on recruitment activity for the position and recruitment/retention data for the class. In cases where there are qualified applicants deemed unsuitable for employment by the hiring supervisor and the remaining applicant pool is unqualified, the position is to be reposted. The salaries for informal trainee progressions are to be set commensurate with their education and experience which requires advanced approval from the Classification and Compensation section.
3. Work-Againsts: Work-against situations for recruitment purposes are similar to informal trainee progressions except that a full class is used to qualify the incumbent when they do not qualify for the position posted. Such arrangements are used when it has been demonstrated to the Classification and Compensation section, for its approval, the job duties to be done in the work-against arrangement to ensure an

adequate class and grade is allocated and the time it will take for the individual to qualify for the full class. When posting full classes where a work-against is needed, use the following statement: *Applicants with a [minimum training and experience requirements for the respective work-against class] may be considered for [name of work-against class] in absence of qualified applicants. The salary range is: [respective class salary range]*

4. Full Class: When posting a full class that has an established trainee progression where it is expected there may be limited to no qualified applicants, use the following statement: *Applicants with [minimum training and experience requirements for the respective class] may be considered for a [name of class trainee appointment]. The trainee salary range: [respective salary range]*
5. Budgeted Amount: A position vacancy may be posted up to the maximum of the respective salary range, at the budgeted amount in the position, or less than the budgeted amount, but at least at the minimum or special minimum rate, whichever applies.

C. Continuous Recruitment:

1. The continuous recruitment of positions is conducted upon approval of HR when there has been demonstrated a difficulty in attracting applicants in combination with high turnover which sacrifices the quality of services provided. Basically, continuous recruitment allows agencies to post a class without a closing date. Typically, continuously recruited jobs are found in facility and school settings and include classes such as medical or institutional services. Unique to the continuous recruitment process is the fact that individual positions/numbers are not posted, but rather the class. Nevertheless, the intent of SB 886 and EO 30 still applies in that highly qualified applicants are considered for selection.
2. Under OSP provisions, all state agencies must provide to OSP the positions for which they wish to continuously recruit. The criteria the DHHS Division of HR shall use before submitting a request to have a class listed for continuous recruitment shall be based on the recruitment and retention issues experienced by the division, facility or school. Agencies desiring to propose classes for continuous recruitment should submit such in writing along with appropriate justification to the DHHS Division of HR Recruitment Section. DHHS divisions, facilities and schools should ensure their selection process meets the intent of the Merit-Based Employment policy. HR offices are still required to screen applicants who are qualified before

forwarding them for further screening. For continuously recruited jobs, please refer to the following guidelines:

- a. For administrative ease, it is recommended that applications not be kept, or “banked”, over three (3) months.
- b. Should an adequate bank of qualified applicants be on hand, it may be decided to forego posting until the applicant pool gets low.
- c. Applicants should be logged and accounted for as required under OSP’s outcome and process measures.

### 3. Selection

- A. Determining *qualified applicants* (applicants who meet the minimum education, experience and KSAs of the posting requirements): Applications are to be submitted to the appropriate HR office. HR shall screen all applications to determine which applicants meet minimum qualification requirements including any selective criteria. If the quality of the applicant pool is deemed insufficient, the hiring manager may choose to re-advertise the position.
- B. Determining *highly qualified applicants* (applicants whose education, experience and KSAs clearly exceed the posting requirements): The hiring manager shall determine the highly qualified applicants and record this information on the Applicant Selection Log. Only applicants designated as highly qualified shall be interviewed. Qualified persons with RIF priority shall be interviewed. The screening for highly qualified applicants may also be conducted by HR, management representatives or by panels consisting of all parties, depending on the hiring manager’s preference.
- C. Applications referred to the hiring manager must be reviewed in relation to all applicable state and federal employment laws and policies.

### 4. Final Selection Recommendation/Decision

The final selection recommendation will be made from among the highly qualified applicants. Applicants with priority consideration shall also be given appropriate consideration. The hiring manager shall use selection tools that are objective and based upon job-related KSAs. Any selection tool used will be consistently applied to all applicants in the final pool. The hiring manager will also be responsible for documenting the selection process (i.e., additional selective criteria, KSAs and preferences) and justifying the hiring recommendation and/or decision. Written notice shall be provided to each unsuccessful applicant who was in the group of highly qualified applicants. HR staff will be available for guidance and assistance to the hiring manager at any time during the selection process.

5. Roles of the HR Specialist, the EEO Representative, Panel Member, and Program Representative in the Selection Process

A. HR Specialist:

1. Screen all applications to determine if applicants meet minimum qualifications.
2. Determine highly qualified applicants when program management, management representative and/or panels are not used.
3. Evaluate applications as a panel member to determine if applicants are highly qualified.
4. Advise and consult on employment laws and policies.
5. Attend merit-based training.
6. Provide ongoing training and education.
7. Ensure evaluation of applicants complies with the intent of the merit based plan and related employment laws.

B. EEO Representative:

1. Serve as a panel member to determine highly qualified applicants.
2. Apprise HR and panel members of under-represented groups.
3. Ensure that under-represented groups are given proper consideration during the evaluation process.
4. Ensure that EEO laws are abided by during the evaluation and employment process; consult with the department's EEO coordinator on questions regarding EEO employment laws and concerns in the evaluation and employment process.
5. Attend merit-based and EEO training.
6. Ensure the evaluation of applicants complies with the intent of the merit based plan.

C. Program Management, Management Representative and/or Panel Members:

1. Evaluate applications to determine highly qualified applicants.
2. Attend training on merit-based hiring procedures.
3. Stay abreast of selection guidelines.
4. Ensure that applicable employment laws are followed and that applicants' rights are afforded.
5. Ensure the evaluation of applicants complies with the intent of the merit based plan.
6. Panel Make-up:
  - a. Program Management, Management Representative and/or Human Resources Specialist. Management representatives may include: EEO designee, subject matter expert, hiring supervisor

- or non-state employee. The DHHS Secretary must waive the release of confidential information (application and resume) before a non-state employee can participate in the screening process).
- b. Consists of three (3) to seven (7) members, who will appoint a chair.
  - c. Key points when using panels.
    - Applications will be submitted to the appropriate HR office.
    - Management, in consultation with HR, determines the classes for which panels are to be used.
    - Panel members shall maintain the confidentiality of the application/resumes they review.
  - d. General guidelines when not to use panels.
    - For critical classes or occupational groups where there is recurring turnover.
    - For positions that are continuously recruited.
    - For classes where subject matter expertise is not deemed critical when evaluating applicants' qualifications.
    - For positions which attract high volume of applications for most vacancy postings.
    - Any of the above assumes that management is secure in its position that HR has the subject matter expertise and/or knowledge of the vacancy's recruitment standards to be able to distinguish highly qualified versus qualified applicants. The assignment of this responsibility to HR rather than relying on panels has to be agreed upon by the division, facility or school HR manager. When all parties agree that HR staff is responsible for determining highly qualified applicants, the following shall apply:
      - HR will screen applicants to determine those that are highly qualified in accordance with the merit based plan and employment policies and laws.
      - Highly qualified applicants will be sent directly to the hiring manager in alphabetical order.
      - The hiring manager will determine if the highly qualified pool is adequate, and if not, the position will be re-posted.

- HR may request the assistance of a program representative to assist in the review of applications to determine the highly qualified. Likewise, management may also request of HR that a program representative participate in screening applications to determine the highly qualified, particularly when the vacancy is organizationally sensitive or technically complex.

## 6. Approval Process

The hiring manager, as determined by management for the respective position vacancy, makes the final selection recommendation and submits the recommendation with appropriate documentation to HR. The HR office shall review the package, ensure the proposed selection complies with merit based provisions and relevant employment laws and policies, and if deemed in good order, administratively approves the selected candidate.

## 7. Documentation Process

It shall be the practice of the DHHS to maintain documentation of the merit-based recruitment and selection process to support employment decisions and to provide fact-based information for monitoring and evaluating recruitment and selection practices and procedures. The following file information will be maintained in each of the HR offices for a minimum of three (3) years and will contain:

- A. Any record of job analysis conducted for the vacancy, including additional KSAs and/or selection criteria that resulted from the job analysis (or a reference to the job analysis utilized for the vacancy)
- B. Vacancy announcement
- C. Recruitment sources
- D. Selection tools and criteria
- E. Applications received
- F. Priority re-employment inventory/register
- G. Selection/decision log
- H. Inventory of applicants as unqualified, qualified, and highly qualified
- I. Copy of the rejection letter
- J. Recruitment and selection checklist (optional)

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The DHHS Division of HR will periodically review program data across the department to ensure the recruitment and selection activities are in compliance with the agency plan. HR will compile and analyze an annual summary of selection activity for the secretary. This report will include analysis of the impact on demographic groups, exceptions to policy, and other relevant factors. HR staff also will comply with the reporting and plan update requirements of the OSP.

9. Communication and Training

The DHHS will inform employees, applicants, and the general public of the merit-based recruitment and selection plan by use of the following strategies:

A. Initial Communication:

1. Summarize the department's recruitment and selection plan and distribute this information via employee pay stubs.
2. Distribute the approved department plan to executive management and the division, facility and school directors.
3. Distribute the approved department plan to all HR offices.
4. Post a summary of the approved plan with appropriate contacts and phone numbers on HR office information boards and on information boards at agency regional and satellite offices.
5. Make available a complete plan in the HR offices for employees' and applicants' review.

B. Training:

1. Train appropriate division, facility, school HR staff, hiring supervisors and panel participants in the department's plan and the requirements thereof.
2. Provide ongoing training to new supervisors, panel members and the DHHS Division of HR staff.

C. Ongoing Communication:

1. Update the department plan and information postings as plan elements and procedural changes occur.
2. Provide a summary of the plan in new employee orientations.

10. Expectations of Employees and Applicants

A. Executive Management:

Provide leadership on development and implementation of merit-based employment procedures and demonstration of ongoing commitment and support for merit-based recruitment and selection.

B. Managers and Supervisors:

1. Evaluate the need to fill vacant positions.
2. Maintain accurate and efficient position descriptions for subordinate jobs.
3. Understand the concepts of the merit based employment system and communicate the process to employees and applicants.
4. Make every effort to achieve and maintain a diverse workforce,
5. Demonstrate commitment and support for merit-based recruitment and selection.
6. Make all employment decisions based on merit based principles.
7. Document selection decisions.

C. HR and EEO Representatives:

1. Demonstrate commitment and support for merit-based recruitment and selection in daily operations.
2. Provide technical advice and assistance to managers and supervisors.
3. Develop agency-specific policies and procedures for merit-based actions.
4. Ensure that managers and supervisors are trained on a variety of issues and procedures related to merit-based recruitment and selection.
5. Monitor recruitment and selection activities to ensure adherence to merit-based policies and procedures.
6. Maintain recruitment and selection data for use in conducting employment trend analyses.
7. Notify all unsuccessful highly qualified applicants in writing informing them of their non-selection.

D. Applicants:

1. Obtain vacancy information in order to submit a job application and/or resume.
2. Provide full, complete, and accurate information on job qualifications and experience on the state application.

3. Submit the application for the vacancy by the established deadline to include relevant information on licenses and certificates.

11. Appeal Rights

A state employee or applicant for initial state employment who believes that s/he was among the most qualified persons for a position and was denied employment due to political affiliation or influence (G.S. 126-14.2) may file a complaint directly through the Civil Rights Division of the Office of Administrative Hearings.

*For questions or clarification on any of the information contained in this policy, please contact [Human Resources](#). For general questions about department-wide policies and procedures, contact the [DHHS Policy Coordinator](#).*