



MERIT SYSTEM STANDARDS

COUNTY OF VENANGO

PREFACE

This merit system was established to ensure the maintenance of a fair and just system to recruit, employ, promote and retain qualified persons for employment with the County of Venango. The Board of Commissioners has adopted these rules which preserve the principles of the merit system while being responsive to the principles of equal opportunity employment and sound labor-management relations.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The County has an Employee Handbook that is given to each new employee which is periodically reviewed for updates and approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The handbook is designed to acquaint employees with information about working conditions, employee benefits, and some of the practices affecting their employment. In the case of an employee covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the terms and conditions of said agreement supersede the provisions of the handbook.

"APPROVED"

VENANGO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

RECRUITMENT

1. *"Ensuring that announcements are posted centrally, in different work locations, and in areas open to the public."*

When regular vacancies occur or new positions are created, as determined at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners, the vacancies or new positions shall be posted in all County agency locations and areas open to the public for seven (7) business days for SEIU Union, and five (5) workdays for salaried or non-union positions. If the position(s) is within the bargaining unit, the most senior qualified employee within the bargaining unit who bids on the vacancy shall be given preference provided he/she possesses the minimum qualifications for the position and proves his/her ability to perform the functions, duties and responsibilities of the job to the satisfaction of the County. An employee submits an internal job posting/bid application to the Human Resource Department indicating their job-related skills.

If an internal union or non-union candidate is not selected to fill the vacancy, then external applicants are considered.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.01

2. *"Placement of advertisements in local newspapers, minority publications, local Bureau of Employment office(s), and appropriate professional and technical journals as determined by the vacancy of the organization's workforce."*

The job vacancies are posted simultaneously on the PA JobGateway website and/or advertised in the local newspaper and associated websites where applicable.

3. *"Other community and media sources as determined by the vacancy and the organization's workforce needs."*

The County researches local minority organizations and contacts them to determine their interest in working with us for placement.

The County of Venango has a policy statement which affirms our commitment to Equal Opportunity Employment. With that being said, and with the understanding that we are a small rural county that does not have much of a diverse population, we continue to implement new hiring practices to target minorities in our locale.

4. *"Providing for the short and long range workforce/occupational planning needs of the program."*

Annually during the budget process, the Human Resource Director, in conjunction with the department managers, provides input to the Commissioners and Finance Administrator relative to the staffing needs for the upcoming year. Items discussed include department budget, county complement, justification for filling/creating positions, etc. The same consideration is given during the year should the need arise to address staffing needs/changes.

SELECTION/APPOINTMENT

After review of applications by the Human Resource Department for required skills, competencies, and qualifications, the qualified applicants are scheduled for interviews by hiring manager. After Human Resources reviews the interview results, the hiring manager will make the final decision as to the most qualified applicant when filling the vacancy.

1. *The rules and procedures of the selection (hiring) process are thoroughly documented and provided to the Human Resources Department.*

A. A structured interview process is utilized by following an outline provided by HR.

Normally, interviews are conducted by the hiring manager and/or another supervisory employee. The applicants are each asked the same pre-determined work-related questions which are based on the requirements of the position.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.02

For exempt positions, the candidate will be selected based on the results of the assessment and the interview.

For union and non-union hourly positions, a standard testing process is followed dependent upon the position. A clerical test is given for department clerks and fiscal technicians. A caseworker exam is given to applicants for caseworker vacancies. The final hiring decision is made by the hiring manager from the pool of candidates that were successful in the required testing and interview process.

B. Job descriptions will be created and edited to ensure that the job requirements correlate to the duties and responsibilities of the vacancies.

C. Consideration of the impact of selection methods and examination material on minorities and women.

The County will consider the impact that selection methods and exam materials have on minorities and women.

D. The County creates and maintains, for each vacancy, recruitment files for a minimum of three years. All non-qualified and non-selection candidates will receive written notification.

2. *"Minimum qualifications for appointments and promotions are developed, uniformly applied, and met by all successful candidates."*

Each applicant is evaluated to measure their skills, competency, and qualifications to ensure that each new hire or promotion meets the position requirements.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.02

3. *"Adherence to state requirements for veterans' preference in hiring in accordance with the PA Military Affairs Act."*

The County shall adhere to state requirements for veterans' hiring preference in accordance with the PA Military Affairs Act.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.03

4. *"All candidates are considered equally."*

The Board of Commissioners agree that no provisions of this system shall be applied to discriminate against any individual with respect to hiring, compensation, terms or conditions of employment, because of an employee's age, race, color, sex, national origin or disability. The Board of Commissioners will not limit, segregate or classify employees in any way to deprive any employee of employment opportunities because of age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability. Discrimination as used in this provision refers only to discrimination which is prohibited by state and/or federal law.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.04, 1.05, 1.06 and 1.07

5. *"Legitimate evaluation of performance standards is used during probation periods and beyond."*

The County of Venango uses a probationary period to evaluate employee capabilities, work habits, and overall performance through an end of probation evaluation. Additionally, formal performance evaluations are conducted annually.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.08 1.09, and 1.10

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

1. *"Formal and written procedures exist on promotions."*

The County adheres to written procedures for promotions.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.11

2. *"Promotions are made on a competitive basis."*

Promotions are made on a competitive and non-competitive basis where justified.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.11 and 1.12

3. *"There is a formal procedure independent of county management for appealing or challenging promotion decisions (which are separate from any grievance procedure contained in a collective bargaining agreement) of which employees are made aware in a published writing."*

Any appeals made against promotion decisions shall be subject to the Alternate Dispute Resolution policy.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.13

POSITION CLASSIFICATION AND COMPENSATION

1. *"Class specifications for each job title are developed through job analysis and reflect the level, scope, and complexity of the work performed by that job title. Class specifications must explain in detail the type, level, and scope of work and the minimum qualifications required."*

Current job descriptions are maintained on regular full-time and regular part-time positions; job descriptions are reviewed and signed by the supervisors and their respective employees for placement in employee personnel files. When revisions to the job descriptions are necessary, the supervisor of said position submits the modifications to the Human Resource Department for re-evaluation.

2. *"Compensation is linked to the classification plan and reflects responsibility and difficulty of the work, and labor market conditions which exist in the county."*

Each position is analyzed to measure responsibility and difficulty involved in the essential job functions before being assigned to an appropriate pre-determined county pay scale. Job title consistency is maintained within the exempt-level classifications.

See Exhibit Comp. 2.01, 2.02, and 2.03

3. *"The county's classification and compensation plan listing all job titles used by the county and the corresponding range of pay must be supplied to the DHS annually. Note: In order to determine the level of reimbursement from the Commonwealth to the county for employee salaries, the DHS will crosswalk county job titles to a comparable state job title and pay scale group. Reimbursement will only be authorized up to the maximum of the comparable pay scale group."*

See Exhibit Comp. 2.04

4. *"Appropriate and current job descriptions are maintained on each position; job descriptions are reviewed periodically, and available to employees."*

All current job descriptions shall be maintained by the Human Resource Department. Employees may request a copy of any job description at their discretion.

5. *"Compensation plans contain rules for their administration."*

Administrative Rules for the Implementation of the Pay Plan are adopted every year by the Board of County Commissioners and enforced by the Human Resource Department. Annually, the Board of County Commissioners adopts a comprehensive pay plan for eligible employees. This would include salary increases for eligible salaried and non-union positions. In addition, the County consistently administers a pay grade system which assigns each job title to a pay grade consistent with the duties and responsibilities associated with that position. All hourly union employees are covered by their respective CBA agreements, all of which contain wage provisions.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.11

A position complement is also ratified annually which includes every department's total number of approved salaried and hourly positions. Salary histories for all employees, i.e., salaried, union, and non-union hourly employees for the County of Venango are on file in the Human Resource Department. The complement lists all active positions including regular and non-regular part-time positions, temporary positions, and full-time hourly positions which include 35, 37.5, and 40 hour work weeks.

See Exhibit Comp. 2.05

TRAINING AND EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

1. *“Employees receive basic orientation and training as needed to maintain and improve current job skills.”*

Specific training/orientation is conducted relevant to the employee’s position which would also include a formal teaching mechanism developed by the Integrated Training Committee. Each department budgets a certain amount of money dedicated to external training and/or seminars. The County also regularly offers other specific training to all employees, i.e., FLSA, FMLA, Harassment Awareness, Drug and Alcohol, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), HIPAA, Defensive Driving, Bloodborne Pathogen, and Workplace Security.

See Exhibit Comp. 3.01

2. *“A system exists for the identification of organizational training needs.”*

Each of our human service departments has a set plan to make sure each new employee meets all state training requirements at the time of hiring, continuing to monitor training needs for the length of employment. The human service departments have developed committees to determine which training is needed for each employee.

See Exhibit Comp. 3.01a, 3.01b, 3.01c

LAYOFFS, SEPARATIONS, AND EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS

1. *“Individual records and employment histories are maintained for all employees that are accurate and which are protected from unauthorized or inappropriate access.”*

The County keeps an up-to-date personnel file on each employee. The personnel files contain information including a copy of a current driver's license, a detailed and up-to-date salary report, any required Pennsylvania or Federal clearances, past and current performance appraisals, and other sensitive employment information.

See Exhibit Comp. 4.01

2. *“An equitable plan for the layoff/furlough of employees.”*

In the event where it is necessary for an employee to be laid off, a minimum of ten work days' notice is provided before the actual layoff is to occur.

Furloughs may occur due to lack of funds or lack of work and the return rights of employees furloughed shall be as follows:

A) A furloughed employee shall have the right of return to any position which was previously held, provided such position is contained in the current classification plan of the agency; or to any position in the same or lower grade, provided that the employee meets the minimum qualifications given in the job description of the agency.

B) The appointing authority shall promptly report to the Human Resources Director the names of employees furloughed, together with the date the furlough of each is effective and the character of their services. A regular employee furloughed shall for a period of one year be given preference for reemployment in the same paygrade from which furloughed and shall be eligible for appointment to a position of a comparable paygrade in other departments unless the terms of an existing labor agreement preclude the employee from receiving the preferential treatment contained in this section in which event the terms of the labor agreement shall be controlling.

See Exhibit Comp. 4.02, 4.03

3. *“There must be procedures for the evaluation of employees' work performances including a procedure for an employee to appeal.”*

The County administers six-month probationary evaluations on all human services employees. Additionally, employees for the duration of their employment will also undergo annual evaluations to ensure that position goals are being met and personal and professional growth is occurring while identifying any issues that need corrected through encouragement or training. After each evaluation is completed, the employee is asked to review the evaluation, ask questions, and voice opinions on the subject. Employees have the opportunity on the evaluation form to indicate their concurrence or non-concurrence and to make comments relative to their performance evaluation. Any issue the employee may have is documented and brought to the attention of their supervisor, the department head, or Human Resources when applicable.

Should an employee's wish to appeal their evaluation, they shall adhere to the direction and procedures contained within the Alternate Dispute Resolution policy.

Probationary employees have a right to a limited appeal.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.08

4. *"The work performance appraisal procedures must be based upon a systematic job analysis of work performance under standards that have previously and timely been communicated to the employee."*

Annual evaluations and probationary evaluation dates are tracked through the use of our MUNIS software. Reports are sent monthly to respective supervisors. Each report lists current evaluations due and are released one month in advance to ensure the supervisor has sufficient time to review with employee(s) and to complete the evaluation in a timely manner.

See Exhibit Comp. 4.04, 4.05, 4.06, and 4.07

5. *"Employees must receive written periodic evaluations of their performance from their immediate supervisor."*

Annually each employee undergoes an evaluation based upon the previous year's accomplishments, goals, and overall work performed. The evaluation dates are tracked and monitored to ensure that each employee receives their annual evaluations in a timely manner.

See Exhibit Comp. 1.10

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

1. *"There is an independent formal process with procedures for employees to challenge unfair treatment."*

All job selections, promotions, assignments, compensation, training, benefits, discipline, and termination will be based solely upon an individual's personal merits, qualifications, and ability. No individual shall be discriminated against based on race, color, religion, disability, ancestry, age, sex, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Employees who believe they have been discriminated against in any of the aforementioned ways are encouraged to file a complaint with their immediate supervisor, the Director of Human Resources, the Bureau of Equal Opportunity, the PA Human Relations Commission, or the Office for Civil Rights. All contacts are listed on the Venango County EEO policy located on the public bulletin boards at our various County facilities.

2. *"Equal Employment Opportunity objectives based upon the make-up of the local labor force must be established and monitored."*

The County maintains an EEOP database that tracks minority employment as well as male/female break-downs for all EEOP coded positions. The database is compared against the government census information for our area to determine our utilization of minorities and women and ensure our workforce is as equally diverse as our community.

3. *"A policy must be written and published making clear that an agency is an equal opportunity employer."*

Venango County posts a copy of the EEO policy upon all public County bulletin boards for all individuals to reference. At any time, a copy can also be requested from the Human Resource Department.

EMPLOYEE-EMPLOYER RELATIONS

1. *"No provision against collective bargaining."*

The County of Venango recognizes that certain categories of County employees have the right under Pennsylvania law to engage in collective bargaining over the terms and conditions of employment.

2. *"Where collective bargaining takes place there must be procedures established assuring that collective bargaining agreements do not infringe upon merit principles."*

When the County engages in the collective bargaining process with organized employees, due regard will be given to the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements that recognize and do not infringe upon merit principles of hiring. Obviously, the County also recognizes that collective bargaining is a two way street and the concurrence must be obtained of collective bargaining groups and their duly authorized bargaining representatives.

APPEAL AND ADJUDICATORY PROCESS

1. *"A merit system must include the right of an employee to enforce his/her rights through an appeal and adjudicatory process which grant relatively speedy hearings and quick adjudications."*

See Exhibit Comp. 1.13

2. *"The appeal process must extend to all personnel actions affecting employment including termination from employment, suspension from employment, involuntary demotion, furlough from employment, and any personnel action that the employee believes to be based on non-merit factors or which the employee believes to stem from illegal discrimination."*
3. *"The appeal process must be independent of county management; i.e., a panel appointed by county commissioners with staggered term limits, a contract with the State Civil Service Commission, a contract with a private contractor with such expertise, or any other method the DPW determines to be adequate."*
4. *"There must be a record of the adjudicatory hearings and decisions must be issued in writing and must contain the reasons for the decision."*

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

1. *"All employees are regularly informed of their rights and responsibilities under the State and Federal laws."*

Political activity guidelines for all classified service employees are subject to Section 905.2 of the Civil Service Act.

See Exhibit Comp. 6.01

2. *"There must be written policy statements concerning political activity which are consistent with State and Federal laws."*

See Exhibit Comp. 6.02 and 6.03