COUNTY OF ADAMS
HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE
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Adams County Merit Hire Policy and Procedures for Children & Youth Services

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Introduction

In 2015, the Adams County Commissioners (hereinafter "County") determined that it was in the best interest of the County and the County's Office of Children and Youth Services (hereinafter "the Department") to withdraw from participation in the Pennsylvania State Civil Service Commission, and adopt a merit-based hiring system pursuant to the standards set forth in Title 5 C.F.R. Part 900 – Intergovernmental Personnel Act Programs. The principles which inform the County's Merit Hire program are:

1) To recruit, select, and advance employees based on relative ability, knowledge, and skills.
2) To provide equitable and adequate compensation.
3) To train employees to perform assigned job functions in a competent manner.
4) To base employee retention on performance; to correct inadequate performance; and to separate employees who are unable to perform to the required standards.
5) To assure fair treatment to all applicants to and employees of the County in all aspects of personnel administration without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, familial status, political affiliation, or disability, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights. This fair treatment principle includes compliance with federal equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination laws.
6) To assure that employees are protected against coercion for partisan political purposes and are prohibited from using their official authority for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or nomination for office.

See 5 C.F.R. § 900.603.

Statement of Policy

It is the County's policy to recruit and select the most qualified candidates for vacant positions and to do so in a manner that provides equal employment opportunities, ensures open competition, and prohibits discrimination.

Statement of Scope

This policy applies to all County employees responsible for the selection, hiring, management, and/or retention of CYS employees.

Collective Bargaining Statement

The County does not prohibit employees from organizing or participating in collective bargaining activities. In the event that CYS employees organize and become subject to the provisions of a collective bargaining agreement and the terms of that agreement conflict with this policy, the terms of the collective bargaining agreement shall prevail.

Equal Opportunity Employer Statement

The County is an equal opportunity employer. It is the policy of the County to grant equal employment opportunities to qualified persons regardless of race, religion, creed, ancestry, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, pregnancy, familial status, veteran status, genetic information, or any other categories protected by federal, state, or local laws. The County will provide equal opportunities in promotion, wages, benefits, and all other privileges, terms, and conditions of employment. Complaints or other communication regarding possible discrimination should be raised with the Director of Human Resources or the Adams County Commissioners

Employment Procedures

I. Prior to Recruitment

A. New Positions

Prior to recruiting for a new position, the following shall occur:

1. The direct supervisor for the new position shall, in coordination with HR, create a job description for the position.
2. The job description shall be approved by the CYS Administrator.
3. Once approved by the CYS Administrator, HR shall evaluate the job description and assign it a pay grade. This assignment shall be based upon the pay grades of similar positions within the Department and in comparison with similar positions in Children and Youth agencies in surrounding counties.
4. The new position, including proposed pay grade and wage, shall be submitted to the Commissioners for consideration and approval. If approved, the position will be presented to the Salary Board to set the wage and pay grade for the position.

B. Existing Positions

Prior to recruiting for an existing position, the following shall occur:

1. Generally, job descriptions are reviewed and updated annually. If needed, the direct supervisor for the position shall review the current job description and make any changes required to ensure the job description is an accurate representation of the position. If changes are made, they shall be approved by the CYS Administrator.
2. HR shall review and approve the job description. If changes have been made, a determination will be made regarding whether a change in pay grade and/or starting wage is appropriate.
3. A Request for Board Action Form explaining any changes to the position and requesting Board approval thereof shall be submitted to the Chief Clerk for presentation to the Commissioners.

4. The Salary Board must approve any changes in pay grade and/or starting wage.

II. Recruitment

A. Posting and Advertisement of Vacancies

1. The County reserves the right to not post a vacancy due to business conditions.

2. With the exception of the above, all vacancies must be posted. Vacancies shall initially be posted for fourteen (14) days utilizing the County's online application system. HR may elect to first post the vacancy for seven (7) days internally to assess current employee interest.

3. HR shall advertise all employment vacancies on the County website and the ADP Portal. The County may also advertise vacancies via the following mediums:

   a. Employment-related entities, such as Career Link
   b. College career services (i.e., through websites and campus job fairs)
   c. The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) website and other employment websites.

4. If no suitable candidates are identified through the recruiting process, HR will determine if additional advertising is needed or if the position should be readvertised externally for an additional time period.

B. Internal Consideration for Vacancies

1. Current County employees shall be considered for promotional advancement, based upon such factors as the employee's performance record, abilities, personal credentials, and previous work experience.

2. Former employees shall be eligible for rehire, so long as the employee worked at least two entire weeks prior to his/her last day and left voluntarily with sufficient notice of resignation.

3. The County participates in the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (hereinafter, "CWEB") program. This program is a cooperative effort among the United States Administration for Children and Families, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and fourteen (14) undergraduate social work degree programs in Pennsylvania accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Its goal is to strengthen public child welfare services in Pennsylvania by providing educational opportunities for undergraduate social work majors preparing for employment in one of Pennsylvania's sixty-seven (67) public child welfare agencies. CYS may offer qualified individuals who are enrolled as social

work majors at one of the approved schools (on either a full-time or part-time basis) educational fellowships. In return, an individual must make a contractual obligation to accept employment in a Pennsylvania public welfare agency upon completion of their education. Under the County's Merit Hire system, if a student completes a fellowship at a Children and Youth Agency in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and earns a bachelor's degree, that student will be eligible to apply at the Caseworker 2 level. These students will also be eligible to apply as candidates internal to the County.

4. CYS Interns may be considered for open positions after they have met all the requirements of their intern program and have successfully completed their course of study. They must also meet the minimum requirements of the position. Interns shall be considered candidates internal to the County.

5. Internal candidates shall be given first consideration for vacancies. This does not, however, mean an internal candidate must be selected if he/she is not the most suitable candidate, or even interviewed if he/she does not meet the minimum qualifications of the posting.

C. Applications

1. All applications for employment must be completed on the County's online applicant tracking system. Applications received via any other means shall not be considered.

2. Internal candidates must complete an updated employment application when applying for an open position.

3. Former employees must submit a new application and will be considered along with other qualified candidates for the position.

D. Application Review

1. Factors that may be considered during the review process, include, but are not limited to:

    a. Minimum Qualifications, to ensure the applicant meets the minimal qualifications of job description/posting.
    b. Availability for work.
    c. Work Eligibility, confirming that the individual has the legal right to work in the United States.
    d. Work History, including any separations for employment in prior positions
    e. Gaps in work history.
    f. Criminal conviction(s), which must be reviewed by the Solicitor.

2. The Hiring Team shall be appointed by the HR Director and CYS Administrator and shall include representatives from both Departments.

III. Interview and Selection

A. After the Hiring Team has reviewed the applications, the Team must notify the HR representative of their availability for interviews and specify which applicants they would like to interview. It is recommended that the top three to four candidates be interviewed.

B. The HR representative will schedule the interviews with the selected candidates. The Hiring Team will conduct initial interviews. Second round interviews for the most qualified candidates may be conducted, if needed.

C. The Hiring Team will utilize a structured panel interview methodology. This methodology supports Merit Hire, as it is based on a solid job analysis, an applicant's skill set, and their relevance to the position being filled. The Hiring Team will rank the candidates using an Interview Evaluation Form that is specific to the position, where Veteran or Veteran Spousal status will be noted, if applicable.

D. In the interview process, the role of the HR representative may include the following:

1. Confirm and/or discuss information from the original application; and
2. Ask assessment questions.

E. In the interview process, the role of the Hiring Team shall be to outline information pertinent to CYS and the vacant position, such as education, training, and specific skills needed for the position.

F. Certain candidates may be required to undergo additional assessment as part of the interview process.

G. Applicants entitled to veterans' preference who meet all required employment criteria will receive additional consideration in recognition of their military service pursuant to the Pennsylvania Military and Veterans Code, 51 PA C.S.A. § 7101.1. Applicants entitled to spousal preference who meet all required employment criteria will receive additional consideration in recognition of their status as a widow or widower of a deceased veteran OR the spouse of a fully (100%) disabled veteran. *See* 51 PA C.S.A. § 7108. In the case that there are equally qualified applicants, preferences shall be given in the following order:

1. Applicants who qualify for veterans' preference.
2. Applicants who qualify for veteran spousal preference.
3. All other applicants.

H. After the interview results have been reviewed and the Hiring Team has selected a preferred candidate, a conditional offer of employment shall be made, pending pre-employment screening results and further Salary Board action. The following pre-employment screenings may be required:

1. CYS shall ensure that the required background checks for working with children in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are conducted. These shall include an FBI Criminal Background Check, a Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Records Check, and a Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance. 23 Pa. C.S.A. § 6344(b). Once an offer of employment has been made, the new employee is responsible for obtaining an FBI fingerprint. This must be completed prior to the commencement of employment.
2. HR shall ensure that criminal background checks are completed, including federal, state, and local criminal histories.
3. HR shall conduct all reference checks, which are required to verify the validity of the information provided in the application/resume and during the interview. Educational qualifications, work experience, and military records should be verified. Reference checks shall be sent via e-mail to the references provided.
4. Candidates shall be required to undergo a pre-employment drug screening conducted at an occupational medicine practice, as directed by the employer. Due to medical confidentiality, the Hiring Team shall not be given any details of the drug screen beyond whether the candidate passed or failed.
5. If applicable, candidates shall be responsible for providing HR with proof of veteran or veteran spousal status, through DD-214 or other documentation.

I. After a conditional offer of employment has been made, HR will complete a Request for Board Action for Salary Board review. This Request shall note the job title, starting date of employment, and suggested rate of pay.

J. If the Salary Board approves the Request and the candidate successfully passes all required pre-employment screenings, an official offer of employment shall be made.

IV. Performance Reviews

A. All newly hired, promoted, or transferred employees shall have a six-month probationary performance evaluation. The probationary period of an employee may be extended at the discretion of their supervisor. An employee can move out of probationary status once they have attained an overall performance rating of "meets expectations."

B. Once out of probationary status, an employee shall have a performance evaluation on the one-year anniversary of the date of hire, and annually thereafter.

C. Overall performance ratings can be found to be exceptional, exceeds expectations, meets expectations, nearly meets expectations, and fails to meet expectations.

D. Employee performance reviews may be used for promotion, demotion, or other employment decisions.

E. Employee performance review determinations may be appealed under the County's Alternative Dispute Resolution (hereinafter "ADR") policy as employee work performance appraisals.

V. **Internal Transfers**

A. When hiring, it is the responsibility of HR to include a current employee's application for a new position in those presented to the Hiring Team for consideration, so long as the employee meets the minimum qualifications for the position.

B. HR shall present the Request for Board Action and any clarifying documentation to the Salary Board for approval prior to an official job offer.

C. In the event that a current employee is selected and subsequently accepts a position in a new department, the transferring employee shall provide a written 14-day notice to his/her current department head.

Record Retention

I. All current job descriptions, as well as the most recent prior version, shall be maintained electronically by HR.

II. Recruitment files shall be created for each vacancy, including the job posting; application and resumes; interview questions and responses; interview ranking sheets; non-selection and non-qualified letters; and a copy of the spreadsheet tracking applications and determinations. For candidates who are offered a position, reference checks and transcripts shall also be included. Recruitment files shall be maintained for three years, or until an audit has been conducted by DHS, whichever is longer.

Furlough

I. Furloughs are temporary layoffs from work for certain employees. They may occur due to lack of need or funding for one or more positions in CYS.

II. Procedures

A. The need for a furlough shall be at the sole discretion of the Commissioners. When the need for a furlough has been determined, HR will work with the CYS Administrator to determine the order of layoff.

B. When a furlough is necessary, all probationary employees will be furloughed first, in order of their hire date, least to most senior. If additional separations are required, regular full-time employees will be considered based on seniority.

C. Department employees who must be separated will be given a furlough notice as soon as possible, but no later than fourteen (14) days from the date the furlough will begin. This notice shall include the employee's most recent job title, reason for furlough, date of separation, and the employee's right to appeal under the ADR policy.

D. Return to Work List

1. When an employee is separated from employment due to a furlough, they will be placed on a "Return to Work" list. The most recently separated employee will be placed at the top of the list, so that employees return to work in order of seniority, most to least senior.
2. A furloughed employee will have a right to vacancies in the department that match the classification of the position from which the employee was separated, for one year from the furlough date.
3. When an opening occurs, HR will review the furlough list with the CYS Administrator and offer employment to the person at the top of the list, so long as they are qualified for the position. If employment is accepted, the employee will be reinstated at the same rate and benefits package that they had before separation, unless an agreement is reached for a different position and pay rate. If a person on the list refuses employment that they are qualified for, they will be removed from the list and will need to reapply for future openings with the County. If an employee finds other work within the County, they shall be removed from the list. HR shall ensure that all employees on the list have been offered the positions for which they are qualified, and either accepted or refused, before beginning the recruitment process for a vacant position.
4. It is the furloughed employee's responsibility to keep all contact information up-to-date with HR while on the list.

Political Activity

I. The County recognizes the importance of the electoral process and system to the lives of its employees, as well as to all citizens of the County. Accordingly, the County strongly encourages all employees to exercise their political rights in the proper manner and at the proper time and place.

II. The County employs and serves a diverse population. It is vital to the interest of the County that its employees neither engage in, nor appear to engage in, partisan political activity during working hours at County worksites. Any employee found to

be in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

III. Prohibited activity.

A. Employees may not engage in political activities while on duty.

B. If an employee's salary from the County is paid in full by federal loans or grants, whether paid directly or indirectly through state and federal agencies, that employee may not run for public office in a partisan election.

C. No employee who runs for public office in an election may:

1. Use federal or other public funds to support his/her candidacy;
2. Use any County resources to support his/her candidacy, including email, stationary, office supplies, or other County equipment; or
3. Ask or otherwise recruit subordinates to volunteer for or otherwise contribute to the campaign.

IV. If employees have questions or concerns about their political engagement pursuant to this policy, they should seek guidance from their supervisors. In the event that the supervisors are unable to assist, the individual may, singly or jointly with their supervisor, seek further guidance from the Solicitor's Office.

Office of the Adams County Commissioners

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Commissioners: Randy L. Phiel, James E. Martin, Mark A. Clowney
Chief Clerk: Paula V. Neiman | County Administrator: Steven A. Nevada
Solicitor: Molly R. Mudd, Esquire

ADAMS COUNTY

Adams County Merit Hire Policy & Procedures
For Children & Youth Services

This Policy is effective the 16th day of September, 2026.

ATTEST:

Paula V. Neiman
Chief Clerk

ADAMS COUNTY BOARD
OF COMMISSIONERS

Randy L. Phiel, Chairman

James E. Martin, Vice-Chairman

Mark A. Clowney, Commissioner