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OF COOK COUNTY

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LETITIA DOMINICI
COMPLIANCE OFFICER

County Building
118 North Clark Street - Room 868
Chicago, Illinois 60602-1304
(312) 603-6857 TEL
(312) 603-0039 FAX

March 15, 2013

Toni Preckwinkle, President
Office of the President
Board of Commissioners of Cook County
118 N. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60602

Patrick Blanchard, Independent Inspector General
Office of the Independent Inspector General
69 West Washington, Suite 1160
Chicago, IL 60602

Mary Robinson, Compliance Administrator
Office of the Compliance Administrator
69 West Washington, Suite 840
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: March 2013 Semi-Annual Report

Dear President Preckwinkle, Inspector General Blanchard and Ms. Robinson:

This is the second semi-annual report issued pursuant to the Employment Plan that was filed on March 19, 2012 and includes monitoring activities during the previous six months. Again, emphasis has been placed on the significant transformations that have taken place within the past year that support the key commitments made for increased transparency in hiring and the elimination of political considerations from decision-making in all employment actions for non-exempt positions. This report will be posted on the County's website as required by the Employment Plan. Please note that, in addition to my responsibilities related to monitoring activities in Offices Under the President, for the past year I have also been assisting with hiring matters and issues with the Cook County Health and Hospital System which will not be addressed in this report.

Postings on Cook County's Website:

The Bureau of Human Resources' link has consistently been updated to include amendments of the Employment Plan and current exempt lists with the names of those employees holding exempt positions. In the last report, I anticipated that quarterly employment action reports for 2012 would be posted, reflecting the number of new hires, transfers, promotions and terminations by Department. *

***Employment Actions:** Monthly reports and quarterly reports have not been sent to the Compliance Administrator's Office and the Office of the Independent Inspector General since last May due to technological challenges. The Bureau of Human Resources and the Bureau of Technology have created a new reporting tool to revise the mechanism for generating these reports. At the present time, testing of the new reporting tool is underway and all monthly reports for 2012 will be rerun and sent to the appropriate parties. Additionally, the quarterly employment action reports for 2012 will then be posted online. The quarterly reports will include the number of new hires, promotions, transfers and terminations categorized by Department, effective date, job title, posting online or an emergency hire as set forth in the Plan.

Training:

The goal to train all employees under the Offices of the President in 2012 was met. Currently, new employees and employees returning from a leave of absence who were not trained in 2012 are trained face-to-face within 90 days of their start/return date. I continue to view training as the single most important component to reaching substantial compliance with the requirements of the Supplemental Relief Order. Several Departments have requested "refresher" training that has been provided.

The 2013 Annual Employment Plan Training will consist of two online training modules. Tom Conway, Training Manager, Barbara Pryor, HRIS Director, Francesca Gaeta, Training Coordinator IV, and I developed the modules with the assistance and consultation of the Bureau of Technology. All employees must take the online training developed on the Employment Plan and supervisors/interviewers will be required to take an additional module in order to remain certified to conduct interviews. We are in the last stage of finalizing the modules and scheduling training, which we hope to begin in April. The Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) will participate in the online training and will also receive face-to-face, comprehensive training sometime in May. Related tools for Departments to use are available on the County intranet (CCNET) and revised guidelines for interviewers will be available with the new training modules, based on related questions and issues that arose this past year.

Requests to Hire/Job Descriptions:

I have reviewed approximately 59 Requests to Hire with no issues. Reviewing all job descriptions continues and this task will take some time to accomplish to ensure that the duties and minimum qualifications are up-to-date and accurate. During the past six months, I have reviewed approximately 27 job descriptions and worked with BHR as well as various Departments on the edits. As the Shakman certification form is no longer used, replaced by the No Political Consideration Certification that is embedded in all forms, this part of the process has become more efficient for everyone involved in the general hiring process and for monitoring purposes.

Randomizations:

I have observed approximately 71 randomizations without any substantive concerns being raised; in fact, I attended all but one randomization during the period covered by this report. There were several occasions where minor issues arose due to monitoring, and resolutions were reached in all instances after discussions with BHR staff and the Compliance Administrator's Office.

Actively Recruited Positions:

The Actively Recruited Positions Hiring Process is an exception to general hiring and one of the most-recent amendments to the Employment Plan. This process is used exclusively for a defined set of positions where the hiring Department takes the lead by designating a three-member panel to review applications and resumes. The panel decides which candidates will be interviewed. Department Heads also have the option of conducting second interviews for these positions. The challenge with this



process is due to timing because training in 2012 was completed before this amendment was incorporated into the Employment Plan (2013 training will include this amendment). To introduce Departments to this new section of the Employment Plan, BHR staff and I flag these positions and have met with Departments to ensure that the proper steps are followed and related questions are fully addressed prior to posting the vacancy. To date, there have been five (5) Application Review Panels that convened, three (3) of which I monitored at the Department of Revenue, Medical Examiner's Office and Public Defender's Office, without issue.

Validation of Candidates/Interview Lists:

Since the last report, I have reviewed approximately 77 interview lists that the Bureau of Human Resources staff generated after validating candidates. Discussions regarding validations have occurred in conjunction with the Compliance Administrator's Office based on questions regarding monitoring activities. Consistency in implementing the Employment Plan plays a significant role in its success as each step must be followed throughout the hiring sequence. Maureen T. O'Donnell, Bureau Chief of Human Resources, sent a memo to Bureau Chiefs and Department Heads on October 16, 2012 and on March 14, 2013, requiring that they send notice of discipline to BHR to ensure that employees who have been suspended/terminated in the past year are removed from eligibility for a position for which they applied. This will also enable me to monitor discipline to ensure that political considerations are not the basis for discipline.

Recommendation Letters:

Approximately 60 recommendation letters have been submitted to me and processed, with some logged as political contacts and sent to the Office of the Independent Inspector General. All letters were compliant with the Employment Plan, as opposed to patronage recommendations, which would be investigated by the Office of the Independent Inspector General.

Interviews/Selection Meetings Monitored:

I have monitored 11 sets of interviews and 7 selection meetings. Based upon my observations during the interviews and selection meetings, there have been minor issues. Interview Panel Members voluntarily disclose potential conflicts of interest and regularly ask questions to ensure they can fairly score candidates. Certain Departments have taken the initiative to substitute an Interview Panel Member prior to the start of the interviews or to remove the conflicted Panel Member from an interview. Departments have followed recommendations given by the BHR Analysts and me in these situations.

The new hiring-related forms have successfully been used for six months. There are less frequent issues regarding documentation that must be provided during interviews as interviewers have become more acclimated to the process and the revised forms. Scoring of candidates using the new Interviewer Evaluations Forms, combined with BHR's responsibility for tallying the Interview Panel Members' scores



and embedding them on the Interview Panel Ranking form, has provided consistency and greater ease for reviewing documents. As the steps in the Employment Plan have become routine, there have been very few mistakes, e.g., forgetting to circle a score for a question after interviewing a candidate, tallying the weighted values to equal 100% and not including candidates who scored below a 3.0 on the Interviewer Panel Ranking Form. These errors were either spotted quickly or resolved through discussions with the Compliance Administrator's Office and me. There have been several instances when the selection meeting occurred outside the required three business days after the last interview. Since Interview Panel Members can participate by phone, if necessary, such instances should rarely occur. The BHR Analyst now sends offer letters to candidates after reviewing the Decision to Hire forms.

If there are errors with this form, either the Department is contacted and/or the form is returned for additional information prior to final approval.

The noticeable pattern emerging indicates that the BHR Analysts and Departments are re-reviewing items, asking questions, catching missteps and bringing issues to my attention to work through to a resolution.

Application Tracking and Application System:

Barbara Pryor, Director of HRIS, has been working for the County approximately nine months and has positively impacted the issues and challenges the County faced with the Application Tracking and Application System (also known as "Taleo"). User group meetings with representatives for each elected official and entity using the online system have continued and the Recorder of Deeds and Juvenile Temporary Detention Center joined the meetings, since those two offices will be using Taleo in the near future. The system is currently undergoing a redesign to upgrade key functions that will create efficiencies; for example, utilizing a workflow that will provide information for candidates from the initial step of creating a requisition through sending an offer letter to a potential hire. This functionality will assist tremendously with auditing of hiring activities.

Complaints:

Since the last report, two Employment Plan Complaints were investigated and Incident Reports issued. Complaints #12-002 and #13-001 resulted in findings of no violations of the Employment Plan so BHR Reports were not required. Complaint #12-002 did involve follow-up from the Department and I have recently discussed the finding with the Department. As there have been no violations of the Employment Plan, this report does not contain any remedial action or corrective action taken. Please note that the mechanism for the public to request reports generated as a result of investigations is by sending a request for documents. To date, no request for documents has been sent to my attention. I believe that the small number of complaints filed indicates that the Employment Plan is effective. I regularly receive phone calls from employees and candidates, inquiring about their applications and I always inform them of the option to file an Employment Plan Complaint if they are not satisfied with my explanation or if they have additional information that they could provide. One applicant did not like



the fact that I told her she did not meet the minimum qualifications and she asked me to give her a break and let her come down and interview; however, I responded that I could not give her any preferential treatment. She proceeded to leave several voicemail messages to BHR staff and myself, stating that I was mean, that I crushed her and that she should vote Republican.

Exempt Appointments:

The certification process per the Employment Plan that was established in 2012 is being followed to ensure that persons appointed to these positions meet the minimum qualifications. The exempt list updates have been consistently sent to me for review and posted on the County's website since May 17, 2012. A paper copy is prominently displayed in the Bureau of Human Resources main office.

Interns/Externs:

For the past six months, I have closely monitored intern placements that are an exception to general hiring in the Employment Plan. Inquiries for interns have been directed to me and I have ensured that the exception is properly followed. There have been five (5) occasions where the interns were placed at the County and, in each instance, the academic institution or non-political organization has been fully compliant with all steps in the process. My review included speaking with the representatives of the schools to ensure that they understood the process and to verify that the Department did not conduct interviews nor had any input into the decision-making process for the candidate selected. No Political Consideration Certifications were executed and submitted with the required memo sent to the Bureau of Human Resources. There was one occasion where the school's placement process was interactive with the employer and student, which is not in sync with the exception so there could not be placements from that particular academic institution. On another occasion, a summer fellow with Cook County wanted to pursue an internship at a Department for the fall quarter; however, the quarter already started and, after my discussions with the school representative, we agreed that it was too late for the student to pursue an internship at that time.

Executive Assistant:

One Department wanted to appoint a current employee to an Executive Assistant position and asked me to review the packet. While all of the documentation met with the requirements of the Employment Plan, the employee was in a probationary period and could not be placed in this title.

Layoff List:

Layoff lists for 2012, as well as recalls from the 2011 layoff lists, were provided to the Compliance Administrator's Office, Office of the Independent Inspector General and me to monitor. I reviewed the information provided and did not see any issues with the layoffs/recalls as conducted per the Employment Plan.



A Few Observations:

Some Departments have not sent the required notices to the Compliance Administrator's Office or me related to the general hiring process, but it appears to have been inadvertent and does not happen often.

There was an occasion when a candidate provided an unofficial transcript and when the BHR Analyst received the official transcript the candidate did not have the required degree and was removed from the list of candidates to be ranked at the selection meeting.

Applicants continue to send resumes to Departments via U.S. mail and email. Standard language has been drafted, directing the candidate to apply online and informing them that the County no longer accepts paper applications and resumes for job postings.

I continue to have access to all Bureau of Human Resources files, including a large volume of computerized data. Additionally, I continue to obtain any requested documentation from Departments, which cooperation guarantees successful monitoring activities.

Conclusion:

Since the Employment Plan was filed almost a year ago, it has provided a road map that has improved hiring and moved the County closer to its goal of reaching substantial compliance with the requirements of the Supplemental Relief Order. The processes in the Employment Plan will become second nature. The majority of employees who are following procedures, policies, steps and rules have contributed to positive changes in hiring at Cook County. I will continue my commitment to increase oversight and accountability to ensure that full compliance with the Employment Plan remains a top priority.

Lastly, through the tireless efforts of the President's Office, the entire Bureau of Human Resources staff and the assistance of the Compliance Administrator's Office and the Office of the Independent Inspector General in working through issues, I am deeply grateful for all of their cooperation and help as I would not otherwise be able to monitor all the activities required of me pursuant to the Employment Plan.

Sincerely yours,



Letitia Dominici

cc: Maureen T. O'Donnell, Bureau of Human Resources
Laura Lechowicz Felicione, Office of the President

