



BUREAU OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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TONI PRECKWINKLE

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September 13, 2013

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Office of the Independent Inspector General
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Chicago, IL 60602

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

RE: September 2013 Semi-Annual Report

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

This is the third semi-annual report issued pursuant to the Employment Plan that was filed on March 19, 2012 and includes monitoring activities during the past six months. My priority has been to ensure that the commitments made for increased transparency in hiring and the elimination of political considerations from decision-making in all employment actions for non-exempt positions continue on a daily basis. This report will be posted on the County's website as required by the Employment Plan.

Supplemental Policies:

One of the remaining steps towards substantial compliance for the Offices under the President was finalizing the Supplemental Policies Manual which became part of the Employment Plan effective August 1, 2013. As required by the Employment Plan, the Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) and representatives of Departments under the President attended training on the Supplemental Policies and related forms in August. Because the Supplemental Policies must be considered when making decisions about employees, in addition to the Employment Plan, Collective Bargaining Agreements and Personnel Rules, Departments were encouraged to contact BHR or me for purposes of clarification, questions on implementation and use of the forms. The Bureau of Technology submitted two requests for internal preference for promotions which were approved and one informal request, which was not approved because the position had been posted online several months prior to the effective date of the Supplemental Policies. The Department of Transportation and Highways submitted a request for a reclassification and the Medical Examiner's Office submitted a request for an interim assignment. Both requests were approved. The Office of the Public Defender and Bureau of Technology sent discipline along with the required forms. All related documentation and forms have been forwarded to the Compliance Administrator's Office and the Office of the Independent Inspector General and I will continue to monitor implementation of the Supplemental Policies.

Training Status:

The 2013 Annual Employment Plan Training consists of two online training modules. All employees must take the online training developed on the Employment Plan and supervisors/interviewers are required to take an additional module in order to remain certified to conduct interviews. Online training began on May 17, 2013 and will finish by the end of the year. Approximately 1,567 employees have been trained online, including face-to-face training for employees who do not have access to a computer in their jobs. BHR participated in the online training and received face-to-face, comprehensive training in May. Related tools for Departmental use are available on the County intranet (CCNET), including 2013 Revised Guidelines for Interviewers, which were updated based upon related questions and issues that arose this past year. Currently, new BHR employees and supervisors are trained face-to-face within 90 days of their start date.

Postings on Cook County's Website:

The BHR website link has consistently been updated to include amendments to the Employment Plan, Supplemental Policies, an exempt list containing the names of employees holding exempt positions and exempt job descriptions.* The certification process for exempt hires that was established in 2012 is being followed to ensure that persons appointed to these positions meet the minimum qualifications.

Applicant Tracking and Application System (a/k/a Taleo):

A Taleo redesign has been underway for months and is near completion. The redesign created efficiencies in the hiring process, and information previously not accessible in Taleo is now readily available, such as information on interviews scheduled or an offer made to a candidate. The redesign team devised one client selection workflow, which replaced the multiple workflows previously used. Countless hours have been spent on this effort, including testing to ensure that the redesign will be effective. This information tremendously assists with monitoring and auditing responsibilities. I participated in the redesign and will continue to attend user group meetings with representatives for each elected official and entity using the online system.

Requests to Hire/Job Descriptions:

I have reviewed approximately 91 Requests to Hire with no issues. Within the last several months, BHR staff stopped assisting the Health and Hospital System with hiring and has refocused to help the Departments review job descriptions and post vacancies to fill. I have had the opportunity to review approximately 37 job descriptions and have been involved in discussions with Departments to change the minimum qualifications in order to reflect current job duties, which is a critical part of the hiring process. One Department wanted minimum qualifications revised contingent upon graduating with a Bachelor's degree within six months of the date of hire, which would not only be a challenge to validate but to ensure that the employee graduated within that timeframe after being hired. Of course, this request was not approved. Another example of discussions on minimum qualifications arose when one Department decided to include minimum qualifications stricter than a state licensing law and in effect lessened the pool of candidates for the position. The job descriptions are being revised and the positions will be reposted.

Randomizations:

During this monitoring period, 75 randomizations occurred without any substantive concerns being raised, including 11

*Employment Actions: BHR and the Bureau of Technology are in the final phases of generating monthly and quarterly reports with a new reporting tool. I anticipate that the quarterly reports will be posted online as set forth in the Employment Plan during the next reporting period. These reports will reflect the number of new hires, promotions, transfers and terminations categorized by Department, effective date, job title, posting online or emergency hire.

that BHR staff observed when I was unable to monitor.

Actively Recruited Positions:

The Actively Recruited Position Hiring Process is an exception to general hiring and allows the hiring Department the opportunity to designate a three-member panel to review applications/resumes to create an Interview List, eliminating the randomization of candidates. Department Heads also have the option of conducting second interviews for these positions. During this reporting period, I monitored three (3) Application Review Panels from the County Auditor and Medical Examiner's Office, without issue. However, the Office of the Public Defender did not provide notice to the Compliance Administrator's Office or to me as required by the Employment Plan. I requested that the Office reconvene the meeting with notice so monitoring could take place. The Application Review Panel met and conducted a thorough review of the eligible candidates without issue.

Validation of Candidates/Interview Lists:

Since the last report, I have reviewed approximately 146 interview lists that the BHR staff generated after validating candidates. Discussions regarding validation issues with the Compliance Administrator's Office continue but are infrequent due to the fact that BHR staff has been doing an excellent job with this task. One step in the validation process that was presenting challenges was obtaining discipline from Departments to assist with removing names of those employees (or former employees) that were suspended within the previous 12 months. Maureen T. O'Donnell, Bureau Chief of Human Resources, sent several communications reminding Bureau Chiefs and Department Heads that notice of discipline must be sent to BHR to ensure compliance with the Employment Plan. Departments have been sending more discipline than in the past and, since the Supplemental Policies became effective on August 1, 2013, this additional control should reinforce this step and assist with compliance.

Assistance from the Bureau of Technology with validating technical minimum qualifications began in late spring for 11 positions. This "dual" validation was closely monitored and has provided a benefit not only to BHR staff but to the hiring managers. BHR staff has a better understanding of the intricacies of the technical minimum qualifications in the job description and the Department representatives experience how the application and resumes of each candidate are examined.

Recommendation Letters:

Approximately 337 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. The vast majority of the recommendation letters are associated with the Office of the Public Defender.

Interviews/Selection Meetings Monitored:

I have monitored 9 sets of interviews and 6 selection meetings. My observations during the interviews and selection meetings have revealed only minor issues. BHR reviews all questions prior to the interviews and, where there have been concerns, the questions have been revised. There have been several occasions when a candidate has failed to bring the required documentation to interviews, although the posting informs each candidate of this responsibility. BHR and Departments have consistently been advising the candidate that they have until the end of the last interview to bring the documentation; otherwise, they will be considered ineligible from further consideration.

The hiring forms have been successfully used for one year and have provided consistency and greater ease for reviewing documents. Based upon my observations from monitoring, the Actively Recruited Position Hiring Process in the Employment Plan is being amended to require that the interview forms be used for the first and second sets of

interviews. For some reason, which I believe was to allow flexibility in choosing candidates for a second interview, the Interview Panel Ranking form was not required, which caused confusion.

There have been several instances when the selection meeting inadvertently occurred beyond the required three business days after the last interview; however, these Departments will be monitored to ensure a pattern of choosing not to comply with the timeframe does not emerge. There were several occasions where the Departments either did not provide notice of the selection meeting to the Compliance Administrator and to me or did not conduct the selection meeting within three business days after the last interview. In these instances, I instructed the Departments (Bureau of Technology, Revenue and Medical Examiner's Office) to send notice and reschedule the selection meeting.

I would like to recognize BHR staff and the assistance they have provided to me. On many occasions, they bring items to my attention where the steps in the Employment Plan are being questioned. Discussions have taken place with strong suggestions communicated to the Departments; and, on each occasion, the resolution complied with the Employment Plan, which is how I envision the Employment Plan was designed to work.

Complaints:

Since the last report, four Employment Plan Complaints were filed; two involved the Health and Hospital System, which will not be discussed in this report, and two involved Offices under the President. Complaint #13-004 was opened to determine whether or not Section V.C.1., Prohibited Contacts, of the Employment Plan was violated; however, the allegation was unfounded.

On July 26, 2013, I issued an Incident Report for Complaint #13-005, finding a violation of the Employment Plan. The Office of the Public Defender has been operating an intern program that is noncompliant with the Employment Plan. Per the Employment Plan, a meeting was scheduled on September 12, 2013, with a representative of your Office and the Chief of BHR with the Public Defender. I will provide an update in my next report.

Please note that the mechanism for the public to request reports generated as a result of investigations is a Request for Documents. To date, three Requests for Documents have been sent to my attention from the Office of the Public Defender for Incident Report #13-005 and responses have been sent pursuant to the Employment Plan.

Interns/Externs:

I continue to closely examine intern placements that are an exception to general hiring in the Employment Plan. Placements are funneled through the Compliance Office to ensure the steps are properly followed. There have been 37 interns placed into positions at the County and, in each instance, the academic institution or non-political organization has submitted the No Political Consideration Certification and has been fully compliant with the process. The number of interns does not include those interns who are part of the Internship Program at the Office of the Public Defender. Additionally, several Commissioners and staff members have come to the BHR and the Compliance Office for direction on obtaining interns per the Employment Plan.

Executive Assistant:

During this reporting period, there have been four Executive Assistant II positions filled in compliance with the Employment Plan.

A Few Observations:

I was pleased to learn that the Medical Examiner's Office embedded the Employment Plan in its Policy Manual, which was distributed to all employees.

BHR has worked with several Departments to develop writing sample assessments, where this skill is critical to the position, and multiple choice questions for technical positions. Hopefully in the future, these types of tests will be utilized more frequently during the interview process.

I continue to have access to all BHR files, including a large volume of computerized data. Departments have cooperated with providing requested documentation.

Conclusion:

Consistency in implementing the Employment Plan plays a significant role in its success and familiarity with the steps in the process will allow compliance with the Employment Plan procedures to become second nature in the near future. A majority of Cook County employees are following the steps in the Employment Plan and continue to contribute to positive changes that will lead to substantial compliance with the Shakman Consent Decree. I will continue my monitoring to ensure that full compliance with the Employment Plan remains a top priority.

Lastly, I will reiterate exactly what I stated in my previous report. I am deeply grateful for the tireless efforts of the President's Office, the entire Bureau of Human Resources staff, the Compliance Administrator's Office and the Office of the Independent Inspector General. Without their cooperation and help, 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