



BUREAU OF HUMAN RESOURCES

PIEMENGIE N. HAMISU

COMPLIANCE OFFICER

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TONI PRECKWINKLE

PRESIDENT

**Cook County Board
of Commissioners**

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17th District

March 15, 2022

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

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

RE: March 2022 Semi-Annual Report

Dear President Preckwinkle and Inspector General Blanchard:

Attached please find the March 2022 Semi-Annual Report, which details compliance-related activities of the past six months. It is the eighteenth report issued pursuant to the Employment Plan filed in March 2012.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at 312-603-6857.

Sincerely yours,

Piemengie N. Hamisu

Piemengie N. Hamisu
Compliance Officer

Enclosure

cc: Lanetta Haynes Turner, Chief of Staff, Office of the President
Laura Lechowicz Felicione, Special Legal Counsel to the President
Velisha L. Haddox, Bureau Chief of Human Resources



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MARCH 2022 SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

This is the eighteenth Semi-Annual Report issued pursuant to the Cook County Employment Plan filed in March 2012, with a status of activities during the past six months. This Report will be posted on the County's website as required by the Employment Plan.

Employment Plan and Supplemental Policy Training

The County must implement training on the Employment Plan through All-Employee, Supervisor/Interviewer and comprehensive Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) training no later than 90 days after employment or promotion. From September 1, 2021 through March 1, 2022, all trainings were conducted virtually, through Microsoft Teams. 152 new employees attended virtual in-person orientation and 63 supervisors and/or interviewers completed virtual in-person Supervisor/Interviewer Training. Additionally, this reporting period, six (6) employees attended a virtual in-person training session on the Supplemental Policies Manual.

Annual All-Employee and Supervisor/Interviewer online Employment Plan Trainings launched on September 21, 2021 and were completed at the end of December 2021. 1982 employees completed online All-Employee Employment Plan Training through the Learning Management System (LMS) platform, and 367 employees completed online Employment Plan Training for Supervisors/Interviewers through the LMS platform. Annual BHR Employment Plan Training was held on October 14, 2021.

The County, through BHR, contracted with Deloitte in part to assist the BHR Workforce Strategy Division with areas of the hiring process typically handled by Workforce Strategy Analysts. In December of 2021, the Deloitte team participated in related training including, but not limited to, the Cook County Employment Plan, General Hiring Process, and the hiring process for Actively Recruited Positions. Additional trainings are provided to the Deloitte team as needed and training materials, including recordings, are readily accessible by the Deloitte team.

Quarterly Employment Action Reports

The BHR Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS) Division, the Bureau of Technology (BOT) and the Compliance Office recently met on February 28, 2022 to discuss system challenges and work related to refinement and optimization of the BHR Report.

The BHR website was updated this reporting period to include Employment Action Reports for Quarters 1 and 2 of 2019, and Quarter 4 of 2020. The Reports reflect the total number of hires, promotions, transfers, and terminations by department, including Emergency hires and *Shakman* Exempt positions. My Office works with the HRIS Division on a regular basis to review the Reports as they are generated, and BHR will continue to update the website with outstanding Reports.

Exempt List and Exempt Job Descriptions

The Exempt List posted on the BHR website continues to be modified. The List was updated on the following dates during this reporting period: October 8, 2021; November 30, 2021; January 26, 2022 and February 14, 2022. The Compliance Office periodically conducts audits of Exempt hires in Taleo to ensure compliance continues. The OIIG and my Office continue to review and approve newly created and modified Exempt job descriptions. There are no substantial issues to report with this process.

Requests to Hire/Job Descriptions

The Request to Hire (RTH) Form initiates the hiring process. Hiring Departments determine the operational need to fill a vacancy or create a new position, complete the RTH Form and upon budget approval the RTH is electronically sent to the BHR Workforce Strategy Division for approval. This reporting period, BHR approved approximately 198 RTH Forms. My review this period included 30 of the Forms.

Revised and new job descriptions are brought to my attention and issues are discussed as needed. Additionally, the Deputy Bureau Chief of BHR (or Designee) and I meet on a bi-weekly basis to discuss issues and/or concerns related to job descriptions. This reporting period, I have reviewed approximately 68 job descriptions for Exempt and Non-Exempt classifications.

Randomizations

In the six-month monitoring period, I monitored 10 randomizations. The pre-randomized and randomized Preliminary Eligibility Lists are provided per the Employment Plan. BHR Workforce Strategy staff has diligently applied the provision under Section V.I of the Employment Plan, *Creation of Preliminary Eligibility List*, and the randomization process continues to be implemented with minimal issues.

Actively Recruited Positions and Assistant Public Defender Positions

Actively Recruited Position hiring allows eligible candidates to move forward in the hiring process without randomization and certified panel members meet to create Interview Lists. Actively Recruited job descriptions can be amended with proposed changes provided to the OIIG and I for review.

My Office monitored 11 Application Review Panel meetings conducted to fill vacancies at the Public Defender's Office, Medical Examiner's Office, the Bureau of Human Resources, and the Department of Capital Planning & Policy. The BHR Workforce Strategy team attended additional review panel meetings to facilitate the process and kept me apprised of the sessions. Panel members reviewed all materials prior to and during the meetings and were prepared to assess candidates to place on Interview Lists.

Five (5) positions in the Public Defender's Office were processed in accordance with the respective section in the Employment Plan during this reporting period. Assistant Public Defender I, Senior Policy Advisor, Immigration Unit Staff Attorney, Director of Legislative and External Affairs – Criminal Justice and Director of Community Engagement positions were all processed with an Application Review Panel that convened to create Interview Lists. There are no material issues to report.

Validation of Candidates/Interview Lists

During this reporting period, I reviewed approximately 82 Eligibility Lists prior to interviews being conducted. Occasionally, errors were discovered. In such instances, the Workforce Strategy Analyst and/or Deloitte Recruiting Consultant were notified of the errors and asked to make corrections. I continue to monitor validation of the Eligibility Lists to ensure steps are completed in a comprehensive and thorough manner.

Recommendation Letters

The Employment Plan explicitly states that written recommendations for any applicant, candidate or employees shall be reviewed for compliance with the Plan and placed in an individual's employment file if selected for employment. Recommendation letters that meet the requirements of the Employment Plan are given to the interview panel at the selection meeting. Interview panel members are aware that any recommendation letters presented at the time of interview need to be processed through BHR and Compliance. Eleven (11) recommendation letters were processed. Ten (10) focused on the personal knowledge of individuals' work, skills, experiences, or other job-related qualifications. One (1) letter did not focus on the personal knowledge of the individuals' work, skills, experiences, or other job-related qualifications and was not provided at the Selection Meeting. All letters were placed in the respective Interview Files, and none required a Political Contact Log.

Interviews/Selection Meetings Monitored

During this reporting period, I monitored some or all interviews for approximately 33 job postings and attended 19 selection meetings. The BHR Workforce Strategy team and Deloitte Consultants also attend interviews and facilitate selection meetings.

Complaints/Investigations/Corrective Action

Complaints under my authority to investigate include allegations of a violation of the Employment Plan, Supplemental Policies and/or Personnel Rules in connection with an employment action. If there is a finding of a violation or non-compliance with the Employment Plan, BHR should issue a BHR Report within 30 days of receipt of the Incident Report or submit a written request for an additional 30-day extension to issue the responsive report. The following three (3) Incident Reports were issued this reporting period:

Complaint # 21-006: The Public Defender's Office sought to hire and/or onboard candidates who failed post-offer drug screening tests. Additionally, one of the candidates in question attended New Employee Orientation (NEO) hosted by the Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) and began working in the Law Office of the Public Defender without proper authorization and receipt of the post-offer drug screening results, in violation of Section V.T.1, *General Hiring Process – Post-Offer Testing – Drug Test* of the Employment Plan.

The investigation revealed that while the Bureau Chief of BHR instructed her team the candidate was not to attend NEO or commence work until after receipt of an acceptable Post-Offer Testing result, the information was, unintentionally, inaccurately conveyed to the staff responsible for registering NEO participants. As such, the candidate attended NEO and was permitted to begin work at the Public Defender's Office. Upon receipt of the candidate's unsatisfactory test result and notice that they were already working, the candidate's offer of employment was rescinded and their employment with the County was terminated.

I recommended that BHR finalize the SOP related to post-offer screening tests, train employees responsible for the process and develop procedures through which the Personnel Services Division and the Training Division work together to ensure only those employees authorized to attend New Employee Orientation, in fact attend. Additionally, I recommended that the Public Defender's Office review its processes related to hiring and onboarding and create written SOPs that provide clear guidance to staff responsible for Human Resources matters, including, but not limited to, onboarding candidates. The BHR Report was timely received and the Bureau Chief of BHR agreed with my findings. This matter is open, pending receipt of the finalized SOPs.

Complaint # 21-008: The Department of Facilities Management interviewed a candidate without collecting requisite documents from the candidate. Additionally, Facilities Management failed to timely submit Interview Evaluation Forms to the Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) after interviews concluded and was thus unable to conduct the Selection Meeting within the timeline prescribed by the Employment Plan, in violation of Section V.N. *General Hiring Process-Pre-Interview License and Certification Verification* and Section V.Q.1 *General Hiring – Selection Meeting* of the Employment Plan.

Following this incident, I met with employees responsible for coordinating interviews and collecting requisite documents, the BHR Analyst, and the Interview Panel to discuss the errors made. The Facilities Management employees critical to the interview process completed a refresher Employment Plan Training for Supervisors/Interviewers and are now fully aware of proper interview process requirements and understand the importance of adherence to the mandates of the Employment Plan. The BHR Report was timely received and the Bureau Chief of BHR agreed with my findings. This matter is closed.

Complaint # 21-009: An employee of the Law Office of the Public Defender engaged in inappropriate discussions with an applicant during the hiring process, violating section V.G, *General Hiring Process – Permitted Contacts from Applicants* of the Employment Plan.

Upon advertising a Public Defender position posting on her personal social media page, the employee included a statement informing interested individuals to reach out to discuss the position. The employee who shared the position was unclear about permissible discussion requirements re social media postings and acknowledged her mistake. I recommended that the employee attend a refresher Employment Plan Training for Supervisors/Interviewers before sitting on future interview panels.

The BHR Report was timely received. While the Bureau Chief of BHR agreed there was a violation, BHR and the Public Defender's Office, after careful consideration, declined to agree with the recommendation because the employee lastly attended the recommended training at the end of 2021 and will attend the same this year. As decided by BHR and the Public Defender's Office, the employee will have a separate meeting with experts on the matter within the Public Defender's Office. The Chief of BHR and I met and discussed this matter. An update will be provided in the next Report.

Interns/Externs/Fellows

During this reporting period, Section XI of the Employment Plan, *Intern/Extern Hiring Process*, was utilized to place 10 interns, externs and/or fellows into positions throughout OUP.

Emergency Hires

The Department of Facilities Management utilized the Emergency provision under Section VII of the Employment Plan, *Exceptions to the General Hiring Process*, this reporting period.

Executive Assistants

One (1) Executive Assistant was hired during this reporting period.

Direct Appointments

Three (3) Public Defender Direct Appointments were made during this reporting period.

Supplemental Policies

In the past six months, the following requests and associated forms were submitted per the Supplemental Policies:

Reclassification Requests: A total of three (3) requests were received - two (2) from the Department of Revenue and one (1) from the Department of Administrative Hearings. While results of salary surveys conducted for the Department of Revenue positions were approved by BHR and the Compliance Office, the changes are yet to be reflected in Oracle EBS. As to the Department of Administrative Hearings position, a desk audit was conducted and BHR determined no change in classification was necessary.

Interim Assignment Requests: Three (3) requests were submitted by the Bureau of Human Resources and all requests were approved and processed with no issues.

Disciplinary Action: During this reporting period, 41 instances of discipline were processed. 39 Disciplinary Action Forms and 12 Discipline Notice and Request for Approval Forms were provided by Departments.

Discipline Audit: The Compliance Office completed its seventh review of discipline this reporting period and issued an Audit Report on February 4, 2022, covering the time frame of October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021. The audit encompassed all Offices Under the President, in accordance with Supplemental Policy 2013-2.8.

18 Departments did not issue discipline during the relevant time frame. Discipline issued by 14 Departments was reviewed in detail. The total amount of discipline reviewed, including oral and written reprimands, suspensions, and terminations of non-probationary employees from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021 was 86.

The total number of Disciplinary Action Forms, including Discipline Notice and Request for Approval Forms, sent to BHR and the Compliance Office (BHR/CO) during this time frame was 37. The total number of Disciplinary Action Forms not sent to the BHR/CO was eight (8). Please note that some Departments sent Disciplinary Action Forms containing written reprimands to BHR/CO, although this step was not required. Such instances are noted in the Report and its attachments.

Four (4) of the 14 departments reviewed were 100% compliant with successful implementation of all the steps outlined in the policy while 10 of the 14 departments were not fully compliant with the disciplinary sequence.

The Audit Report details my recommendations regarding internal process flow, filing of required documents and training. As in previous years, it was recommended that the Report and its attached data be shared with departments, as the in-depth information can aide them when issuing discipline and maintaining their files.

Ineligible for Rehire List

Former employees who are deemed disqualified or ineligible for employment due to reasons listed in the Personnel Rules, a finding related to unlawful political discrimination and/or engagement of prohibited political activity are placed on an Ineligible for Rehire List. Individuals on the List are not allowed to move forward in the hiring process, whether the position is Non-Exempt or Exempt. During this reporting period, the List was updated by BHR on September 15, 2021 and November 15, 2021.

Interview File Audit

Every quarter, randomly selected Interview Files are audited after completion of the hiring cycle. 16 areas on the BHR Interview File Checklist, tied to the hiring steps, are examined along with required documentation that must be housed in the files. During this reporting period, 30 electronic Interview Files were reviewed and scored for each category on the Checklist.

Scores have improved since implementation of a revised Interview File Checklist. However, inconsistencies with maintaining the Files remain present. Based on my review of Interview Files this reporting period, the following common issues were found:

1. interviewers scored 1 and 5 on the Interview Evaluation Forms without noting comments;
2. Several Request to Hire (RTH) Forms were not in the shared folder titled, *RTH Docs for Compliance Officer*.

When interviewers score a 1 or 5 on the Interview Evaluation Form, the rationale for their score must be documented in the comments section. See Section V.O.3, *General Hiring Process - Interviewer Evaluation Form and Preparation of Interview Panel Ranking Form* of the Employment Plan. I recommended that the Workforce Strategy Team pay special attention to the Interview Evaluation Form during their review to ensure panel members provide comments for scores of 1 and 5. Completed RTH Forms should be provided to the Compliance Officer within five days of receipt, as mandated by the Employment Plan. See Section V.B.4, *General Hiring Process - Distribution of Completed RTH Forms* of the Employment Plan. The folder, *RTH Docs for Compliance Officer*, was created to facilitate this mandate. Moving Forward, the Team should ensure the RTH Forms are scanned into the appropriate folders, continue to utilize the Checklist for all Interview Files, and perform audits of their own files to maintain compliance.

Audit Reports are provided to the Bureau Chief of BHR, and issues are regularly discussed for resolution.

Third-Step Grievance Hearings and Employee Appeals Board

I monitored three (3) Third-Step Grievance Hearings conducted by BHR Hearing Officers during this reporting period and did not observe any discrepancies during the monitored hearing with respect to following written procedures. There are no matters pending before the Employee Appeals Board.

Meetings

I meet with Lanetta Haynes-Turner, Chief of Staff and Laura Lechowicz Felicione, Special Legal Counsel, Office of the President every quarter and as needed to discuss implementation of the Compliance Program and any issues that may need attention to ensure the Program is effective. Each month and as required, the Independent Inspector General, Patrick Blanchard, and I meet regarding all aspects of the Employment Plan and investigations. Additionally, I meet monthly and as needed with the BHR Chief, Velisha Haddox, on all facets of the Program.

Conclusion

The Report shows the County continues to implement the Employment Plan in a reasonable and consistent manner. Issues are continuously spotted, resolved and/or investigated. I am appreciative of everyone involved in providing assistance with my compliance activities.