

Due Diligence in Hiring Healthcare Employees

Having qualified, competent, and reliable employees in healthcare settings is pivotal to providing exceptional care, preventing patient harm, and reducing liability exposure. Due diligence of the workforce begins during the hiring process and should include thorough screening of candidates and verification of their skills and expertise. A paper in the *University of Cincinnati Law Review* explains that “Predicting the likelihood of future malfeasance by any single employee is impossible, [but] effective backgrounding enhances quality of care, decreases risks, and lowers costs.”¹

Healthcare organizations should have formal recruiting and hiring processes in place that comply with state and federal laws, and individuals involved in hiring should consistently apply these processes to all applicants. Lax or inconsistent employment processes can pose risks to patients, other employees, and the corporate entity.

The following tool offers a high-level list of areas to review and validate for applicants during the hiring process.¹ This list is not exhaustive, and the process will vary depending on the type of position and qualifications required. However, healthcare organizations can use this checklist as a starting point to assess their processes and identify potential gaps.

	Yes	No
Education and Training		
Have you verified the applicant’s education and training, including:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational transcripts and diplomas from degree programs? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation of educational institutions? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residency/internship certificates of completion? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹ Healthcare organizations should get appropriate consent, authorization, and release forms from applicants to do background checks, contact references and employers, verify academic performance, etc.

	Yes	No
Education and Training (continued)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References from residency/internship program directors to verify performance and competency? Specialty board status? Continuing education certificates showing completion of adequate hours? 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Licensure and Certification		
<p>Have you verified the applicant's licensure and certification, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active state license and letters of good standing in any states in which licenses were obtained? National Provider Identifier? Drug Enforcement Administration number? Medicare number that is current and unencumbered? Proof of board certification or eligibility? Basic, advanced, and/or pediatric advanced life support certification? 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Experience and Work History		
<p>Have you verified the applicant's experience and work history, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current and prior employment (accounting for and clarifying any gaps in employment/residencies)? Scope of practice or professional duties (including experience in clinical practice for clinicians)? Staff privileges at current and prior places of employment? At least three professional recommendations/references that are validated with follow-up communication?² 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

² Healthcare organizations should require applicants to provide a copy of a government-issued photo identification as part of the hiring process. A picture of the applicant should be included with requests for recommendations/references to ensure that the applicant has not misappropriated the identity of another individual.

	Yes	No
Malpractice Claims and Adverse Outcomes		
<p>Have you reviewed the applicant’s history of malpractice claims and negative clinical outcomes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Practitioner Data Bank? • Negative sanctions from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Inspector General? • Insurance loss runs (for the last 10 years if available, or 5 years at minimum)? • Board of Medical Examiners’ investigations? • Prior professional disciplinary actions? 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Character, Conduct, and Health Status		
<p>Have you reviewed the applicant’s personal character, conduct, and health status, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general internet search and social media screening (used unofficially to identify potential red flags)? • State and federal criminal background checks, including sex offender registries? • History or red flags related to substance abuse, including drug testing (according to organizational policy)? • Any remediation efforts that the applicant has taken in relation to substance abuse issues? • Attestation of physical abilities from a licensed healthcare provider (according to organizational policy)? • Necessary health screenings and vaccinations? 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Insurance Coverage		
<p>Have you verified the applicant’s insurance coverage, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of malpractice insurance, including current certificate of coverage with policy number and copy of declarations? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Endnote

¹ Winn, J. I., & Govern, K. H. (2018). Due diligence and legal obligations of employment screening in healthcare organizations. *University of Cincinnati Law Review*, 87(1), 1–27. Retrieved from <https://scholarship.law.uc.edu/uclr/vol87/iss1/1/>

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