

GIVING EMPLOYMENT REFERENCES

Before giving an employment reference:

1. Contact the Human Resources Department and verify a release of liability form is on file.
2. Check out the legitimacy of the person calling.
3. Make sure the inquiry is legitimate by asking what position the former employee applied for.
4. Determine whether the former employee has given permission and/or a waiver to allow the prospective employer to talk with you.
5. State the information you are giving is confidential, cannot be passed on, and should be treated confidentially. Say "I am providing information only because you requested it and only for professional purposes."

When giving an employment reference:

1. What you say must be true.
2. Make sure all released information is documented.
3. What you say must be relevant to job performance.
4. What you say must have a bearing on the new job.
5. Only provide information which relates to the job and job performance in question. If the new job has no bearing on the old job, indicate you have no feel for how former performance has a bearing on the new position.
6. What you say must not be said for purposes of harming a former employee but only to answer questions.
7. Do not volunteer information, respond directly to the question.
8. Keep a brief record of who called, what was asked, what was provided, and the date and duration of the conversation.
9. Do not answer questions such as "Would you rehire this person? Would you recommend applicant for position sought?"
10. Do not answer questions "off the record." All questions are clearly discoverable in a lawsuit.
11. Do not provide vague statements such as "He was average." Provide answers which match the documentation exactly.
12. Do not make subjective statements which cannot be backed up by documentation.
13. Be sure to state why you made the opinion. "He received a rating of unsatisfactory on job attendance because he was absent from work five times during the month of May."
14. Affirm or deny information that was given the inquirer by the former employee and indicate if you have documentation to back up your statement.
15. If the former employee has been involved in some very serious offense relating to health and safety of others instead of such things as poor performance then the prospective employer should not be misled. Be sure documentation backs up what you say and tell the truth.
16. When responding to a written inquiry, do not fill in the blanks or check choices which do not match exactly the documentation you possess.