

# Background Check Procedures

Background check procedures are to be conducted on selected candidates after making a conditional offer of employment, but prior to extending a formal offer of employment, unless an exemption has been granted to the Fair Chance Hiring Policy. If an exemption has been granted, part of the background check procedure may be conducted *prior* to the conditional offer of employment. Up to five different checks may be conducted as part of the background check procedure: a **criminal history** check, an **experience verification** check, an **education verification** check, a **licensure verification** check, and a **state tax compliance** check. Detailed instructions for conducting these checks are outlined below.

Questions regarding these procedures should be directed to Miranda Martin at [mirmartin@pa.gov](mailto:mirmartin@pa.gov) or (717) 857-3309.

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## CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK

A criminal history check must be conducted on all selected external candidates prior to extending a formal employment offer, as well as internal candidates who are selected for positions that mandate more extensive criminal history checks. The State Police Pennsylvania Access to Criminal History (PATCH) check is the minimum criminal history check that must be completed; however, agencies are permitted to conduct additional criminal history checks if desired. Additionally, public safety agencies are excluded from this process.

1. Delivery Center (DC) staff must conduct a criminal history check on the selected candidate using the PATCH system website: <https://epatch.state.pa.us/>.
2. Refer to the "[How to Run Pennsylvania State Police Checks](#)" document (located on the NEOGOV Resources page of the HRM website – [www.hrm.oa.pa.gov](http://www.hrm.oa.pa.gov)) for step-by-step instructions, complete with screenshots, on conducting PATCH checks.
3. If no criminal history is found, the candidate passes the criminal history check.
4. If criminal history is found, once the results are received from State Police, DC staff must send the appropriate NEOGOV notice template to request an explanation from the candidate and conduct an individualized assessment to determine if the offense prohibits employment in the position.
  - a. If the criminal history is determined to be related to the position, DC staff must notify the candidate via NEOGOV notice template that he/she is no longer being considered for employment and initiate the list removal process, if applicable. DC staff must notate the referred list to indicate that the candidate did not pass the background check.
  - b. If the criminal history is determined *not* to be related to the position, DC staff must request approval to appoint. The candidate is considered to have passed the criminal history check upon completion of the approval to appoint.

5. PATCH results and any other criminal history records for candidates who are hired should be stored in the "Criminal Background Checks" document type of the electronic official personnel file (E-OPF). PATCH results and any other criminal history records for candidates who are not hired should be attached to the exam plan in NEOGOV.

**In summary, a candidate is considered to have passed the criminal history check if:**

- **No criminal history is found, or**
- **Criminal history is found, but it is not related to the position and approval to appoint has been received**

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## **EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION CHECK**

If experience is needed to qualify for a position, then the minimum amount of qualifying experience must be verified by DC staff. If experience is not needed to qualify (i.e. the candidate qualifies based on education or licensure, or there are no METs), then experience verification does not need to be conducted.

1. DC staff must review the candidate's application in NEOGOV to determine if experience was needed to qualify for the position, and if so, identify which particular employment or volunteer experience(s) were needed. If staff are unsure which experience was used to qualify the candidate:

-For **non-civil service vacancies**, DC staff must contact Staffing Services via [ra-bsewebe-mail@pa.gov](mailto:ra-bsewebe-mail@pa.gov) to determine if experience was needed to qualify for the position, and if so, ask Staffing Services to identify which particular employment or volunteer experience(s) were needed.

-For **civil service vacancies**, DC staff must contact the State Civil Service Commission via [ra-cs-scscqanda@pa.gov](mailto:ra-cs-scscqanda@pa.gov) to request that the Commission identify the particular experience that was needed for the candidate to meet the METs.

2. DC staff must verify the minimum amount of qualifying experience that is needed (i.e. all potentially qualifying experience does not need to be verified; only the minimum amount of experience needed to meet the METs must be verified).
3. If the experience has been previously verified, per documentation in the "Experience Verification" document type in the E-OPF, the candidate is considered to have passed this background check. A second verification of the same experience is not necessary.

4. If the experience has not been previously verified, then DC staff must verify the qualifying experience.

-Via telephone, DC staff must contact the company or organization where the experience was obtained and complete the "[Experience Verification – Internal Use Only](#)" form. In this case, the DC staff member will obtain the necessary information over the phone and will sign the form. The signed copy must be uploaded to the hire form in NEOGOV.

-If the company or organization cannot be reached by telephone, the "Experience Verification" NEOGOV notice template must be sent to the employer. In this case, the employer will provide the necessary information via email response to DC staff. The employer's response must be uploaded to the hire form in NEOGOV.

5. If the experience can be verified, the candidate passes this verification check. DC staff must upload a copy of the verification documentation to the hire form in NEOGOV and the "Experience Verification" document type in the E-OPF.
6. If the experience cannot be verified by DC staff, then DC staff, Staffing Services staff, or State Civil Service Commission staff (i.e. whichever group performed the initial evaluation of eligibility) must re-evaluate the candidate's application and/or resume to determine if there is other qualifying experience and/or education that would qualify the candidate for the position. If so, the new experience and/or education must be verified following the instructions above.
7. If DC staff is unable to verify the necessary experience and/or education, DC staff must contact the candidate via NEOGOV notice template and request that the candidate provide the experience and/or education verification. If there is no response to the NEOGOV notice template, and the deadline for response is approaching, DC staff should try reaching the candidate via telephone.

-Acceptable documentation from the candidate includes, but is not limited to:

- job descriptions with dates of employment signed by the former employer
- notarized statements or a statement on company letterhead from the former employer including dates of employment and job title held

8. If the candidate supplies acceptable verification documentation, the candidate passes this verification check. DC staff must upload a copy of the documentation to the hire form in NEOGOV and the "Experience Verification" document type in the E-OPF.
9. If the candidate does not supply acceptable verification documentation, and there is no other qualifying experience and/or education to consider, DC staff must notify the candidate via NEOGOV notice template that he/she is no longer being considered for employment and initiate the list removal process, if applicable. DC staff must notate the referred list to indicate that the candidate did not pass the background check.

**In summary, a candidate is considered to have passed the experience verification check if:**

- **DC staff can verify the qualifying experience using documentation already uploaded to the candidate's E-OPF or hire form in NEOGOV, or**
- **The candidate supplies acceptable documentation verifying the qualifying experience**

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## **EDUCATION VERIFICATION CHECK**

If education is needed to qualify for a position, then the qualifying education must be verified by DC staff. If education is not needed to qualify (i.e. the candidate qualifies based on experience or licensure, or there are no METs), then education verification does not need to be conducted.

1. DC staff must review the candidate's application in NEOGOV to determine if education was needed to qualify for the position, and if so, identify which component of the education was necessary for the candidate to qualify (i.e. a general diploma, a post-secondary degree, a post-secondary degree in a particular major, specific coursework, etc.). If staff are unsure which education was used to qualify the candidate:

-For **non-civil service vacancies**, DC staff must contact Staffing Services via [ra-bsewebe-mail@pa.gov](mailto:ra-bsewebe-mail@pa.gov) to determine if education was needed to qualify for the position, and if so, ask Staffing Services to identify which particular education was used.

-For **civil service vacancies**, DC staff must contact the State Civil Service Commission via [ra-cs-scscqanda@pa.gov](mailto:ra-cs-scscqanda@pa.gov) to request that the Commission identify the particular education that was needed for the candidate to meet the METs.

2. DC staff must verify the minimum amount of qualifying education that is needed (i.e. *all* education may not need to be verified; only the minimum amount of education needed to meet the METs must be verified).
3. If the education has been previously verified, per documentation in the "Education Verification" document type in the E-OPF, the candidate is considered to have passed this background check. A second verification of the same education is not necessary.

4. If the education has not been previously verified, then DC staff must verify the qualifying education.

- DC staff must use the appropriate NEOGOV notice template to request that the candidate supply the necessary educational documentation (i.e. transcript, diploma, course breakdown, etc.).

-Qualifying post-secondary education must be obtained from an accredited U.S. institution.

-For verification purposes, official transcripts must be obtained.

-Official transcripts may be received electronically, but the candidate should be instructed to have them sent directly to a DC staff member; not to the candidate.

-Please be aware that some colleges set the electronic transcripts to expire, and this is communicated in the email from the college that includes the transcript. It's important to carefully review these emails for this information. If a transcript will expire, DC staff must print and scan the transcript, and then upload that version to the hire form in NEOGOV and the "Education Verification" document type in the E-OPF. DC staff must include a comment stating that it was an official copy at the time of receipt, which will enable the documentation to be used for verification purposes in the future, if necessary.

-Electronic versions of official transcripts are only acceptable if they are opened by DC staff at the onset.

-Printed hard copies of electronic official transcripts are not acceptable (i.e. if the printed copy is supplied by the student), unless they are printed by DC staff after opening the official electronic copy themselves.

-Foreign education may not be taken at face value. A foreign credential evaluation must be completed to determine the United States educational equivalency. Acceptable foreign credential evaluations must be completed by an organization that is a member of the National Association of Credential Services (NACES). Refer to the Foreign Credentials Equivalency NEOGOV notice template for a listing of acceptable organizations.

-If a foreign credential evaluation is not already in the "Education Verification" document type in the E-OPF, DC staff must select the appropriate NEOGOV notice template to communicate with the candidate to request a foreign credential evaluation.

-Documentation supplied by the candidate or an educational institution must be uploaded to the hire form in NEOGOV and the "Education Verification" document type in the E-OPF. DC staff must include a comment stating that it was an official copy at the time of receipt, which will enable the documentation to be used for verification purposes in the future, if necessary.

5. If the education can be verified, the candidate passes the education verification check. DC staff must upload a copy of the verification documentation to the "Education Verification" document type in the E-OPF and to the hire form in NEOGOV with a note in the comments section indicating that the transcript was an official copy at the time of receipt.
6. If the education cannot be verified, DC staff, Staffing Services staff, or State Civil Service Commission staff (i.e. whichever group performed the initial evaluation of eligibility) must re-evaluate the candidate's application and/or resume to determine if there is other qualifying education (i.e. a degree from another school) and/or work experience that would qualify the candidate for the position. If so, the new education and/or experience must be verified following the instructions above.
7. If DC staff is unable to verify the new education and/or experience, DC staff must contact the candidate via NEOGOV notice template and request that the candidate provide the necessary education and/or experience verification. If there is no response to the NEOGOV notice template, and the deadline for response is approaching, DC staff should try reaching the candidate via telephone.
8. If the candidate supplies acceptable verification documentation, the candidate passes this verification check. DC staff must upload a copy of the documentation to the hire form in NEOGOV and the "Education Verification" document type in the E-OPF.
9. If the candidate does not supply acceptable verification documentation, and there is no other qualifying experience and/or education to consider, DC staff must notify the candidate via NEOGOV notice template that he/she is no longer being considered for employment and initiate the list removal process, if applicable. DC staff must notate the referred list to indicate that the candidate did not pass the background check.

**In summary, a candidate is considered to have passed the education verification check if:**

- **DC staff can verify the qualifying education using documentation already uploaded to the candidate's E-OPF or hire form in NEOGOV, or**
- **The candidate supplies acceptable documentation verifying the qualifying education**

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## **LICENSURE VERIFICATION CHECK**

If a license is needed to qualify for a position, that license must be verified as being active/current by DC staff. If a license is not needed to qualify, then licensure verification does not need to be conducted.

1. DC staff must review the candidate's application in NEOGOV to identify if licensure is required for the vacant position.

2. If licensure is required, DC staff must contact the primary source (i.e. the Department of State, PennDOT, etc.) to verify that the license is current/active and conduct a review of current/past disciplinary actions, if applicable.
3. If the license is current and no disciplinary action exists, the candidate passes the licensure verification check. DC staff must upload a copy of the documentation to the hire form in NEOGOV.
4. If licensure cannot be verified, DC staff must notify the candidate via NEOGOV notice template that he/she is no longer being considered for employment and initiate the list removal process, if necessary. DC staff must notate the referred list to indicate that the candidate did not pass the background check due to inability to verify the license.
5. If the license is current, but disciplinary action is found, DC staff must send the appropriate notice template in NEOGOV to request an explanation from the candidate and conduct an individualized assessment to determine if the disciplinary action prohibits employment in the position.
6. If the disciplinary action is determined to be related to the position, DC staff must notify the candidate via NEOGOV notice template that he/she is no longer being considered for employment and initiate the list removal process, if necessary.
7. If the disciplinary action is determined to not be related to the position, DC staff must request approval to appoint. The candidate is considered to have passed the licensure verification check upon completion of the approval to appoint.

**In summary, a candidate is considered to have passed the licensure verification check if:**

- **Licensure is verified and no disciplinary action is found, or**
  - **Licensure is verified and disciplinary action is found, but it is not related to the position and approval to appoint has been received**
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## **STATE TAX COMPLIANCE CHECK**

A state tax compliance check must be performed on all selected candidates to ensure compliance with Pennsylvania tax obligations.

1. DC staff must use the Revenue Integrated Clearance System (RICS) to run a query on the selected candidate using the candidate's Social Security number.
2. A compliance decision will be displayed.
3. If the candidate is compliant, the candidate passes the state tax compliance check.

4. If the candidate is non-compliant, a case will be populated in the RICS system and a letter will be sent to the candidate with instructions to contact an employee at the Department of Revenue. The Department of Revenue will work the case for up to 60 days and will provide clearance certificates to agencies once the candidate becomes compliant. In the meantime, the hiring agency may determine whether or not to proceed with the hire.
5. A screenshot of the state tax compliance check result should be attached to the hire form in NEOGOV.

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