# **Checking References**

The following suggestions are provided to assist you when checking references. It is important to check the references of your top candidate(s) after the final interviews, to compare the candidates' perception of what they have accomplished with that of the referees.

You should check references with the current and at least one former supervisor of the applicant who is the final candidate for the position. Reference information must be documented and retained with other recruitment and selection documents.

The reference check should attempt to obtain information such as the following:

• verification of employment dates;

• verification of position title;

• verification of position duties;

• verification of beginning and ending salaries;

• training completed;

• performance (work experience, KSAs, competencies);

• whether the employer would rehire the applicant; and

• verification of any license, certification or degree the applicant claims to possess.

When checking references by telephone, open the conversation by identifying yourself and describing the position or reading the job description, if necessary. If you are talking with a former supervisor, you may eventually want to ask this question: *"Would you hire this person for the position I have described to you? Why or why not?"*

Then you may ask the former supervisor if he or she would rehire this individual for the same position that they had when working at his or her institution.

Close the telephone interview by asking if there is anything else you should know about the applicant that would be helpful in determining his or her appropriateness for the position you are attempting to fill.

If you have received ambiguous answers to your questions throughout the telephone interview, attempt to summarize the conversation by making either of the following two statements:

*"I take it that you don't recommend the candidate for this position,"*

or

*"I take it that you highly recommend the candidate for this position."*

Sometimes one of these summarizing statements evokes the clear-cut response you need.

Document reference checks by taking note of the following:

* the name and position of the person who provides the information
* date of the contact
* questions asked
* responses

In some cases, checking references from the candidate's supplied list may not be the best source of information on the applicant's potential. Contacting peers and/or subordinates can provide a unique perspective on the candidate's job-related abilities. If there is an extensive work record, contacting supervisors in previous positions to the one currently held can be helpful. It is strongly recommended that at least one reference be from a former supervisor. However, before checking references with a current employer or supervisor, the candidate's permission is required; and his or her written approval is recommended.