


Subject: BACKGROUND SCREENING	Departmental Policy No. 3-54	
	Effective: Upon Approval	
<p>I. Purpose</p> <p>1.1 To provide uniform procedures for performing background screens to aid in the selection and evaluation of a qualified workforce at time of hire, promotion or reassignment.</p> <p>II. Objectives</p> <p>2.1 To provide a procedure for authenticating and verifying academic records, degrees and credentials from secondary schools and institutions</p> <p>2.2 To provide a procedure for previous employment screens.</p> <p>2.3 To provide a procedure for criminal screens, drug and alcohol screens and Motor Vehicle Registration screens appropriate for the position.</p> <p>2.4 To provide reliable quality service to the public by ensuring a qualified workforce through background screens.</p> <p>III. Scope</p> <p>3.1 These procedures apply to all applicants and employees and to all workers from temporary services performing work for the Department of Public Works and Engineering (PWE).</p> <p>IV. Policy</p> <p>4.1 At the time the Hiring Manager submits a Posting Request to fill a vacancy, a Position Specific Attributes (PSA) Form must also be submitted.</p> <p>The job will be posted for the specified time, applications collected, minimum qualification verification completed on the applications, and those applications appearing to meet the minimum qualifications based on the information submitted will be referred to the Hiring Manager. Note, if the application was not completed sufficiently to perform this review, the application will not be referred.</p> <p>4.2 Before conducting any of the background screens for employment purposes, written authorization from the applicant or employee must be obtained; this is typically secured when the applicant or employee signs the job application. In addition, the Department of Public Safety (DPS) release form must be signed</p>		
Approved: 	Date Approved: 11/13/15	Page 1 of 6

by the applicant/employee for the criminal background screens.

4.3 Background Screens of Workers from Temporary Services

4.3.1 All screens and verifications shall be requested and obtained from the temporary service, who is the employer of the temporary worker. The normal background screens include academic, employment and basic criminal background checks. Drug and alcohol screens and Motor Vehicle Requests reports must be requested, if appropriate to the work being performed, following the same guidance provided in this procedure for PWE employees. It should be noted that the expense of these screens may be covered by the temporary service or may be at the expense of the temporary worker depending on the temporary service's business practices.

4.4 Academic Verification and Authentication

4.4.1 All diplomas/degrees for the employee or applicant shall be verified by the Human Resources' PWE Support Section or other designee to ensure the credentials meet the requirements of the position and to ensure it was actually issued by an accredited institution.

4.4.1.1 Verified high school diplomas and General Equivalency Degrees (GEDs) must be from an institution recognized by an accrediting agency, such as the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Private School Accreditation Commission or similar agencies in other states. Home school students may be required to produce transcripts or other supporting documentation consistent with requirements for home school in the state where the applicant graduated from high school.

4.4.1.2 Diplomas issued by organizations selling fraudulent high school diplomas and transcripts, including but not limited to Marque Learning Center, Southwest Academy and Parkview Baptist Home School, will not be accepted. If an existing employee has one of these diplomas, and a high school diploma/GED was not required for his/her current job classification, then the employee will not be able to use these diplomas to meet the minimum qualifications for positions requiring high school diploma/GED in the City. If an existing employee has one of these diplomas, and the diploma was previously considered and accepted to meet a high school/GED requirement prior to being deemed fraudulent, then s/he may be considered for a promotion within the job family or a similar job

Subject: Background Screening	Departmental Policy No.: 3-54	Page 2 of 6
	Effective date: Upon Approval	

family if s/he has demonstrated acceptable performance at the full responsibility level of his/her current position (typically, this is documented by a performance evaluation). However, such an employee shall obtain a high school diploma/GED in order to be promoted in positions higher than the first-line supervisor level.

4.4.1.3 PWE only recognizes post-secondary degrees from degree-granting schools accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) [website at www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation] and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) [website at www.chea.org] as well as recognized regional accrediting agencies such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The post-secondary degree must have been granted at a time when the school was accredited by a recognized accrediting agency.

4.4.1.4 Unless otherwise indicated by this policy, diplomas or degrees from non-qualifying institutions, which are not accredited by a USDE or CHEA, will not be accepted. An applicant/employee claiming degrees and/or credentials from non-qualifying institutions may constitute fraud and be considered dishonest behavior or conduct and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination regardless of whether or not the fraudulent degree or education claimed was required to qualify for the position.

4.4.2 Foreign diplomas/degrees require evaluation of complete, official transcripts at the applicant's expense by an approved credential evaluation service to determine the equivalency between his/her credits and/or degrees to those from accredited U.S. institutions (if the degree is required for the applicant to meet minimum qualifications of the position). Foreign education equivalency reports will be accepted from current members of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) [website at <http://www.naces.org>] or the Foreign Education Credential Service of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) [website at <http://www.aacrao.org/international/>].

4.4.3 If a diploma/degree of an applicant or employee cannot be verified, the hiring division shall be immediately notified. If the diploma or degree is needed to meet minimum qualifications, then the applicant shall not be hired for the position. If the diploma/degree is

Subject: Background Screening	Departmental Policy No.: 3-54	Page 3 of 6
	Effective date: Upon Approval	

not needed to meet minimum qualifications, then the division will need to evaluate all circumstances (i.e., interviews) and determine if deceit was intended and if the applicant would still be appropriate for the applied position.

If an existing employee is found not to have a reported degree/diploma, appropriate action may be taken based on an evaluation of the circumstances, which may include up to indefinite suspension.

4.5 Employment Screens

4.5.1 Work experience during the past ten years shall be verified in order to evaluate recent work history, including type and level of experience. Work history not readily verifiable may be excluded from verification. Additional prior experience may need to be verified, such as experience needed for applicant to meet minimum qualification requirements or for additional evaluation. Experience that cannot be verified shall not be used towards minimum qualifications unless supported by official supporting documentation, i.e., W-2 statement.

4.5.1.1 Verified information shall include name of company, job title (if possible), job duties (if possible), dates of hire, and if the employee is eligible for rehire (if possible). The verification document shall reflect actual information verified, and should not be pre-filled with information that the applicant placed on the application.

If the verification document and application have notable differences, the hiring division shall be notified immediately to evaluate the circumstances. If the verification reflects that the applicant no longer meets minimum qualifications, then the applicant shall not be hired for the position.

If an existing employee is found not to have the experience as stated on his/her application, appropriate action may be taken based on an evaluation of the circumstances, which may include up to indefinite suspension.

4.5.1.2 Every effort shall be made to verify previous work experience, work ethic and/or character by conducting professional/personal reference checks. At least three reference checks should be made (or with great attempt) and at least one of the checks should be a professional reference (if applicant has previous work experience).

Subject: Background Screening	Departmental Policy No.: 3-54	Page 4 of 6
	Effective date: Upon Approval	

Generally, these will be conducted by the Human Resources' PWE Support Section. Hiring managers are encouraged to review personnel files, attendance and disciplinary histories of City employees being considered for rehire, promotion or transfer.

4.6 Criminal History

4.6.1 Criminal screens will be conducted by the Human Resources Department primarily through The Texas Department of Public Safety Crime Records Service (DPS) and fingerprinting. Other comparable state or federal databases may also be used where available as indicated.

Applicants may be requested to provide a Certificate of Disposition from the Harris County Clerk's Office (or other appropriate agency) to further document a criminal record.

4.6.1.1 Criminal screens are obtained to determine suitability for a specific position. A conviction does not necessarily preclude hire/promotion and the impact of convictions will be made on a case by case basis. Relevant factors include the type of conviction (misdemeanor, felony, seriousness of crime, multiple convictions), elapsed time since last conviction and nature of the position for which the applicant is being considered, as well as evidence of rehabilitation.

4.6.1.2 During the verification process, the criminal history from DPS (or other reporting agencies) for the applicant recommended by the Hiring Manager will be compared to the Position Specific Attributes. If a nexus is identified, evidence of rehabilitation will be considered. If the review of rehabilitation does not resolve the nexus, the hiring manager will be notified. If the division chooses to continue with hiring this applicant, it must document that on a Background Acknowledgment Form.

4.7 Other Background Screenings

4.7.1 Drug screens are conducted for all new hires and for any promotions/transfers to Safety Impact positions in accordance with the City's Executive Order 1-12. Alcohol screens are conducted on hires and promotions/transfers to positions that require a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) in accordance with the City's Executive Order 1-32. These screens are conducted by the Human Resources Department, and applicants that do not pass the screen(s) are ineligible for employment.

Subject: Background Screening	Departmental Policy No.: 3-54	Page 5 of 6
	Effective date: Upon Approval	

4.7.2 Motor Vehicle Registration checks are conducted using reports from the Department of Public Safety for applicants/employees receiving driving assignments in compliance with the City's Administrative Procedure 2-2 to ensure they can fully carry out their driving responsibilities. Upon hire/rehire/promotion, any employee who does not have the proper license for the type of driving required to perform his/her job will not be hired for the position.

4.8 Offers of employment are conditioned upon successfully completing all pre-employment screening. If any of the above screenings are not finalized prior to the effective date of employment, then continued employment shall be expressly contingent on the employee providing satisfactory evidence of meeting the acceptable standard. It shall be the employee's responsibility to cooperatively assist the Human Resources' PWE Support Section and/or hiring division in the finalization of any screenings in an expedient fashion.

V. Compliance

Adherence to the above is mandatory. Any employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

Subject: Background Screening	Departmental Policy No.: 3-54	Page 6 of 6
	Effective date: Upon Approval	