

## PRE-EMPLOYMENT QUESTIONS

*(The following are examples of questions that are generally considered to be appropriate and inappropriate to ask during the pre-employment process. This list is only intended to provide guidance in what questions may be asked and should not be viewed as an all inclusive list of such questions. It must also be remembered that, as new legislation is passed and decisions are made in the courts, there may be changes in what questions are considered appropriate.)*

### **National Origin**

#### Appropriate:

None unless national origin is a bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ).

#### Inappropriate:

What is your nationality? Were you born in the United States? What country are you parents from? Where were you born?

### **Race or Color**

#### Appropriate:

None

#### Inappropriate:

What is your skin color? What is your race?

### **Religion**

#### Appropriate:

None unless religion is a BFOQ.

#### Inappropriate:

Are you a Christian? What is your religious denomination? Do you attend church? What religious holidays do you observe?

### **Age**

#### Appropriate:

Are you at least 18 years of age? If not what is your age?

#### Inappropriate:

How old are you? What is your date of birth?

### **Sex**

#### Appropriate:

None unless sex is a BFOQ.

Inappropriate:

Are you male or female? Do you plan to have children? Do you practice birth control?  
Do you feel like that a woman can handle this job?

**Disability**

Appropriate:

None

Inappropriate:

Are you disabled? Have you ever been treated for any of the following injuries or illness (followed by a list)? Have you ever filed a workers' compensation claim? Have you ever had any mental or psychological problems? How long have you been in a wheelchair?

**Marital Status**

Appropriate:

None

Inappropriate:

Are you married? Do you preferred to be called Miss? Mrs? Ms? What is your spouse's name? Have you ever been divorced?

**Arrest Record**

Appropriate:

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? (NOTE: In most jobs, a felony conviction cannot be the sole basis for failure to hire.)

Inappropriate:

Have you ever been arrested?

**Driver's License**

Appropriate:

Do you have a current driver's license (if driver's license is required for performance of the job)?

Inappropriate:

Do you have a driver's license (where a driver's license is not required for the job)?

**Citizenship**

Appropriate:

Are you a citizen of the United States? If not a citizen, are you legally authorized to work in the United States?

Inappropriate:

Of what country are you a citizen? Are you a native born or naturalized U.S. citizen? Are your parents citizens?

**Languages**

Appropriate:

Do you speak Spanish (or other language required for the job)?

Inappropriate:

What foreign languages do you speak or write? How did you learn those languages? What is your native tongue?

## **Military Experience**

Appropriate:

Have you served in the Armed Forces of the United States? If so, what were your duties?

Inappropriate:

Have you ever served in the Armed Forces of a country other than the United States. Have you ever received a discharge under less than honorable conditions?

## **Education**

Appropriate:

Any questions pertaining to educational requirements that are truly a requirement for the job.

Inappropriate:

Any questions about an applicant's educational background that is not a true requirement for the job.

## **Photograph**

Appropriate:

None

Inappropriate:

Any requirement that an individual provide a photograph before being hired.

## **Personal Characteristics**

Appropriate:

None

Inappropriate:

What color are your eyes? What color is your hair? What is your height and weight?

## **Comments**

Generally, any question that has direct bearing on an applicant's ability to do the job is acceptable. However, questions asked of only certain applicants, and not of all applicants, can make an otherwise valid inquiry appear to be discriminatory. An example would be asking a woman if she could meet the physical requirements of the job but not asking the same question of male applicants. The key to staying out of trouble in the interview and selection process is to ask questions that pertain only to the job and avoid any questions that pry into an applicant's personal background.

Once an employee is hired, it may be necessary to obtain information for benefit programs or government reporting that should not be sought during the pre-employment process. This is okay but, before obtaining any such information, be sure that there is truly a need to have it and, once obtained, keep it separate from the employee's personnel file.

## Examples of Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Why do you want to work for the county?
2. What hours are you available to work?
3. What are the things you look for in a job?
4. How did your previous jobs prepare you for the position for which you are applying?
5. Describe (or show me) how you would perform the functions of this job.
6. In what areas do you feel that additional training would be beneficial to you in performing the duties of this job?
7. Tell me about your qualifications for this job and how you developed them.
8. What machinery (equipment, tools) do you operate that would be used in this job?
9. How do you keep your knowledge current in your profession?
10. Why do you want to change jobs at this time?
11. Describe your duties in previous jobs.
12. What did you like most and least about your last job?
13. If you could have changed something in your last job, what would it have been?
14. What were you doing from the time before you started your most recent job and the time you left your previous job?
15. Tell me about your level of responsibility in previous jobs.
16. What do you feel are the safety considerations in the job for which you are applying and how would you handle them?
17. What do you feel you accomplished in your previous jobs?
18. Describe your relationship with your supervisors in previous jobs.
19. What makes a job interesting to you?
20. What irritates you in the workplace?
21. What do you expect from your supervisor?
22. What are your long term career goals?
23. What do you think an employer should expect from an employee?
24. Why do you feel you are the best qualified applicant for this job?
25. What information haven't we discussed that would help in considering your application for this job?