

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICIES & PRACTICES IN
EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCIES



PERFORMANCE AUDIT SERVICES
ISSUED APRIL 17, 2018

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LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
DARYL G. PURPERA, CPA, CFE

April 17, 2018

The Honorable John A. Alario, Jr.,
President of the Senate
The Honorable Taylor F. Barras,
Speaker of the House of Representatives

We conducted a performance audit to evaluate the sexual harassment policies and practices of executive branch agencies, including the four university systems. The report contains our findings, conclusions, and recommendations. I hope this report will benefit you in your legislative decision-making process.

We would like to express our appreciation to the management and staff of all executive branch agencies and the four university systems for their assistance during this audit.

Sincerely,

Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE
Legislative Auditor

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICIES & PRACTICES

Louisiana Legislative Auditor

Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE



Sexual Harassment Policies Executive Branch Agencies

April 2018

Audit Control # 40170027

Summary

We evaluated the sexual harassment policies and practices of executive branch agencies, including the four university systems. We specifically:

- Evaluated Louisiana’s sexual harassment policies and procedures, with a comparison to other states and any best practices noted.
- Compiled statistics from the Office of Risk Management and/or Civil Service on the number of sexual harassment claims and the amounts paid out over the last five years, including a breakdown by agency.
- Reviewed Louisiana’s policies and practices relative to examining a job applicant’s background, prior to hiring or appointment decisions.
- To the extent possible, evaluated the effectiveness of the sexual harassment training mandated in other states and how it compares to similar training in Louisiana.
- Developed recommendations to assist Louisiana in strengthening its policies, procedures, and laws related to sexual harassment.

In addition to evaluating each agency’s sexual harassment policies and practices, we also sent a confidential survey to approximately 30,000 state employees in a select number of agencies to assess their knowledge of sexual harassment procedures, including their familiarity with the resources available to them if they witness or are a victim of sexually offensive behavior. We also determined whether employees had been sexually harassed and asked their opinion on how the state could make reporting and investigative processes better. We received approximately 3,200 responses for a survey response rate of 10%.

Our results are summarized on the following pages, along with our recommendations to assist Louisiana in strengthening its policies, procedures, and laws related to sexual harassment. Appendix A summarizes our scope and methodology.

Survey Results

- 89% of employees who responded to our survey stated that they believe their agency would competently and fairly investigate a sexual harassment claim.
- 91% of employees stated that they believed agency management was committed to providing a workplace free from sexual harassment.

Source: LLA Survey, March 2018

Objective: Evaluate the policies and practices related to sexual harassment in executive branch agencies.

Overall, we found inconsistencies among executive branch agencies, including the four university systems, regarding hiring practices and sexual harassment policies. Specifically, we found:

- **Louisiana does not have a uniform sexual harassment policy that governs executive branch agencies.** Although each executive branch agency has its own policies on sexual harassment, these policies are inconsistent between agencies, and sometimes among agencies within the same department. As a result, agencies may not be handling sexual harassment cases consistently.
- **Executive branch agencies reported 330 internal complaints involving sexual harassment from fiscal years 2013 through 2017.** In addition, Louisiana has spent approximately \$5 million on lawsuits involving sexual harassment claims since fiscal year 2010. However, sexual harassment may be under-reported, as 77% of employees who responded to our survey said they did not report the sexual harassment they experienced.
- **Executive branch agencies do not have consistent processes for examining the background of prospective employees.** For example, we interviewed Human Resources personnel for 10 agencies and found that 50% do not require reference checks.
- **State law does not mandate training on how to identify, report, and investigate sexual harassment.** Directing agencies on what to include in their sexual harassment training, at a minimum, would help provide consistent training among executive branch agencies that conform to best practices.

Our results along with four recommendations to assist Louisiana in strengthening its policies, procedures, and laws related to sexual harassment are discussed in detail below.

Louisiana does not have a uniform sexual harassment policy that governs executive branch agencies. Although each agency has its own policies on sexual harassment, these policies are inconsistent between, and sometimes within, agencies. As a result, agencies may not be handling sexual harassment cases consistently.

Because there is no overall policy on sexual harassment, each executive branch agency has its own internal policies and procedures for reporting and investigating sexual harassment. In addition, Louisiana has not promulgated any rules, regulations, or laws regarding what needs

to be included in an agency's sexual harassment policy. In our review of executive branch agency policies, we found that only four of the 18 policies fully conform to best practices for preventing sexual harassment. For best practices, we used the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) promising practices on preventing sexual harassment, which were developed as a result of the Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace, issued in June 2016.

Most executive branch employees (3,008 of 3,097, or 97%) who responded to our survey said they knew their agency's process for reporting sexual harassment

Source: LLA Survey, March 2018

Although all executive branch agencies have policies on sexual harassment, these policies are inconsistent between agencies, and sometimes among agencies within the same department. The EEOC lists minimum criteria for what should be included in sexual harassment policies; however, only four of the 18 agency policies we reviewed fully follow these EEOC guidelines. For example, the EEOC states that every policy should not only define sexual harassment, but also give illustrative examples to help demonstrate what behaviors are prohibited. Of the 18¹ agency policies we reviewed, 10 did not define the entire populations of people the policy should apply to, and three gave a definition of sexual harassment without giving any examples. In addition, two agencies' policies specifically allow the department head to create exceptions to the sexual harassment policy on a case by case basis, while three agencies' policies specifically prohibit any exceptions to the policy. The other 13 policies do not address the authority of the agency head to give exceptions. In addition, we found some agencies that had sexual harassment policies that were inconsistent with those of other agencies within the same department.

Due to these inconsistencies, it may be beneficial for Louisiana to promulgate certain minimum requirements for all state government sexual harassment policies. The EEOC recommends that the following be included.²

- A statement that the policy applies to all employees, as well as to applicants, clients, customers, and other relevant individuals;
- An unequivocal statement that harassment is prohibited;
- An easy to understand description of the prohibited conduct, including examples;
- A description of any processes for employees to share or obtain information about harassment without filing a complaint;
- A description of the organization's harassment complaint system, including multiple easily accessible reporting avenues;
- A statement that employees are encouraged to report conduct that they believe may be prohibited harassment, even if they are not sure the conduct violates policy;

¹ We reviewed the four university systems in addition to 14 State agencies.

² The complete EEOC report can be found at https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/upload/report.pdf.

- A statement that the employer will provide a prompt, impartial, and thorough investigation; and
- A statement that the identity of all individuals in a sexual harassment complaint and/or investigation will be kept as confidential as allowed, consistent with a thorough and impartial investigation.

We found that at least 20 other states have promulgated a centralized sexual harassment policy or, at a minimum, guidelines which must be included in each agency's policy. Of these 20 states with a centralized sexual harassment policy, 14 promulgated their policy through the agency responsible for overseeing classified employees similar to Louisiana's Department of State Civil Service (DSCS), five states promulgated the centralized policy through executive order, and one state used legislation to create the policy. While these states used different means to promulgate their sexual harassment policies, the policies themselves have similarities. The policies tend to contain similar elements including:

- Statement explaining who the policy applies to
- Description of prohibited conduct, including examples
- Preferred methods of reporting prohibited conduct
- Explanation of the investigative process
- Statement of non-retaliation

The Governor's Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy³ also preliminarily recommended the implementation of a uniform policy by all agencies throughout Louisiana to provide assurance to state employees and the public served that complaints regarding sexual harassment will be handled expeditiously and consistently.

Matter for Legislative Consideration: The legislature may wish to require that executive branch agencies adopt minimum standards for what should be in a sexual harassment policy based on all EEOC recommendations.

Executive branch agencies reported 330 internal complaints involving sexual harassment from fiscal years 2013 to 2017. In addition, Louisiana has spent approximately \$5 million on lawsuits involving sexual harassment claims since fiscal year 2010.

According to the EEOC, one aspect of an effective sexual harassment policy is making the reporting process a comfortable experience for those employees who have witnessed or

³ This Task Force was created by Executive Order (Number JBE 17-30) on December 6, 2017, to review current harassment and discrimination policies within every executive branch agency.

experienced inappropriate workplace behavior of a sexual nature. In general, executive branch agencies in Louisiana share a similar process for reporting sexual harassment. Most policies instruct a victim or witness of inappropriate workplace behavior to immediately report that behavior either to their direct supervisor or a Human Resources representative, whichever makes the person giving the report more comfortable. After a report is made, the agency is responsible for quickly and thoroughly investigating the complaint.

According to the Human Resources department of each executive branch agency, there have been a total of 330 internal sexual harassment complaints or cases over the last five years. Sexual harassment complaints can include jokes of a sexual nature, unwanted sexual attention or sexual coercion, and sexist comments. Exhibit 1 summarizes the number of sexual harassment complaints or cases self-reported to us from each agency. As the exhibit shows, the Department of Corrections (DOC) and Higher Education institutions had the highest number of cases.

Exhibit 1 Number of Complaints/Cases by Agency Fiscal Years 2013 through 2017	
Agency	Number of Internally Reported Complaints/Cases
University Louisiana System	59
Department of Corrections	56
Louisiana Community and Technical College System	46
Louisiana State University	46*
Southern University System	33
Office of Juvenile Justice	16
Department of Transportation and Development	13
Department of Children and Family Services	12
Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism	8
Department of Public Safety	7
Department of Health	7
Department of Veteran Affairs	6
Department of Education	4
Division of Administration	4
Department of Insurance	4
Department of Agriculture and Forestry	2
Louisiana Workforce Commission	2
Secretary of State	2
Department of Environmental Quality	1
Department of Natural Resources	1
Department of Revenue	1
Department of State Civil Service	0
Louisiana Department of Economic Development	0
Public Service Corporation	0
Office of the Treasury	0
Department of Justice	Does not Track
Total	330
<p>* LSU Health Sciences Center - Shreveport reported 9 instances of sexual harassment complaints/cases, but this is as of June 2015. They did not track the number of cases prior to this date. Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by each agency.</p>	

The Office of Risk Management (ORM) paid approximately \$5 million for closed claims involving sexual harassment from fiscal year 2010 to February 2018. If individuals want to pursue legal action, they may file a claim against the state. ORM, within the Division of Administration (DOA), is responsible for managing all tort claims. ORM must also authorize and approve the Attorney General's appointment of defense counsel and funding of defense claims and litigation. According to data from ORM, Louisiana has been involved in 82 sexual harassment lawsuits totaling \$5 million from fiscal year 2010 through February 2018. Exhibit 2 summarizes the cost of sexual harassment claims by agency, including the payments to claimants

as well as the total cost of litigating the claim. As the exhibit shows, DOC has the most lawsuits involving sexual harassment.

Exhibit 2 Total Cost of Sexual Harassment Claims* by Agency Fiscal Year 2010 through February 2018	
Agency	Amount
Department of Corrections	\$1,131,460
Division of Administration	763,992
LSU System	554,733
Southern University System	477,434
Boards and Commissions	436,923
Louisiana Workforce Commission	313,862
Department of Transportation and Development	256,183
Department of Revenue	243,045
University of Louisiana System	175,723
Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism	173,969
LSU Healthcare Services Division	170,029
Department of Public Safety	114,025
Office of Juvenile Justice	83,383
Department of Health and Hospitals	80,463
Department of Environmental Quality	41,147
Retirement Systems	5,733
Executive Branch	2,626
Department of Justice	1,274
Total	\$5,026,006
*These cases were categorized using the accident description column in ORM data, which is a description of the initial allegation. Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from ORM.	

Sexual harassment in executive branch agencies may not always be reported. Although 16% of survey respondents stated that they had experienced some degree of sexual harassment at work, 77% did not report it to anyone. In our survey of executive branch agencies, we also asked questions using different scenarios to determine if employees believed they had been victims of sexual harassment and whether they reported it. Exhibit 3 summarizes the survey responses.

Exhibit 3		
Survey Responses to Various Sexual Harassment Scenarios		
Question	Yes	Percent
Has a coworker or someone employed by or associated with your agency made inappropriate or offensive comments about your body or someone else's body, appearance, or sexual activities?	499	16.18%
Has a coworker or someone employed by or associated with your agency made sexual remarks or told sexual jokes or stories that were insulting or offensive to you?	464	15.07%
Has a coworker or someone employed by or associated with your agency made crude or sexual comments to you and/or tried to get you to engage in sexual conversations when you didn't want to?	246	8.09%
Has a coworker or someone employed by or associated with your agency made emailed, texted, tweeted, phoned, instant messaged, or otherwise electronically communicated offensive sexual remarks, jokes, stories, pictures, or videos to you that you didn't want?	123	4.05%
Has a coworker or someone employed by or associated with your agency continued to ask you to go out, get dinner, or have drinks even though you said "no"?	65	2.14%
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from our survey.		

While 19% (90) of employees stated that they reported the behavior to their supervisor, 77% said that they did not report it to anyone. Others stated that they reported it to a co-worker, Human Resources, DSCS, the EEOC, and/or a private attorney. When asked why some employees did not report this behavior to anyone, the most prevalent reason (17.5%) was that they did not think it was serious enough. Other reasons include fear of retaliation (13.8%) and the perception that nothing would be done (12.3%). Exhibit 4 summarizes the reasons employees gave for why the behavior was not reported.

Exhibit 4		
Reasons Given for Not Reporting Sexual Harassment		
Question	No. of Responses*	Percentage
I did not think it was serious enough to report	145	17.49%
Other	135	16.28%
I feared negative work consequences and/or retaliation	114	13.75%
I did not think anything would be done	102	12.30%
I feared it would not be kept confidential	84	10.13%
I did not want the other person to get in trouble	68	8.20%
I feared negative social consequences	57	6.88%
Felt embarrassed, ashamed or that it would be too emotionally difficult	33	3.98%
I did not think anyone would believe me	21	2.53%
No clear identification of lack of consent was given	20	2.41%
Incident was consensual	19	2.29%
Incident was not during work or associated with employment	18	2.17%
Did not know where to go or who to tell	13	1.57%
Total	829	100%
*Note: There were 405 total respondents, but they could have answered to more than one of the reasons.		
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data from our survey.		

We also asked questions related to how employees would prefer to report sexual harassment. Most individuals (1,959 or 76%) stated that they preferred to report it in person. When asked who they would feel most comfortable reporting to, 46% said their immediate supervisor, 26% said a Human Resources representative with specialized training, and 22% said an independent party not affiliated with the agency.

Executive branch agencies do not have consistent processes for examining the backgrounds of prospective employees. For example, we interviewed Human Resources personnel for 10 agencies and found that 50% do not require reference checks.

There are two statewide requirements that involve the verification of applicant backgrounds. First, since the criminal history question was eliminated on the application for classified jobs, State agencies can only inquire about criminal history during the applicant's interview or when the applicant has been given a conditional offer of employment. The second statewide requirement is the question on the employment application that asks "Have you ever been fired from a job or resigned to avoid dismissal?" If the applicant answers "yes," then he must provide an explanation. However, the application states that a "yes" answer will not necessarily bar them from working in state government. DSCS does not have any formal policies or procedures regarding hiring practices, or on how executive branch agencies should examine the backgrounds of prospective employees. Each agency has the authority to develop its own policies.

We interviewed Human Resources personnel for 10 agencies and found that some do not conduct reference checks on prospective employees. For example, some agencies require hiring managers to call references, while others just encourage it but do not require it. If a manager does call references, it is primarily to verify dates of employment and whether the applicants would be eligible for rehire at their previous jobs. In addition, the majority of the agencies we interviewed do not provide guidance to the hiring managers for what specific questions they should ask. However, the Human Resources personnel in the agencies we interviewed all stated that they do not require hiring managers to ask about any past sexual harassment complaints on that person when calling references. Exhibit 5 summarizes the responses of the Human Resources personnel for 10 agencies we interviewed and differences in their hiring practices.

Exhibit 5 Inconsistencies in Hiring Practices				
Hiring Question	Not Required	Yes	Depends on Position	Total Agencies Surveyed
Conducts Background Checks?	4	2	4	10
Conducts Reference Checks?	5	3	2	10
Provides Detailed Guidance for Reference Checks?	8	2		10
Conducts Online Research (i.e, Google and Facebook)?	10			10
Inquiries About Past Sexual Harassment Complaints?	10			10
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information obtained from interviewing State agencies.				

According to the United States Office of Personnel Management, reference checking is a vital part of a successful hiring strategy to verify information provided by the candidate, better predict the candidate's on-the-job success, and gain knowledge about the candidate's abilities. In addition, both the United States Office of Personnel Management and the Society for Human Resources Management provide a list of suggested questions when contacting references. Human Resources managers in executive branch agencies could use these questions to provide guidance to hiring managers when conducting references. Appendix B provides examples of these questions.

Matter for Legislative Consideration: The legislature may wish to require that DSCS or DOA develop guidelines or best practices regarding how executive branch agencies should examine the backgrounds of potential employees.

State law does not mandate training on how to identify, report, and investigate sexual harassment. Directing agencies on what to include in their sexual harassment training, at a minimum, would help provide consistent training among executive branch agencies that conform to best practices.

State law does not mandate sexual harassment training for all state employees. During the 2012 Regular Session, the legislature passed SCR 107 that directed public agencies to provide a minimum of one hour in-service education and training on sexual harassment for its public servants annually. The training referred to in SCR 107 is intended to inform and protect its officials and employees from sexual harassment. This resolution also directs each agency to designate at least one person to provide instruction on sexual harassment. However, this resolution does not have the force of law and therefore does not mandate sexual harassment training for all state employees.

State law should provide guidance on what should be included in the training, as recommended by EEOC. Directing agencies on what to include in their sexual harassment training, at a minimum, would help provide consistent training among executive branch agencies that conform to best practices. For example, both Nevada and Illinois have guidelines in their laws for state agencies to follow when giving employees sexual harassment training. Illinois' state law outlines what the training should include, at a minimum, for all employees. Specifically, Illinois' law states that the training should include (i) the definition, and a description, of sexual harassment utilizing examples; (ii) details on how an individual can report an allegation of sexual harassment, including options for making a confidential report to a supervisor, etc.; (iii) the definition, and description of, retaliation for reporting sexual harassment allegations utilizing examples, including availability of whistleblower protections; and (iv) the consequences of a violation of the prohibition on sexual harassment and the consequences for knowingly making a false report.

The EEOC states that sexual harassment training should focus on the following:

- Unacceptable behaviors themselves, rather than trying to teach participants the specific legal standards that will make such conduct “illegal”
- Consequences of engaging in conduct that is unacceptable in the workplace, including that corrective action will be proportionate to the severity of the conduct
- Clarifying what conduct is not harassment and is therefore acceptable in the workplace
- Educating the employees about their rights and responsibilities if they experience conduct that the employer has stated is not acceptable in the workplace

As a result of SCR 107, DSCS developed training that state employees can access online. According to our survey results, 2,673 of 3,087 (86.6%) employees stated that they received training on sexual harassment when they first began employment, and most (58%) received this training from DSCS. While the DSCS training conforms to several recommended EEOC best practices, some areas could be improved. For example, because this training is online, there is no opportunity for individuals to interact and ask questions, which is recommended by EEOC. In addition, best practices recommend that training be tailored to a specific workplace and workforce, but the DSCS training provides just a general overview. According to our survey 962 (33%) of 2,922 employees attended training that was developed internally by their agency. Most employees had no suggestions for how the training could be improved, but those who did primarily said that it should be more individualized and interactive - with real life examples and the ability to discuss and ask questions.

Louisiana should also require specialized sexual harassment training for all supervisors, as recommended by EEOC. The EEOC states that training should provide managers and supervisors with easy-to-understand and realistic methods for dealing with harassment that they observe, that is reported to them, or of which they have knowledge or

A total of 36% of supervisors who responded to our survey do not know what to do if an employee complains about sexual harassment.

Source: LLA Survey, March 2018

information. This includes practical suggestions on how to respond to different levels and types of offensive behavior, and clear instructions on how to report harassing behavior up the chain of command. Training should also stress the affirmative duties of supervisors to respond to harassing behavior, even in the absence of a complaint. The EEOC also reiterates that this training should be tailored to the specific worksite, organization, and/or industry, so that the examples used are helpful to managers and supervisors. According to our survey results, most supervisors (1,201 of 2,307, or 52%) have not received training on how to handle sexual harassment complaints.

Some states require more specialized training for individuals in supervisory positions. For example, California requires that an employer having 50 or more employees provide at least two hours of classroom or other effective interactive training and education regarding sexual harassment to all supervisory employees within six months of their hiring or promotion and every two years subsequently. California state law also gives guidance on what this type of training should include such as practical examples aimed at instructing supervisors in the prevention of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. Their law also states the training must be presented by trainers or educators with knowledge and expertise in the prevention of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. The Governor's Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy also recommended that sexual harassment training be mandated in state law, including specialized training for supervisors, managers, and agency heads.

Matter for Legislative Consideration: The legislature may wish to mandate sexual harassment training in state law, including specific training for supervisors, for all classified and unclassified executive branch employees.

Matter for Legislative Consideration: The legislature may wish to develop legislation that outlines what should be included in sexual harassment training based on EEOC recommendations.

APPENDIX A: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We conducted this performance audit under the provisions of Title 24 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended. We conducted this audit to evaluate Louisiana's policies and practices related to sexual harassment. Our audit covered the time period of fiscal year 2010 through February 2018.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit topic, which was to evaluate sexual harassment in executive branch agencies. We reviewed internal controls relevant to our audit topic and performed the following audit steps:

- Requested, obtained, and summarized the sexual harassment policy from 18 executive branch agencies and the number of sexual harassment complaints from all executive branch agencies and the four university systems. We then emailed each executive branch agency to confirm their number of sexual harassment complaints.
- Requested and obtained from the Office of Risk Management the amounts paid and legal expenses resulting from sexual harassment claims from fiscal year 2010 through February 2018 by executive branch agency and the university systems.
- Reviewed the sexual harassment policies from all executive branch agencies and the four university systems and compared these policies to other states and best practices.
- Researched and summarized Louisiana's current training mandates on sexual harassment training and compared the required training to best practices and other states.
- Researched and summarized the sexual harassment policies of 20 other states (Alaska, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming).
- With the help of the Office of Technology Services, developed and sent a survey to all employees (approximately 30,000) within a select number of State agencies (Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Health, Office of Juvenile Justice, Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, Department of Transportation and Development) to obtain their feedback

regarding sexual harassment policies in their State agency. We selected these agencies because these are the agencies OTS supports. We received approximately 3,200 responses for a survey response rate of 10.7%.

- Develop recommendations to assist Louisiana in strengthening its policies, procedures, and laws related to sexual harassment.

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE REFERENCE CHECK QUESTIONS

United States Office of Personnel Management Sample Reference Check Questions

- In what capacity did you work with the candidate (e.g., peer, colleague, supervisor)?
- Could you give me a brief description of the duties the candidate performed?
- What were the candidate's strengths? What were the candidate's weaknesses or areas where the candidate could improve?
- Would you recommend him/her for this position? Why or why not?
- How well did the candidate know the work? How well did the candidate perform on the job? How well did the candidate manage the workload?
- How would you describe the candidate's relationships with co-workers, subordinates, and supervisors?
- Is there anything else you can tell me about the candidate's ability to perform his/her job?
- What kind of work-related training, certificates, education, or other qualifications does the candidate have?
- Is the candidate eligible for re-hire in your organization?

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/other-assessment-methods/referencechecking.pdf>

Society for Human Resource Management Sample Reference Check Questions

- What were the individual's job responsibilities and salary?
- Was the individual successful in his or her role at your organization? Why or why not?
- What was it like to supervise the person?
- Was the person a valuable member of the team? Why or why not?
- What unique skills did the individual bring to your organization?
- What were his or her strengths?
- What were his or her weaknesses or areas that needed improvement?
- Was the person ever disciplined, and what were the circumstances?
- Do you think the individual is suitable for the job being applied for?
- Why did the person leave your organization?
- Would you rehire the person? Why or why not?

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/reference-check-checkup.aspx>