

How To Conduct Reference Checks



DECAL
Thriving Child Care
Business Academy

Learn why reference checks are important and how to conduct them for your new hires.

The main goal of a reference check is to learn more about the candidate and to hear from people who have known or worked with the candidate. This process can help you better understand the person you are wanting to hire and assist you in verifying what you have come to know about the person. Ultimately, this helps figure out who the right person will be to bring value to your organization with their skills and capabilities. Reference checks also serve a legal purpose. If you fail to check references, even for someone you know well, your legal liabilities can be greatly increased because courts perceive that you didn't fully vet a candidate.

Please keep in mind that reference checks are **separate from the required background checks** that must be conducted on child care staff.

What purpose do reference checks serve in hiring?

Reference checks give the employer an additional avenue of information gathering and insight into how the candidate was perceived in other situations. When you interact with a candidate's reference, you can share some of the responsibilities of the position to be sure that this candidate meets the requirements of your position. You can collect information about past job performance to make an informed decision about whether the candidate is the right fit for your program.

Reference checks can:

- Verify the information the potential candidate has provided,
- Offer additional information on a candidate's skills, performance, knowledge,
- Provide work history from a source other than the candidate, and
- Help the employer assess the candidate's potential for success in the position.

How can I set up reference checks?

After an interview, you will want to get the candidate's permission to conduct the reference check and ask them for a minimum of 3 references with contact information. This can be done by email as a follow-up after the interview process is complete, once you have determined that you want to keep the process going with this candidate. You will want to determine if you want only professional references or if other categories (friend, teacher, relative, or coach) will be allowed.

Example Reference List Request to Candidate

Dear Whitney,

It was great speaking with you yesterday about the open lead teacher role in Little Loves Child Care Center. At your earliest convenience, please send a list of three references and their contact information; please include both email and phone number. References may include past supervisors and others who have worked directly with you in your current or previous roles.

Thank you,
[Your name]

Ways to complete reference checks:

Once you receive contact information for each reference, there are several ways that you can attempt to speak with the individuals. Many people like to send an introduction email offering to speak over the telephone or send questions in writing. Remember, the reference is doing both you and the candidate a courtesy, so be respectful of their time.

- **Telephone.** Talking over the phone with a candidate's reference can give you lots of insight into the person you are considering. Taking the time to conduct a phone reference can provide you with detailed, comprehensive information and is a more intensive screening for candidates. Call the reference and identify yourself by title and your organization and tell them the purpose of your call. Check to see if this is the best time for the reference to spend a few minutes talking with you about the candidate. If not, then make an appointment for a time that works better for you both.
- **Email.** Write an email introducing yourself and your program to the candidate's reference. Share the questions you have about the candidate and state the date when you need their response. An email allows the candidate's reference to complete their response at their leisure and to seek out their company's approval as some agencies have protocols regarding providing reference checks of current or former employees.
- **Form.** You can also choose to use a form format when seeking reference checks. A system such as Google Forms can allow you to pre-assign questions

to be completed and then you can send a link to the form to the candidate's references. This method will allow you to ask the same question of each reference and collect all of the responses in one place. You can always follow up by phone call if you need more in-depth answers.

Sample Outreach Email

Dear [past employer's name],

I am _____ from _____ I am sending this email to conduct a reference check for [candidate's name], as they are currently interviewing for [position name] with our company. [Candidate name] listed you as a relevant reference and mentioned that you may provide some valuable insight into their experience working in your organization.

Specifically, I want to ask about the skills and experience that [candidate's name] displayed while working for your organization.

Please let me know if you would be available for a phone call or if you would prefer that I send questions over in an email. [offer some times you are available]

Thank you and I appreciate in advance your time to complete this reference check.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

Some sample questions you could ask:

- How long have you known the candidate?
- In what capacity do you know the candidate?
- What were some of the candidate's responsibilities? (Assuming the reference is a former co-worker or supervisor)
- Please describe the candidate's overall job performance.
- What are some of the candidate's strengths?
- Where are some of the candidate's areas for growth?
- In your experience, how does the candidate respond to feedback?

- Tell the reference a little bit about the position and then ask the reference how they see the candidate performing in this role.
- Is the candidate eligible for rehire with your organization?
- Is there anything else I should know about the candidate?
- Given the opportunity would you hire the candidate again?

**You may have other things that you will want to know or some of these questions may not be as relevant to your position. Spend some time thinking about what's most important for you to know about this candidate.*

Tips for conducting reference checks:

- Be clear in your purpose of calling or reaching out to the reference.
- Briefly describe what will be asked.
- Plan the questions carefully and ask them in an open-ended way.
- Take detailed notes.
- Thank the reference for their voluntary time.

Additional Resources

If you have questions or need help, assistance is available.

[GaPDS Website](#)

[DECAL Thriving Child Care Business Academy Website](#)

To Find Other Study Guides: Click on [Resources](#) on the Academy home page

To Find Training: Click on [Trainings](#) on the Academy home page

To Register for Training: Click on [Schedules & Registration](#) on the Academy home page

To Sign Up for Study Groups: Fill out the [Intake Assessment](#)

For questions about coaching or study groups: Email GAcoaching@civstrat.com

To Find Other ECE Resources: Visit the [DECAL Website](#)

For General Questions about the Academy: Email thriving@decals.ga.gov

For More Information:

[Family Child Care Learning Home Rules and Regulations](#)

[Child Care Learning Center Rules and Regulations](#)

The content included in this guide has been adapted from [Lean Recruitment: Finding Better Talent Faster](#) (2017), by Gary Romano and Alison LaRocca.

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