

CHAPTER 7

Certification and Appointment

7.1 Appointments to the Competitive Service

- 1 Merit appointment indicates that the employee has been selected for appointment in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 5 and 6 of the Regulations. Merit employees shall receive annual and sick leave and other fringe benefits.
- 2 Merit positions may be filled from within or outside the merit system. Appointments from within the system may be promotions, lateral transfers or demotions.
- 3 Merit employees scheduled for 20 or more hours per week, including those in more than one merit position, shall have all the benefits of full-time merit employees, including:
 - A. Leave Accrual: Annual and sick leave will accrue as stated in Chapter 10 of the Fairfax County Personnel Regulations.
 - B. Health Benefits: Employees scheduled to work less than 31 hours per week may be subject to higher premium payments for certain benefits, in accordance with county benefits policy.
 - C. Performance Pay Increases: Employees holding more than one merit position are eligible to receive pay increases in all positions.

7.2 Status of Employees and Positions

- 1 Merit employees normally occupy positions in the competitive service and exempt employees normally occupy positions in the exempt service. In exceptional circumstances, however, particularly when it is urgent that a position be filled without delay, a merit employee may occupy a position in the exempt service or an exempt employee may occupy a position in the competitive service.
- 2 Except as provided in 7.2-3 below, a merit employee shall not have his/her status changed to exempt while assigned to a position in the exempt service when there has been no break in service. There shall be no change in the merit employee's rights and benefits entitlement while serving in an exempt service a position. When a merit employee is appointed to an exempt service a position, the personnel action request form shall indicate in what manner it is planned to return the employee to a merit position. The rules governing temporary acting promotion or demotion shall apply. Upon return to the merit position, the

employee's grade, salary and performance pay increase date shall be determined as if the exempt appointment had not occurred.

- 3 A merit employee may occupy an exempt position without a change in status for no longer than ninety days. A merit employee who accepts an appointment in excess of ninety days to an exempt position loses his/her merit status, but may be reinstated to a position in the competitive service at his/her former merit grade and salary within one calendar year of the end of the exempt appointment.

7.3 Certification of Applicants

- 1 Upon receipt of a personnel requisition, the Human Resources Director or designee shall promptly announce the vacancy and certify applicants following the procedures specified in Chapters 5 and 6.
- 2 Following the closing date of the job announcement, the Human Resources Director or designee will establish a certification list of the best qualified applicants and submit it to the agency contact.

When creating the certification list, in addition to the employment standards, necessary knowledge, skills and abilities as defined in the class specification and position description, consideration shall be given to the following: the number of vacant positions to be filled from that list, applicant responses to supplemental application questions, preferred qualifications considered critical to successful performance in the job when approved by the Human Resources Director or designee, as well as the diversity needs as identified in the agency's Diversity Plan. Where possible, the certification list should contain at least ten applicants.

- 3 Applicants shall be certified in accordance with the following rules.
 - a. If a position has been announced exclusively as a promotional opportunity open only to current employees, only current County employees shall be certified.
 - b. Applicants shall be listed in alphabetical order on certification lists furnished to departments. The certification list shall identify the applicants who are veterans, veterans with a service-connected disability rating, or persons with a disability.
- 4 The Human Resources Director may delegate some or all of the actions described in this section to department heads.

7.4 Selection and Appointment

- 1 Before making any appointment, the department head or his/her designee shall review the applications of all certified applicants and shall interview at least one more than half of those certified.
- 2 For the purpose of this subsection, the department head's designee may be either an individual or a panel. Department heads are encouraged to use panels for all positions. When panels are used, either to review applications or to conduct interviews, they should be constituted with due regard for the demographic characteristics of the certified applicants. Due to the scope and rigorous nature of the selection procedures used for public safety job classes, interviews are not required for these job classes except when deemed appropriate at the discretion of the department head or deputy.
- 3 The department head or his/her designee should review and consider the performance records of current and former employees who are finalists for a job vacancy.
- 4 Department heads or deputies normally should complete the process of screening, interviewing and appointing within 30 calendar days of receipt of a certification list. If a period longer than 30 days is required to make a selection, department heads or deputies shall consider the likelihood that the best qualified applicants may no longer be available. This subsection does not apply to applicants for uniformed public safety positions, who are required to undergo additional screening after initial certification and whose appointments may be timed to coincide with the convening dates of training academy classes.
- 5 Appointment to a vacancy in the competitive service shall be made by the proper department head or deputy from those applicants certified by the Human Resources Director or designee. Such appointment shall be indicated by the completion of a personnel action request form.
- 6 No applicant shall seek or attempt to use any political endorsement in connection with any merit system appointment and no consideration shall be given to political or partisan affiliation, activity or endorsement in selecting candidates for original or promotional appointment in the merit service.
- 7 Every appointee shall be required to show proof of identity and proof of eligibility to work in the United States, before his/her appointment becomes effective.

7.5 Probationary Period

- 1 Except as noted in 7.5-2 below every merit appointee shall serve a probationary period of twelve months after original appointment (initial probationary period) or promotion (promotional probationary period). The probationary period shall be

used for closely observing the employee's work, for obtaining the most effective adjustment of a new employee to his/her position, and for separating any new employee or demoting any promoted employee whose performance does not meet the performance requirements.

- 2 Sworn police officers, animal protection police officers, deputy sheriffs, and uniformed firefighters shall serve an initial probationary period of twelve months commencing with the date of graduation from the appropriate training academy. Public safety communicators shall serve an initial probationary period of twelve months commencing upon graduation from the Department of Public Safety Communications Academy and the completion of a 10 week on the job training program. The performance pay increase date shall be determined by the date of original appointment. For all other merit employees, the initial probationary period shall commence with the date of appointment.

- 3 With the approval of the Human Resources Director, a department head or deputy may extend the initial or promotional probationary period in limited circumstances situations where the employee has been unable to perform the duties for which he or she was hired due to extended absence or extended period of restricted duty for medical reasons as covered by paid family leave (PFL) or FMLA for a period not to exceed 120 calendar days.
 - a. Requests for extension of the probationary period must be made in writing to the Human Resources Director stating the specific facts and circumstances justifying the request. The request for extension must be made in advance of the expiration of the employee's probationary period and may be granted under the following circumstances:
 - (1) when an employee is absent from work on an approved absence in excess of 30 calendar days during the probationary period;
 - (2) when an employee is unable to perform the assigned duties of the job for which he/she was hired for a period in excess of 30 days, such as when serving in a temporary light duty assignment to accommodate a medical condition.
 - b. Such extension shall commence on the date the employee resumes the assigned duties of the job for which he/she was hired.

- 4 An employee serving in the initial probationary period is eligible to apply for, be certified to, and be appointed to a class of a higher level. Under such circumstances, a promotional probationary period begins with the date of the promotion but the initial probationary period expires twelve months from initial appointment date unless extended in accordance with the provisions of this action.

- 5 Unless alleging illegal discrimination, an employee serving an initial appointment probationary period including extensions authorized in accordance with this section has no right to grieve or appeal under these rules. Any employee who has satisfactorily completed an initial probationary period and who is serving a probationary period following promotion retains his/her grievance rights.

7.6 Underfill Appointments

- 1 With the approval of the Human Resources Director or designee, an applicant who does not meet all the employment standards as outlined in the class specification and approved position description for a merit class may be appointed competitively to fill a position in that class at a lower grade than that of the class under the conditions specified in this section.
- 2 Underfills are appropriate under the following circumstances:
 - a. When recruitment difficulties exist for a class at the authorized grade.
 - b. When appointees require specialized training and work experience within a particular function to meet the performance standards for the position at the authorized grade.
 - c. When underfilling a position is part of an authorized upward mobility program for career employees.
 - d. A reclassification action changes the classification of the position and the incumbent does not meet the minimum qualifications.
- 3 When it is planned or likely that a position will be underfilled, the vacancy announcement will so state.
- 4 Before making a formal offer of an underfill appointment, the department head or deputy shall prepare a written underfill agreement, which must be approved by the Human Resources Director or designee in advance of the offer. The agreement shall include at least the following information:
 - a. The specific training and experience requirements the employee must meet before promotion to the authorized grade.
 - b. The manner in which they are to be met and the time frame within which the appointee is expected to meet the performance standards for the position, which standards shall be included within the agreement.
 - c. A statement to the effect that promotion will be made without further competition when the appointee meets the terms of the agreement and the

performance standards of the authorized position; and that if the appointee fails to do so within the allotted time the department head or deputy will effect a transfer, demotion, dismissal or unsatisfactory service separation or a statement to the effect that after successfully completing the terms of the agreement, the employee will be required to compete for promotion to the higher level position and if not selected, the department head or deputy will effect a transfer, demotion, dismissal or unsatisfactory service separation.

d. A statement that the employee's pay shall revert to its pre-agreement level if the employee, before satisfying the agreement's terms and conditions, discontinues performance under the agreement or takes a position with the County different than the one authorized under the agreement.

-5 Underfill agreements normally will be for a period of not more than one year but may be for periods of up to four years in multi-tiered underfill agreements. The department head or deputy may extend an underfill agreement without the Human Resources Director approval if the employee necessarily is absent for more than 30 consecutive calendar days or because of the unavailability of required training. The department head or deputy must inform the Human Resources Director of all such extensions.

7.7 Appointment of Family Members, Members of Household or Extended Relationships

-1 Except as provided herein, no applicant/employee shall be hired, reinstated, reemployed, transferred, promoted or demoted to a position which places him/her in a direct supervisory line as defined herein or otherwise permits them to participate in any personnel action relative to a family member or members of his/her household or extended relationships.

-2 This prohibition may also be extended to positions, in which the duties involve access, review, verification, authorization, or approval of the transactions of family members, members of household, or extended relationships in financial, personnel, purchasing, or other sensitive matters, even though the respective functions are in different departments. Such positions will be identified by an affected department head or designee, with the approval of the Human Resources Director.

-3 For purposes of this regulation, the definition of 'Extended Family Including Household Member' is defined in Chapter 2.

-4 For the purposes of this regulation, "Extended Relationships" is defined as those personal relationships creating a potential conflict of interest or having the possibly of creating adverse impact (actual or perceived) on supervision, safety,

and security. Additionally, a direct supervisory line is defined as those situations where an employee, regardless of job description or title, has authority to hire, transfer, promote, assign, reward, discipline or terminate other employees or has responsibility to direct their work or conduct their performance evaluation. This also includes those situations where an employee effectively is able to recommend these actions where such recommendations are given substantive weight in the final decisions being made.

- 5 If a change occurs which causes employees to be in conflict with this regulation, one of the employees shall be transferred to a vacant position within the County. In the absence of an agreement which is satisfactory to all the concerned parties, the employee with the lower grade, or, if they are of the same grade, the employee with the fewer years of County service shall be transferred.
- 6 Requests for exceptions to this policy shall be submitted in writing to the Human Resources Director, who has the authority to waive this regulation when it is in the best interest of the County to do so. The approved exception request shall be maintained in each employee's respective personnel file.

7.8 *Applicant Right of Appeal on Discriminatory Practices*

- 1 An applicant who is not employed by the County at the time of his/her application and who believes he/she has been discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, pregnancy or related medical conditions, gender identity, sexual orientation, political affiliation, genetic information, military status or disabled military status during the selection process may file an appeal on the alleged discriminatory practice. A bona fide occupational requirement for any position, the minimum age qualifications for public safety occupations, and the exclusion of family members, members of household, or extended relationships as defined in Section 7.7 shall not be appealable except as provided in Sec. 7.5-5.
- 2 Such an appeal stating the alleged discriminatory practice and the corrective action desired must be filed in writing with the Director of the Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs within fifteen business days of the date the applicant knew or should have known that he/she was not selected for employment.
- 3 The Director of the Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs shall investigate the allegations and respond in writing to the applicant within twenty business days.
- 4 Should the applicant believe the Director of the Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs' response to be unsatisfactory, the applicant may file a written request for a hearing with the Civil Service Commission. The applicant's request for a hearing must contain a complete statement of the alleged discriminatory practice and the corrective action desired, and must be filed within fifteen

business days of receipt of the Director of the Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs' response.

- 5 The Civil Service Commission shall set a time and place for such hearing to be held not more than thirty workdays after receipt of such request. At its discretion, the Commission may appoint a hearing officer to hear the appeal.
- 6 The hearing shall be conducted in accordance with hearing procedures adopted by the Civil Service Commission.
- 7 After the hearing, the Commission shall forward an advisory finding on the merit of the appeal and disposition of the case to the County Executive. The Commission does not have the authority to award or recommend monetary damages.