

**COUNTY COMMISSIONER / COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
GUIDE FOR RECRUITING AND HIRING A DIRECTOR**

*Field Administration
Division*

*Office of Performance
Improvement*



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INTRODUCTION

This is a guide for Commissioners to use in hiring a Director of a Social or Human Services Department. Hiring a new Director is one of the most important decisions a Board can make and this guide provides some ideas for Commissioners to consider.

The guide contains sections on:

- The County Board Appoints the County Director
- Characteristics (Functions) of Directors
- Summary of Director Responsibilities
- Hiring Requirements
- Necessary Knowledge and Skills of County Directors
- Recruitment Tools
 - Example of Position Description
 - Example of Advertisement
 - Sample Questions

THE COUNTY BOARD APPOINTS COUNTY DIRECTOR

Since January 2001, the County Board has the authority and responsibility to establish a personnel system for the county department that is based on the federal merit principles covered in the introductory section of this manual. The Board sets the salary work hours, leave, medical, and retirement benefits and determines the amount and frequency of salary increases as long as the system is administered according to the merit principles. Except for the caseworker series, the Board also sets job descriptions and minimum job requirements. Colorado requires that caseworkers have at least a bachelor's degree in human behavior or social work in order to provide child welfare services.

The County Board is the official governing body for social services and as such is ultimately responsible for what happens in the department. It hires and fires the Director and is accountable for this person's actions. See CRS 26-1-116. According to Colorado Statute, **The Board shall appoint a Director of the county department of social services ...(26-1-117 (1)).**

The County Board evaluates and monitors the county social services Director who is charged with the executive and administrative duties and responsibilities of the county department. The county Director shall serve as the secretary to the Board (26-1-117). The Director, with the approval of the Board, shall appoint staff to carry out the responsibilities of the county department (26-1-119). The necessary qualifications and salary level of the Director's position is determined by the Board.

1. The system shall assure **fair treatment of applicants** and employees in all aspects of personnel administration without regard to political affiliation, race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, age, or disability and with proper

regard for the privacy and constitutional rights of such persons or citizens. **This fair treatment principle shall include compliance with all federal equal opportunity and nondiscrimination laws;** and,

2. The system shall assure that employees are protected against coercion for partisan political purposes and are prohibited from using their official authority for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the results of an election or a nomination for office.

Personnel Administrative Requirements:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000e et. seq.
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 701 et seq.
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, 29 U.S.C. 621 et. seq.
- The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, 29 U.S.C. 201 et seq.
- Equal Pay Act of 1963, 29 U.S.C. 206 et. seq.
- Family Medical Leave Act of 1993, 29 U.S.C. 2611 et. seq.
- The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et. seq.
- Standards for a Merit System of Personnel Administration. Title 5, C.F.R., 900.601 et. seq.
- Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Title 8, C.F.R. 274 et. seq.
- Conflict of Interest Colorado Revised Statute 18-8-308
- Public Records Act, Colorado Revised Statute 24-72-101 et. seq.
- Inspection of Records Colorado Revised Statute 24-72-201 et. seq.

The County Human Resource (Personnel) Section should be familiar with and provide guidance regarding the requirements of hiring staff in compliance with federal and state law.

Colorado Department of Human Services Field Administrators serving the county can assist the Board in the recruitment, selection and training of a new Director.

CHARACTERISTICS (FUNCTIONS) OF DIRECTORS

Selection of a county Director is one of the most important decisions the County Board of Social Services has to make. The Board's motivation for hiring an executive Director is to have an expert help with managing the organization and provide the skills and support necessary to achieve the county department's mission, goals and objectives in serving eligible recipients. A strong, highly skilled Director provides the following essential functions:

Planning – The **Director provides sound fiscal planning** through development of the annual budget. The Director is key in helping staff work together to accomplish goals and achieve program objectives. The Director communicates the vision, purpose, strategies and timelines for achieving program outcomes.

Organizing – The **Director is responsible for determining the human and other resources necessary to accomplish the agency’s plans**, projects, and services’ goals. The Director should also try to fit staff in the right positions for the agency and for their personal growth and satisfaction.

Leadership – The **Director inspires, motivates, and leads staff to reach their potential in performing their jobs**. He or she coordinates a variety of tasks in a complex organization that requires cooperation and teamwork. The Director knows the staff and what intrinsic and extrinsic rewards motivate them. As a leader, the Director offers them opportunities to fulfill their career plans. A Director **encourages internal teamwork, external partnerships, open communication, and mutual trust**. A Director should exhibit a high level of **integrity** and fairness, and express respect for individuals and be culturally competent.

Decision-Making – The **Director decides a lot of issues and must consider complex and sometimes contradictory alternatives before reaching a decision**. The process requires weighing the possible consequences and risks and making the best possible decision with the information available. Good decision-makers analyze the data and then monitor the effect their decisions have on staff, the Board, the community. They learn to make decisions within a consistent framework.

Collaboration – The **Director works collaboratively with others**, including the Commissioners, to deliver comprehensive services and establishing effective partnerships.

Supervision – The **Director must also supervise subordinates** who either perform the line tasks or supervise those who do. The Director needs to provide regular supervisory sessions based on good performance plans and periodic evaluations. Good supervision assures consistency, quality and accountability.

Delegation – The **Director knows how to delegate tasks to staff**. A Director, who is effective at delegation, knows what tasks to assign, but also delegates the authority necessary to perform that task.

Evaluation – The **Director monitors the staff performance** to be sure that the desired results are achieved. In order to improve the quality and quantity of work produced; this performance data is essential to make the necessary improvements. The Director **identifies critical needs** of customers and devotes resources to meeting those needs. The Director should **focus on program results** and use state-of-the-art technology to be more efficient and effective.

SUMMARY OF DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The law itself provides County Directors protection because specific activities and duties are prescribed in the Director's performance of duties. In CRS 26-1-118, the duties of the County Director are spelled out:

- The Director is the **chief budget officer** of the county department as prescribed in **CRS 26-1-124**. The Director is responsible for the development, implementation, execution, and monitoring of the County Department's budget. The Director oversees the preparation of the budget and develops new budget issues by recognizing the policy implications and resource requirements of those issues. The Director prepares and submits the Department's annual budget to the County Commissioners and in if there is a County Administrator, to that office for approval. Even if the Director does not prepare the budget, he or she is clearly responsible for its contents. The Director must monitor the approved appropriation and take corrective action as appropriate.

The Director also **authorizes all agency expenditures** and should be bonded as a protection. The Director is the chief budget officer of the county department as prescribed in **CRS 26-1-124**. The Director authorizes all agency expenditures and should be bonded as a protection.

- The Director serves as an **agent of the State Department of Human Services** in the administration of human services programs as long as they are administered in accordance with State Department rules.
- Serves as an **officer or agent of the court** when appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction and shall perform under the supervision of the court in any social service matters before the court. This is particularly important in adult and child protection, juvenile actions and adoptions. When acting on the orders of the court, Directors have considerable protection.
- The Director oversees **strategic planning**. The plan sets the priorities and strategic objectives for the current budget request, and serves as a management tool to gauge performance. The strategic planning process is also integrated into the budget cycle to ensure that annual budget initiatives are consistent with the Department's long-range strategic intent and vision.

NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE AND DESIREABLE SKILLS OF COUNTY DIRECTORS

The County Director should have a certain knowledge base of the following or be able, within a short time period, to acquire such knowledge to enable him/her to carry out the responsibilities of the position. The following list is not inclusive:

- A thorough knowledge of the organization, structure, funding and functions of both state and local governments, including budget and finance, with particular reference to their implications on the county level.
- Communications skills and especially the ability to work with the media in times of crisis or stress.
- Thorough knowledge of Colorado's social services' laws and regulations.
- Knowledge and familiarity with management practices and procedures, budgeting and financial management, public administration and personnel management.
- General knowledge of current social and economic problems and their impact on individuals and families.
- Knowledge of programs of other state agencies that might benefit the county department and/or the individuals and families that it serves.
- The skill to work with people, including consumers, citizens, other professional agencies, and staff.
- The skill to exercise good judgment in decision making, problem solving, planning, directing and monitoring the work of the agency.
- The skill to provide effective leadership in the development and administration of a county department of social services.
- The skill to effectively communicate verbally and in writing. This includes working with the media in presenting a positive image of the agency to the community.
- Proficiency in or knowledge of computer operation and systems within the county/state.
- Skills in supervision. According to the size of county and how the department is organized, these skills may differ.

RECRUITMENT TOOLS

This section includes two examples of Director (position) descriptions, newspaper advertisements, and sample interview questions.

DIRECTOR POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

EXAMPLE 1

_____ COUNTY

Health and Human Service Director

ANNOUNCEMENT

The _____ County Board of Commissioners is seeking qualified applicants to fill the position of County Director for the _____ County Department of Health and Human Services. The agency's office is in the historic mining town of _____, with a county population of about _____ located in the Rocky Mountains. The Director is responsible for administering a variety of social and human service programs with about _____ staff and a budget that exceeds \$_____ in annual expenditures.

Knowledge, Abilities and Skills

Applicant must have knowledge of management principles and techniques; the ability to direct and organize an agency with about _____ staff performing a variety of technical, clerical, professional and specialized duties; the ability to plan, budget, direct and administer complicated health and human service programs; the ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with persons at all levels within and outside the organization; and the ability to think creatively and write and speak clearly and concisely.

Requirements

Position requires a Bachelor's Degree from a 4-year accredited college with a major in social work, human behavioral science, public health or related field and 5 years administrative experience.

Preferred Qualifications

A Masters Degree in Human Services, Public Administration, Public Health, or related field and experience in human services and/or public health is preferred.

Salary and Benefits

The job is advertised at an annual salary starting at \$_____ and up and is based on the applicant's qualifications and experience. Retirement and Health benefits are available.

How to Apply

Please send letter of interest and resume by Date to:

Address

Closing Date

Date

_____ COUNTY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER.

EXAMPLE 2

Director of _____ County Department of Social Services

Beginning Monthly Salary: \$_____ to \$_____ based on qualifications and experience) (Plus benefits)

Summary of Duties: Administers all social services programs and manages all activities of the _____ County Department of Social Services under the supervision of the _____ County Board of Commissioners and the Colorado State Department of Human Services. Assures county compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Supervises ____ employees. Hires, trains, fires, and evaluates personnel. Prepares an annual budget along with planning, organizing, and administering all programs and state-mandated activities. Has responsibility for quality control and error-rate management. Works closely with other community agencies. Manages budget within state allocations and county resources.

Job Requirements: Requires a working knowledge of budgeting and financial management, management philosophy, supervisory techniques, agency and program functions. Knowledge of casework management, child abuse issues, aging issues, family

dynamics, human development and behavior and the philosophy of social services. Ability to develop progressive management concepts, make rapid resourceful decisions, and coordinate plans and activities with the department staff. Ability to maintain effective working relationships with the staff, clients, and the community.

Minimum Qualifications to Apply:

Education: Bachelor’s Degree from an accredited four-year college. A major in business administration, public administration, or human behavioral sciences preferred.

Experience: Five years full-time administrative experience in human services or related field.

POSITION ADVERTISEMENTS

EXAMPLE 1

Advertisement for _____ County Director of Health and Human Services

Employment Opportunity

_____ County Department of Health and Human Services

_____ County is seeking to fill the full-time position of Director of Social (Health and Human) Services. Position requires a Bachelor’s Degree from a 4-year accredited college with a major in social work, human behavioral science, public health or related field and 5 years administrative experience. A Masters Degree and experience in human services and/or public health or public administration is preferred. Salary ranges about \$_____ depending on qualifications and experience of applicant.

Please send letter of interest and resume by Date to:

NAME _____
County Commissioner
Address

_____ COUNTY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER.

EXAMPLE 2

Social Services Director for _____ County, to provide administrative, supervisory, and professional work directing the County's Department of Social Services. The Department includes the annual preparation of the budget, implementing and monitoring all social service programs and social casework activities. Assures County compliance to both Federal and State Mandated services and requirements.

Salary Range: \$ _____ to \$ _____ monthly, commensurate with experience and qualifications.

Submit Resumes and letters of Interest no later than (DATE) to:

Name and Address

SCREENING AND INTERVIEW TIPS

After all of the resumes, letters of interest, and or applications have been screened to determine if the applicants qualify, the Commissioners in most cases will want to interview a set number of qualified candidates.

Here are some basic tips to consider when interviewing candidates for the position of County Director.

1. The hiring authority **should limit the number of interviews** to a set number before applications are screened. Typically, anywhere **from 3 to 10 interviews** should be conducted depending on the quality and number of applications received.
2. Develop and pre-assign all of the interview questions to members of the interview panel before the candidates are interviewed.
3. Consider having the Colorado Department of Human Services Field Administrator and if appropriate Field Liaison from the Department of Public Health and Environment participate in the interview panel as **non-voting members**.
4. Develop or use questions that will address some if not all of the job-related requirements. (Note: Some example questions are included in this document.)
5. Agree on what procedure will be used to **rate candidates** in advance of the interview.
6. Applicants (interviewees) should be rated on their responses during or immediately after their interviews.) while information is fresh.
7. Watch how the interviewees **respond to the stress** of the interview verbally and non-verbally because stress is inherent with the position of Director.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for County Director Position County Department of Health and Human Services

1. Why do you want this job and what unique qualities do you bring to the position?
2. Now that you have had a chance to tour our community, what about the community is appealing to you? What do you find unappealing?
3. Briefly describe your management style and its positive and negative effects.
4. What is your view of the role of health and human services as a public agency, and what is the best way for the agency to assist clients?
5. In a conflict situation between workers and their supervisor, how would you intervene effectively to preserve relationships with both the complaining staff and supervisor?
6. What are some methods you would use to improve employee morale?
7. What are some of the factors you would consider in preparing your department's annual budget?
8. Suppose you submitted your annual budget to the County Commissioners for review and approval and they voted to reduce the overall budget by 5%. What would you do?
9. How do you perceive the role of the Social Services Director in this community?
10. How do you perceive the role of Director relative to the County Commissioners?
11. Is there any question we should have asked but didn't? Is there anything else you'd like to add that will help us evaluate you as a candidate for this position?