



Merit System Overview

Division of Human Resources, R.I. Department of Administration

October 16, 2023

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RI State Government Hiring Overview

- The Executive Branch hires, appoints and promotes using processes that are governed by Merit System Law (RIGL § 36-4), personnel rules, collective bargaining provisions, and policies. The Division of Human Resources collaborates with agencies to implement these processes, ensuring the agencies comply with these requirements.
- Other requirements or conditions impact agencies' ability to hire such as the national labor shortage and competition from neighboring states.
- Public sector recruitment and personnel management processes are less nimble than in the private sector, as the Executive Branch serves as a steward of taxpayer dollars. This means more controls and oversight must be applied to hiring process protocols. It also means more complexity, in some cases.
- Executive Branch agencies manage their staffing, organizational structure, and how work is assigned. Human Resources collaborates with agencies to fill vacant positions when they are identified by the agency, after the need, budget and full time equivalent (FTE) have been approved to be filled. This includes partnering on promotion of postings and opportunities through job fairs, social media, job boards, partnership with the Division of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (DEDI), etc.
- The current state of recruitment and hiring requires the use of multiple systems and paper – some of them decades old - based manual processes for implementation. The state is in the process of implementing an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) web-based system to modernize Human Resource operations.

Statewide Outlook: Workforce Landscape

Challenges

- Persisting national labor shortage
- 11% vacancy rate among state positions (Fall 2023)
- Lateral transfer activity
- Competitive wage and benefit packages for comparable jobs in other public or private sector environments

In Progress Short-term & Long-term Actions (Statewide)

- Review laws, rules, protocols and other requirements pertaining to the hiring system
- Launch an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to replace decades-old legacy systems and combine data sources to improve speed & efficiency (*launch estimated for 2025*)
- Classification and Compensation Study – currently in the process of reviewing the requests for proposals (RFPs) that have been submitted.
- Work with labor on agreements or collective bargaining changes to speed up recruitment for key job vacancies
- Continuous improvement of outreach and partnership efforts to community and professional organizations
- Marketing campaign/statewide strategy (in addition to individualized recruitment strategies already underway)

HR Recruitment: Non-Union Jobs

State Employment Job Board/
Online Application System:



AGENCY submits Personnel Action Request (PAR) for each position, then **HUMAN RESOURCES, & BUDGET** approves

Human Resources posts job at **APPLY.RI.GOV**

Human Resources refers applications to hiring managers for review and selection

AGENCY interviews selected candidates

AGENCY selects candidate, submits selected candidate for review and approval by **Human Resources**

Human Resources coordinates onboarding

HR Recruitment: Union Jobs, No Civil Service Exam

LATERAL:

1. **AGENCY** requests Personnel Action Request (PAR) for each position

2. **AGENCY** creates PAR

3. **HR, BUDGET & AGENCY** approvals

4. **HR** posts position

5. **HR** identifies lateral candidates for transfer

Process repeats as necessary

6. **AGENCY** creates PAR for lateral backfill; repeats entire process

PROMOTIONAL:

7. **HR** posts any job openings available after lateral transfer process is complete

8. **HR** reviews promotional candidates by seniority

9. **AGENCY** interviews promotional candidates

10. **AGENCY** selects promotional candidate

Process repeats as necessary

11. **AGENCY** creates PAR for promotional backfill; repeats entire process

EXTERNAL:

12. **HR** posts any job openings available after promotional candidate process is complete

13. **HR** forwards applications for review

14. **AGENCY** interviews external candidates

15. **AGENCY** selects candidate

16. **HR** coordinates onboarding

What is the purpose of a Personnel Action Request (PAR) system?

- The use of the PAR system ensures **transparency** and **compliance** with legal and policy requirements, and **controls** in an environment where the State is the primary steward of taxpayer funding and public trust is paramount.
- The PAR system is required to comply with certain statutory requirements, including having the State Budget Officer approve or disapprove of all requests for new personnel and investigate the need for all existing positions in state government. The law also requires the administration to produce a detailed personnel supplement that would only be possible through some type of PAR system.
- The system provides agencies' management teams with a tool to properly manage their personnel budgets while targeting their hiring needs. It is the mechanism used by an agency to initiate changes to positions.
- The upcoming Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system will be a more modern, flexible system than what we currently have in place while ensuring the necessary transparency, compliance and controls.

Breaking Down Time to Hire – DHS & DCYF

DHS & DCYF have seen a recent reduction in time to hire. Over the duration the data captures, time between when an offer is made and the start date appears relatively stable while time between PAR initiation and candidate selection/approval varies.

- The following manually-retrieved data reflects positions that have a start date of January 1, 2023 to September 30, 2023; data from 2022 represents actions taken within the hiring process for a candidate that was hired in 2023.
- The data reflects the average amount of time between 1) when a PAR is entered into the system and when a hire approval is given, and 2) a hire approval and when the employee starts
- Backfill hiring actions and new position hiring actions can be differentiated, but lateral, promotion, “true” backfill, etc. cannot be disaggregated; this data does not represent net new FTEs, but the number of hiring actions
- Please note: Because of the manual nature of these processes, there may be lag time in the data shared between the hiring agency and HR

Agency	Agency FTE Cap*	# of 2023 Hires	Time to Hire: PAR Initiation Year	Avg. Time between PAR Initiation and Hire Approval	Avg. Time between Hire Approval and Start Date	Avg. Total Time to Hire
DHS	1,047 (FY22) 1,067 (FY23)	163	CY 2022	162 days	40 days	202 days
			CY 2023	73 days	32 days	105 days
DCYF	702.5 (FY22 & FY23)	108	CY 2022	190 days	31 days	220 days
			CY 2023	71 days	32 days	104 days

Civil Service Exams

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HR Recruitment: Civil Service Exams

- Civil Service/Merit-based testing developed as part of the “*Progressive Movement*” and motivated by federal employment practices (Spoils System).
- RI Merit Law was developed and formalized in 1951. The competitive testing Civil Service testing process is described in R.I.G.L. §36-4-18.
- Employment testing and Civil Service lists for interview and hiring provided a “*checks & balances*” to agency management designed to level the playing field for unaffiliated and unassociated jobseekers an opportunity to compete for government jobs.
- Civil Service testing provides an objective and empirically-based assessment of jobseekers' competency and capacity to perform core job functions of government positions.
- The vast majority of states do maintain a component of Civil Service testing and the employee protections Merit Law provides. However, some states have abolished Civil Service testing all together, including Georgia, Indiana, Arizona, and Colorado.*

The Evolution of Civil Service Exams in RI

- The use of Civil Service examinations reached its height during the 1980s when over 100 classified classifications were tested but has steadily declined.
- Over the last 10 years, in collaboration with the unions and in consultation with HR, some agencies have opted out of civil service testing.
 - Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) → Customer Service Representative I
 - Department of Transportation (DOT) → Engineering Technician I
 - The job duties associated with these classifications did not lend themselves to written employment testing. There was consensus that the traditional *post-and-fill* model, per the CBA, was sufficient for hiring.
- Today, only five classifications are currently tested with Civil Service lists provided to agencies and are confined to social services and public safety. Agencies have the opportunity to request changes to the test after each use.
- Currently, 3.8% of all current state employees have been hired via a Civil Service list. Of the total workforce, 12.5% have taken some sort of employment test, including Civil Service. Examples of these classifications include Correctional Officers and Deputy Sheriffs.

HR Recruitment: Civil Service Exams Process Flow

Civil Service Exams

- EXAM IS ADVERTISED
- CANDIDATES SELECTED BASED ON MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS
- TEST DATE SCHEDULED
- EXAM IS ADMINISTERED
- EXAMS ARE SCORED
- CANDIDATE LIST IS CERTIFIED



Candidate Lists

PROMOTIONAL
Good for 3 years

OPEN COMPETITIVE
CANDIDATES
Good for 4 years

Job Openings

Per union contract, allow for lateral transfers before moving to promotional list

Certify first six (6) candidates from promotional list for first vacancy

Certify one (1) candidate for each additional vacancy in same job classification

Follow same procedure with external list once promotional list exhausted

Hires

- Agency Interview
- Offer date extended
- Hire date confirmed
- Onboarding begins



Exams Cont'd

Civil Service Exam Status

As of October 2023

NOTE: AGENCIES can request additional exams be scheduled even when a current candidate list is still active if the agency is concerned about the number of the available candidates remaining on the list.

JOB CLASSIFICATION (*Required civil service exam by law)	DEPARTMENT	CANDIDATES ON ESTABLISHED LIST	CANDIDATES REMAINING	EXPIRATION DATE PROMOTIONAL	EXPIRATION DATE EXTERNAL	LIST ESTABLISHED
Child Protective Investigator*	DCYF	20	0	7/18/2026	7/18/2027	7/18/2023
Eligibility Technician I (current)	DHS	61	30+	8/28/2026	8/28/2027	8/28/2023
Eligibility Technician I (pending)	DHS	TBD	TBD	Currently posted through 11/3/2023	TBD	TBD
Social Caseworker* (Adult) (current)	DHS	400+	108	N/A	12/4/2023	12/4/2019
Social Caseworker* (Adult) (pending)	DHS	87 tested, list pending	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD-tested on 9/29/2023
Social Caseworker II* (Child)	DCYF	12	0	6/14/2026	6/14/2027	6/14/2023

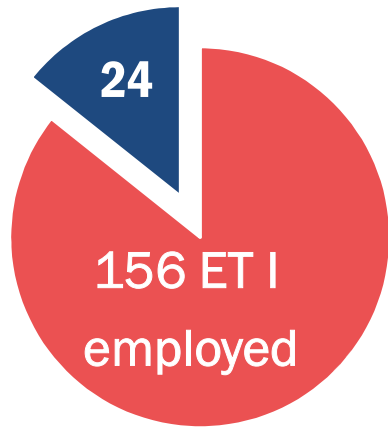
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Recent DHS Hiring Solutions

Problem-Solving for Workforce Need: DHS Eligibility Technician I (ET1)



As of October 2023

Recent Actions Taken:

- DHS has ramped up hiring for a larger number of ET1 positions to meet the demand of filling vacant positions. Human Resources continues to partner with the agency to meet their goals.
- The state held an exam in August establishing a list on 8/28/2023. While that list is being implemented (DHS is interviewing candidates and making job offers), a new examination has been announced and applications are currently being accepted through 11/3/2023. This will allow for another list to be established as the current list is completed.
- Union contracts require lateral moves first, which often result in a series of internal bumps before any new candidates could be considered. The state and Council 94 agreed to temporarily cease lateral moves in order to speed the process for onboarding new ET1s. There was a freeze in place through 8/5/2023 that proved to be successful. While the lateral freeze is no longer in place, the State and Council 94 signed a Special Purpose Agreement (effective 10/12) for expedited posting period of ET1 and CSA positions from 10 to 7 days. The SPA is in place for 6 months.

DCYF

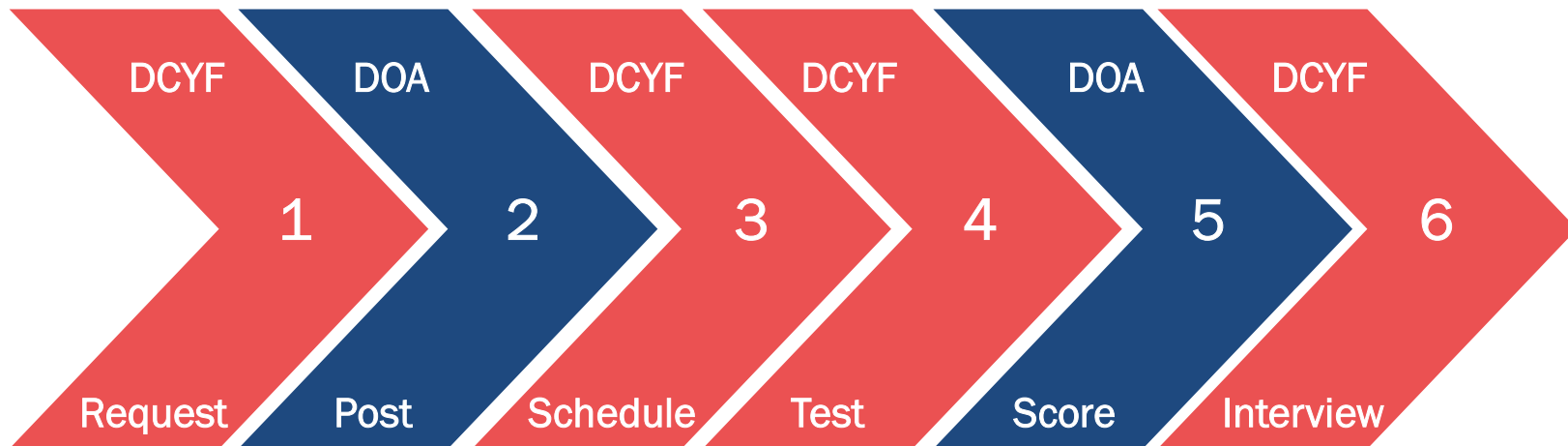


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Status of DCYF Civil Service Exam Pilot

- Upon passage of the legislation authorizing the DCYF's pilot program to administer, interview and on-board candidates that passed the Civil Service examinations for Social Caseworker II (SCW-II) and Child Protective Investigator I (CPI-I), the DOA Division of Human Resources and the Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) entered into a collaborative partnership to ensure a smooth transition of testing duties and functions.
- HR trained and advised the DCYF lead on all elements of examination administration, including test security, examination proctoring and determination of adverse/disparate impact based on pass-fail outcomes.
- While DCYF is responsible for test administration, HR is responsible for the scoring of all candidate answer sheets.
- HR continues to provide robust and ongoing consultant testing services to the DCYF team. On October 2, 2023, HR received 19 total candidate answer sheets as a result of DCYF's SCW-II and CPI-I testing from late September. These answers sheets were scored, and pass-fail feedback was provided to DCYF the following day.
- DCYF will hold its 3rd exam on November 17th. Currently, 24 potential SCWs and 38 potential CPIs are anticipated to take the exam.

DCYF PILOT CIVIL SERVICE EXAM PROCESS FLOW





Questions?

APPENDIX



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HR Recruitment: Definitions

- **Lateral Transfer:** A union member in a particular job classification who is transferred to a position with the same job classification in a different office or location based on seniority
- **Promotional Hire:** Union member who wishes to advance to a hire position within the union. Promotional hires are considered for open positions before external candidates can be considered.
- **External Candidates:** Members of the public interested in applying for positions within a union for which they are not currently members.
- **Classified Service (Competitive/Non-Competitive):**
 - **Competitive classified** positions are governed by competitive civil service examinations, which are open to those who satisfy the minimum requirement of education and previous experience. Unless appointed from a list, employees hired into competitive positions are subject to civil service examination and must be reachable to retain their position.

HR Recruitment: Definitions

- **Non-Competitive classified** positions are defined by statute to include positions that require the performance of routine, laboring, custodial, or domestic tasks, or those positions that are subject to continuing supervision. Also included are positions that require licenses, certificates, or registrations. Many job classifications require that an employee hired into a non-competitive position must maintain the required license, certificate, or registration as a condition of continued employment.
- **Unclassified Service:** These positions are established by law, per Rhode Island General Law 36-4-2, or as stated in other statutes pertinent to department organization, including positions of trust in state government excepting classified and non-classified. Generally, the unclassified service includes employees of elected officials, courts, independent agencies, departmental directors, or public authorities and various positions of a policy making character.
- **Non-Classified Service:** These are positions covered under contract terms for the Board of Governors for Higher Education (Higher Education/Colleges) and the Board of Education, including senior administrative staff as well as faculty.