

Human Rights Law: Legal and Illegal Interview Guidelines

Directly Revelatory Questions

The law expressly prohibits employers from asking certain questions either in an application form or in a personal interview before selecting an employee, where such inquiries express, directly or indirectly, any limitation, specification or discrimination as to age, race, creed, color or national origin, sexual orientation, sex, disability, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or marital status, or any intent to make any such limitation, specification or discrimination, unless based upon a bona fide occupational qualification.

The following are examples of different types of inquiries that are recommended or not recommended:

SUBJECT	RECOMMENDED	NOT RECOMMENDED
Age	Are you 18 years of age or older? If not, state your age.	How old are you? What is your date of birth? What are the ages of your children, if any?
Arrest Record	Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense?	Have you ever been arrested?
Disability	None	Do you have a disability? Have you ever been treated for any of the following diseases. . .? Do you have now, or have you ever had, a drug or alcohol problem?
Birth Control	None	Inquiry as to capacity to reproduce, advocacy of any form of birth control or family planning.
Marital Status	None	Do you wish to be addressed as Miss? Mrs.? Ms.? Are you married? Single? Divorced? Separated? Name or other information about spouse.

SUBJECT	RECOMMENDED	NOT RECOMMENDED
Race or Color	None	Complexion or color of applicant's skin, eyes, hair, and so forth.
Religion or Creed	None	Inquiry into applicant's religious denomination, religious affiliations, parish or church, religious holidays observed.
Sex	None	Inquiry as to gender.
Genetic Predisposition or Carrier Status	None	Do you have any genetic predisposition to disease? Do any diseases run in your family? Inquiries as to the health status of parents or other family members.
National Origin	None	Inquiry into applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, parentage or nationality. Nationality of applicant's parents or spouse.
Sexual Orientation	None	Questions concerning the applicant's heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or asexuality, whether actual or perceived

INDIRECTLY REVELATORY INQUIRIES

It is unlawful to ask questions the answers to which will indirectly reveal information as to race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, sex, marital status, disability, genetic predisposition or carrier status, age or arrest record in cases where such inquiry expresses, directly or indirectly, any limitation, specification or discrimination, unless based upon a bona fide occupational qualification.

The following are recommendations on inquiries which may be considered indirectly revelatory of race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, sex, marital status, disability, or age:

SUBJECT	RECOMMENDED	NOT RECOMMENDED
Address or Duration of Residence	<p>Applicant's place of residence</p> <p>How long a resident of this state or city?</p>	<p>How long have you lived in this country? In what country did you live before?</p>
Birthday	None	<p>Requirements that applicant submit birth certificate, naturalization or other record showing age. Requirement that applicant produce proof of age in form of birth certificate or other record.</p>
Birthplace	None	<p>Birthplace of applicant.</p> <p>Birthplace of applicant's parents, spouse or other close relatives.</p>
Citizenship	<p>Are you a citizen of the United States?</p> <p>If not a citizen of the United States, do you intend to become a citizen of the United States? If you are not a United States citizen, have you the legal right to remain permanently in the United States? Do you intend to remain permanently in the United States?</p>	<p>Of what country are you a citizen?</p> <p>Inquiries as to whether an applicant or an applicant's parents or spouse are naturalized or native-born citizens;</p> <p>Requirements that applicant produce naturalization papers.</p>
Driver's License	<p>Do you possess a valid NYS driver's license (if a driver's license is necessary for the position the applicant is seeking)?</p>	<p>Requirement that applicant produce license prior to offer of employment.</p>

Education	Inquiry into applicant's academic, vocational or professional education and the public and private schools attended.	Year(s) of attendance; Date(s) of graduation.
Language	If the duties of the position applicant is seeking require fluency in a particular language, inquiry may be made into whether applicant speaks or writes that language fluently.	What is your native language? Inquiry into how applicant acquired ability to read, write or speak a foreign language.
Military Experience	Inquiry into applicant's military experience in the Armed Forces of the United States or State Militia. Inquiry into applicant's service in a particular branch of the United States Army, Navy, etc.	Inquiry into applicant's military experience other than in the Armed Forces of the United States or in a State Militia.
Name	Have you ever worked for this company under a different name? Is additional information relative to change of name, use of an assumed name or nickname necessary to enable check on your work records? If yes, explain.	Inquiries as to original names of an applicant whose name has been changed by court order or otherwise. Inquiries as to the birth name of a married woman. If you have ever worked under another name, state name and dates.
Notice in Case Of Emergency	None	Requirements that applicant provide name and address of relative to be notified in case of an accident or emergency.
Organizations	Inquiry into applicant's membership in organizations which the applicant considers relevant to his or her ability to perform the job.	Requirement that applicant list all clubs, societies, and lodges to which applicant belongs.

Photograph	None	Requirement or option that applicant affix a photograph to employment form at any time before hiring.
Relatives	Inquire as to names of applicant's relatives already employed by the company.	Inquire as to names, addresses and ages of applicant's spouse, children or relatives not employed by the company.