

Personnel Recordkeeping—What Goes Where?

Maintaining personnel records is an obligation of every employer. Accurate and complete personnel records limit an organization's exposure to discrimination claims and provide required information for payroll and tax purposes, benefit administration, and employment eligibility. Furthermore, personnel records are necessary to document employment actions such as hiring, training, performance, discipline, and termination.

It is important to balance this confidential information with both an organization's need to know and an employee's right to see it. In general, the personnel file should include information that the supervisor and employee have a right to see. It should not include any information that would identify an employee's protected characteristics (i.e., age, race, sex, marital status, disability). Also, it should not contain confidential information that an employee should not see (i.e., interview notes, reference reports).

Therefore, it may be necessary to separate personnel documents into separate files to limit the access to restricted information. Examples of the types of files maintained by employers and examples of documents found within the files include:

Personnel File

- Employment application and resume
- Offer letter
- Employee contact information such as home address and telephone number
- Job history
- Education and training records
- Attendance sheets
- Performance evaluations
- Disciplinary notices and supporting documents
- New hire and termination checklists
- Exit interview

Confidential/Medical File

- Drug test results
- Physician statements
- Benefit materials
- Leave of absence requests and supporting documents
- Interview notes
- Reference reports

Other Separate Employment-Related Files

- Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9)
- Worker's Compensation claims
- Payroll records
- Pre-employment and post-employment EEO voluntary self-identification forms
- Incident reports and investigation notes

Keeping personnel records organized and up to date is essential to be in compliance with federal and state laws as well as internal administration.