



## **Applying for Municipal Positions (Avoiding the Pitfalls)**

A newsletter for AMEA members

By

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During my three years with the Association, several of our members have experienced difficulties with the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) by submitting inaccurate, incomplete or illegible employment applications. Some of these members' applications were rejected, some of the members weren't selected for positions for which they were qualified, and the MOA charged some members with wrongdoing.

Here are some application areas, which can create problems for members:

1. Failing to read and follow the information and instructions on the application. The instructions on the form clearly state, "A full, accurate and complete application must be submitted..." If you are not sure how to complete a part of the application, contact the Employee Relations Employment office at 343-4453.
2. Criminal Convictions. All convictions of law violation including DUIs, misdemeanor convictions, and military convictions must be listed. Unconditional pardons and suspended impositions of sentences with set-aside court orders need not be listed unless applying for a job requiring a background check. The "notice" section of the vacancy announcement will specify whether a background check is required for the position.

If you're not sure about your conviction record/history and/or if you want to know what information will be reported to the MOA, you can access your own criminal history at:

Department of Public Safety  
5700 East Tudor Road  
Monday through Friday from 8:30 – 4:00

You will need to bring \$20.00 for the fee and two forms of identification: 1) a government-issued ID with picture and signature and 2) another ID with signature.

A complete report is issued to the MOA that includes not only convictions, but also arrests, dismissals, acquittals, and set-aside convictions. The MOA cannot consider any of the information except convictions, and even then, they must consider whether the convictions are job-related, the amount of time that has passed since the convictions, etc. An exception is that the MOA will likely reject your application for any conviction for an offense involving “moral turpitude” within the past ten years. Since moral turpitude is a judgment call, it is likely the Association and the MOA will have differing opinions about what is or is not moral turpitude. The definition of Moral Turpitude from Black’s Law Dictionary might be helpful to you:

***MORAL TURPITUDE.*** *An act of baseness, vileness or depravity in the private and social duties which a man owes to his fellow men, or to society in general, contrary to the accepted and customary rule of right and duty between man and man.*

*Conduct contrary to justice, honesty, modesty, or good morals.*

3. Jobs requiring cash handling. The MOA will not certify applicants who have had a conviction or convictions involving theft, shoplifting, embezzlement, etc. for positions that require cash handling. It is likely the Association and the MOA will have differing opinions if the MOA fails to consider things like mitigating circumstances, the age of the conviction, the age of the applicant when convicted, amount of cash handled and amount of cash handling actually required.
4. Driver’s License. Review the vacancy announcement to see if the job requires a driver’s license and if you are required to complete and return a driving history questionnaire with your application. If the job requires a driver’s license, you will be required to show your license and a copy of your driving record from the State of Alaska DMV or from previous states if your Alaska driver’s license is less than one year old. If you feel you are a serious candidate for the position, but have a less than clean driving record, I recommend you review your record at DMV before you complete the driving history questionnaire.
5. Education. Tell the truth. If education is a job requirement or your education can substitute for some or all of the required experience, attach transcripts or other school records so the examiner can verify the type and amount of education you have. Tell the truth even if the job doesn’t require your education. If a subsequent review of your application shows you don’t actually have what you said you have, you’ll be in trouble with-

the MOA. If, after being hired, you get in trouble on the job for any reason involving dishonesty, you can count on Employee Relations to go back and check all of the information you put on your application. If they cannot verify an item, they may add falsifying your application to the list of charges.

6. Employment History. Be complete and be accurate. Make sure you record all of your work history. While you don't want it to end up reading like "War and Peace," it's better to provide a bit too much detail than too little. An examiner will try to elicit your qualifying experience from your work history. Each municipal job class is defined by a "Class Specification." The class specification defines the "minimum qualifications" for the job class. (Class specifications can be found through your MOA Microsoft Outlook Account.)

For example, if you are applying for a "Senior Office Associate" position, the minimum qualifications include: *High school diploma, GED, or equivalent AND three years of experience in office clerical work*. The examiner will check to see if you have the required education and three years of experience in office clerical work. Using this example, the examiner will total the years and partial year's office clerical experience from your application. Years of experience means full-time, 40 hours per week. Partial pro-rated credit is awarded for anything less than a year and for anything less than 40 hours per week.

Depending on the vacancy announcement, candidates with the most required work history will be ranked higher. Those with the least will be ranked lower. If there are a lot of qualified applicants for the position, not every candidate who is minimally qualified will make the list of candidates sent to the hiring supervisor; only the higher ranked candidates.

When *preferences* are listed in the vacancy announcement, they are also used to screen/rank applicants to determine which applications make the certification list. If you have any of the desired preferences, make sure you list this information clearly on your application. If it doesn't fit in the *duties/responsibilities* section or the *types of computer software and programs you have used* section, include it in the *List any other special qualifications, skills and/or abilities* section.

If you omit key information such as relevant work experience, employment dates, or hours per week, there is no way the Examiner can quantify your required work experience and your experience will not be considered.

6. Sign your application and submit it on time!

## **Beyond the Application**

In addition to the application examiner, you are also writing your application for the hiring supervisor. The hiring supervisor's first impression of you may be based solely upon your application. Work histories that are hard to read, look slapped together, aren't targeted to the vacant job and don't get to the point leave poor impressions that your best interviewing skills may not overcome.

Do your homework. Don't assume the vacancy announcement fully describes the job. It seldom does. Contact the hiring supervisor or others familiar with the section and try to find out:

1. all of the key job expectations;
2. changes or issues the section is working through;
3. problems the successful applicant will be expected to resolve;
4. additional knowledge, skills, and aptitudes that would be considered beneficial by the hiring supervisor;
5. past hiring problems the hiring supervisor is hoping to avoid, and
6. what's it *really* like working there.

The hiring process is a matchmaking process. The hiring supervisor is trying to find the best-fit candidate for the job and you are trying to find a job that is a best fit for your current and anticipated wants and needs. Look beyond the duties of this vacant position for other things like:

1. the organization's culture/personality;
2. supervisor's style;
3. co-workers' styles;
4. promotion potential;
5. working conditions, and
6. personal development potential.

I hope this information helps you when applying for future jobs. Please contact me ([Hank Wiedle](#)) if you have questions.

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### **Upcoming newsletter topics:**

**1. The job interview**

**2. Dealing with reference checks**