

Pediatric Insight Recap

The Risks of Not Checking References in Hiring

Bringing a faculty member or employee into an organization has very important implications for the future success of the organization and the recruit. Making a bad choice in hiring is extraordinarily painful for a department and for a faculty member whose career suffers as a result. Often faculty searches bring candidates who may be known to a member of the search committee and, as a result, references may be deemed unnecessary. In this conversation, members of the Child Health Advisory Council discuss the importance of obtaining references prior to completing all faculty searches. Key concepts in the conversation include:

- Obtaining professional references prior to a faculty hire is essential to avoid preventable errors in incompatibility with the requirements of the position, as well as unanticipated ethical or personal issues.
- When references are obtained, it also offers the opportunity to assist the potential candidate by providing suggestions for a successful transition in the new organization.
- References should be obtained regardless of whether search committee members know a candidate personally. Professional relationships do not always mirror the daily performance of an individual.
- References should be obtained with a consistent format and include questions about honesty, integrity and ability to communicate.
- When questionable issues are found in reference checks, it is advisable to discretely explore issues with candidates, as not all negative concerns are found to be valid.
- When concerns are raised, it is very important to take them into full consideration.
- The urgency of filling a position should not supersede the finding of negative past experiences that suggest an unsuccessful performance in your organization.
- When checking references, it is always important to hear from the candidates' departmental leader, as well as from colleagues who have worked with the individual.
- When surgical references are being obtained, in addition to case logs, it is important to contact other members of the surgical team, including anesthesiologists, fellows and trainees.
- The timing of reference checks should be coordinated with the candidate to avoid breaching confidentiality or disruptions in their home department.

Reference checking during searches should be a well-organized and an important aspect of any faculty search. Information obtained during professional references can be tremendously helpful to the hiring organization and to the prospective recruit.

Moderator



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Dr. Stapleton is a pediatric nephrologist, Professor Emeritus and Chair Emeritus at the University of Washington School of Medicine. He served as Chair of the Department of Pediatrics, as well as Chief Academic Officer and Associate Dean.

[Click here](#) to watch the video or listen to the podcast.