



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 24, 2014

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Fitzgerald Announces Adoption of ‘Ban the Box’ Policy for County Employment

PITTSBURGH – Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald announced today that, effective January 1, 2015, Allegheny County will remove a question regarding prior convictions from its employment application. The initiative, dubbed “Ban the Box,” will broaden the applicant pool for county employment positions, as well as allowing opportunity for individuals who have past convictions to be considered for employment in public service.

“In my role as Executive, I talk a lot about our region’s growth and making certain that all of our residents can take advantage of the opportunities available to them, and that includes county employment,” said Fitzgerald. “As a public sector employer, we should be open minded when it comes to an employee’s past if it is not at issue with their position in the county, but also need to guarantee that public safety is a priority. Taking this step allows us to accomplish both of those goals while also broadening opportunities within the county.”

The new policy will apply to all applicants considered for employment for full-time, part-time, seasonal and temporary positions, as well as to internal promotions and transfer candidates. In those cases where appropriate, a criminal history check, and any other background check, will be conducted after a conditional offer of employment has been made and accepted by an applicant. A candidate’s criminal history will be considered in evaluating his or her application on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration such factors as the seriousness and date of the criminal offense and the nature of the County position being sought. (Hires for the Allegheny County Jail, Allegheny County Police, the Department of Human Services, Kane Regional Centers, Shuman Center and Allegheny County Emergency Services will be exempted from the new policy based on specific laws covering the work done by the departments.)

“When I accepted this position, I was charged with centralizing and standardizing the human resources policies and procedures used throughout the county. In addition to those steps, we began to accept online employment applications and streamlined the process by which we provide applicant information to the departments,” said Laura Zaspel, Director of the Department of Human Resources. “This new policy is part of that effort and also complements our internal efforts to broaden our applicant pool, increase the diversity of our employees and ensure that we reach a greater audience in our efforts to attract the most qualified candidates.”

Beginning January 1, 2015, each Allegheny County job announcement will note if a criminal history or background check is required prior to appointment to the position. If it is, such checks will be conducted by the Department of Human Resources using the Pennsylvania state system (e-PATCH). The Department will maintain confidentiality of such records and will use such information solely for the purpose of determining suitability for employment.

Nationally, more than 80 governments have implemented “Ban the Box” policies including 13 states, Washington, D.C., and 69 cities and counties. In Pennsylvania, this includes the cities of Pittsburgh

(2012) and Philadelphia (2011).

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