CIVIL SERVICE

REFERENCE GUIDE

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This brochure is available in alternative formats upon request.

This booklet is designed to help you become familiar with the civil service process administered by the Monroe County Civil Service Commission.

MONROE COUNTY GOVERNMENT PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT, PROGRAM ACTIVITIES, PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING, ON THE BASIS OF DISABILITY, RACE, COLOR, SEX, RELIGION, AGE, NATIONAL ORIGIN AND MARITAL STATUS.

This guide is for informational purposes only, and is not intended to be a substitute for seeking legal advice.

CIVIL SERVICE LAW

In 1883, the New York State Legislature passed the Civil Service Law, which affected appointments in state government and cities. The law was amended in 1909 and again in 1958 and continues to be amended by The State Legislature regularly.

Civil Service Law sets rules for appointment, promotion, and discipline of government employees. These rules apply to the state and all of its civil divisions, including cities, towns, villages, school districts, community colleges, special districts and authorities, and counties.

MONROE COUNTY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

The Monroe County Civil Service Commission is composed of five members appointed by the County Executive for a six-year term. The Commission oversees the Civil Service function for all branches of local government in Monroe County, except for those covered under the Rochester Municipal Civil Service Commission, such as the City of Rochester and the Rochester Housing Authority.

As part of its services, the Monroe County Civil Service Commission provides Monroe County government and jurisdictions with the following:

- Determines position titles and develops job descriptions.
- Administers examinations for competitive titles and establishes lists of qualified candidates.
- Interprets Civil Service Law, and Rules covering appointment, promotion, discipline and discharge.

CLASSIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Positions in government fall within two categories: the unclassified service and the classified service.

Unclassified service consists of all elected officials, certain department heads, employees of the Monroe County Legislature and Board of Elections, teachers and some supervisory personnel in school systems. In Monroe County, the unclassified service positions comprise only a small percentage of the workforce.

Classified Service makes up the vast majority of positions which are assigned to one of the following classes:

- **Exempt** – there is a confidential relationship between the employee and the elected official, department head or policy making level positions. E.g. deputies and secretaries to department heads.

- **Labor** – have no minimum qualifications. Ex. entry level service employees and laborers.

- **Noncompetitive** – specific experience and education are required and it is impracticable to hold a competitive examination to fill them. Ex. various part-time positions, registered and licensed practical nurses, and mechanic positions. (Included in the noncompetitive class can be a competitive position that is reclassified for a disabled applicant - Section 55-A of Civil Service Law. See page 3).

- **Competitive** – require applicants to meet both minimum qualifications and pass an examination. Those candidates with the highest scores are the first to be considered for appointment.

THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

Permanent Appointments – are made to vacant classified service positions. A permanent appointment in the competitive class is made from a list of qualified eligible candidates who have passed an appropriate Civil Service examination. All permanent appointments are subject to successful completion of a probationary period. A permanent appointment cannot be terminated, interrupted or discontinued except in accordance with the laws, rules, and regulations governing the classified service, or an applicable labor contract.

Provisional Appointments – may be made to a vacant competitive classified position if there is no appropriate civil service eligible list for that title. A qualified applicant may be provisionally appointed and serve in the position until an appropriate eligible list can be established and a permanent appointment made.

Temporary Appointments – may be made to competitive class positions when a current employee is on a leave of absence from his/her position or when the appointment will not continue for more than six months. Temporary appointments may be made for a period of not more than three months without regard to existing eligible lists, providing the candidate meets the minimum qualifications. Appointments for more than three months, but not more than six months, may be made by selecting any candidate from the appropriate eligible list, without regard to their standing on the list. Temporary appointments may be extended to one year, by the Commission. Temporary appointments may also be made for the duration of a leave of absence.

Transfer Appointments – are movements of permanent competitive employees from their positions in one department or jurisdiction to the same or similar positions in the same or lower grade in another department or jurisdiction. The Civil Service Commission determines similarity. No employee may be transferred without his/her consent. Transfers must be approved by Civil Service Commission action.

Probationary Periods – may vary in the minimum and maximum periods. But all permanent appointments to positions in the classified service include a required probationary period during which the employee must prove his/her ability to do the work.

CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATIONS MOST ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are examinations needed?

According to Civil Service Law, appointments and promotions in New York State and its civil divisions, as listed on page 1, shall be made, based on "merit and fitness" to be determined by examinations, which, when practicable, must be "competitive." It is necessary to hold examinations to provide "eligible lists" (ranked lists of successful candidates) to fill vacant positions. Examinations are required to fill positions in the competitive class.

What are the types of Civil Service examinations?

Open competitive examinations are open to anyone who meets the minimum qualifications and the stated residency requirement. Unless otherwise stated most positions covered by the Monroe County Civil Service Commission have a four-month Monroe County residency requirement.

Promotional examinations are open only too permanent Monroe County Civil Service employees who are in the announced direct line or collateral line promotional fields and are employed in the department or jurisdiction that has the vacancy in the title tested.

Section 55-A was added to the state Civil Service Law to increase employment opportunities in local governments throughout New York State for qualified people who are mentally or physically disabled. These provisions allow eligible individuals to be appointed to competitive-class positions without taking a Civil Service examination.

Responsibility for determining who is eligible for appointment under 55-A is shared by the Monroe County Civil Service Commission and either the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) or the State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH).

What formats are the Civil Service examinations in?
An examination may consist of one or more tests:

- ***Written Tests*** – usually multiple choice questions.

- ***Oral Tests*** – candidates appear before a panel of examiners, and/or sometimes before a video camera to make a presentation.

- ***Performance Tests*** – candidates are evaluated on how well they perform a sample of work. *Ex. database performance test, typing test, bilingual test etc.*

- ***Training and Experience Evaluations*** – candidate's education and work experience are rated against the job requirements.

- ***Physical/Agility Tests*** – for some positions, candidates may be required to pass a physical and/or agility test.

Where are the upcoming examinations posted?

The examination announcements are posted in the Monroe County Department of Human Resources, at various Monroe County departments, on the Monroe County web site (**www.monroecounty.gov**) and other public sites such as libraries, town halls, and colleges. Postings are updated regularly, so it is recommended to check the lists of current tests every two weeks.

Anyone interested in taking an examination should first acquire a copy of the examination announcement. Announcements are released approximately four weeks prior to the closing date for filing an application and contain important information such as:

- Type of examination (open-competitive or promotional).
- Date of the examination and the application closing date.
- Examination number, title, salary, and application processing fee.
- Eligible criteria for admission to the examination (minimum qualifications).
- Location of positions (County department or jurisdiction).
- General description of duties.
- Types of tests that will be held, and the subjects of the test.
- Information on how to apply, special arrangements for Saturday religious observers and persons with disabilities, and other important information, depending on the type of test and the specific examination.
- Eligibility requirements for veteran's credits.
- Residency requirements.

How do I apply?

You must complete one application for each examination you wish to take. Applications may not be filed for examination titles that are not yet announced. Applications and examination announcements are available online, in the Human Resource Office or by mailing a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Monroe County Department of Human Resources, 210 County Office Building, 39 West Main Street, Rochester, New York 14614. You may also apply for an examination online or download an application form on the Monroe County web site (www.monroecounty.gov/hrapply).

Most examinations require that you pay an application fee. The examination announcement indicates whether or not a fee is required. Personal checks and money orders are accepted via mail or in person. Credit card payments are only accepted online. Payment must accompany your application. In some cases, the fee is waived because of financial hardship. Check the examination announcement and the last page of the application for details about fee waivers.

PLEASE READ THE ANNOUNCEMENT CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU APPLY.
APPLICATION FEES ARE NOT REFUNDABLE.

Please be sure that:

- An application is submitted for each examination you wish to take.
- The correct examination number and title are on the application.
- A check or money order payable to the Monroe County Director of Finance is submitted with your application by the closing date for filing.
- Applications are complete and accurate.

Applications with incomplete information may result in your disqualification from the examination.

Attaching a resume is not an acceptable alternative to completing an application.

NO REFUNDS ARE MADE IF YOU DO NOT QUALIFY
OR DO NOT APPEAR FOR YOUR EXAMINATION.

What if the position does not require an examination?

If you are applying for a position within County government, fill out the same application as you would for an examination. If you are interested in a position in a County jurisdiction that does not require an exam, you should apply directly to the village, town, school district, or special district in which you seek employment using their application.

What happens after I apply?

Applications for announced examinations are processed as they are received. Those that meet the minimum qualifications are notified by mail at least one week prior to the examination date of the examination location and other instructions. Those applicants who do not meet the qualifications are notified by mail prior to the examination informing them of the reasons why they are not qualified and allowing submission of additional qualifying information, if any, by a specific date.

How do I prepare for an examination?

After reading the examination announcement and the subject areas you will be expected to know, compare the list of topics to be tested with your own knowledge and skills. If the examination announcement reads, "There will be a written test," you can usually expect multiple choice questions. You can improve your examination score by improving your skill in taking multiple choice tests. The County has no examination preparation materials, unless otherwise noted on the examination announcement.

When will I receive my examination results?

You will be notified by mail of your score a few months after the examination. Only those with a score of 70% or above are included on eligible lists for job openings. Additional points may be added to the scores of qualified veterans and promotional candidates. Most examinations allow for a computational review of the test results (a comparison of your answer sheet to the answer key of the examination). This can be requested in writing within ten days of the notification of your test score.

Where are the examination eligible lists used?

All Monroe County departments, towns, villages, school districts, including the City School District, suburban fire districts, libraries, the Monroe County Water Authority, and Monroe Community College use the lists resulting from these examinations to fill competitive positions. The state and federal governments and the City of Rochester administer their own examinations. Jobs are filled from these lists by the employer choosing one of the three highest scoring applicants and anyone tied in score with the third applicant, willing to accept the job.

What about promotional Civil Service examinations?

If you are currently employed by Monroe County government or one of the Monroe County jurisdictions, promotional announcements are posted within your County department or jurisdiction. Copies of the examination announcements are also available in the Monroe County Department of Human Resources.

ELIGIBLE LISTS

The names of all successful examination candidates (those with a score of 70% or above) are placed on a civil service eligible list in rank order according to the score they received on the examination. Eligible lists are established for a period of one year. Lists may be extended to no more than four years. If an eligible list is extended beyond one year, the eligible candidate will be notified in writing by the Monroe County Department of Human Resources.

The lists are available for your viewing via the County web-site at www.monroecounty.gov or in person at the Monroe County Department of Human Resources during normal business hours, Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

TYPES OF ELIGIBLE LISTS:

Open-Competitive – list of the names of all successful open-competitive examination candidates for a particular title.

Promotional – list of the names of successful promotional examination candidates who are currently employed in a lower level title in that County department or jurisdiction. Civil Service Law mandates that promotional eligible lists, if they exist, be used before an open competitive eligible list can be used.

Preferred – list of employees in the competitive class who had permanent appointments and are laid off. Preferred lists must be used first in filling vacancies.

CERTIFICATIONS OF ELIGIBLE CANDIDATES

Names of candidates on a Civil Service Eligible List will be certified for appointment to Monroe County departments and Monroe County jurisdictions that have the title and want to fill a vacancy in that title. Certifications of eligibles will be sent to departments and jurisdictions seeking to fill vacancies at the time the eligible list is established and to those departments and jurisdictions employing provisional appointees. As vacancies occur, certifications of eligible candidates will be sent to the employing agency. When the jurisdiction receives the certification of eligible candidates, it sends canvass letters to a sufficient number of eligibles in order to make an appointment following the "Rule of Three."

THE "RULE OF THREE"

Job vacancies are filled from eligible lists according to the "Rule of Three" which requires the selection of one of the top three eligibles on the list who indicate willingness to accept appointment.

The Rule of Three

- **How do you determine who is reachable for appointment?**

Count down 3 NAMES from the top of the list. Everyone RANKED ABOVE or TIED in score with the THIRD candidate is REACHABLE.

- **May I appoint anyone in the TOP 3 SCORES?**

NO!! Only people ranked above or tied in score with the THIRD CANDIDATE FROM THE TOP OF THE LIST.

WHO IS REACHABLE FOR APPOINTMENT WHEN THERE IS ONE VACANCY?

Example 1		
1 Julia	100	
2 Nelson	95	
3 Linda	90	
4 Horace	85	
5 Kwah	85	
6 Joe	85	
7 Carey	80	
Example 2		
1 Paula	90	
2 Karen	90	
3 Jim	90	
4 Taylor	85	
5 Dell	85	
6 Pat	85	
7 Doug	80	
Example 3		
1 Pedro	90	
2 Will	90	
3 Lori	85	
4 Marie	85	
5 Dan	85	
6 Jill	85	
7 Tammy	80	

The Eligible Candidate's Responsibilities:

Upon receipt of a canvass letter, the eligible candidate should immediately indicate his/her interest in the position or their reason for declination and return the canvass letter within the time frame indicated to the appointing authority it was sent by. Not everyone who responds to a canvass letter will be interviewed; you may not be immediately reachable for consideration at that point in time using the “Rule of Three”.
If you fail to reply to a canvass letter, the appointing authority will report such failure to reply on the certification, which is returned to the Monroe County Department of Human Resources. Your name will be removed from further consideration for that and all other positions filled from the eligible list. If you respond late to the letter, you may be skipped over for that position as well.

If you decline due to salary or location, your name will not be certified to that jurisdiction again.

If your name has been removed from an eligible list, it may be restored to an active status on this eligible list by written request to the Monroe County Department of Human Resources. Include in this request your name, social security number, eligible list number, title, score, and reasons you are requesting reinstatement.

Your request will be reviewed and a determination will be made regarding your restoration to the eligible list. If reinstated, your name will be considered on future certifications, but your name will not be added to any outstanding certification.

If you are on an eligible list, it is your responsibility to inform the Monroe County Department of Human Resources of any change of address and/or name. Include in this notice your name, social security number, eligible list number, title and score.

ADDRESSES

Monroe County Department of Human Resources
210 County Office Building
39 West Main Street
Rochester, New York 14614-1471
www.monroecounty.gov

Monroe County Civil Service Commission
210 County Office Building
39 West Main Street
Rochester, New York 14614-1471

Rochester Municipal Civil Service Commission
City Hall
30 Church Street
Rochester, New York 14614

New York State Job Service
130 West Main Street
Rochester, New York 14614

New York State Department of Civil Service
Alfred E. Smith State Office Building
Albany, New York 12239
www.cs.ny.gov

Satisfaction Survey for

"Civil Service Reference Guide"

Please take time to fill out this form and mail to:

Monroe County Civil Service Commission
210 County Office Building
39 West Main Street
Rochester, New York 14614-1471

My overall rating of this booklet.

☐ Very Good ☐ Good ☐ Satisfactory ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

What I liked most about this booklet: _____

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What I would change, add, delete, etc., in future editions of this booklet: _____

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Other comments: _____

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Name/Address (optional): _____

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