TESTING AND ASSESSMENT:

This Guide is designed to help managers and human resource (HR) professionals use assessment practices to reach their organizations' HR goals. It conveys the essential concepts of employment testing in easy-to-understand terms so that managers and HR professionals can:

❖ Evaluate and select assessment tools/procedures that maximize chances for getting the right fit between jobs and employees.

❖ Administer and score assessment tools that are the most efficient and effective for their particular needs.

❖ Accurately interpret assessment results.

❖ Understand the professional and legal standards to be followed when conducting personnel assessments.

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ALL assessment tools used to make employment decisions, regardless of their format, level of standardization, or objectivity, are subject to professional and legal standards. For example, both the evaluation of a resume and the use of a highly standardized achievement test must comply with applicable laws.

Importance of using tests in a purposeful manner:

Assessment instruments, like other tools, can be extremely helpful when used properly, but counterproductive when used inappropriately. Often inappropriate use stems from not having a clear understanding of what you want to measure and why you want to measure it. Having a clear understanding of the purpose of your assessment system is important in selecting the appropriate assessment tools to meet that purpose.

Reliability refers to how dependably or consistently a test measures a characteristic. If a person takes the test again, will he or she get a similar test score, or a much different score? A test that yields similar scores for a person who repeats the test is said to measure a characteristic reliably. How do we

account for an individual who does not get exactly the same test score every time he or she takes the test? Some possible reasons are the following:

1. **Test taker's temporary psychological or physical state.** Test performance can be influenced by a person's psychological or physical state at the time of testing. For example, differing levels of anxiety, fatigue, or motivation may affect the applicant's test results.

2. **Environmental factors.** Differences in the testing environment, such as room temperature, lighting, noise, or even the test administrator, can influence an individual's test performance.

3. **Test form.** Many tests have more than one version or form. Items differ on each form, but each form is supposed to measure the same thing. Different forms of a test are known as parallel forms or alternate forms. These forms are designed to have similar measurement characteristics, but they contain different items. Because the forms are not exactly the same, a test taker might do better on one form than on another.

4. **Multiple raters.** In certain tests, scoring is determined by a rater's judgments of the test taker's performance or responses. Differences in training, experience, and frame of reference among raters can produce different test scores for the test taker.

Reliable assessment tools produce dependable, repeatable, and consistent information about people. In order to meaningfully interpret test scores and make useful employment or career related decisions, you need reliable tools. It takes a good deal of knowledge and judgment to properly use assessment tools to make effective employment-related decisions. Many assessment tools and procedures require specialized training, education, or experience to administer and interpret correctly. These requirements vary widely, depending on the specific instruments being used. Check with the test publisher to determine whether you and your staff meet these requirements. To ensure that test users have the necessary qualifications, some test publishers and distributors require proof of qualifications before they will release certain tests.

Administering Assessment Instruments

Proper administration of assessment instruments is essential to obtaining valid or meaningful scores for your test takers. The following discusses how to administer assessment instruments so that you can be certain that the results will be valid and fair.

Principals of Assessment Discussed:
➢ Ensure that administration staffs are properly trained.
➢ Ensure that testing conditions are suitable for all test takers.
➢ Provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process for people with disabilities.
➢ Maintain assessment instrument security.
➢ Maintain confidentiality of assessment results.

Ensuring suitable and uniform assessment conditions: There are various extraneous influences that may affect the reliability and validity of an assessment procedure. To maintain the integrity of results you and your staff should make sure that adverse conditions are minimized.

❖ **Choose a suitable testing location.** Obtain a room that is well-lit, well-ventilated, with acceptable room temperature. Make sure the room is free of noise, traffic, and other interruptions. Chairs should be comfortable and tables should be at an appropriate height, with sufficient room for test booklets and answer sheets. Furthermore, testing facilities and conditions must be uniform for all test takers. This means that people taking the test in another room, or at a different time, should be in substantially the same testing environment. As indicated before, these extraneous factors can affect the reliability and validity of test results. It is imperative that *testing conditions are suitable* for all test takers.

❖ **Maintaining assessment instrument security.** In order to obtain fair and valid results, no test taker should have an opportunity to view the test beforehand. To ensure this, keep test materials secure at all times. Store all materials relating to the test in locked rooms or cabinets when not in use, and account for all materials that are used during the testing session. Test takers should not take any items from the testing room, including scrap paper. Limit access to testing materials to staff involved in the assessment process.

❖ **Maintaining confidentiality of assessment results.** Test results and answer sheets should be kept in a secure location. Results should only be released to those who have a legitimate need to know. This includes staff involved in making the employment decision but may exclude the candidate's first-line supervisor. Test results are confidential and should not be disclosed to another individual or outside organization without the informed consent of the test taker.

Issues and Concerns with Assessment

It is important to remember that an assessment instrument, like any tool, is most effective when used properly and can be very counterproductive when used inappropriately.

- **Ensure that *testing conditions are suitable* for all test takers.** There are various extraneous influences that may affect the reliability and validity of an assessment procedure. For example, noise in the testing room, room temperature of the testing room, poor lighting, inaccurate timing and damaged test equipment may adversely affect test takers. Staff should ensure that the testing environment is suitable and that administration procedures are uniform for all test takers.

- **<u>Maintain assessment instrument *security*</u>**. All materials used in the assessment process, whether paper-and-pencil or computer-based, must be kept secure. Lack of security may result in some test takers having access to test questions, or test answers, beforehand, thus invalidating their scores. To prevent this, test users should, for example, keep testing materials in locked rooms or cabinets and limit access to those material to staff involved in the assessment process. Security is also the responsibility of test developers. The security of a test may become compromised over time. To protect security, test developers periodically introduce new forms of tests.