

About the Merit System

The Minnesota Merit System is a civil service office that serves 73 of Minnesota's 87 County Social Services and Human Services Agencies. Federal regulations require that each County Social Services Agency funded with federal money establish a selection (hiring) process that is fair and gives all qualified and interested applicants equal opportunity to pursue the job.

Many larger counties have the resources to carry out this function. However, most counties in Minnesota have found it more economically efficient to contract with the Minnesota Merit System to carry out the federally mandated part of their hiring process. This works out well for you, the applicant, because when you apply through the Merit System, you have the opportunity to become eligible for positions in any of the agencies we cover, and don't have to apply in 70 different places.

To submit an application, go to <http://agency.governmentjobs.com/mnmeritsystem/default.cfm>

Positions we cover

Most of the positions available are in the Social Services / Human Services agencies that use our service. Most counties call it the Social Services Department. Others call it the Family Services Agency. Still others refer to the department as the Health and Human Services Department. Whatever it is called in your county, it is the county agency that provides services such as Financial Assistance (Income Maintenance, previously known as welfare), Social Services, Child Protection and Child Support Services.

The jobs available through our system are the types of jobs that carry out and support these services. The majority of positions available through the Merit System are Social Workers, Financial Worker (Eligibility Specialists) and Child Support Officers. Other positions exist in support of these functions, such as Accounting Technicians or Office Support Specialists.

The positions are located only in the Social Services / Human Services Departments. Positions in other departments in the county are not covered by the Merit System. If you are looking for work in the highway department or the court system, contact the County Administrative offices in the county you are looking; hiring is usually managed by the County Coordinator, Human Resources, or the County Auditor.

What Happens when you apply to the Merit System

Applying to the Merit System doesn't automatically mean you are applying for a job. Generally speaking, each county under the Merit System has its own hiring practice and unique process. Part of that process will always require Merit System eligibility. To submit an application, go to <http://agency.governmentjobs.com/mnmeritsystem/default.cfm>

When you apply to the Merit System, you are actually applying for the assessment process. Many times, this means an employment exam. The exam will usually be in one of two formats: A written exam that you take at a scheduled time and place, or a rating of training and experience, where you are assigned a "score" based on your qualifying education and the type of experience you already have that would strengthen your qualifications for the position in question. There are other types of exams as well. The exam process for each job classification is explained in the online postings at the Merit System's Online Application Center.

Once you pass the exam process and your name is placed on the eligible register, you become part of the pool of candidates from which hiring agencies can select their candidates for a position.

When it is time to fill the vacancy, the county will request a list from the Merit System. We will find all eligible candidates available for the position, sorted by score, and refer the top candidates to the county. Usually the county will get the names of the 15 candidates with the highest scores. However, many times candidates who are in the top 15 have had some change since originally applying, and may not be available for the vacancy in question. Then the county can request additional names from our office, so the county is always able to work with 15 “active” job seekers. The county is not obligated to request these supplemental lists, but in the case of a shortage of qualified candidates, counties are often anxious to consider all options.

For more information about the Minnesota Rules that guide our operation, see MN Rules [Part 9575](#).

How testing affects eligibility

Sometimes, counties will “pull” the eligible list as it stands before ever posting a vacancy in a local newspaper. However, many times, there are not very many candidates on the existing list, so a county will post a vacancy locally and solicit interest in the job they have open.

Often the county will require that you complete a local county application and submit it to the local Human Resources office in addition to being Merit eligible. That means that, even if you have already taken the exam and are on the list, you still have to submit a county application by the application deadline.

Regardless of the county process, when it comes time to hire, the county is obligated to hire from candidates identified as “eligible” by the Merit System.