CURRENT EMPLOYER REFERENCE QUESTIONS

Use these questions when you are calling an employer reference to verify employment information provided by a tenant applicant on their application. Start the conversation by introducing yourself and explaining the purpose for your call.

Note: Some employers may require their employee to verify you as the landlord or sign a Release of Information authorizing them to disclose employment information before they will answer reference questions. Other employers may not answer reference questions over the phone but may be wiling to provide a signed employment letter on company letterhead verifying employment, length of employment, and income level.

1. **[Applicant's name'] has identified you as their employer reference. What is your role in the company? Does [applicant name] report to you or work with you directly?**
   The first thing to establish when speaking to an employer reference after you introduce yourself is whether you are speaking with someone in an employer, supervisory, or Human Resource (HR) position. If the reference is a co-worker, consider why your applicant didn't supply reference information for someone in a supervisory or HR role. A co-worker reference will not be able to verify employment terms and income.

   It is also important to understand whether the reference works regularly with your tenant applicant. In large companies, the owner or high-level supervisors may have little direct interaction with certain employees. It is ideal to speak with someone who works regularly with your applicant although that may not always be possible.

2. **When did [applicant's name] start working for you and what is his/her position?**
   This question will allow you to verify application details. If the applicant is new to the company, this doesn't automatically make them a less qualified candidate—perhaps your applicant has recently moved to the area, has recently graduated from school, has returned to the workforce from being a stay at home parent, or is advancing his/her career. Through your conversation, consider why and try to gain an understanding of whether this is a long-term position with room for growth.

3. **Is this position full-time, part-time, seasonal, or contract?**
   Whether applicants work full-time or part-time shouldn't be a deciding factor if their wages are adequate to cover their rent plus allow for other living expenses or is combined with another employed member of the household. If applicants are in a seasonal or contract position, this may mean their employment is more precarious, less consistent, or they may be a short-term tenant. In conversation with your tenant applicants, work to understand whether they will have enough income to cover rent if and when they are between seasonal employment or contract positions.

4. **What is [applicant's name] current wage or salary?/[Applicant's name] has filled out his/her income as $_____; can you verify this amount?**
   This question should verify information on the application, but some employers may not be willing to answer this question citing confidentiality. If the employer will not provide this information, ask applicants if they are willing to provide copies of recent pay stubs or their tax return to verify income.

5. **If you could describe [applicant's name] in three words, which would you use?**
   This question isn't a standard employer reference question, but it can reveal a lot about what the employer thinks of their employee and sometimes a lot is revealed in what the employer doesn't say.

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6. Is there any other information you would like to share with me about [applicant's name]?

Asking a broad open-ended question at the end of your reference call can allow the employer or supervisor to share other positive or relevant information about their employee. If the employer doesn't provide any additional information, don't necessarily take it as a bad sign—they may not want to overstep boundaries, reveal confidential information, or it may indicate they are simply busy and ready to move to the next task in their workday.

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