

**§448.095 FS | EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY**

## (1) DEFINITIONS

As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Contractor" means a person or an entity that has entered or is attempting to enter into a contract with a public agency to provide labor, supplies, or services to such agency in exchange for salary, wages, or other remuneration.

(b) "Employee" means an individual filling a permanent position who performs labor or services under the control or direction of an employer that has the power or right to control and direct the employee in the material details of how the work is to be performed in exchange for salary, wages, or other remuneration. An individual hired for casual labor, as defined in s. 443.036, which is to be performed entirely within a private residence, is not an employee of an occupant or owner of a private residence. An independent contractor, as defined in federal laws or regulations, hired to perform a specified portion of labor or services is not an employee.

(c) "E-Verify system" means an Internet-based system operated by the United States Department of Homeland Security which allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of new employees.

(d) "Public agency" means any office, department, agency, division, subdivision, political subdivision, board, bureau, commission, authority, district, public body, body politic, state, county, city, town, village, municipality, or any other separate unit of government created or established pursuant to law, and any other public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency.

(e) "Subcontractor" means a person or an entity that provides labor, supplies, or services to or for a contractor or another subcontractor in exchange for salary, wages, or other remuneration.



(f) "Unauthorized alien" means an individual who is not authorized under federal law to be employed in the United States, as described in 8 U.S.C. s. 1324a(h)(3). The term must be interpreted consistently with that section and any applicable federal rules or regulations.

(2) EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION

(a) An employer shall verify each new employee's employment eligibility within 3 business days after the first day that the new employee begins working for pay as required under 8 C.F.R. s. 274a.

(b)1. A public agency shall use the E-Verify system to verify a new employee's employment eligibility as required under paragraph (a).

2. Beginning on July 1, 2023, a private employer with 25 or more employees shall use the E-Verify system to verify a new employee's employment eligibility as required under paragraph (a).

3. Each employer required to use the E-Verify system under this paragraph must certify on its first return each calendar year to the tax service provider that it is in compliance with this section when making contributions to or reimbursing the state's unemployment compensation or reemployment assistance system. An employer that voluntarily uses the E-Verify system may also make such a certification on its first return each calendar year in order to document such use.

(c) If the E-Verify system is unavailable for 3 business days after the first day that the new employee begins working for pay and an employer cannot access the system to verify a new employee's employment eligibility, the employer must use the Employment Eligibility Verification form (Form I-9) to verify employment eligibility. The unavailability of the E-Verify system does not bar the employer from using the rebuttable presumption established in paragraph (4)(a). An employer must document the unavailability of the E-Verify system by retaining a screenshot from each day which shows the employer's lack of access to the system, a public announcement that the E-Verify system is not available,



or any other communication or notice recorded by the employer regarding the unavailability of the system.

(d) The employer must retain a copy of the documentation provided and any official verification generated, if applicable, for at least 3 years.

(e) An employer may not continue to employ an unauthorized alien after obtaining knowledge that a person is or has become an unauthorized alien.

(f) An employee leasing company licensed under part XI of chapter 468 which enters into a written agreement or understanding with a client company which places the primary obligation for compliance with this section upon the client company is not required to verify employment eligibility of any new employees of the client company. In the absence of a written agreement or understanding, the employee leasing company is responsible for compliance with this section. Such employee leasing company shall, at all times, remain an employer as otherwise defined in federal laws or regulations.

### (3) ENFORCEMENT

(a) For the purpose of enforcement of this section, any of the following persons or entities may request, and an employer must provide, copies of any documentation relied upon by the employer for the verification of a new employee's employment eligibility:

1. The Department of Law Enforcement;
2. The Attorney General;
3. The state attorney in the circuit in which the new employee works;
4. The statewide prosecutor; or
5. The Department of Economic Opportunity.

(b) A person or an entity that makes a request under paragraph (a) must rely upon the Federal Government to verify an employee's employment eligibility and may not independently make a final determination as to whether an employee is an unauthorized alien.



## (4) DEFENSES

(a) An employer that uses the E-Verify system or, if that system is unavailable, the Employment Eligibility Verification form (Form I-9) as provided in paragraph (2)(c), with respect to the employment of an unauthorized alien has established a rebuttable presumption that the employer has not violated s. 448.09 with respect to such employment.

(b) An employer that uses the same documentation that is required by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services on its Employment Eligibility Verification form (Form I-9) with respect to the employment of an unauthorized alien, has established an affirmative defense that the employer has not violated s. 448.09 with respect to such employment.

## (5) PUBLIC AGENCY CONTRACTING

(a) A public agency must require in any contract that the contractor, and any subcontractor thereof, register with and use the E-Verify system to verify the work authorization status of all new employees of the contractor or subcontractor. A public agency or a contractor or subcontractor thereof may not enter into a contract unless each party to the contract registers with and uses the E-Verify system.

(b) If a contractor enters into a contract with a subcontractor, the subcontractor must provide the contractor with an affidavit stating that the subcontractor does not employ, contract with, or subcontract with an unauthorized alien. The contractor shall maintain a copy of such affidavit for the duration of the contract.

(c)

1. A public agency, contractor, or subcontractor who has a good faith belief that a person or an entity with which it is contracting has knowingly violated s. 448.09(1) shall terminate the contract with the person or entity.

2. A public agency that has a good faith belief that a subcontractor knowingly violated this



subsection, but the contractor otherwise complied with this subsection, shall promptly notify the contractor and order the contractor to immediately terminate the contract with the subcontractor.

3. A contract terminated under this paragraph is not a breach of contract and may not be considered as such. If a public agency terminates a contract with a contractor under this paragraph, the contractor may not be awarded a public contract for at least 1 year after the date on which the contract was terminated. A contractor is liable for any additional costs incurred by a public agency as a result of the termination of a contract.

(d) A public agency, contractor, or subcontractor may file a cause of action with a circuit or county court to challenge a termination under paragraph (c) no later than 20 calendar days after the date on which the contract was terminated.

(6) COMPLIANCE

(a) In addition to the requirements under s. 288.061(6), beginning on July 1, 2024, if the Department of Economic Opportunity determines that an employer failed to use the E-Verify system to verify the employment eligibility of employees as required under this section, the department must notify the employer of the department's determination of noncompliance and provide the employer with 30 days to cure the noncompliance.

(b) If the Department of Economic Opportunity determines that an employer failed to use the E-Verify system as required under this section three times in any 24-month period, the department must impose a fine of \$1,000 per day until the employer provides sufficient proof to the department that the noncompliance is cured. Noncompliance constitutes grounds for the suspension of all licenses issued by a licensing agency subject to chapter 120 until the noncompliance is cured.

(c) Fines collected under this subsection must be deposited into the State Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund for use by the department for



employer outreach and public notice of the state's employment verification laws.

(7) CONSTRUCTION

(a) This section must be enforced without regard to race, color, or national origin and must be construed in a manner so as to be fully consistent with any applicable federal laws or regulations.

(b) The requirements to use the E-Verify system under this section do not apply in any federal fiscal year in which the system is not funded by the Federal Government.

(c) This section shall expire 60 days after the E-Verify system is no longer a pilot program, and the Federal Government requires the use of the E-Verify system by all employers in the United States.

*History - (s. 2, ch. 2020-149; s. 7, ch. 2023-40.)*

