

HR Ask The Expert – Tracking Prior Service After Rehire



HR systems do not always reflect an employee's full employment history, particularly when there has been a break in service followed by rehire.

Clear documentation can help employers distinguish between continuous employment, recognized service, and benefit eligibility.

Question

An employee was previously terminated and later rehired. The organization recognizes some of the employee's prior service for vacation and other entitlement purposes, but the HRIS only displays service from the most recent rehire date. Should the employer change the employee's original hire date in the HRIS to reflect their total recognized service, or is it better to keep the current rehire date and maintain separate records of prior service?

Answer

Keeping the HRIS hire date tied to the employee's current period of employment is generally a reasonable approach, particularly where the earlier employment relationship formally ended and the employee was later rehired.

Explanation

A good practice is to distinguish between the employee's current employment date and any prior service that the organization has chosen or is required to recognize. The HRIS can continue to show the employee's current rehire date, while HR maintains a separate confidential record identifying the earlier employment period and explaining how that service is being credited.

Where possible, employers may also use a secondary service date, seniority date, custom field, employee note, or similar HRIS feature to record recognized service without changing the employee's actual current hire date. This can be particularly helpful where previous service affects vacation entitlement, benefits, seniority, or other employment terms.

Consistency and documentation are especially important. Employers should clearly

identify which types of entitlement recognize prior service and ensure that the same approach is applied consistently in comparable situations. Employees can also be advised that the HRIS reflects their current employment record, while separately documented recognized service is used when calculating applicable entitlements.