Home > Employee Verifications: 5 Common I-9 Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Employee Verifications: 5 Common I-9 Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

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Blog

The I-9 is a government document used by employers to verify the identity and employment authorization of all employees hired and working in the U.S. On July 17, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) released a revised version of Form I-9.

Employers can use this revised version or continue using the Form I-9 with a revision date of 11/14/16 through September 17 of this year. On September 18, employers must use the revised form with a revision date of 07/17/17. Though employers don't need to complete new I-9s for all existing employees, they must transition new hire verification to the new form as soon as practical, but no later than September 18.

When it comes to new hire paperwork, mistakes can happen, especially during the I-9 process. Here are five common (and sometimes costly) pitfalls and how to avoid them:

1- Failing to examine unexpired, original documents in the employee?s physical presence: View only original versions of the required documents, not copies unless it is a Certified Copy of a Birth Certificate. When hiring a remote employee, do not use Skype, instead, find a knowledgeable agent to assist you.

2- Requiring a Social Security Number: Only employers using E-Verify can require the inclusion of this number on the Form I-9.

3- Retaining I-9s unnecessarily: Employers need to retain I-9s for terminated employees for one year after their termination date or three years after their hire date, whichever is later. Keep in mind that all I-9s in the employer?s possession can be audited by the government; accordingly, best practice is to eliminate unneeded I-9s.

4- Inconsistent copies of supporting documentation: Except for certain E-Verify documents, employers are not required to keep copies of the documents shown for I-9 verification. Best practice is not to retain these

verification documents such as driver?s licenses, social security cards, passports or the like.

5- Telling the employee what documents to produce or failing to provide the instructions: Telling an employee which documents to produce violates the law. Instead, employers should provide the complete I-9 instructions to the employee in advance and advise the employee that they can choose from List A documents or a combination of List B and C documents.

Employers can visit the "I-9 Central" website for useful information on all things I-9: www.uscis.gov/i-9-central.

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