



# Interviewing and Placing Volunteers

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Volunteers succeed if they're a good fit for the position and the organization. An interview is a useful way to ensure that a volunteer has the necessary attributes for the job. With that thought in mind, the following information might prove helpful.

## Preparing for Interviewing

### Volunteer Applications

Applications start the screening process. You can learn about the background of an individual and their desires and goals.

Application information includes:

- Education and employment background
- Previous volunteer and life experiences
- Organization and/or club memberships
- Hobbies and interests
- Personal strengths and weaknesses
- Reasons for volunteering
- Time and days available
- Access to a vehicle
- Any other information the volunteer wants to share

### Selection of Interview Location

For the interview, chose a place that is:

- Comfortable and accessible for the volunteer
- Private — where you won't be interrupted by calls, drop-ins, etc. and where conversation will be confidential

### Interview Preparation

To make the interview productive for both you and the prospective volunteer, be sure you have the following on hand (and consider changing "interview" to "meeting" or "discussion"):

- Information and materials about the agency
- Information on possible positions with requirements and training needed
- Volunteer's completed application
- Set of open-ended interview questions

Getting started:

- Make the applicant feel welcome.
- Build rapport and explain the hows and whys of the process.
- Give background about agency and ask for any questions.



# Conducting the Interview

## Be a Good Interviewer

- Be an active listener. You are finding out the applicant's interests and abilities and determining the applicant's interest and possible place within the agency.
- Pay close attention to what a person is saying (and not saying). Observe body language and never disregard your gut instincts.
- Maintain eye contact. Answer all questions openly and honestly.
- Don't promise anything you can't deliver, such as new positions, promotions, etc.
- Describe the position: disclose all the positives and negatives.
- Evaluate each person on an individual basis. Avoid stereotypes and personal bias.
- Find out the questions that you legally can and can't ask someone — race, religion, age or marital status, national origin, etc.
- Fill out a standard interview sheet for each volunteer. Remember to look at the volunteer and write as little as possible during the interview. Finish after the interview ends.
- Explain the reasons for a reference check and address any concerns.
- Solicit questions about the position or the agency. If there are no positions available, consider providing names of other possible referrals.
- Explain what the next step is — training, reference checks, etc.

## Open-ended Questioning

Open-ended questions allow an individual to elaborate on topics rather than simply give a closed "yes" or "no" answer. Following are some examples of open-ended questions:

- What attracted you to our agency?
- What have you enjoyed most (least) in previous volunteer positions?
- What do you do to relax or reduce stress?
- Are there any types of clients that you would most prefer to work with? That you are not comfortable working with?
- Give me an example.
- Why do you think that was the case?
- Thinking back, what are some significant decisions you have made and how do you feel about them?
- What kind of supervision do you prefer? How do you prefer a supervisor relate to you?
- What skills can you contribute?



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