

Step 5 – Conducting Interviews

Interviews are an extremely important step in the screening process. The interview provides not only an opportunity to talk to the potential volunteer about his/her background, talents, skills, interests and availability, but also to explore any doubts the organization may have about the suitability of the candidate. An interview also serves to express your expectations and to convey the norms/culture of your organization. In other words, an interview will help determine "the right fit."

You should be well prepared in order to be thorough and make the best use of time, but an interview need not be long or difficult.

When planning an interview, you may want to consider the following:

- have at least two people conduct the interview;
- explain the interview process to the applicant;
- establish a safe environment for the applicant;
- describe the position specifically;
- describe the screening procedures;
- document the applicant's responses and keep them on file;
- look for attitudes towards children, vulnerable adults or general values that do not fit with those of your organization; and
- ask all applicants the same basic questions for consistency.

When selecting questions for an interview, remember that the most revealing questions address situations that have already taken place. Past behaviour is the best indicator of future performance. Remember that interviews are subject to the same Human Rights laws as discussed in Step 4 – Application Form.

Interview questions should encourage responses that allow you to judge:

- relevant work-related experiences and education;
- eagerness to work;
- ability to work with others;
- integrity; and
- initiative and judgement.

Location of interview

If a volunteer and participant will spend time in a volunteer's home, an in-home interview is entirely appropriate. The applicant must consent to it, of course, but if he or she does not, this may be enough to reject the application. The organization should determine if the home is a safe and appropriate place for the participant to be taken.



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Warning signs

Be wary of monosyllabic or many yes/no answers instead of complete responses. Note any inconsistencies when similar questions are asked in two or three different ways. Evasion, general and roundabout answers rather than specific information should raise flags.

You may wish to conduct a role-playing exercise to prepare for the interview.

Summary of key concepts

1. To select the candidate most likely to succeed, the process must be completely objective.
2. Like screening, selection is based on the requirements of the position.
3. Interviews are important ways to get to know the applicant better.

For additional information and exercises on 'Conducting Interviews' and other Volunteer Canada Screening resources, or to order the complete Safe Steps workbook, please call 1-800-670-0401 or visit us at: www.volunteer.ca



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