

INTERVIEWING AND PLACING

The Purpose of Interviewing is to insure the suitability, appropriateness and quality control of all applicants. One must screen out those clearly unsuited and redirect them to appropriate placements, because:

1. Clients of the Agency must be protected; must be helped, not hindered by the volunteers.
2. The Agency's reputation is affected by volunteers who work there.
3. The morale of the paid staff and other volunteers declines when inappropriate or poor volunteer placements occur.
4. The volunteer himself/herself suffers when misplaced.

The interview may have the greatest impact on the quality of the program in years to come for it will determine which people will be involved in the designing, directing and carrying out of that particular program.

The two most crucial skills to acquire for an interview are: How to Ask Questions and How to Listen Effectively.

One type of interview utilizes the Non-Directive Approach, whereby the interviewer serves as a skilled catalyst and prober, while the applicant becomes the director of the content of what is said.

Some Samples Questions in a Non-Directive Interview:

1. Tell me about your family.
2. What do you most enjoy doing?
3. What are your personal and work goals that would be important to consider in choosing a volunteer job?
4. Describe what you would consider to be an ideal job for you, and tell me why.
5. How would you describe your work habits?
6. What kind of supervision do you prefer?
7. Describe your temperament. What do you like best about yourself? If you could, what would you improve?

There are different kinds of interviews and the purpose of the interview will determine the appropriate format and amount of time required.

Types:

1. **Screening or Counseling Interview: Initial Interview.** Generally conducted by the person responsible for the entire program. Purpose-To determine if the volunteer meets the basic requirements and thus is suitable for further consideration. Must also give applicant enough info. about the agency for him/her to make a determination on choice of job. Usually 15-30 min., sometimes by phone.
2. **In-Depth Interview: More intensive and Lengthy.** Conducted by person to whom the volunteer will report. Such things as personality traits, skills,

likes and dislikes, goals, emotional stability, attitudes, and motivation should be explored.
Purpose - To obtain enough sound info. and personal data to be able to determine if the volunteer is appropriate for a particular position, if compatible to co-workers, and most important if the volunteer can work with a particular client.

Two people may interview the applicant if for a particularly responsible or sensitive position. The volunteer needs to make a decision, as well as the agency by the end of the interview.

Time - Minimum 45 Min. to 1 Hour.

3. Follow-Up or Evaluation Interview: Purpose - to evaluate volunteer's progress, identify problems and assess promotional possibilities. Can be formal or informal, but must have a purpose and be productive.
4. Exit Interview: Purpose - To obtain candid feedback when volunteer is leaving organization. Hopefully to obtain constructive suggestions for the agency and its programs.

How to Listen Effectively

Interviewer must learn to use silence effectively and must be able to reflect and restate the ideas of the interviewee.

Pitfalls to Effective Listening:

1. Anticipation of what applicant will say before anything is said.
2. Intolerance towards applicant. Personal Prejudices.
3. Impulsivity - Interrupting to interject one's own thoughts.
4. Indolence - Becoming mentally lazy and inattentive.
5. Suggesting or influencing the applicant's answers.

Aides to Effective Listening:

1. Interest-Must consider applicant important.
2. Patience- Must give applicant the time to respond with thoughtful answers.
3. Linking - Having the ability to build the interview upon what has been said.
Example: If the volunteer has just identified her favorite volunteer job as that of establishing a volunteer tutor program, the next question should be, "tell me how you went about it"; not "tell me about your family".

4. Alertness - Always listening for key words and phrases, making sure they are understood.
5. Concentration on what the applicant is telling you.
6. Deliberation - Ability to withhold evaluation and decision until the interview is completed.

*** One Rule - DO NOT KEEP THE INTERVIEWEE DANGLING. Inform the candidate upon closure of the interview as to their status and when a decision will be made, even if it means saying, "We are still conducting interviews, but will arrive at a decision by the first of next month."

Placing

In order to make a good placement, the process of job design and interviewing are essential. Occasionally, you may interview a volunteer who has a unique set of skills or unusual potential in a particular area, but you have no job description that fits. A new job description may have to be designed to allow the latitude for this individual to function in.

However, it is most important that the volunteer feels his/her involvement will be meaningful to the agency, satisfying, and a growing experience for himself/herself.

The Effective Management of
Volunteer Programs by Marlene
Wilson. 1978