

HOW TO INTERVIEW A PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEER

A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Keep Objective of the Interview in Mind

Unless conscious attention is directed toward the objective, the interview becomes lengthy and irrelevant material can get undue attention.

2. Know Your Assignments

As the interview progresses, you will need to weigh the volunteer's qualifications against the personal and skill requirements of the assignments.

3. Be Honest with the Applicant

In an effort to supply a much needed volunteer, it is easy to emphasize the favorable aspects of the assignment and gloss over the unfavorable. Such techniques may lead to turnover absenteeism and/or requests for reassignment.

4. Make your Questions Work for You

Questions that can be answered by YES or NO rarely advance the interview.

5. Give the Volunteer a Chance to Talk

A good interview is a discussion not a cross-examination.

Get the volunteer's viewpoint before you give yours.

6. Weigh and Evaluate the Facts

Consider each fact about the volunteer in relation to all others.

Avoid basing evaluations on impressions.

7. Give the Volunteer a Decision

Make his or your next step a definite one. Avoid vague statements such as "We'll let you know". If you will not be able to use his services, tell him so frankly. If you expect to call him, give him as definite information as you can.

B. PLANNING THE INTERVIEW

1. Know Your Assignments.

a. Sources of information

- . --Observing the work
- Discussion with supervisor
- Discussion with volunteers, - both those who like the work and are successful, as well as those who did not like or adjust to the work.

2. Review the Application Record

- a. Get an overall view of your volunteer.
- b. Determine what facts are missing and what additional facts you will need to obtain in the interview.

3. Plan the Direction of your Discussion

- a. Decide what information is of first importance.
- b. Decide how you will get at motivations, attitudes, interests.

C. CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

1. Opening the Interview

- Introduce yourself
- Call volunteer by name
- Show interest in him as an individual

2. Questioning

a. General Principles

- Let volunteer tell his story
- Interrupt him only to keep the interview "on the beam".
- Use your questions clearly so that the volunteer will understand the information you want.
- When direct questions are used, begin these with who, what, when, why, where, how so as to prevent "Yes" or "No" answers.
- Ask one question at a time..
- Use questions to help evaluate attitudes, judgement and reactions, as well as to get facts.

EXAMPLES: What did you enjoy most in that work?

Why did you decide to give up that activity?

3. Timing the Interview

- a. Keep objective of the interview in mind
 - Is it a preliminary interview which cannot be completed until references are checked? Keep it short.
 - Is it an assignment interview in which suitable kinds of assignments are discussed with the volunteer?
- b. Although a satisfactory interview cannot be hurried, it should be confined to information pertinent to appraising the volunteer's qualifications, or to the prospective assignment.

How much is Enough to Know?

4. Evaluating Information

- a. All of the discussion concerned with the appraising the volunteer's SKAPATI apply here. (Skills, Knowledge, Ability, Physical status, Aptitudes, Traits, Interest).
- b. Additional evaluation aides:
 - Mental reaction time.
 - How well presentation of qualifications and answers to questions are organized.
 - Volunteer's own evaluation of himself--what he can and cannot do; do well.
 - Quality of self-prepared application form--handwriting; clerical ability; follow written instructions.

5. Closing the Interview

- a. When you have enough information, bring the interview to a close.
- b. The volunteer should have the feeling that he has told all he wanted to tell and that he will get a fair, impartial and well-considered decision.
- c. If the volunteer decides against accepting an assignment, try to determine why. It will help in future interviews with other volunteers.
- d. If you decide to reject the applicant, tell him so.
- e. If you are accepting him for assignment in this interview, be sure that he understands:
 - What the overall requirements of your agency work are, and the demands of a particular assignment if that decision has been made.
 - What is expected of all volunteers.

Use well-trained volunteers to do the interviewing.

Explain to them that their background and experience doesn't quite fit in with what is needed for this particular position.

With tact.

Be aware of other community needs. Keep suggesting something outside of your agency.

Contact the Volunteer Bureau.

The problem of the person whose aspirations are unrealistic in terms of what they have to offer requires both tact and honesty. Reviewing realistically the duties, as contrasted with the fantasies the person might have about what is expected, sometimes helps. If alternate, appropriate jobs are available, this helps if the person is persistent in seeking a volunteer job for which he or she is not suited. The same kind of honesty one would use with a professional applicant is needed. I would tell them, as tactfully as is possible, that in my opinion they are not right for the job. It's better to risk offending them than to fill jobs with the wrong people.

If the agency has a wide variety of jobs for volunteers, perhaps the volunteer will fit in somewhere.

Spend sufficient time in a warm, convincing manner, and suggest that perhaps this is not the best area for him to provide service. Refer him back to the Volunteer Bureau.

During the interview, get all information possible on previous experiences, particularly the successful activities. Develop these with the person to help him see them in new light. Emphasize these successful experiences and their value to possible agency jobs where person is needed.

We interview out professional applicants. We need to be specific about volunteer assignments and orientation programs in order to select what we need.

Depends entirely on the situation. For example, you can point out during an interview that the volunteer doesn't have time to do this job...or that this particular job doesn't fit in with his many talents (he's over-qualified for this "menial" task).

Simply say there is no opening at the present time.

I have been able to have the person who doesn't fit in find this out for himself by discussing in detail the job, and having HIM state his qualifications and interests. He realizes there is variance.

Stress the negatives of the volunteer service to be performed. Results:

- 1) Many will see reality and suddenly "fit".
- 2) "Chickens" will cop out.

Make positive and helpful suggestions to person where they MIGHT fit in.

However you do it, don't forget you have to live with yourself when it's over. Be kind and tactful at all times--probably the best "out" is the one whereby you say that anyone working at the agency must be there only for the best of the agency, and here it all works out well.