

## Tips for Interviewing Potential Volunteers

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The interview process is a continuation of the recruitment process. Potential volunteers should be familiar with the service description and decide if they can make the commitments described prior to arranging for an interview. If you have targeted your recruitment message to appropriate groups, you have a good chance of interviewing people who would make good volunteers.

Once a potential volunteer has expressed interest, hold some form of an interview to determine, on both your parts, if this is a good match. The formality and length of the interview depend on the job to be done. Structure the interview ahead of time to determine the most appropriate questions and information to gather.

Make a plan for sharing information about the program and the job with the individual you are interviewing so they can determine whether this is the type of work they want to do. Be sure to allow time for their questions. Encourage the candidate to ask questions and help them to understand that this interview is a two-way street--both of you are making decisions.

A well-prepared and well-handled interview will usually bring both participants to a concluding point:

- Both the interviewer and interviewee are confident that this is a good match
- One or both of you see that this match is not a good one and no further follow up is needed. The potential volunteer may realize that the position is not what they want and will tell you so. If, as the interviewer, you think the match is not a good one, be sure to keep your reasons work-related.

Have a successful candidate complete enough of the volunteer application form to get their signed permission for reference and criminal background checks. Once those are completed, a potential volunteer can be scheduled for orientation and completion of the application. Be sure the volunteer knows what the next steps will be and when they can expect to hear back from you.

**A Note about Legal Concerns:** As a general guideline, the courts tend to treat volunteer programs like personnel programs in the hiring and firing of volunteer workers. You need, therefore, to be aware of the consequences of actions and questions that could be interpreted as discriminatory. As long as you can demonstrate a job-related reason for a question, then you are usually safe in asking it. If you doubt the legality or reasoning behind a question, consult your legal counsel or omit the question.

In addition, it is legal to ask for references, as long as you ask them of every potential volunteer for that position and as long as you follow-up on them. Likewise, you can ask for conviction records, but not arrest records. You may also ask for proof of things like age or a valid driver's license, after "employment," if you need to. The key is not to appear as if you are discriminating on the basis of age.