



***Special Olympics***

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT SERIES

**SCREENING &  
INTERVIEWING**

***Facilitator's Guide***



## **Special Olympics Volunteer Management Series**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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- Special Olympics staff
- The Global Volunteer Resource Development Team
- Program leadership, with special thanks to Nancy Sawyer and Janet Novak

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# INTERVIEWING

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### **Introduction:**

Screening and interviewing candidates for a volunteer position is imperative to ensure that Special Olympics is selecting the most qualified person. To find quality, qualified volunteers, applicants are asked to complete the volunteer application form and consent to a reference and background check if necessary (and if allowed by the laws in your state, country or province). A key outcome of screening and interviewing is to ensure that a person is appropriate for the position you seek to fill. Without this significant step, many misplaced or inappropriate volunteers may begin to work for your Program, leaving both the volunteer and the Program dissatisfied. When the wrong person is in the wrong volunteer job, the efforts of volunteer supervision are often distracted to the inevitable problems of poor performance, volunteer dissatisfaction, staff complaints, etc.

The necessity for a face-to-face interview (in lieu of a phone interview or application review) is based on the volunteer's level of responsibility and his/her direct contact with athletes. The interviewer will guide a discussion to determine if there is a mutual fit between the interests and needs of the Special Olympics Program and the interests and needs of the volunteer. When asking staff and volunteers to interview other prospective volunteers, we must provide training in the skills involved in effective interviewing.

Your Program needs to be concerned about risk management for the athletes, the staff and the volunteers. Effective interviewing and screening are no longer optional activities in a well run volunteer program. This module provides an introductory understanding and training in these significant skills.



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The **Primary purposes** of this module are:

- ⇒ to examine the need for interviewing and screening volunteers
- ⇒ to share the basic process and skills necessary to do it effectively.

### **Learning Objectives:**

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the importance and purposes of having interviews with prospective volunteers.
2. Review or initiate the 4 key steps in the interview process.
3. Design relevant interview questions and review the essential role of listening during the interview process.
4. Propose options for handling problem situations that occur during interviews.
5. *Optional: Review policies and procedures for initiating Criminal Background Checks.*



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### General Notes To Trainer:

1. This workshop is in a suggested format. Feel free, however, to personalize it with your own stories about your experiences working at Special Olympics.
2. Although the focus of this module is interviewing volunteers, the skill is a generic one which may have broader applicability to the participants.
3. Most people have had many experiences where they have been poorly interviewed. Having participants recall personal experiences of being interviewed effectively will immediately begin to reinforce the art and skills involved.
4. It is important to reiterate that this is a cursory overview of the skill of interviewing. Because of the significance of the interview in determining success in matching volunteers, I would recommend that you request that this seminar be longer than 55 minutes. The in-service could also be offered in two time slots allowing for some role play or other experiential learning activities.
5. Because there are 4 concepts to cover, presentations and facilitation must be crisp and timed. If participants want more information, use this as an opportunity to ask for future additional training time on the topic.



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## WORKSHOP OUTLINE

CORRESPONDING SLIDE #	CORRESPONDING FACILITATOR GUIDE PAGES	SECTION	TOTAL ESTIMATED TIME: 60 MINUTES
C-1, 2, 3, 4, 5	7,8	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> Introductory Activity Introductory Comments Learning Objectives 4 Key Concepts	10 minutes
C-6, 7	8, 9	<b>Concept 1</b> Importance of Interviewing	5 minutes
C-8, 9, 10, 11, 12	9-11	<b>Concept 2</b> Steps in Interviewing	15 minutes
C-13, 14, 15, 16, 17	12-14	<b>Concept 3</b> Skills in Interviewing	15 minutes
C-18, 19, 20,	15, 16	<b>Concept 4</b> Special Problems in Interviewing Applicant review process	8 minutes
C-21	16-18	<b>Optional Section (mandatory for US Programs)</b> <b>Advanced Volunteer Screening</b> <b>The Criminal Background check</b>	Optional: 10 minutes
C-22	18	<b>Summary/Wrap-up/ Evaluation</b>	7 minutes



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### INTRODUCTION

- **Show Slide #1**

#### Opening Exercise

Get the participants to begin thinking about good interviewing skills. Start by asking them to think of a time when they left an interview and thought: "Wow, that person really did a good job interviewing me."

Ask participants...

**What were the outstanding skills and qualities of the interviewer?**

#### **Show Slide #2: Opening Exercise**

In the above feedback activity, participants will most likely mention the following observations: (If some key skills are not mentioned you can fill them in with your observations of good interviewing skills and qualities.)

- "Well thought out questions."
- "Good listener. I really felt heard."
- "Kept control without the feeling of being controlled."
- "Good eye contact." (May vary in different cultures)
- "Guided discussion well."
- "Let me talk most of the time."
- "Encouraging and supportive."
- "Clear about purposeful."
- "No interruptions."
- "Private setting."
- "Gave me time to reflect before answering."
- "Showed genuine interest."
- "Let me feeling intact, even if I wasn't chosen."



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### **Key Learning:**

Much is learned about the art and skills of good interviewing by analyzing someone who interviewed you well.

- **Show Slide #3: Learning Objectives**

Summarize objectives of this module and offer some introductory comments on screening and interviewing. Employ personal experiences and anecdotes.

- **Show Slide # 4 & 5: Key Concepts of Recognition**

This workshop is built on 4 Key Concepts. Indicate that during the workshop each concept will be examined more closely.

- **Show Slide # 6 Key Concept 1**

### **KEY CONCEPT # 1:**

**THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF INTERVIEWING VOLUNTEERS IS TO DETERMINE A MUTUAL FIT BETWEEN THE CANDIDATE AND THE PROGRAM AND TO SCREEN FOR RISKS TO THE VOLUNTEER, THE PROGRAM AND THE ATHLETES IF THE PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEER IS CHOSEN.**

### **Presentation:**

It is important to understand that during an interview, there is *mutual screening* – the Special Olympics Program is assessing whether they have the right person and the volunteer is evaluating whether his/her desires, needs and skills can be met in this volunteer opportunity. No longer can we as Special Olympics staff say, "Here are our needs - can you fill them???" The process, if done well, is one of negotiation so that both volunteer and Program are winners.

Ask participants to mention (or you may present) other reasons that screening through interviewing is important to Special Olympics.



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Touch on the impact of screening issues with regard to:

- **Show Slide # 7: Importance of Screening Through Interviewing**

- Athletes protection
- Staff and volunteer morale – a volunteer who causes problems severely affects morale.
- Special Olympics reputation – impacts future attraction of human and financial resources to the organization

***Important!!***

***Any individual who wishes to serve in a long-term position (member of Council Committee, Board) or in a direct-contact position (coach, chaperone, host) should have a personal interview as part of the screening process.***

- **Show Slide # 8: Key Concept 2**

### KEY CONCEPT #2:

#### THERE ARE FOUR KEY STEPS IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS:

- PREPARATION
- OPENING
- BODY
- CLOSING

\*\* Refer participants to their *Participant Workbook*, for additional notes on the Four Key Steps.

#### 1. PREPARATION



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### **Activity:**

Ask participants what they do to prepare for an interview.  
List important preparation activities on a flip-chart.

### **Show Slide # 9: Preparation**

Add the following information if not mentioned and if pertinent to your situation:

- Review all information about the applicant.
- Review pertinent information about previous work or volunteer experience.
- Use prepared questions to screen for suitability for the volunteer position.
- List the objectives you hope to accomplish through this interview
- Schedule adequate time and arrange for a private, comfortable place to interview
- Cast aside all distractions!!!

#### **1. OPENING AND GREETING**

### **Show Slide # 10: Opening/Greeting**

Ask participants to suggest essential elements of the opening. Add the following if not mentioned:

- Put applicant at ease, establish rapport
- Clarify purpose of interview ("to determine if we have a match")
- Establish appropriate time frame for interview

#### **1. BODY OF INTERVIEW**

### **Show Slide # 11: Three Basic Sections of an Effective Interview**



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Share three basic sections of an interview:

- (1) Interviewer provides general information about Special Olympics, if the applicant is unfamiliar with the movement
- (2) Applicant shares information about him/herself in response to thoughtful questioning.  
Explore such things as may be appropriate:
  - skills
  - interests
  - experience
  - time availability
  - work or leadership style
  - motivation for wanting this job
- (3) Interviewer shares information on appropriate volunteer opportunities

### 1. CLOSING

- **Show Slide # 12: Closing**

Share key elements of the close of an interview:

- (1) Review and summarize interview
- (2) Discuss next steps:
  - If mutual acceptance - discuss how volunteer can become active
  - If no match - encourage honest sharing / refer person to other agencies utilizing volunteers
- (3) Express appreciation for his/her time

- **Show Slide # 13: Key Concept 3**



**KEY CONCEPT #3:**

**TWO ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN INTERVIEWING ARE:**

- 1. DESIGNING AND ASKING QUESTIONS BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE POSITION AND REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS**
- 2. REFLECTIVE LISTENING ASSURING THAT BOTH INDIVIDUALS ARE HEARING AND UNDERSTANDING.**

Discuss and lead activities regarding the **Two Essential Skills**:

**1. ASKING QUESTIONS**

- The most important skill is learning to word questions in a way that will elicit the information you need to make decisions as to the suitability of a prospective volunteer.
  - It is best to use open-ended questions (those not answered by one or two words) to get expanded information.
- \* Refer participants to their *Participant Workbooks*, for more information on formulating open-ended questions.

**Designing Interview Questions**

Ask participants to focus on the importance of developing several key questions to elicit information needed to determine a candidate's suitability for a specific job.

**Show Slide # 14: Designing Interview Questions**



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**Activity:** Pair participants in groups of two and assign each group a different volunteer position. Ask groups to write the following...

- The volunteer job and its requirements
- The characteristics of the ideal person for the job
- A series of questions which will assist them in getting an accurate view of the candidate's qualifications and motivation.
- The three most important questions for the specific job description

Invite a few participants to share. Offer several sample questions that you ask of volunteers when they apply for positions within your Special Olympics Program.

### 2. LISTENING

- **Show Slide # 15: Listening**

Start the discussion by asking participants why it is so difficult to listen.

Answers may include:

- you are preparing to respond
- you are distracted
- you are evaluating them or their opinions
- you don't understand what they're saying

Listening is another critical skill for effective interviewing. It is distressing to learn that we generally only remember 50% of what was shared with us immediately after it is shared. Why is this, and what practices do we need to learn to become a good listener?



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- **Show Slide # 16 & 17: Skills of a Good Listener**

**The skills of a good listener:**

1. Listens to understand what is meant - not to get ready to reply, contradict, or refute.
2. Listens to what is being said, but also pays attention to the tone of voice, the facial expressions, and overall behavior of the speaker.
3. Observes all this and is careful not to infer too quickly.
4. Puts aside own views and opinions – One cannot listen to him/herself inwardly and at the same time listen outwardly to the speaker.
5. Does not prepare to answer while listening. Wants to get the whole message before deciding what to say in turn. The last sentence of the speaker may give a new slant to what was said before.
6. Shows interest and alertness. This stimulates the speaker and improves performance.
7. Does not interrupt. Asks questions in order to secure more information, not to trap the speaker or force him/her into a corner.
8. Uses the technique of linking to build on what the interviewee has already said. This is called probing and it indicates to the interviewee that you are listening.

*For example: "You indicated that your previous volunteer experience was particularly pleasurable. Can you elaborate on why it was so pleasurable?"*



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- **Show Slide # 18: Key Concept 4**

### **KEY CONCEPT #4:**

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO PREPARE FOR POTENTIAL PROBLEMS  
THAT MIGHT PRESENT THEMSELVES DURING THE INTERVIEW.**

#### **Activity:**

Have participants offer a list of some problems they have run into or anticipate experiencing in interviewing. Lead problem-solving discussions as to suggested approaches and solutions. Or, you may share five or so problems most likely to be experienced and problem solve around them.

- **Show Slide # 19: Problem Interviews**

#### **Examples:**

- Very shy
- Unmotivated
- Attitude Problem
- Put off by having to “interview” for a volunteer position
- Wants position, not qualified
- Over confident
- Worried about working with people who have mental retardation
- Sympathetic verses empathetic

#### **Presentation:**

Once all applicants have been interviewed, the applicant review process may begin to determine which person(s) are best suited for the job.



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- **Show Slide # 20: Applicant Review Process**

Applicant Review Process should include:

- A *careful* review of the written application
- A reference check. Call the references and keep a dated record of the contact, noting any concerns or reservations that have been expressed.

For example, "This is Mary Green from Special Olympics calling. Ed Jones has listed you as a reference on his application to be a volunteer with our organization. As you may already know, Special Olympics is a sports training and competition program for individuals of all ages with mental retardation. What are your thoughts about using Mr. Jones as a volunteer?"

- Initiate a background check if necessary (and if allowed by the laws in your state, country or province)

### **Optional Section Required For U.S. Programs only**

Volunteer registration policies in the United States require answers to several specific questions:

- Do you use illegal drugs?
- Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense?
- Have you ever been charged with neglect, abuse or assault?
- Has your driver's license ever been suspended or revoked in any state or other jurisdiction?

1. If the individual answers affirmatively to any of these questions, ask for clarification. Remember, a positive answer...
  - Does not *automatically* preclude the acceptance of that individual as a volunteer
  - *Requires* clarification to help the screener determine which assignment, if any, may be an appropriate match
2. Determine your Program's specific procedure for handling applications with affirmative answers to any critical questions and follow it explicitly.



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### 3. Where the Program procedure permits local screeners to process applications with positive answers:

- Explain the necessity of asking these questions to the volunteer.
- Be direct and specific in your request for clarification.
  - “You checked ‘yes’ on question three. Would you please elaborate on that?”
- Make a written record of the applicant’s explanation and any conclusion that may affect the types of assignments which may be given as a result of this additional information.
  - “License revoked in 1982 – No violations since then. NO ASSIGNMENT RESTRICTIONS.”
  - “Felon conviction in 1992 associated with Savings and Loan scandal. FINANCIAL ASSIGNMENT RESTRICTIONS.”

### **Show Slide # 21: Initiating a Background Check**

### 4. Initiate a Criminal Background Check (CBC) if:

- One is required by the State
- It is required by the Program Screening Policy
- More information about the individual’s background is needed.

### 5. Explain to the potential volunteer the reason for initiating the CBC...

- Our volunteer policy requires that a CBC be requested for anyone with a felony conviction in the last \_\_\_ years.
- The state requires that all individuals working with vulnerable populations have CBCs.
- All individuals volunteering in the following positions are required to have a CBC on file.

### 6. Follow the Program’s established procedures:

- Record the date of initiation of the CBC
- Record the date of return
- Maintain a record that can be retrieved as necessary



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*\* Remember... All information about a potential or accepted volunteer must be held in strict confidence and shared only with those who need to know because of their professional relationship with the individual.*

### Summary/Wrap-up/Evaluation

In closing, offer the group some reminders of principles for successful volunteer screening and interviewing. Close with a review of the 4 Key Concepts

- Remember... Nothing you do will impact your volunteer program more positively than effective interviewing and screening. When the right people are in the right jobs, the role of volunteer supervisor is a pleasure!
- Remind participants that interviewing skills are numerous. This is simply a cursory training to give a few tips and techniques to improve their skill. Encourage them to further refine this skill if it is not fully developed.
- **Interviewing is where you make the ultimate decision about whether or not an individual will be volunteering for you. Don't treat it lightly!!! If you say "yes" to the wrong person, neither of you will benefit.**

Ask participants to fill out the Evaluation Form located in the back of the *Participant Handbook*.

### END VOLUNTEER SCREENING & INTERVIEWING MODULE

### Suggestions for expanded activities for sessions over 60 minutes



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1. Deal with the policies and practices of turning down volunteer applicants and further discuss techniques for saying "No" to a volunteer applicant you are interviewing.
2. Spend more time on designing questions for the jobs within your Special Olympics Program.
3. Allow more time to discuss problem that are common in interview situations with your volunteer applicants.
4. End the session with opportunities for people to role play the interview of a volunteer. If the group is very inexperienced, you might wish to demonstrate a brief interview with one of your workshop participants.
5. Allow more time to discuss qualities of good interviewers. There is a great deal of learning potential in this activity.



### **Resources on Interviewing**

#### On-Line Resources:

<http://energizeinc.com> Energize, Inc. is an international training, consulting and publishing firm specializing in volunteerism. Their goal is "to connect leaders of volunteers with resources, information and ideas generated from around the world."

<http://www.iave.org>. IAVE is "the only international organization with the mission to promote, celebrate, and strengthen volunteerism worldwide." The International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) worked in close cooperation with the United Nations Volunteers and was a major contributor in establishing the International Year of the Volunteer.

<http://e-volunteerism.com/> The "Electronic Journal of the Volunteer Community," e-Volunteerism is a quarterly online publication that caters to volunteer leaders and managers.

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