



***Special Olympics***

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT  
SERIES

# **SCREENING & INTERVIEWING**

***Participant's Workbook***



## **Special Olympics Volunteer Management Series**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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- Special Olympics staff
- The Global Volunteer Resource Development Team
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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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### Opening Exercise

What are the skills and qualities  
of a good interviewer?

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### Learning Objectives: Interviewing

- Discuss the purposes of interviewing prospective volunteers
- Review Four Key Steps in interviewing
- Design relevant interview questions and review role of listening
- Propose options for handling problem situations during interviews
- *Optional: Review policies and procedures for initiating Criminal Background Checks*



## Key Concepts of Interviewing

1. The primary purpose of interviewing volunteers is to:
  - ⇒ Determine a mutual fit between the candidate and the Program
  - ⇒ Screen for risks to the volunteer, the Program, and the athletes if the prospective volunteer is chosen.
2. There are Four Key Steps in the interview process: Preparation, Opening/greeting, Body, and Closing.

C-4



## Key Concepts of Interviewing (continued)

3. Two essential skills in interviewing are:
  - ? Designing and asking questions based on an analysis of the position and required qualifications;
  - ? Reflective listening which assures that both individuals are hearing and understanding.
4. It is important to prepare for potential problems that might present themselves during the interview.





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### KEY Concept #1

1. The primary purpose of interviewing volunteers is to:
  - ⇒ Determine a mutual fit between the candidate and the Program
  - ⇒ Screen for risks to the volunteer, the Program, and the athletes if the prospective volunteer is chosen.

C-6



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### Importance of Screening Through Interviewing


- Athlete Safety
- Staff and volunteer morale
- Special Olympics reputation

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### KEY CONCEPT #2

There are Four Key Steps in the Interview Process:

- Preparation
- Opening/greeting
- Body
- Closing

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### Preparation

- 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 the interview.
- Schedule adequate time and arrange for a private, comfortable place to interview
- Cast aside all distractions!!!

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### Opening/Greeting

- Put applicant at ease, establish a rapport.
- Clarify purpose of interview – to determine if there is a “mutual fit.”
- Establish appropriate time frame for interview.

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### Three Basic Sections of an Effective 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.
- (3) Interviewer shares information on appropriate volunteer opportunities.

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## Closing an Interview

- Review and summarize interview
- 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
- Express appreciation for his/her time

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### KEY CONCEPT # 3

Two essential skills in interviewing are:

- (1) Designing and **asking questions** based on an analysis of the position and required qualifications; and
- (2) **Reflective listening** which assures that both individuals are hearing and understanding.

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## Designing Interview Questions


- Volunteer job requirements
- Desired characteristics of a volunteer
- Questions to elicit the volunteer's qualifications and motivation
- The three most important questions for the specific job description

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# Listening

Why is it so difficult to listen?

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## Skills of a Good Listener

- Listens to understand what is meant - not to get ready to reply, contradict, or refute.
- Listens to what is being said, but also pays attention to the tone of voice, the facial expressions, and overall behavior of the speaker.
- Observes speaker but is careful not to infer too quickly.
- Puts aside own views and opinions – One cannot listen to him/herself inwardly and at the same time listen outwardly to the speaker.

C-16



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## Skills of a Good Listener (continued)

- Does not prepare to answer while listening.
- Shows interest and alertness. This stimulates the speaker and improves performance.
- Does not interrupt. Asks questions in order to secure more information, not to trap the speaker or force him/her into a corner.
- Uses the technique of linking to build on what the interviewee has already said. This indicates to the interviewee that you are listening

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### Key Concept #4

It is important to prepare for potential problems that might present themselves during the interview.

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### Potential Problems

- 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

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## The Applicant Review Process

- Review the written application carefully.
- Call the references and keep a record of the reference contact and any pertinent information.
- Initiate a background check if necessary (and if allowed by the laws in your state, country or province)

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## Initiating a Criminal Background Check (Mandatory in US Programs only)

Initiate a criminal background check if:

- One is required by the State
- It is required by the Program screening policy
- More information about the individual's background is needed



## Important Steps in the Interview Process:

### Preparation

Preparation for the interview includes:

- Reviewing all available information about the applicant (It often helps to have the applicant fill out an application ahead of time),
- Reviewing all pertinent information on available job openings.
- Formulating questions to bring out the desired information you need to screen for suitability for the job.
- Scheduling adequate time (generally one half hour) and a comfortable, private place for interviewing
- Casting aside your other work and distractions and asking for your calls to be held

### Opening/Greeting

Opening the interview includes:

- Putting the applicant at ease (warm greeting, introductions, establishing rapport)
- Clarifying the purpose of the interview
- Establishing timeframe for the interview



## **Body of the Interview**

- If the interviewee is not familiar with Special Olympics, you may wish to give him/her this information at the beginning of the interview. If he/she is familiar with the movement, you may wish to begin the interview with your questions which access information about his/her hobbies, interests, past jobs, motivators, dislikes, etc.
- After getting a clear picture of the applicant, it is then appropriate to selectively share information about the possible job for which he/she might be suitable. If you conduct the interview in the reverse order, prospective volunteers may simply tell you what you want to hear in order to get an available job.
- If you have several applicants for the same job, be sure to ask each of them the core questions you have developed. During this information-giving phase of the interview, the applicant must be given the necessary information about the job or jobs to be done. His or her questions must be answered also. Information to be given includes job requirements, hours of service, place and conditions of work, training needed, purchase of uniform (if required), opportunities offered, supervision to be expected, etc.
- Be careful to explain the full requirements of the job; a common mistake is for interviewers to under-sell the job or its requirements.



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### The Closing:

- The closing should be concise and upbeat. First review and summarize where you have been in your interview and then share what the next steps will be.
- **When the applicant is acceptable:** This is easy. The important thing is to be certain that the final choice is wholeheartedly the applicant's. Have you gently urged the applicant to accept your own decision? If there is agreement, be sure the applicant knows when and where to go for discussion and determination of the specific assignment.
- **When the applicant is unacceptable:** Rejection is not easy at any time, particularly when the would-be applicant is eager to be of help. When the interviewer has reached a decision that the applicant is unqualified for the job in question or for other service in the Program, the interview should be terminated as rapidly as possible, consistent with graciousness and tact.
- Finally, in either case, in closing your interview you may want to thank the person for his/her time and interest in Special Olympics. It may be necessary to develop some interview termination techniques, since applicants sometimes do not know when it is time to leave. Standing up will usually be effective in terminating an interview.



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### **Sample Interview Questions: Open Ended vs. Closed Questions**

- Closed questions (Have you ever volunteered before?) usually require no explanation and can prevent informative responses. They are useful for obtaining specific answers such as yes or no. Closed questions typically begin with such words as: is, do, has, can, will or shall.

Can you work in the evenings?  
Will you be moving into your new house soon?  
Do you type?  
Do you enjoy children?  
Are Wednesdays alright?

- Open-ended questions usually require an explanation and are useful in obtaining information. They typically begin with such words as what, when, how, who, where, or which.

Tell me more about...  
How did you do...  
What did you not like about...  
What would you like to be different about...

- When you are designing your interview questions, make certain that you have a number of open-ended questions such as:

Why are you interested in this job?  
What type of supervision do you like to receive?  
What would you describe as your ideal work setting?  
How will this volunteer job fit into your life now?



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### Resources on Volunteer Management

#### 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.

## Participant Evaluation Form

**Thank you** for taking the time to share your evaluation of today's seminar. Your critique is valued and will be considered as we continually strive to improve our support to all personnel who team with volunteers.

The learning objectives in this workshop were:                      \_\_\_met \_\_\_partially met \_\_\_not met

1. Discuss the purposes of interviewing  
prospective volunteers

.....

2. Review the four key steps in interviewing

.....

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

.....

Comments:

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This session was:

Yes

No

helpful

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

provocative

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

practical

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

well-paced

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

too short

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

too long

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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The trainer was:

Yes

No

knowledgeable

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

prepared

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

organized

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

enthusiastic

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

good discussion facilitator

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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In what ways can you utilize this material in your work?

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What, if anything, do you plan to do differently as a result of this training?

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What additional information on this on any other topic dealing with volunteers would be helpful to you in your work?

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What suggestions do you have to strengthen this workshop?

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Further comments or suggestions:

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NAME (optional) \_\_\_\_\_



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