
DEPARTMENTAL INTERVIEWING GUIDE: INTERVIEWING APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES

It is extremely important that the interview is conducted in an appropriate manner:

- Create an environment that is accessible to the disabled (e.g., eliminate obstacles so that wheelchairs can move freely).
- Do not assume the applicant needs assistance.
- Ask about the applicant's ability to perform work-related tasks.
- Ask all questions in a straightforward manner.

Do not ask about:

- The nature of a disability.
- The severity of a disability.
- The condition causing a disability.
- Any prognosis or expectation regarding a disability.
- Whether the person will need treatment or special leave because of a disability.
- The progress of an illness, even if the person volunteers information about medical condition, its remission, or treatment.
- The workers' compensation history of a person.

Get the most out of your interview by:

- Inquiring if the person knows of any reason that he or she cannot perform the essential functions of the job...ask this question of all applicants interviewed.
- Asking questions regarding ability to perform all job functions, not just those essential to the job (However, an applicant cannot be eliminated from consideration because of his or her inability to perform marginal functions).
- Describing or demonstrating an essential job function and asking applicants if they can perform the functions with or without reasonable accommodation. If the person believes there may be problems related to a disability, rely on his/her personal experience and ask if there is another

way to accomplish the function or the job. Would special equipment or furniture help? What about changing the physical location of the desk or work area?

- Offering a tour of the work site if that would be helpful. Discuss or visit common areas that the person may be interested in but may feel awkward asking about, such as the lunchroom and restroom.
- Providing information on your area's regular work hours, leave policies, absence policy and any special attendance standards for the job. Then, asking the applicant if those work-attendance requirements or that schedule can be met.

Points to remember when interviewing an applicant with a disability:

- Do not patronize the applicant. Be certain that the applicant is treated with the same courtesy, respect, and understanding that is given for all of the applicants you interview.
- Greet the applicant as you would welcome all applicants. If you are going to perform an action that may not be obvious to the applicant, make sure that the applicant is alerted to such actions. For example, tell a blind person: "Let me shake your hand."
- Provide the same kind of information to the applicant that you give to all applicants (e.g., position descriptions, information about the department, college, etc.).
- Be sure to focus on the person (the applicant), not the disability. Likewise, look the applicant in the face when addressing and/or speaking to him or her.
- Ask the same questions of the person with a disability as you would a person without a disability.
- To create ease amongst yourself and the applicant, make the atmosphere comfortable. Adapt where necessary. For example, give a hearing-impaired applicant your list of questions. This can help reduce your tension as well as that of the applicant.

Courtesies for Individuals with Disabilities

Interviewing Persons Using Mobility Aids

- It is your responsibility to ensure that the interview location is accessible. Check on location of available disabled parking spaces; available ramps and elevators; and accessible restrooms, water fountains, and telephones. Prior to the interview, inform the applicant of these aids.
- Enable people who use crutches, canes, or wheelchairs to keep them within reach. Be aware that some wheelchair users may choose to transfer themselves out of their wheelchair into an office chair for the interview.
- To facilitate conversation when interviewing a person in a wheelchair, sit in a chair to place yourself at that person's eye level.
- A wheelchair is part of the body space that belongs to the person who uses it.
- Never touch or lean on a person's wheelchair.

Interviewing Persons with Vision Impairments

- Always identify yourself and introduce anyone else who is present, when greeting a person with vision impairment.
- In order to allow the person with visual impairment to take your arm at or above the elbow, guide rather than propel or lead the person.
- Provide verbal directions as to the location of the seat.
- Always announce the name of the person to whom you are speaking, when conversing in a group.
- Let the person know if you move or need to end the conversation.
- Never pet or distract a guide dog.
- If there will be written materials in the interview, find out before the interview if there is an alternative format the person would prefer such as large print, Braille, or tape recording.

Interviewing Persons with Speech Impairments

- Exercise patience by allowing for time for the person to speak rather than attempting to speak for the applicant or complete the applicant's sentences for him or her.
- Do not pretend to understand if you do not. Ask the person to repeat what you do not understand.
- Do not shout or raise your voice.

Interviewing Persons Who Are Deaf or Hearing Impaired

- If the person lip-reads, look directly at him or her. Try to speak clearly and at a moderate pace. Do not exaggerate your lip movements or shout. Speak expressively because the person may rely on your facial expressions, gestures, and body movements to understand you. Always maintain eye contact.
- Place yourself facing the light source and keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking.
- Use a normal voice tone. Only raise your voice if requested. Brief, concise, written notes may be helpful.
- Use a sign language interpreter.
- If an interpreter is present, the interpreter should be seated beside the interviewer, across from the applicant.
- Speak to the applicant, not to the interpreter and always maintain eye contact with the applicant, not the interpreter.
- The interpreter will be at least a few words behind the speaker, so allow extra time for the applicant to respond.
Interpreters should not be consulted or regarded as a reference for the applicant. Interpreters are there only to facilitate communication.