

# The Interview

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In each and every interview situation, there are common questions that will be asked. Don't wait until the interview to decide your response! Be prepared and think through your answers before you arrive. It may even help to write down your answers and practice with someone. Try to keep your answers brief, usually less than 2 minutes. Remember, **listening, confidence and quality of presentation** are the keys to successful interviewing.

### TRY ANSWERING THESE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What would you like to tell me about yourself?
2. Why are you interested in this agency?
3. How does the work in this organization fit your professional mission?
4. Why do you want this job? Why do you want to work for this organization?
5. What are your experiences with the (target population)?
6. What are your qualifications?
7. What kind of supervision do you expect?
8. How has your education / work experience prepared you for this position?
9. What do you hope to accomplish at this agency?
10. What would you like to learn here?
11. Have you done this type of work in the past?
12. What issues might you have with [adoption, for example]?
13. What schedule will work for you?
14. What are your career goals? For the next 5 years? The next 10 years?
15. What are some of your strengths? Some of your weaknesses?
16. How do you define success for yourself?
17. How do you plan?
18. What is your work style?
19. How do you work with others?
20. Tell me about a time when you had to juggle your regular responsibilities and deal with a sudden priority?
21. Are you a leader ... a follower?
22. Describe the process you go through in developing a (case plan, budget, workshop, contract, or marketing plan, for example).
23. What is your ideal position and career path?
24. Is there anything you would like to say to close the interview?
25. Do you have any questions? **(YES! You should always have questions!)**

### Direct Practice Questions

1. What is your understanding of service delivery in [a particular field or region]?
2. Tell me about a time you were in a disagreement over a treatment plan.
3. What has been your experience with agency paperwork and how do you feel about it?
4. How will you deal with the dual-relationship issues of working in a small community?

### Community Administration & Leadership Questions

1. What type of research skills / computer skills do you have? What specific policy issues are you interested in?

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## Policy Questions

1. How do you handle shifting priorities and working in a fast-paced, pressured environment?
2. What is your experience with writing quickly, under pressure?
3. What do you do to keep track of a lot of information at once?

## Program Development Questions

1. How would you go about locating community resources in a neighborhood in which you have no relationship?

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ASK OF AN INTERVIEWER:**

1. What do you like best about working at this agency?
2. How often, and by whom will I be supervised? What types of supervision are available? Is consultation available?
3. Are there opportunities for professional development within and beyond the agency itself?
4. With what other staff members will the person in this position work (for example, marketing department director)?
5. What are the opportunities for advancement?
6. What do you think would be the most challenging experiences for a social work intern in your agency?
7. What do you think would be the most rewarding experiences for a social work intern in your agency?
8. Is the staff on call, and how is that handled?
9. How are expectations for students different from those for agency staff?
10. What are the agency's service delivery strengths and weaknesses?
11. To what extent do students have an opportunity to offer input into administration and planning?
12. What can I count on from the agency to assist me in my professional development?
13. What is the typical career path of social workers within this field/agency?
14. To what extent will I have the opportunity to network with other agencies, or other professionals in the field?
15. How would you describe the organizational culture of this agency?

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## THANK-YOU AFTER AN INTERVIEW LETTER

March 23, 2005

Ms. Amanda Newton, Director  
Johnson Center  
222 Fischer Ave.  
Austin, TX 78759

Dear Ms. Newton:

I would like to thank both you and Ms. Smith for taking time to meet with me this past Wednesday to discuss the MSSW field placement position. I really enjoyed learning more about the Johnson Center and the many services it provides to the community. After speaking with you and learning more about your agency, I feel strongly that my experiences in working with older adults and their families, planning with an interdisciplinary team, and coordinating special services offer the leadership qualities you are seeking from an MSSW intern.

Enclosed you will find a list of my references as well as the report I wrote on long-term care alternatives that you requested. Please feel free to contact me at 555-4321 if you have any further questions. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Name

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## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following is a sample interview evaluation form that an employer might use to critique a candidate's interview:

(1-2 Unacceptable, 3-4 Limited, 5-6 Satisfactory, 7-8 Above Average, 9-10 Outstanding)

**Preparation for the Interview** \_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge of Organization

Pertinent Questions

**Qualifications** \_\_\_\_\_

Work Experience

Academic Preparation

**Verbal Communication** \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation of Ideas

Grammar and Vocabulary

**Direction** \_\_\_\_\_

Confidence in Abilities

Well-defined Goals

**Maturity** \_\_\_\_\_

Decisiveness

Leadership/Supervision

**Personality** \_\_\_\_\_

Enthusiasm

Motivation

**Sincerity** \_\_\_\_\_

Genuine

Honest

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

Professional Interests

Fits into Organization

**Overall Score** \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Comments:**

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## TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING

- Plan your attire in advance and make sure you look sharp!
- Arrive on time (or 15 minutes early).
- Fill out the application completely.
- Bring extra copies of your resume and a list of references.
- Introduce yourself in a courteous manner and give a firm handshake!
- Be positive and enthusiastic about the job!
- Respect the other applicants.
- Focus on things you can control.
- Speak slowly and clearly and don't be afraid to pause for a moment to collect your thoughts.
- Be honest. Don't try to cover up mistakes-focus on what you learned from them.
- Listen, and use body language to show interest.
- Analyze yourself: personality, interests, values, strengths and weaknesses, skills, accomplishments, education, and career goals.
- RESEARCH THE COMPANY!!!
- Anticipate frequently asked questions (education, work experience, career goals, personal qualities, etc.).
- Ask intelligent questions that demonstrate the fact that you have done your research.
- Do NOT ask about salary.
- Thank the interviewer and ask about the next step in the interview process.
- Ask the interviewer for a business card and send a thank-you letter or e-mail.

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## THE TWO-MINUTE “TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF” DRILL

Almost every job interview starts off with this question, and it's not one that you want to answer “off the cuff.” This question may set the tone for the whole interview, so you want to make the most out of this opportunity to talk about yourself.

1. Brief introduction
2. Your key accomplishments, credentials, education, career start
3. The key strengths demonstrated by these accomplishments – career progress, growth, most recent accomplishments
4. The importance of these strengths and accomplishments to your prospective employer
5. Where and how you see yourself developing in the position for which you're applying – What you want (tempered with the right amount of modesty)

By working on this statement, you will get a clear focus as to what skills you have and what you would like to do with them. The better you know your statement, the better you will be able to articulate your skills to others, and the more self-confidence you will project. Once you have your statement prepared, you can use it in interviews or when you meet people at workshops, conferences, and career fairs!

### SAMPLE STATEMENT

I am a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin, where I earned a bachelor's degree in psychology. Following graduation, I worked in a social service agency for homeless individuals, where I became interested in client advocacy, as a result of finding a lack of social services available for the homeless. After two years of working directly with clients, resolving their immediate needs as best as possible, I realized that I wanted to further my education, to gain more knowledge about the field of social work, and to learn more about client advocacy.

While in school, I had my first field placement at Caritas, which strengthened my skills further in dealing with the homeless. My second field placement was with the Salvation Army, working with the Executive Director on projects related to community networking. I have also specialized in Administration and Planning courses to prepare me for a management position. I continue to be very committed to working with the homeless, and with my master's degree in social work, I am interested in a position in management with the NeedAHome? Agency.