



Conducting Volunteer Interviews



Contents

Objectives of Materials.	1
Who Conducts Interviews.	2
Why Conduct Interviews.	3
Interview Process Specifics.	4-5
Potential Interview Pitfalls.	6
Forming Good Questions.	7
Sample Interview Form.	8-9
To ask or Not To Ask.	10
Volunteer Interviewer Position Description.	11

Objectives of Materials

The following materials have been developed as a resource to help guide the volunteer selection process in conducting interviews with potential volunteers. The resource is for staff and volunteers who will be assisting with or conducting interviews. More specifically, the materials have been developed to:

1. Provide background information on and share the importance of conducting interviews;
2. Share the specific components of conducting interviews and the procedures necessary;
3. Highlight potential pitfalls and challenges; and
4. Increase knowledge of the volunteer interview process.

Who Conducts Interviews?

The following are examples of who may conduct interviews. Some service teams may include a “volunteer interviewer” position that may conduct all interviews for the entire service unit. Use these examples as a guide to help determine who may be conducting interviews.

Membership Staff Member or Service Team Member  **Leader & Assistant Leader**

Troop Leader  **Volunteer positions within the troop committee**

Why Conduct Interviews?

Introduction

The interview is an important component to the comprehensive volunteer selection process and allows both Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania (GSWPA) and the potential volunteer to make informed decisions about participation. It's a powerful tool that is the foundation of an effective screening process. Having the wrong person in a volunteer position causes a potentially dangerous environment for girls, volunteer dissatisfaction, complaints, and inadequate service delivery. Interviewing allows the applicant and interviewer to determine if there is a good match between individual's interests, skills, abilities, and GSWPA needs.

The interview provides opportunity to:

- Promote GSWPA to potential volunteers;
- Expand on the information provided in the potential volunteer's application;
- Further investigate the validity of the information provided by potential volunteers;
- Obtain additional verbal and non-verbal information; and
- Look for other positive and negative characteristics.

The interview provides an opportunity for potential volunteer to:

- Learn more about GSWPA, individuals and programs;
- Develop a more complete understanding of volunteer roles and responsibilities for the position they are applying for;
- Decide if the organization and the position is a good fit with their skills, abilities and interests and time commitments.

Interview Process Specifics

Step 1: Preparation

- ✓ Review position description so that interviewer has full understanding of what will be expected of the potential volunteer;
- ✓ Review the interview form to identify questions directly related to the position responsibilities;

Step 2: Conduct the Interview

- ✓ Introductions. Create comfortable environment.
- ✓ Review the purpose of the interview and emphasize that it is intended to be a dialogue between the potential volunteer and the interviewer, reminding them that this is an opportunity to learn more about one another;
- ✓ Provide a brief overview of Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania (GSWPA);
- ✓ Ask the potential volunteer to provide background information about themselves and to explain their interest in GSWPA;
- ✓ Let the candidate talk but keep the interview focused;
- ✓ Ask questions relevant to the position and the roles and responsibilities of the individual;
- ✓ Ask the same core questions to all potential volunteers who will be serving in the same or similar positions. Ask more specific, follow-up questions that are relevant to the individual position responsibilities; and
- ✓ Answer questions that the potential volunteer has about the organization, specific responsibilities and or about the position itself.

Step 3: Close the Interview

- ✓ Be clear and concise when closing the interview; thank the potential volunteer for participating and for expressing interest in GSWPA;
- ✓ Inform the potential volunteer that the information collected from the interview will be taken into consideration with all other relevant information gained from the overall selection process. A decision will be made and communicated, in writing, with the potential volunteer.
- ✓ Never tell the potential volunteer that they have been accepted or not accepted. The interview is only one part of the overall selection process and there is information from other components of the selection process that must be considered.

Step 4: Wrap-Up

- ✓ Document any responses, comments or notes on the interview form.
- ✓ Indicate position(s) reviewed for and recommendation on approval or non-approval.
- ✓ Return interview form to CES department.

Potential Interview Pitfalls

While interviewing potential volunteers can be a very positive experience, there are times when it can be problematic for the organization or the applicant. The individual or committee conducting the interview may run into trouble if they are;

1. Asking leading questions that help the potential volunteer anticipate the answer the interviewer is looking for;
2. Asking open-ended questions;
3. Making a decision about a potential volunteer before the interview is complete;
4. Following a pattern too strictly, without recognizing and/or compensating for individual differences;
5. Lacking knowledge about the volunteer position;
6. Trying to rush the interview and not allowing for adequate conversation;
7. Talking too much, rather than listening to the applicant;
8. Not knowing the questions to ask or failing to follow-up with questions;
9. Failing to adequately describe the organization or position requirements;
10. Judging the applicant solely on personality, and overlooking important factors related to their skills, abilities and knowledge;
11. Attempting to answer questions from the applicant without full knowledge or understanding of what is being asked. If interviewers do not know an answer to a question they should let the applicant know they will get back with them with the requested information; and
12. Telling the potential volunteer that they are accepted as a volunteer with GSWPA without the applicant having completed all the selection procedures.

Forming Good Questions

Asking questions is an important component of the interview process. While Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania has a guide of questions for use during the interview, it is sometimes necessary to go beyond the pre-developed list. In those cases, you should be familiar with both closed- and open-ended questions and the implications of each.

Closed Questions

Closed questions (“Have you ever volunteered before?”) typically do not elicit explanation or opinion. Asking closed questions may prevent you from getting the information needed. However, these types of questions do encourage specific answers such as yes or no. Closed questions typically begin with such words as ‘is’, ‘do’, ‘can’, ‘will’, or ‘shall’.

Examples:

Can you work in the evening?

Do you type?

Do you enjoy working with children?

Will you be attending training sessions?

Open-ended Questions

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

Examples:

Tell me more about...

How did you...

What did you like about...

What would you change about...

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

Examples:

Why are you interested in this position?

What type of supervision do you expect?

How would you describe an ideal meeting?

What do you hope to gain from volunteering?

Most importantly...remember to keep it FUN! If it doesn't sound interesting and fun, they won't be interested!

Sample Interview Form



Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania
800-248-3355 • gswpa.org

INTERVIEW FORM FOR VOLUNTEERS

(Interviewer: Questions asked may be altered so they are pertinent for the position being applied for.)

(Please print legibly)

Volunteer Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Service Unit _____ Troop (if applicable) _____

Are you applying for a specific volunteer position? Y / N If yes, which one? _____

If no, Do you prefer working with girls or adults? ___Adults ___Girls Age Level _____

In what role? _____

What interests you about our organization? Is there a particular area within GSWPA you would like to volunteer for?	
Would you share some of your life experiences working with girls and/or adults that are relevant to the position or area which you would like to volunteer?	
What experience do you have using a computer? What programs are you most familiar with?	
<u>LEADERSHIP/COACHING SKILLS</u> Have you ever had the opportunity to lead an individual and/or group of people on a project or to set a goal? Would you share what you learned from this experience?	
Have you ever helped someone (co-worker, friend, child or neighbor) achieve a goal? In what way did your input help them with their accomplishment?	
<u>FINANCIAL SKILLS</u> What experience do you have with checking accounts, budgeting and record keeping?	
If there was a discrepancy in an account you were responsible for, how would you handle it?	
Are there any skills we could help you with to successfully manage monies? (Troop funds, Service Unit Funds, etc?)	
<u>GIRL FOCUSED</u> Have you ever developed and implemented an event or activity specifically for girls? If so, please tell me about it. What age/grade level were the girls involved?	
How do you stay up-to-date on current trends and issues that are influencing girls and teens?	
<u>PERSONAL INTEGRITY</u> What would you do if your integrity was challenged and how would you handle it?	

<p>If you ever saw a coworker, neighbor, or friend do something dishonest or unethical how would you handle it?</p>	
<p><u>DIVERSITY</u> What experience do you have working with someone different than yourself, specifically of a different race, religion, socio-economic status, culture or language?</p>	
<p>Have you ever had to advocate on behalf of someone different than yourself because they were being treated unfairly?</p>	
<p><u>ADAPTABILITY</u> In today's busy world we often find ourselves multi-tasking to meet deadlines. Please share an experience where you had to change your original plans to meet a necessary deadline.</p>	
<p>Have you ever been faced with the possibility that you would not be able to complete a task or assignment because you didn't have what you needed to accomplish it? How did you handle it?</p>	
<p><u>ORAL COMMUNICATION</u> Are you comfortable speaking to groups of girls and/or adults? Please describe a time when you have done so.</p>	
<p>Have you ever had to compromise with someone else in order to complete a task? What was the outcome?</p>	
<p><u>CONFLICT RESOLUTION</u> What experience do you have with conflict resolution or solving problems? What did you learn from those experiences?</p>	
<p>How would you handle the following situations: a) Girl to Girl conflict b) Girl and Adult conflict c) Adult to Adult conflict</p>	
<p><u>WRAP-UP</u> What training or information would you need or want in order to be a successful volunteer with GSWPA?</p>	

Interviewed by: _____ Date: _____

Comments: _____

Recommended: Yes No For what position? _____

Return this form to: GSWPA, Volunteer Placement, 5681 Route 6N, Edinboro, PA 16412

To Ask or Not to Ask

All individuals conducting interviews should review the following information prior to conducting interviews. Not only will it help legally, it may also help keep everyone out of potentially embarrassing or sensitive situations:

You may not ask about an applicant's:

1. Race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation, marital status;
2. Height, weight;
3. Number of children, childcare responsibilities;
4. English language skills;
5. Educational achievement;
6. Discharge from the military;
7. Indicators of economic status (social club membership, etc.);
8. Personal property;
9. Spouse or partner;
10. Physical limitations or disabilities; and
11. Political affiliation

If you are unsure if it is appropriate to ask a particular question, don't ask the applicant!

It is legal to ask the applicant:

1. Whether an applicant is a citizen. If not a citizen, whether an applicant's permitted residence will be long enough to fulfill the expected commitment (such as a student visa);
2. An applicant's place of residence and length of residence in the city or state;
3. What languages are read, spoken, or written fluently by the applicant, if the volunteer position requires such skills, and as long as an applicant is not asked to indicate how the skills were acquired;
4. The name and address of a person to notify in the event of an emergency;
5. Whether the applicant has reached a specific age (for example, "Are you 14?" or "Are you 21?"), if minimum age is a criterion for acceptance;
6. Questions about an applicant's volunteer history;
7. Questions about an applicant's employment history;
8. Questions concerning convictions, if relevant to the job functions to be performed (should only be done by a GSWPA staff member);
9. Questions about the applicant's experience in the armed services;
10. Questions about the applicant's hobbies and/or interests; and
11. How the applicant was referred to GSWPA or how they heard about the volunteer opportunity.

Volunteer Interviewer Position Description

Title: Volunteer Interviewer

Purpose: Gather relevant information about the potential candidates while assessing for which positions volunteers are best suited.

Responsibilities:

1. Gather relevant information about candidates through phone or in-person interviewing.
2. Assess for which positions volunteers are best suited.
3. Determine whether candidates are appropriate volunteers for the available positions.
4. Make referral of candidates to become volunteers for the organization.
5. Complete and submit the Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania (GSWPA) Interview Form.

Qualifications:

1. Have the ability to work with adults.
2. Have a background in human resources, education, social work, child and family services or other relevant field.
3. Is a registered member of Girl Scouts and adheres to the principles of the Girl Scout Movement as stated in the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
4. Willingness to support the policies and procedures of GSWPA.
5. Willingness to complete required training.
6. Demonstrated commitment to diversity.
7. Knowledge of or willingness to learn about the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.