

Interview Guidelines and Checklist

Preparing for the interview

Do your research

Learn about different types of interview styles

- **Behavioral-based:** Involves structured set of questions focused on job of interest, your previous work experiences, your skills, and your work-related values.
 - Example questions: 1) Describe a difficult problem that you had to solve. How did you handle the situation? What was your thought process? 2) Describe a time when you decided that something needed to be done and you took on the task.
- **Conversation/fit-based:** Leverages rapport between the interviewer and interviewee to gather information. Employers want to get to know you and learn about your background, motivation, and interests.
 - Example questions: 1) What did you like most, and least, about your previous position? 2) What are your most positive qualities?
- **Job-specific:** Focuses on technical and job content questions. Employers ask interviewees to discuss their use of specific therapeutic modalities, data analysis programs, review a case study and create an action plan, among other job-specific tasks.
 - Example tasks: 1) Translate an intake form from English to Spanish 2) Brief presentation
- Your interview may be based on one or more of these styles

Find out about interview day

To prepare for your interview, find out as much as you can about what to expect during the interview.

Questions to consider include:

- Where will the interview be?
- Will it be on the phone or in person?
- With whom will you be meeting?
- Will it be a group interview or one-on-one?
- What will be the duration of the interview?
- Is there any specific preparation work, such as preparing to deliver a presentation, present a case study, use Excel or SPSS?

Learn about the agency

By researching the organization and its current needs, you will learn how they function, and where you would fit into their structure. In addition, while salary negotiation questions can be uncomfortable at this stage, it's important to do your research so you can be prepared if needed

Questions to consider include:

- Who leads the organization? Where are the headquarters? When were they founded?
- What are their major department, programs, and/or services?
- What does their website say? Who do they serve? Who are their peers? How are they regarded in the community? What do people say about working there?
- What are the goals, values, and expectations of this organization?

- What are the salaries like at this organization? Do they pay competitively? Review sites like Glassdoor.com.

Know your resume

It's critical to spend time reflecting your goals, strengths, and skills, so that you can discuss them succinctly.

Review your resume and consider the following questions:

- What are your most relevant projects or experiences related to the job?
- What other related experience, skills, knowledge, and transferable skills do you have?
- Identify your strengths and weaknesses, how you capitalize on your strengths and are working to address your weaknesses.

Prepare questions to ask

The interview is also your opportunity to ask questions and interview the interviewer. Think about structuring questions about the position, organization, hiring process, timelines, and substance of work.

Examples:

- How would you describe the organization's culture and values (if not listed on agency website)?
- How is the department in which I would work organized?
- What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to succeed in this role?
- Where do you think the agency is headed in the next five years?
- If the interviewers do not share information on next steps, ask when you can expect to receive an update on your status as an applicant.

Additional preparation tips

- Leverage the STAR model to structure your behavioral based responses.
 - **Situation:** Describe the situation and setting
 - **Task:** What were the specific tasks involved?
 - **Action:** What action did you take to solve the problem?
 - **Result:** What was the outcome of your action?
- Prepare for questions you're afraid of being asked.
- Practice, practice, practice!

During the interview

Things to do

- Use STAR model to respond to behavioral-based questions.
- Be aware of body language and nonverbal communication.
- Frame responses positively, even if asked negatively.
 - For example, "what did you like least about your previous work at x agency?" A strong response is brief, illustrates how you have learned to compensate for this weakness, avoids criticism, and ends on a positive note.
- Thank the interviewer for their time.

Things to avoid

- Refer to problems finding the interview location.
- Make negative references to anyone.
- Volunteer why you lost your last job.

- Ask about salary or benefits.

In the U.S., it is illegal for interviewers to ask your age, ethnicity, religion, race, citizenship, military record, sexual orientation, marital status, arrest record, and/or disabilities. If you are asked one of these questions, politely decline to answer, or ask why the question is relevant in order to address the underlying issue.

After the interview

De-brief

- Think about what you did well and what you could improve on.
- Use this information in your preparation for future interviews.

Send a thank-you letter to everyone who interviewed you

- Personalize each note.
- Reference something that was discussed in the interview.

Keep alumni and/or other references who have advocated for you updated

- Let them know how the interview went and how much you appreciate their support.

Acknowledge and respond to job offers in a timely way

- It's critical to acknowledge the job offer, even if you are not ready yet to accept or reject it.

Checklist

- Learn about different types of interview styles
- Find out about interview day
- Learn about the agency
- Know your resume
- Prepare questions to ask
- Practice responding with the STAR model
- Schedule an interview preparation appointment with GSSWSR Career Services
- De-brief after each interview
- Send thank-you notes
- Keep alumni and other references updated
- Acknowledge and respond to job offers

*Don't forget that GSSWSR Career Services is here to support your job search.
Visit our website, call, or e-mail to learn more!*