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Interviewing Guide

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Interview Development

Form the Interview Team

If feasible, use a team approach. The team approach is preferable because it saves time and allows for comparison of the applicant by the team members. The size of the interview team may vary, but generally two to three members are recommended.

Familiarize the Interviewer(s) with the Position

The interviewer(s) must be familiar with the major duties and responsibilities and the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities of the position at entry level. Be sure that each interviewer reviews the position description carefully.

Establish Criteria for Selection

The selection criteria must be consistent with the complexity and level of the job. Focus on performance factors that can be demonstrated in the selection procedure. Understand the departmental and organizational goals as they relate to this position. Such criteria must be job-related and might include performance during the interview, relevant training, education and experience, affirmative action goals, etc. Example: To what extent is job success dependent upon effective oral communication skills, on-the-spot reasoning skills, and the ability to effectively present oneself to strangers.

Develop Job-Related Questions

"Nice to know" questions are not permitted! Lawsuits may result from applicants who are rejected on the basis of irrelevant questions asked by interviewers.

Develop Interviewing Strategies

There are many different interviewing strategies. Develop strategies appropriate for the position level and skill requirements.

Establish a System to Evaluate the Responses

It might be beneficial to set up a formula for rating or ranking the applicant's responses to the questions based on the selection criteria. Evaluating the responses in this manner will help make the selection process easier and more objective.

Preparing Questions

When developing questions, always keep in mind that they must be job-related and appropriate for the complexity and level of the position. It is helpful to weigh the questions based on the importance of each selection criterion. Below are six main categories of questions that are commonly used by interviewers. Different types of questions may be combined to obtain a certain response.

- **Closed-ended questions:** These questions may sometimes be helpful when an interviewer(s) wants to know certain information at the outset or needs to determine specific kinds of knowledge. Example: "could you name the five specific applications involved in . . .?"
- **Probing questions:** These questions allow the interviewer(s) to delve deeper for needed information. Example: "Why?" "What caused that to happen?" or "Under what circumstances did that occur?"
- **Hypothetical questions:** Hypothetical situations based on specific job-related facts are presented to the applicant for solutions. Example: "What would you do if . . .?"; "How would you handle . . .?"
- **Loaded questions:** These questions force an applicant to choose between two undesirable alternatives. The most effective way to employ a loaded question is to recall a real-life situation where two divergent approaches were both carefully considered, then frame the situation as a question starting with, "What would be your approach to a situation where . . .?"

- **Leading questions:** The interviewer(s) sets up the question so that the applicant provides the desired response. When leading questions are asked, the interviewer cannot hope to learn anything about the applicant.
- **Open-ended questions:** These are the most effective questions, yield the greatest amount of information, and allow the applicant latitude in responding. Example: "What did you like about your last job?"

Determining Strategies

Although there are many different interviewing strategies, the following are examples of three different perceptive strategies.

- **Situational Interviewing:** This strategy is based on the assumption that the closer you can get to a real work situation, the better the evaluation will be. This situational interview could involve taking a tour of the workplace and asking the interviewee to actually perform some aspect of the job, or a closely related aspect of the job.
- **Stress interviewing:** This strategy calls for the use of tough or negatively phrased questions. The interviewer(s) is trying to keep the candidate off balance while evaluating poise and quick thinking under pressure. This style would not be suitable if the employee will not face undue stress on the job.
- **Behavioral interviewing:** The interviewer(s) is looking for a behavioral pattern. All questions are based on the past. The assumption is that a "leopard never changes its spots." The interviewer(s) may get an idea of what action the interviewee might take in the future based on what happened in the past.

Each of these strategies has its strengths and weaknesses. One strategy should not be used exclusively for all interviews. Different position levels might require different interview approaches. The sensible approach is to take the best aspects of each style and combine them to produce a comprehensive strategy.

Note: The interview process should not include the use of a testing device without prior approval from the Division of Personnel Services (K.S.A. 1-6-10.) Contact HRS, x. 4191, before using any type of testing device.

Evaluating Responses

As part of evaluating the responses, the interviewer(s) should review the job description to ensure thorough familiarity with the requirements, duties, and responsibilities of the position. Furthermore, the interviewer(s) should review the work history and relevant educational credentials of each candidate and consider the intangible requirements of

the job. Finally, the interviewer(s) should review the selection criteria, evaluate and rate the responses, and rank the applicants based on that criteria.

Interview Process

Pre-Interview

- Schedule interviews to allow sufficient time for post interview discussion, completion of notes, etc.
- Secure an interview setting that is free from interruptions or distractions.
- Review applications and resumes provided by the applicants.
- Provide an accurate position description to each applicant and allow adequate time for reading before the interview begins.

Opening the Interview

- Review the functions of the agency or unit in which the position is located.
- Allow the applicant an opportunity to pose questions or seek clarification concerning the position.
- Explain the interview process to the applicant.

Questioning

- Question the applicant following the method established in the developing stage.
- Be consistent with all applicants.
- Allow the applicant sufficient time to respond to each question.
- Record any relevant information elicited from the questions.

Closing the Interview

- Inform the applicant when the decision will be made and how notification will occur.
- Confirm the date of the applicant's availability to begin work.
- Confirm the applicant's correct address and telephone number.
- Give the applicant a final opportunity to raise any questions.
- Obtain all necessary information from the applicant about references.

Post-Interview

- Review the selection criteria.
- Review and complete notes.
- Avoid prejudgment and discussion of applicants between interviews.
- Use the selection criteria established in the developing stages.
- Rank the applicants based on the selection criteria.
- When possible, decide upon a second and third choice if the first choice should decline the offer.
- Document the basis for the final recommendation.
- Notify all applicants interviewed of the results prior to announcing the selection.

Guidelines for Employment Inquiries

The following chart is to be used as a guide to formulate questions which will elicit the information needed to make employment decisions.

Any inquiry should be avoided which, although not specifically listed among the above, is designed to elicit information which is not needed to consider an applicant for employment.

Name

Permissible Inquiries: Questions which will enable work and education records to be checked.

- "Have you worked for this company under a different name?"
- "Is any additional information relative to change of name, use of an assumed name or nickname necessary to enable a check on your work and educational record? If yes, explain."

Inquiries which must be avoided: Inquiry about the name which would indicate lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, or marital status. Inquiry into previous name of applicant where it had been changed by court order or otherwise.

- "State your maiden name."
- "Have you ever used another name?"
- "Do you prefer to be addressed as Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms.?"

Age

Permissible Inquiries: If age is a legal requirement, whether applicant meets the minimum or maximum age requirement; upon hire, proof of age can be required.

- "If hired, can you furnish proof of age?" if age is a legal requirement.
- State that hire is subject to verification that applicant meets legal age requirements.

Inquiries which must be avoided: If age is not a legal requirement, any inquiry or requirement that proof of age be submitted must be avoided. Note: The Age Discrimination in Employment Act, as amended in 1986, prohibits discrimination against persons over age 40. The Kansas Act Against Discrimination prohibits discrimination against persons age 18 and over.

- "State your date of birth."
- Require that applicant produce age in the form of a birth certificate or baptismal record.
- Requesting dates of attendance at or completion of elementary or high school.

Race or Color

Permissible Inquiries: Race may be requested for affirmative action statistical recording purposes. Applicants must be informed that the provision of such information is voluntary.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Any inquiries which would indicate race or color.

Gender

Permissible Inquiries: Inquiry or restriction of employment is permissible only where a bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ) exists. (This BFOQ exception is interpreted very narrowly by the courts and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.) The employer must prove that the BFOQ exists and that all members of the affected class are incapable of performing the job.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Any inquiries which would indicate gender. Sex is not a BFOQ because a job involves physical labor (such as heavy lifting) beyond the capacity of some women nor can employment be restricted just because the job is traditionally labeled "men's work" or "women's work." Sex of applicant may be requested (preferably not on the employment application) for affirmative action purposes but may not be used as an employment criterion. Avoid questions concerning applicant's height or weight unless you can prove they are necessary requirements for the job to be performed.

- Asking the sex of an applicant.

Marital & Family Status

Permissible Inquiries: Whether applicant can meet specified work schedules and/or will be able to travel.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Any inquiry which would reveal marital status; information on applicant's children, child-care arrangements or pregnancy.

- "Are you expecting?" or "Are you pregnant?"
- "What are your future childbearing plans?"

Disabilities (See also Americans with Disabilities Act)

Permissible Inquiries: Under the provision of the Kansas Act Against Discrimination, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, applicants may be asked if they are able to perform the essential duties of the position with or without reasonable accommodation.

- "Are you able to perform the duties of the position that you have applied for in a reasonable and safe manner?"

Inquiries which must be avoided: Whether an applicant is disabled or inquiry about the nature or severity of the disability. Inquiries about any association with or relationship to a person with a disability.

- "Do you have any physical disabilities or handicaps?"
- "Do you have now, or have you ever had, a drug or alcohol problem?"
- Questions regarding the applicant's general medical condition, state of health or illness.
- Questions regarding receipt of workers' compensation.

Note: Except in cases where undue hardship can be proven, employers must make reasonable accommodations for an employee's disability. Reasonable accommodation

may include making facilities accessible, job restructuring, modified work schedules, modifying examinations, training materials or policies, acquiring or modifying equipment or devices, or providing qualified readers or interpreters.

Religion

Permissible Inquiries: Employers may inform applicants of normal hours and days of work required by the job.

Note: Except in cases where undue hardship can be proven, employers must make reasonable accommodations for an employee's religious practices. Reasonable accommodation may include voluntary substitutions, flexible scheduling, lateral transfer, change of job duties, or use of annual or vacation leave.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Any inquiry which would indicate applicant's religious practices and customs.

- "Does your religion prevent you from working weekends and holidays?"

Address

Permissible Inquiries: Address may be requested so that the applicant can be contacted. Names of persons with whom the applicant resides may be requested for compliance with the nepotism policy.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Any inquiry which may indicate ethnicity or national origin.

Ancestry or National Origin

Permissible Inquiries: Languages applicant reads, speaks, or writes and the degree of fluency if a specific language is necessary to perform the job.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Inquiries into applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, birthplace, or native language; how applicant learned a foreign language.

Conviction & Court Records

Permissible Inquiries: Inquiry into convictions which relate reasonably to fitness to perform a particular job.

CONVICTION - The employer must consider the nature and gravity of the offense(s), the time that has passed since the conviction and/or completion of the sentence, and whether the conduct for which the applicant was convicted is job-related.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Ask or check into a person's arrest record, ask or check into a person's court or conviction record if not substantially related to functions and responsibilities of the particular job in question.

Birthplace & Citizenship

Permissible Inquiries: If United States citizenship is a legal requirement, inquiry about the citizenship of an applicant is permissible. The Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9) must be submitted by those who are hired to provide evidence of identity and employment eligibility.

- "Are you authorized to work and remain in the United States?"

- State that applicant will be required to submit proof regarding his or her identity and employment eligibility upon hire, in accordance with I-9 requirements.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Any inquiry which would indicate the birthplace of the applicant or any of the applicant's relatives.

- "Of what country are you a citizen?"
- Ask whether applicant's spouse or parents are naturalized or native-born U.S. citizens.
- Ask for date when applicant, parents, or spouse acquired U.S. citizenship.

Military Service

Permissible Inquiries: Type of education and experience gained as it relates to a particular job.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Type of discharge.

Photographs

Permissible Inquiries: Statement that a photo may be required after hire for purposes of identification.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Any requirement or suggestion that a photo be supplied before hiring.

Education

Permissible Inquiries: Applicant's academic, vocational or professional education; schools attended.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Any inquiry which would indicate the nationality, racial, or religious affiliation of a school; years of attendance and dates of graduation.

Experience

Permissible Inquiries: Applicant's work experience, including names and addresses of previous employers, dates of employment, reasons for leaving, and salary history.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Any inquiry regarding non-job-related work experience.

Financial Status

Permissible Inquiries: If required for business necessity, questions concerning financial stability. Examples of agencies that make inquiries into applicants' financial status are the Kansas Highway Patrol, Kansas Bureau of Investigation, and the Kansas Lottery.

- Ask whether applicant has the use of a reliable car, if car travel is required by the job.

Inquiries which must be avoided: If not required for business necessity, questions concerning financial stability.

- Questions about wage garnishments, personal bankruptcy.
- Questions about home or car ownership.

Notice in Case of Emergency

Permissible Inquiries: Name and address of person(s) to be notified in case of accident or emergency may be requested after selection is made.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Name and address of relative(s) to be notified in case of accident or emergency.

Organizations

Permissible Inquiries: Inquiry into the organizations to which an applicant belongs and offices held relative to the applicant's ability to perform the job sought. "List all professional organizations to which you belong. What offices are held."

NOTE: - An applicant should not be required to provide the name of an organization which will reveal the religious, racial, or ethnic affiliation of the organization.

Inquiries which must be avoided: A list of all organizations to which the applicant belongs.

References

Permissible Inquiries: Names and addresses of persons who will provide professional and/or character references for applicant.

- Ask for names of persons willing to provide professional and/or character references for applicant.
- "Who referred you for a position here?"

Inquiries which must be avoided: Requirement that a reference be supplied by a particular individual.

Relatives

Permissible Inquiries: Names of applicant's relatives already employed by the state agency in which employment is sought for compliance with the nepotism policy.

Inquiries which must be avoided: Name or address of applicant's relatives who are not employed by the state agency in which employment is sought.

ANY INQUIRY SHOULD BE AVOIDED WHICH, ALTHOUGH NOT SPECIFICALLY LISTED AMONG THE ABOVE, IS DESIGNED TO ELICIT INFORMATION WHICH IS NOT NEEDED TO CONSIDER AN APPLICANT FOR EMPLOYMENT.

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