

# Screening and Selection

Toolkit for YMCAs



PRAESIDIUM

# PRAESIDIUM

## PREVENTING ABUSE TOGETHER

### WHO IS PRAESIDIUM?

Praesidium is a mission driven risk management firm that helps organizations reduce the risk of sexual abuse as well as the risk of false allegations. With over 25 years of experience and serving thousands of clients in the United States and 11 other countries, our dedicated team of researchers, psychologists, attorneys, social workers, and human resource professionals have analyzed thousands of cases of abuse in organizations and synthesized the latest scientific research.

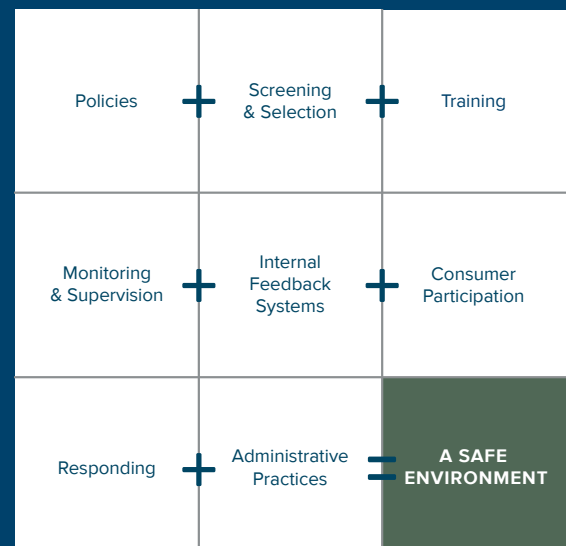
*We know how abuse happens in organizations... and more importantly, how to prevent it.*

### PRAESIDIUM'S MISSION: TO HELP YOU PROTECT THOSE IN YOUR CARE FROM ABUSE AND TO HELP PRESERVE TRUST IN YOUR ORGANIZATION.

An incident or allegation of abuse can bring an organization to its knees. Employees question themselves, "What went wrong? How could such a terrible thing happen under our watch?" Then there's the media. And the police. And the investigations. And the lawsuits. But none of this has to happen. You can prevent sexual abuse from occurring in your organization.

### PRAESIDIUM'S SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY

Using current research and root cause analysis, Praesidium developed its own abuse risk management model, The Praesidium Safety Equation.® Root-cause analysis of several thousand incidents of abuse across industries demonstrated that risks fell into eight organizational operations: Policies, Screening and Selection, Training, Monitoring and Supervision, Internal Feedback Systems, Consumer Participation, Responding, and Administrative Practices. By implementing best practices in each of these operations, Praesidium determined that risks could be reduced or eliminated.



## INDEMNITY STATEMENT

**Praesidium provides the Screening and Selection Toolkit to assist in the prevention of organizational abuse. However, it must be noted that no system can guarantee prevention of abuse.**

When all recommendations are implemented and maintained, a risk for abuse *continues* to exist, as the problem of abuse is pervasive and no system to date can assure complete safety.

**Accordingly, PRAESIDIUM MAKES NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WARRANTIES OF FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE AND MERCHANTABILITY, REGARDING THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THE PRAESIDIUM POLICIES IN PREVENTING OR REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF ABUSE. THIS INFORMATION IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE, EITHER EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED.**

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## Introduction

The Screening and Selection Toolkit is designed to provide organizations with tools to effectively screen and select employees and volunteers to work with vulnerable populations. Vulnerable populations include those who have limited or impaired abilities to protect themselves from physical, emotional, financial, or sexual abuse or neglect. These populations include children under the age of 18, adults requiring nursing care, or adults with mental or physical handicaps requiring the care of others. The Toolkit is based upon the basic premise that staff and volunteers who serve vulnerable populations should be carefully screened.

The Toolkit should be used as a set of guidelines for certain pre-hire and employment practices. It is not legal advice, however. In addition, it cannot account for every legal variation in states and municipalities across the county. Employers using the Toolkit should consult with their attorney to ensure that they are complying with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

The components of the Screening and Selection Toolkit are described below:

**Policies.** The Toolkit contains suggested policies and procedures that relate to the screening and selection of staff and volunteers. These include requirements for selection, procedures in the process, and the confidential nature of the information. Also included is a screening checklist to help Screening Managers track the screening process and monitor that all steps are thoroughly completed.

**Application.** The Toolkit contains a basic application that may serve as a template application for employee and volunteer positions.

**Background Checks.** The Screening and Selection Toolkit contains suggested procedures for the use of criminal background checks and abuse history background checks. These procedures include recommendations for how to review records, how to make decisions based on information obtained, and how to store records and permanent files. This section also refers to the Appendix, where procedures for obtaining criminal history and sexual offender registry checks are briefly described for each of the fifty states.

**Interviews.** Included in the Toolkit are standardized interview questions for employee and volunteer positions. These questions are designed to assess applicants in two specific areas. First, the questions are designed to assess applicants for the potential to abuse or molest children. Second, the questions are designed to assess applicant skills.

**Essential Skills.** Several of the interview questions and reference questions are designed to assess applicant skills. The Essential Skills include: Trainability, Policy Adherence, Patience, Supportiveness, Boundaries and Judgment. The process for developing questions to assess specific skills is demonstrated, and organizations can use this model to develop questions for assessing other skills.

**Interpretive Guidelines.** Interpretive Guidelines are provided for interview responses and reference responses. These guidelines provide information about how to interpret the responses you will hear from applicants. For each question, there is an interpretive guideline and an example of the response you may hear. For questions designed to assess risk, Interpretive Guidelines

describe a lower risk and a higher risk response. For questions designed to assess Essential Skills, the Interpretive Guidelines describe what would constitute a positive and a negative response.

**References.** The reference section of the Toolkit contains instruction for obtaining the best quality references, standardized reference forms, and Interpretive Guidelines for evaluating reference responses.

The standard reference forms are designed for conducting personal and professional reference checks by telephone. The reference questions are designed to assess applicant risk as well as to provide additional information about the applicant's skills.

**High Risk Indicators.** The Screening and Selection Toolkit contains lists that may be used to evaluate and summarize applicant risks that have been identified through different sources in the screening process. Lists include High Risk Indicators for Applications, Interviews, and References. These lists will help you quickly identify and evaluate an applicant's level of risk to physical or sexual abuse in apposition of trust with children. The lists are included in the Final Evaluation Form.

**Final Evaluation Form.** The Toolkit includes a Final Evaluation Form to assist in the overall evaluation of applicant suitability for a position. The Final Evaluation Form includes specific criteria for determining whether the applicant has demonstrated the Essential Skills and the criteria for evaluating the applicant's level of risk to abuse or molest a child.

## **Section 1. Policies and Procedures**

## **Screening and Selection Procedures**

Based on our experience, we offer the following recommendations for your screening and selection procedures.

### **Employment Positions**

Staff ought to be screened before being offered employment with the organization. Ideally, the screening process would include completion of an application, employment interviews, reference checks, criminal history background check, and drug screening.

**Application.** All applicants should be expected to complete an application prior to employment. The application should be reviewed by screening managers for completeness, high risks and fit with job requirements. If the application is not 100% complete, the applicant may be screened out, the applicant may be asked to complete the application, or the missing information may be obtained during an interview. However, your organization should endeavor to follow a consistent approach to applications missing information.

Offers of employment should not be made until an application is 100% complete. Applications for employees are to be kept in the employee's personnel file.

**Interviews.** All applicants should be interviewed during the selection process and prior to employment. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether the applicant possesses skills needed to perform the job requirements and whether the applicant demonstrates characteristics of a potentially abusive person. The interview should also provide the applicant with information about job responsibilities and expectations. Applicants should be interviewed by at least two members of the organization. Each screening manager should have a set of standard interview questions for the applicant, although other additional questions may emerge as the applicant provides interview answers.

Screening managers should take notes as to applicant responses to the interview questions, and the interpretive guide should be used to evaluate applicant responses. After the interviews are completed, the applicant may be screened out or the applicant may continue in the Screening process. The information recorded will be kept in the employee personnel file if the applicant is hired.

**Reference checks.** Reference checks should be conducted for all applicants prior to employment. A minimum of three references is recommended, including two professional and one personal reference. Screening managers will work with applicants to develop a good reference list. If the person responsible for screening the applicant does not believe the references are appropriate, he or she can ask for different ones. References are to be conducted by telephone unless otherwise specified by state licensing or accreditation entities. The person responsible for the screening should inform the referent that the applicant is applying for a position with the organization and will explain that the applicant will have access to a vulnerable population. Screening managers will use standard reference questions and will record the responses of the referents on the reference question form. The high risk checklist will be used to help evaluate referent responses. Offers of employment should not be made until the required number of references is contacted. Completed reference check forms should be kept in the applicant's personnel file if

the applicant is employed.

**Background checks.** Criminal history and sexual offender registry checks should be conducted for all applicants. Generally, the information should be obtained prior to employment of the applicant; however, if the length of time needed to receive the results of these checks is unduly long, your organization could have the applicant start the position and remain in the position until the criminal background results are obtained and reviewed. New employees should not be left unsupervised with children until the criminal history results are returned.

In addition, all applicants should undergo criminal drug screening prior to employment, and applicants responsible for transportation should have a driver's license check performed to identify past driving concerns.

**Employment decisions.** Before an offer of employment is made, screening managers involved in the Screening process should review all information obtained. The employment process should last a sufficient length of time to allow screening managers to carefully collect and evaluate information about applicants and to allow the applicant time to self-select out of the process if they have concerns about the position.

## **Volunteer Positions**

Because of the wide range of volunteer positions available in organizations, the process for screening should vary depending upon the amount of access provided and the amount of supervision available. Volunteers with significant access to children should be required to complete the screening process for employees described above: application, interview, references, and background screening. All volunteers with access to children or vulnerable adults should complete an application and undergo criminal background screening. Whether you use interviews or reference checking should depend upon the specific responsibilities of the volunteer position. Remember: Volunteering is not a "right," and volunteers can be screened out or assigned responsibilities that do not involve work with children.

## **Screening and Selection Policies**

### **Nepotism**

In most situations, the organization may decide whether to allow family members or co-habitants to work together. However, the organization should recognize that such relationships present risk. To mitigate that risk, family members and co-habitants should not be permitted to work within programs where either has the authority to make decisions affecting the supervision, work relationship, assignment, or compensation of the other employee or volunteer. Further, no employee or volunteer may coordinate, audit the work of, or monitor the work of a co-habitant or family member, or participate in an investigation of or disciplinary action of a co-habitant or family member.

### **Criminal Background Checks**

All applicants for employee and volunteer positions should be informed in writing that a thorough criminal background check will be performed as part of the screening and selection process prior to hire for a position working with minors. To the extent a professional background screening company is utilized (as recommended), specific paperwork explaining federal and state legal rights must be used.

The criminal information sought should always be in conformity with local, state, and federal laws (which vary substantially). As explained in more detail below, if an applicant is found to have a job-related conviction, such applicant should be asked to provide additional detail regarding his or her criminal history and post-conviction activities. Criminal record checks should be conducted at a minimum every third year of an individual's employment or volunteer position.

### **Confidentiality**

All applicants for employee and volunteer positions working with minors should be interviewed for suitability. Interviews should be conducted prior to acceptance in positions of trust involving care and contact with children.

Personal information obtained during the screening and selection process should be kept confidential to the extent possible. However, in the event that information obtained in the screening and selection process indicates that a minor may be in danger, information can be shared on a "need to know" basis. Information about illegal behaviors or suspected abuse of minors should be reported to state authorities consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

### **Driver's license checks**

Consistent with applicable laws, annual driver's license checks should be required for all employees and volunteers whose program duties include transporting children or whose duties require him or her to drive on company business. Employees and volunteers who have not resided in your organization's state for the previous five years should also have an inquiry performed in their previous state(s) of residency. As with criminal background checks, to the extent information

is obtained through a third-party provider as opposed to the government, specific written consent must be utilized.

## Sample Screening Checklist for Employees and High-Access Volunteers

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

### Application

- ☐ Standard application submitted.
- ☒ Application reviewed for 100% completion.
- ☐ Application reviewed for High-Risk indicators.

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

### Items for Follow-up:

### Background Checks

- ☐ Applicant informed that background checks will be conducted.
- ☐ Appropriate paperwork utilized to obtain written consent for background checks from the applicant where check is done through a third-party provider.
- ☐ Criminal background check completed.
- ☐ Driver's license check completed (where appropriate).

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

### Items for Follow-up:

### Interviews

- ☐ Applicant interviewed.
- ☐ Standard interview questions used.
- ☐ Interview responses documented.
- ☐ High risk responses from the application addressed in the interview.
- ☐ Interview responses reviewed for High Risk Indicators.

Interviewer 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

**Items for Follow-up:**

**References**

- ☐ Required number of references contacted.
- ☐ Reference forms completed for each reference.
- ☐ Reference information reviewed for High Risk indicators.
- ☐ Interpretive guide used to evaluate reference information.

**Reviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Items for Follow-up:**

**Final Evaluation**

- ☐ Screening processes fully completed.
- ☐ Risk Evaluation completed.
- ☐ Information reviewed by at least two people:

**Reviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Reviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Applicant informed of the decision.
- ☐ Screening documentation properly filed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Screening Manager**

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## **| High Risk Indicators**

### **High-Risk Indicators Checklist for Application**

- ☐ Application has gaps in dates for employment, education, or residence.
- ☐ Application includes conflicting or incorrect information.
- ☐ Application has omitted or incomplete information.
- ☐ Applicant has an unstable work history.
- ☐ Applicant provides vague reasons for leaving previous jobs.
- ☐ Applicant is unwilling to use former supervisors as references.
- ☐ Applicant is overeducated or overqualified for this or other positions with minors.
- ☐ Applicant is moving to a lesser-paying job.
- ☐ Application shows a pattern of work and volunteer positions with the same type of minors.
- ☐ Work pattern shows themes of problems with authority.
- ☐ Applicant found out about position through dropping in on the program.
- ☐ Applicant describes minors as helpless, vulnerable, or perfect.

### **High-Risk Indicators Checklist for Interview**

- ☐ Applicant gave higher risk responses.
- ☐ Applicant gave defensive/angry responses.
- ☐ Applicant gave evasive responses.
- ☐ Applicant described patterns or themes of gaining access to minors.
- ☐ Applicant described preferences for particular minors with no reasonable explanation.
- ☐ Applicant described patterns or themes of problems with authority.
- ☐ Applicant is not applying for a specific position and is willing to accept positions which vary significantly in pay and/or responsibilities.

### **High-Risk Indicators for References**

- ☐ References were reluctant.
- ☐ References did not know the applicant well.
- ☐ References have short-term relationships with the applicant.
- ☐ References refused to answer particular questions.
- ☐ Reference information differed from the applicant's account.
- ☐ References described applicant as having high-risk characteristics.
- ☐ References provided evasive responses.
- ☐ References reported specific concerns about the applicant.

**General High-Risk Characteristics**

- ☐ Social isolation or difficulty interacting with adults.
- ☐ Uses excessive physical affection, particularly tickling or wrestling.
- ☐ Difficulty working as a team player or working with authority figures.
- ☐ Allows minors get away with things their parents/guardians would not approve of.
- ☐ Fails to set limits with minors.
- ☐ Held numerous positions that relate to the same type of minors.
- ☐ Overqualified for positions held.
- ☐ Poor judgment with minors.
- ☐ Difficulty handling stress or managing stressful situations.
- ☐ Presents a poor role model for minors.
- ☐ Uses harsh forms of discipline,
- ☐ Excessively involved with individual minors,
- ☐ Gives gifts to minors,
- ☐ Gets overly involved in the lives of minors.

Date

## **Section 2. Applications**

## Sample Application for Employees and High-Access Volunteers

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

How long at current address: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver License: State Issued: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever previously worked for or volunteered at the organization? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please complete the following. Dates: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ to \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list your addresses in the past seven years:

---

---

---

---

---

*What position are you applying for?*

---

---

*What interests you about this position?*

---

---

*Tell us about your work experience. How does your experience make you a good fit for this position?*

---

---

*What do you like most about your current job?*

---

---

*What do you least enjoy about your current job?*

---

---

**COMPLETE IF APPLYING TO WORK WITH CONSUMERS**

Why do you want to work with consumers?

---

---

What age group or sex do you prefer to work with? Why?

---

---

What is your philosophy about discipline?

---

---

What do you do when you are upset or angry about something?

---

---

Other than through employment how are you involved with consumers?

---

---

List the 3 strengths and the 3 challenges you have in working with consumers:

**STRENGTHS**

**CHALLENGES**

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |

**Employment History**

Dates of Employment (Start with most recent)	Company Name and Address (City, State Zip)	Immediate Supervisor Name and Phone Number	Position Held	Reason for Leaving Position
---	---	--	---------------	-----------------------------

Started ____/____/____ Ended ____/____/____				
Started ____/____/____ Ended ____/____/____				
Started ____/____/____ Ended ____/____/____				

### Educational history

School Name	(City, State Zip)	Type of School	Name of Program or Degree	Program completed?

### References

Reference Name	Address (City, State, Zip)	Best Phone Number to Reach Reference	Email Address	How long have you known this person?	Has this person agreed to provide a reference?
Professional/Civic					

Professional/Civic					
Personal					
Personal					
Family Member					

## Volunteer experience

*Please list your volunteer experiences with non-profit organizations (use back if needed.)*

Organization	Duties	Dates	Contact Person	Phone

Our organization appreciates your willingness to share your skills. Providing safe and secure programs for our consumers is of utmost importance to us. The information gathered in this application is designed to help us provide the highest quality programs for the people of our community.

This organization has **zero tolerance** for abuse and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of consumers in its programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by an employee or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service and cooperation with law enforcement.

This organization takes every allegation of abuse or misconduct seriously and will fully cooperate with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse or misconduct. Employees and volunteers shall cooperate with any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the organization or persons given investigative authority by the organization.

An employee or volunteer's failure to cooperate with an investigation will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or dismissal from the organization.

## Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers

Sample Information for a Code of Conduct:

- Our employees and volunteers will exhibit the highest ethical best practices and personal integrity.
- Our employees and volunteers will provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- Our employees and volunteers will not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a

- Consumers or adult.
- Our employees and volunteers will share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with their supervisor or administrator.
- Our employees and volunteers will report any suspected abuse or neglect of a Consumers to the state authorities.
- Our employees and volunteers will accept their personal responsibility to protect Consumers and adults from all forms of abuse.

### **Code of Conduct with Consumers**

The following policies are intended to assist employees and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with consumers. For clarification of any guideline, or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, contact your supervisor.

The organization provides our consumers with the highest quality services available. We are committed to creating an environment for consumers that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success.

Abuse of any kind will not be tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from this organization. The organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require an investigation.

The Conduct with Consumers outlines specific expectations of employees and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. Consumers will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Consumers will be treated fairly regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, age, gender, or religious preference.
3. Employees and volunteers will adhere to uniform best practices of displaying affection as outlined by the organization.
4. Employees and volunteers will avoid affection with consumers that cannot be observed by others.
5. Employees and volunteers will adhere to uniform best practices of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by our organization.
6. Employees and volunteers will not stare at or comment on consumers' bodies.
7. Employees and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with consumers.
8. Employees and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of consumers.
9. Employees and volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on our organization's property.
10. Employees and volunteers will not have secrets with consumers and will only give gifts in accordance with organizational policies.

11. Employees and volunteers will comply with our organization's policies regarding interactions with consumers outside of our programs.
12. Employees and volunteers will adhere to organizational policies regarding electronic communication and social media with consumers.
13. Employees and volunteers will adhere to organizational policies regarding working one-on-one with consumers in a private setting.
14. Employees and volunteers will not abuse consumers in anyway including (but not limited to) the following:
  - a. *Physical abuse*: hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints
  - b. *Verbal abuse*: degrading, threatening, cursing
  - c. *Sexual abuse*: inappropriate touch, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations
  - d. *Mental abuse*: shaming, humiliation, cruelty
  - e. *Neglect*: withholding food, water, shelter
15. The organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one consumer by another consumer. In addition, our organization will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior. Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all consumers, employees, and volunteers.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- a. *Physical bullying*: when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- b. *Verbal bullying*: when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- c. *Nonverbal or relational bullying*: when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.
- d. *Cyberbullying*: the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs).

Cyberbullying can involve:

- i. Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images;
  - ii. Posting sensitive, private information about another person;
  - iii. Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad;
  - iv. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
- e. *Hazing*: an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
- f. *Sexualized bullying*: when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

16. Employees and volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other employees and volunteers, other adults, or Consumers to a supervisor who can be reached at [*insert telephone number*] or the [*Anonymous Helpline*] at [*insert telephone number*].
17. Employees and volunteers will report allegations or incidents of abuse to the proper state authority. Please refer to the specific guidelines of your state regarding mandated reporting.
18. Employees and volunteers may not have engaged in or been accused or convicted of Consumers abuse, indecency with a consumer, or injury to a consumer.

### **Acknowledgement**

I attended an orientation that describes and explains the organizational policies for the protection of minors adopted by the organization on *<insert date of policy adoption here>*. I understand and voluntarily agree to abide by these policies.

*Please Print*

Date	_____
Name	_____
Title	_____
Department	_____
Program	_____
Signature	_____

## **High Risk Indicators for Applications**

- Application has gaps in dates for employment, education or residence.
- Application includes conflicting or incorrect information.
- Application has omitted or incomplete information.
- The applicant has an unstable work history.
- The applicant provides vague reasons for leaving previous jobs.
- The applicant is unwilling to use former supervisors as references.
- The applicant is overeducated or overqualified for this or other positions with consumers.
- The applicant is moving to a lesser-paying job.
- The application shows a pattern of work and volunteer positions with the same type of consumer.
- The work pattern shows themes of problems with authority.
- The applicant found out about position through dropping in on the program.
- The applicant describes consumers as helpless, vulnerable or perfect.

## **Section 3. Background Checks**

## Types of Background Checks for Employees and High Access Volunteers

There is no “One Size Fits All” background check. Each will be expected to select the types of background checks appropriate for each situation. A description of various types of common background checks is provided below. In general, Praesidium recommends at least the following checks: a multi-state database check, a county-level verification of criminal history “hits” in the multi-state database, abuse registry checks where appropriate, drug testing, and employment/education verification. **Please contact Praesidium at 817-801-7773.**

**Multi-State Database Criminal History.** The multi-state criminal history is a name-based search that provides criminal information from many sources around the country. The purpose of the multi-state database is to provide a wide-ranging criminal history search covering as many jurisdictions as possible. The information provided in a multi-state can vary. The best searches include a Social Security Number Trace and Alias Search so that all names associated with the SSN are run through the database. Make sure that the screening company verifies all multi-state database “hits” at the county-level to double-check that the information remains accurate, and that it relates to the individual in question.

**State Criminal History.** State criminal history checks provide information about criminal activity occurring only within the state specified. The process for conducting these checks, as well as the cost, information available, and time required to complete the checks, varies significantly by state.

**County Criminal History.** County criminal history checks provide information about criminal activity occurring only within the county specified. The cost, information available, and time required to complete the checks varies significantly by state and county.

**Federal Criminal History.** The Volunteers for Children Act, signed as Public Law in October 1998, provides access to FBI criminal history information to all businesses or institutes providing care, treatment, education, training, instruction, supervision, or recreation for consumers, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities. This includes public, private, for-profit, not-for-profit, or voluntary institutes.

**Abuse Registries.** Abuse registries are maintained by welfare agencies on a state-by-state basis. These registries contain information about convictions and allegations of abuse that may or may not have been substantiated. Checking the abuse registry is an extremely important method for screening positions such as foster parent/guardian or residential treatment employees. In most states, abuse registry information is available only to programs licensed by the state. For more information about obtaining abuse registry information, contact the state childcare licensing representative in your area.

**Drug Screens.** Drug abuse has been positively linked to the sexual abuse of consumers. Individuals who use drugs present increased risks to transportation, supervision, and monitoring of consumers. Drug testing is an objective, reliable method for assessing an applicant’s fitness to provide services to consumers.

**Driver’s License Checks.** Driver’s license checks may reveal poor driving records and other criminal activity. Individuals with poor driving records may create added liability for the institute should an injury occur while they are driving for a work-related event.

**Employment/Education Verification.** These checks evaluate whether an applicant/employee received the degree and/or held the jobs identified during the hiring process.

## **Section 4. Interviews**

## **Sample Behaviorally Based Interview Questions for Screening Applicants for the Potential to Abuse**

The interview provides the most comprehensive source of information about an applicant. It provides information needed to assess individual experiences, values, attitudes, and skills that determine whether the applicant meets the criteria for the position.

The entire interview should take between one half hour and one hour to complete. The process is most effective when the interview is conducted at a time and place where neither the interviewer nor interviewee will be distracted or interrupted.

Behavioral interview questions are generally encouraged for the interview process. Behavioral interviewing is a proven method for identifying an applicant's skills. The method is based upon research indicating that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. Behavioral interviewing offers decision makers a way to predict how an applicant will perform job responsibilities by identifying how they have performed in similar situations in the past.

Applicants often need a few questions to get used to answering behavioral interview questions in the fashion desired. The applicant may have difficulty recalling past experiences or may provide theoretical responses rather than describe what they have actually done in the past. The interviewer will sometimes need to give applicants time to think of situations or guide applicants to describe how they have actually performed.

The Interpretive Guide for the Interview provides information about evaluating interview responses. The information in the Interpretive Guide helps the interviewer accomplish two tasks. First, the Interpretive Guide will help assess the applicant's levels of the Essential Skills: Trainability, Policy Adherence, Patience, Supportiveness, Judgment and Boundaries. Second, the Interpretive Guide helps determine the applicant's risk to abuse consumers (to the extent applicable).

### **Essential Skills**

The following skills are considered critical for adults working with vulnerable populations. Use the definitions to help you listen to the applicants' examples of their previous work with consumers. Specific examples of previous situations will help you evaluate the applicants' skill levels.

***Trainability.*** Able to comprehend and behaviorally incorporate new information and skills; willing to utilize training and supervision to modify and improve known techniques.

Tell me about a time in your life when you had to quickly learn how to do something. What did you have to learn? How did you learn it? Did you use the new information?

***Policy adherence.*** Able to conform to established policies and procedures and to address issues in a manner that is consistent with existing guidelines for the program.

Often in school or work, we're expected to adhere to policies that don't really make sense to us. Tell me about a time when you had to stick to a rule, even though it didn't seem reasonable. How did you handle that situation?

***Patience.*** Able to maintain a mature, problem-solving demeanor when faced with interpersonal conflict, personal rejection, hostility, or other stressful circumstances. Able to control anger, control frustration and demonstrate compassion in difficult circumstances.

Give me an example of a time when a child (or teen) really tried your patience. Specifically, tell me about an instance in which this consumer seemed to want to make you angry. How did you respond to that situation?

***Supportiveness.*** Able to show genuine concern for others, determine when a person needs comfort, provide appropriate comfort in a manner that is helpful.

Describe a time when you were personally supportive and reassuring to a person who needed a friend. How did you know the person was in need? How did you show your support?

***Judgment.*** Able to generate useful, effective solutions. Exhibits a realistic understanding of issues and uses reason, even when dealing with emotional or sensitive topics.

Tell me about a time when someone commended you for your good judgment and common sense. What was the situation, and how did you handle the situation?

***Boundaries.*** Able to maintain strong, appropriate relationships with consumers that are not mistaken by others as social or sexual in nature. Maintains positive role modeling at all times.

Tell me about a time when you were able to make a difference in a consumer's life. What did you do, and how did it influence the consumer? Where is the consumer now?



7. Describe the two most frustrating situations you have encountered when interacting with supervisors and/or coworkers. What happened and how did you handle it?
  
8. Have you ever been accused of inappropriate conduct with a consumer or coworker?
  
9. Tell me about a time when you were able to make a difference in a consumer's life. What did you do, and how did it impact the consumer?
  
10. Tell me about a time when someone commended you for your good judgment and common sense. What was the situation and how did you manage that?
  
11. Tell me about a time when someone you worked with broke the rules or did something that made you or someone else feel uncomfortable. How did you respond?

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Signature of Screening Manager

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Date

## Interpretive Guide for Interviews

The Interpretive Guide for Interviews provides information about how to interpret applicant responses, based on our experience. The Interpretive Guide includes sample responses. For questions designed to assess risk, the Interpretive Guidelines describe a lower risk and a higher risk response, with an example of each. For questions designed to assess skills, the Guidelines describe what would constitute a positive and a negative response.

### 1. Tell me why you are interested in this position.

*This question may be used to assess the extent to which an applicant desires to work with consumer to fulfill his or her own needs, rather than the needs of the consumer.*

**Lower risk response:** The applicant describes what he has to offer and the qualities he has that will make him good with consumer.

For example: *“I believe that if you give young people a solid foundation, that it can sustain them throughout their lives. I’ve always been really good at listening to kids and making them feel understood. I think I can use this skill to help them make good choices about life.”*

**Higher risk response:** 1) The applicant describes how consumer fulfill her needs or validate her sense of competence or well-being. 2) The applicant is unconcerned about what the duties of the position are, as long as it involves working with consumer.

For example: *“When I’m surrounded by children, I know I am right where I belong. With adults you never know what their motives are, but with kids, their motives are pure. They are so loving they just make me feel good.”*

### 2. With what group of consumers would you prefer to work with? Why?

*This question may be used to assess the extent to which an applicant has an age or gender or disability preference.*

**Lower risk response:** The applicant is not concerned with the gender, age or other particular traits. Or the applicant prefers a specific gender or age because of practical reasons.

For example: *“I would like to teach CCD in the third-grade class, because my daughter is in third grade.”*

**Higher risk response:** The applicant prefers a specific gender, age, or other particular traits.

For example: *“I would like to work with the kids who are 8 or 9 years old. That is such a fun age. And I do great with the boys. I think it would be good for you to assign me to that group.”*

### 3. Tell me about some of your hobbies or volunteer work.

*This question may be used to assess whether an applicant might be excessively interested and involved with consumer. Particularly note any hobbies, activities or volunteer work which was not identified on the application.*

**Lower risk response:** The applicant describes involvement with adult peers and shows interest in activities with friends or family members.

For example: *“I like ceramics and pottery. About two years ago my sister and I took a crafts class together and we just really enjoyed it. So we found a community workshop where you can bring your own clay and use their wheels and ovens to make your own pots. There are three of us now that meet every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon.”*

Or *“In my last job, I really didn’t have much time for hobbies, but about four friends and I did meet for lunch about once a month. We used to laugh that eating was our hobby.”*

**Higher risk response:** The applicant is involved in numerous activities involving consumer, particularly one-to-one activities involving little monitoring.

For example: *“Well, I like to work out...so I’ve got a couple of kids I’m training on the weight machines at the gym downtown two nights a week. I think it’s real good for them. I also coach a consumer team two nights a week, volunteer as a big brother with two consumer, and teach fourth grade Sunday school at my church.”*

### 4. Tell me about a time in your life when you had to quickly learn how to do something. What did you have to learn? How did you learn it? Did you use the new information?

*This question may be used to assess the applicant’s level of the Essential Skill: Trainability.*

**Positive:** Was the applicant motivated to learn quickly and willing to work hard to make changes?

For example: *“In my last job, I had to learn how to run a new computer program, so I attended the training classes they offered, and then I worked at home in the evenings to try to sharpen my skills. Now I can do just about anything with that program.”*

**Negative:** Did the applicant have trouble understanding the new material or was the applicant unwilling to make extra effort to learn quickly?

For example: *“Well, I have a way of sort of knowing things naturally. I don’t need a lot of training or teaching. I usually just figure things out on my own.”*

### 5. Often in school or work, we’re expected to adhere to policies that don’t really make sense to us. Tell me about a time when you had to stick to a rule, even though it didn’t seem reasonable. How did you handle that situation?

*This question may be used to assess the applicant’s level of the Essential Skill: Policy Adherence.*

**Positive:** Was the applicant open to understanding the policy and willing to adhere to a policy that was inconvenient? Did the applicant work to get a truly unreasonable policy changed by working through the system, rather than simply ignoring it?

For example: *“I worked in a school program for kids with disabilities. We had this one boy who*

**Negative:** Was the applicant unwilling to learn the rationale for the rule? Did the applicant disregard the policy without attempting to get it modified?

wore a leg brace, and the teacher always wanted me to walk with him when he was going to lunch. I didn't see the point in that, because he was so capable of walking by himself, and other children needed more help. But sure enough, in an accident at his home, he fell and broke his leg. I was really glad that we had watched him so closely at school."

For example: "You know it seems to me that every situation is different. Instead of having a lot of silly rules, we ought to just handle the kids individually. This one place I worked insisted that we not tickle the kids, not even when we were just playing with them. That is so ridiculous to me because kids need a lot of love and attention that they don't always get at home."

**6. Tell me about a time when a consumer really tried your patience. Specifically tell me what happened. How did you respond to that situation?**

*This question may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Patience.*

**Positive:** Did the applicant maintain his/her composure even when others attempted to provoke him/her into anger? Was the applicant able to maintain boundaries with consumer and recognize that the situation is not personal?

**Negative:** Was the applicant provoked into an emotional display of frustration or anger? Does the applicant take interactions with consumer personally and deal with them on a child-like or immature level?

For example: "My mother-in-law has Alzheimer's Disease, and she gets things on her mind and just won't let them go. She asks the same questions over and over, and no amount of explaining satisfies her; she just becomes more and more agitated. So we've learned just to agree with her and assure her that we're doing as she asked. We just say, 'Yes, yes, you're right; I know; we'll do that right away.'"

For example: "Oh, yeah. I've worked with difficult kids before. With those really tough guy types, you've just got to show them that you're tougher than they are to keep them in their place. Otherwise, they'll just run all over you. This one kid had made up a nickname for me to make fun of me. Well, I just came right back with a nickname for him and got all the other kids to call him that, which settled him down quite a bit."

**7. Describe the two most frustrating situations you have encountered when interacting with supervisors and/or coworkers. What happened and how did you handle it?**

*This question may be used to assess the applicant's ability to handle stress and work with adults despite frustration.*

**Lower risk response:** The applicant is able to continue problem-solving despite frustrating circumstances. The applicant seeks help from others, stays calm and eventually finds solutions.

**Higher risk response:** The applicant either denies ever encountering a frustrating situation or describes an incident in which he or she quickly lost patience and used poor judgment.

For example: "Well, I know one for sure. It was my supervisor. When I worked for the child care center I told you about, my supervisor would talk about my work performance with everyone but me. Oh, it was just awful! It was aggravating but I asked for a meeting so we could discuss my performance and work on improving our communication. The other was a person I

For example: "Frustrating? Gosh I can't really say that I can think of a situation I found particularly frustrating. I guess some people do get a little put out with their supervisor, but I can't say that's ever happened to me." Or, "Well, I get along with everyone, but I had one employee who was lazy. She was a mean one, and I'd just about had it with her. One day in a team meeting I raised my voice

*supervised who was often late to submit work and it was riddled with mistakes. I met with the employee to explain why the tardiness and sloppy work were problematic and worked with them to improve future projects.*

*at her and let her know her work was not satisfactory! Now that I think about it I probably wouldn't do that again, but she made me so mad, I just couldn't help it. Anyway, I'll bet she thought twice before submitting sloppy work again."*

## 8. Have you ever been accused of inappropriate conduct with a consumer or coworker?

*This question may be used to evaluate the applicant's history of inappropriate behavior with a consumer or coworker. A direct question is an extremely useful tool if you look closely at the responses.*

**Lower risk response:** The applicant may be surprised by the question, but is not indignant. The applicant provides a direct, non-evasive response.

**Higher risk response:** The applicant is angered by the question, indignant at being asked, and/or evasive in the response.

For example: "No, I haven't."

For example: "I can't believe you would ask me such a thing! What kind of a person do you think I am? I really don't appreciate your implication!"

## 9. Tell me about a time when you were able to make a difference in a consumer's life. What did you do, and how did it influence the consumer? Where is the consumer now?

*This question may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Boundaries.*

**Positive:** Did the applicant demonstrate warmth, compassion, confidentiality and concern without developing a personal relationship?

**Negative:** Did the applicant get overly involved in the life of a consumer?

For example: "I worked with this teenager one time that nobody liked. She was sort of rude with everybody. I didn't like her, either, but I found myself sitting next to her at lunch one day, and I just decided I'd try to talk with her. When she talked with me, I realized how insecure she was about herself. She was new there, and she could tell that people didn't like her. Once I understood, I helped her get to know some of the kids. They saw that I was friendly with her, they started visiting with her, too. Then she actually became nicer, too."

For example: "Well, about three years ago I was working in a shelter for homeless consumer. There was one kid there who just wanted to go to school and make something of his life. I got to know him and after a while I told him that if he was ready to work hard and make good grades, he could come and live with me. And he did. I became the father he never had. That's just me. When there's a special kid out there, I find him."

## 10. Tell me about a time when someone commended you for your good judgment and common sense. What was the situation and how did you handle it?

*This question may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Judgment.*

**Positive:** Did the applicant receive praise for

**Negative:** Was the applicant praised for merely

coping with and resolving a genuinely difficult situation? Did s/he use careful analysis and sound judgment?

For example: *“One time a child became really upset one day before lunch. I remembered that she had Diabetes, and I thought she might just need to eat something. Sure enough, we were able to get her to drink some orange juice, and within minutes she calmed down. Then we realized that she hadn’t even known what she was doing, because she needed to eat. My supervisor was impressed that I thought about why she was acting that way instead of just reacting to it.”*

completing the solutions generated by others and following through with directions?

For example: *“A couple of years ago, a kid fell on the playground and cut his knee. It scared me to see how badly he was hurt, but I kept my head about me and sat there with him until the nursing assistant came to help. I think I did a good job under stress.”*

**11. Tell me about a time when someone you worked with broke the rules or did something that made you or someone else feel uncomfortable. How did you respond**

*This question may be used to assess the applicant’s level of the Essential Skill: Policy Adherence.*

**Lower risk response:** The applicant provides a direct, non-evasive response that gives specifics about the incident.

For example: *“At my last school I noticed a teacher was allowing students to hang out in his classroom after school with no stated purpose. It wasn’t alarming but we learned in our annual training that we weren’t supposed to do that. I talked to the teacher and let our supervisor know that we’d had a discussion about it.”*

**Higher risk response:** The applicant has never experienced this or is evasive in the response.

For example: *“Not that I can think of. I really try to focus on myself and making sure I’m meeting expectations. I don’t get involved in other people’s business or tattle on coworkers.”*

## High Risk Checklist for Interviews

- Applicant gave higher risk responses from the Interpretive Guide.

- Applicant gave defensive/angry responses.
- Applicant gave evasive responses.
- Applicant described patterns or themes of gaining access to consumer.
- Applicant described preferences for particular consumer with no reasonable explanation.
- Applicant described patterns or themes of problems with authority.
- Applicant is not applying for a specific position and is willing to accept positions which vary significantly in pay and/or responsibilities.

## **Section 5. References**

## **Sample Reference Check Questions to Assess Abuse Risk**

### **Required References**

Each applicant must submit the names and phone numbers of three references. Two references must be professional references, and one a personal reference. The professional reference must be familiar with the quality of the individual's work and have known the individual in a work environment. If the applicant has identified previous employment or volunteer work with consumers, the references must include a supervisor or co-worker from that position. The personal reference should only include individuals who have known the applicant for more than one year.

### **Reference Procedure**

References should be contacted after a face-to-face interview with the applicant. Individuals who conduct references must be trained in how to conduct reference checks and the types of responses that could indicate risk.

A standard form should be completed for each reference. The interviewer should ask behaviorally based reference questions and write down each of the responses.

All references must be completed before an offer is made.

## Steps for Obtaining the Best Reference List

Obtaining references may be one of the most difficult tasks in screening and selection. Taking the following steps will help you gain the best possible information from this important source.

Review the list of references with the applicant. Make sure the applicant knows that they must inform each reference that you will be calling. Find out how the applicant knows each reference.

Inform the applicant that they are responsible for making sure that the references are willing to talk with you and provide a reference.

Give the applicant a deadline for contacting the reference.

Make sure the list contains accurate phone numbers and/or email addresses.

Use a standard reference form for each call but be sure to modify questions so that you can learn about the specific experiences the reference has had with the applicant.

Be friendly and always treat the references with respect. They will feel more comfortable in the hands of a professional. They will feel more comfortable in the hands of a professional. Require applicants to give the reference's preferred name and use that name when addressing the reference.

Take notes during the call. Listen for pauses or hesitation and then politely ask "I noticed you hesitated, may I ask why?" Write short quotes from the reference to prompt your memory.

Review and elaborate upon your notes immediately after the call.

Note any areas of concern or questions to be clarified with other references or the applicant.

Require applicant to follow up with nonresponsive references or provide alternative references.

Review the Interpretive Guide for references and the High-Risk Indicators for References. Use the skills questions to complete the Essential Skills Rating Sheet. References should be considered in the final decision-making for selection.

## Professional Reference Form

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, my name is [your first and last name] with [insert your organization's name]. [Applicant's name] has applied for a position with us and said you might be able to tell us about their previous work with consumers. Is this a good time for you to talk with me? I would like to start by letting you know that the applicant has applied for a position working with consumers, so it is extremely important for us to make sure that every applicant is suitable for this type of position. I appreciate your help with this.

How long have you known the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you know the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the applicant's ability to learn new information and skills?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of when the applicant was able to learn something new and use it in his/her work? \_\_\_\_\_

We are looking for someone who will adhere to the best practices of our organization. How would you rate the applicant's ability to follow policies and procedures?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

How would you rate the applicant's ability to work with and relate to other adults?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

How would you rate the applicant's ability to use good judgment in stressful conditions?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of when the applicant used good judgment?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you observed the applicant interacting with consumers?

\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, how would you rate the applicant's ability to relate to consumers?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Describe the applicant's interactions with consumers

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What roles or types of work has the applicant engaged in with consumers? Have they maintained appropriate boundaries with or adequately supervised consumers?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you observed the applicant not working well with consumers (*becoming frustrated, angry, resentful, etc.*)? If so, please give an example.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with consumers (*bends the rules for consumers, violates policies, acts more like a peer than a professional, engages with consumers on social media/text*)?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Are you aware of any reason why we should not allow the applicant to work with the consumers we serve?

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Do you have any additional comments or questions?

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Thank you very much for your time.

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Signature of Screening Manager

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Interpretive Guide for Professional References

- 1. How long have you known the applicant?**
- 2. How do you know the applicant?**

Higher risk responses:

- The reference has only known the applicant for a short time, such as less than six months.
- The reference knew the applicant some time ago but has not seen the applicant in more than a year.
- The reference knew the applicant briefly years ago.

The reference knew the applicant in a capacity different than has been claimed by the applicant.

- 3. How would you rate the applicant's ability to learn new information and skills?**

This question may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Trainability.

- 4. We are looking for someone who will adhere to the best practices of our organization. How would you rate the applicant's ability to follow policies and procedures?**

This question may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Policy Adherence.

- 5. How would you rate the applicant's ability to work with and relate to other adults?**

This question may be used to assess the applicant's level of risk to abuse.

Higher risk responses:

- The applicant has difficulty relating to or working with members of the opposite gender.
- The applicant has trouble accepting authority.
- The applicant has low impulse control.
- The applicant has difficulty asking for help.
- The applicant has need for power and control.
- The applicant has emotional and social immaturity when relating to other adults.
- The applicant has better relationships with consumers than adults.

**6. How would you rate the applicant's ability to use good judgment in stressful conditions?**

This question may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Judgment.

Higher risk responses:

- The applicant makes immature decisions.
- The applicant does not consider consequences before making decisions.
- The applicant uses poor judgment in stressful or difficult situations.
- The reference describes the applicant as hot tempered, high strung or "stressed out."

**7. Have you observed the applicant interacting with consumers?**

**8. If yes, how would you rate the applicant's ability to relate to consumers?**

These questions may also be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Patience.

Higher risk responses:

- The applicant lets consumers get away with too much.
- The applicant acts more like a consumers than an adult.
- The applicant lets consumers walk all over him or her.
- The applicant does not closely supervise consumers in their care.
- The applicant relates to consumers on their level, just like another consumers.
- The applicant has difficulty relating to adults.
- Other adults have a hard time talking to the applicant.

**9. What roles or types of work has the applicant engaged in with consumers? Have they maintained appropriate boundaries with or adequately supervised consumers?**

**10. Have you observed the applicant not working well with consumers (*becoming frustrated, angry, resentful, etc.*)? If so, please give an example.**

**11. How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with consumers (*bends the rules for consumers, violates policies, acts more like a peer than a professional, engages with consumers on social media/text*)?**

Higher risk responses:

- The applicant only works well in unsupervised situations.
- The applicant only works well in unstructured environments where they can “do their own thing” with the consumers.
- The applicant can become physically or emotionally abusive in some situations.
- The applicant is easily agitated by consumers.
- The applicant openly demonstrates anger when frustrated.
- The applicant can be punitive or shaming toward consumers.
- The reference describes paid or volunteer work which the applicant has not previously disclosed.

**12. Are you aware of any reason why we should not allow the applicant to work with the consumers we serve?**

This question provides the reference with the opportunity to disclose information in areas that are not addressed in the standard interview. If the reference has general concerns or suspicions, they may reveal these in a general comment at this time.

**13. Do you have any additional comments or questions?**

Give the reference ample time to consider anything else they would like to say about the applicant. Allow the reference to answer before wrapping up the interview. If they have been withholding information and considering whether or not to provide the information, a moment of silence allows the reference to collect his/her thoughts.

## Personal Reference Form

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, my name is *[your first and last name]* with *[insert your organization's name]*. *[Applicant's name]* has applied for a position with us and said you might be able to tell us about their previous work with consumers. Is this a good time for you to talk with me? I would like to start by letting you know that the applicant has applied for a position working with consumers, so it is extremely important for us to make sure that every applicant is suitable for this type of position. I appreciate your help with this.

1. How long have you known the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_ What is your relationship to the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_ Have you observed the applicant interacting with consumer?

\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_ No

2. How would you rate the applicant's ability to work with and relate to consumers?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to consumers?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. We are looking for someone who can stay calm and control frustration even under very frustrating

conditions with consumers. How would you rate the applicant's ability to be patient and stay calm?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

4. Have you ever known the applicant to use harsh or abusive discipline with a consumers?

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5. Would you be comfortable placing one of your own loved ones in the care of the applicant? Why or why not?

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6. What are the applicant's hobbies and recreational activities?

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7. How would you rate the applicant's ability to relate to adults?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to adults?

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8. We need a person who can be supportive and understanding of a consumers's needs. How would you rate the applicant's ability to be genuinely supportive and understanding to a person in need?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

9. Think of a time when the applicant was able to show genuine concern for another person who

needed comfort. Tell me about that time.

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10. How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with consumers?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory    \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

11. Do you have any additional comments or questions?

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Thank you very much for your time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Screening Manager**

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## **Interpretive Guide for Personal References**

- 1. How long have you known the applicant?**
- 2. How do you know the applicant?**

Higher risk responses:

- The reference has only known the applicant for a short time, such as less than six months.
- The reference knew the applicant some time ago but has not seen the applicant in more than a year.
- The reference knew the applicant briefly years ago.
- The reference knew the applicant in a capacity different than has been claimed by the applicant.

**3. Have you observed the applicant interacting with consumers?.**

**4. How would you rate the applicant's ability to work with and relate to consumers?**

These questions may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Patience.

Higher risk responses:

- The applicant lets consumers get away with too much.
  - The applicant acts more like a consumers than an adult.
  - The applicant does not closely supervise consumers in their care.
  - The applicant relates to consumers on their level, just like another consumers.
  - The applicant has difficulty relating to adults.
  - The applicant becomes abrupt with consumers.
  - The applicant does not like to be an authority figure and would rather be viewed as "one of the kids."
- 5. We are looking for someone who can stay calm and control frustration even under very frustrating conditions with consumers. How would you rate the applicant's ability to be patient and stay calm?**
- 6. Have you ever known the applicant to use harsh or abusive discipline with a consumers?.**

This question may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Patience.

Higher risk responses:

- The applicant is quick-tempered.
  - The applicant is unable to handle stress.
  - The applicant uses harsh forms of discipline.
  - The applicant is impatient or easily upset.
  - The applicant is degrading to consumers.
  - The applicant humiliates consumers.
  - The applicant uses inappropriate physical punishment with consumers.
- 7. Would you be comfortable placing one of your own loved ones in the care of the applicant? Why or why not**

This question may be used to identify any specific concerns of the reference that should be investigated

prior to the applicant's working with consumers.

- Probe any affirmative answers for details and specific examples of the applicant's behavior that the reference found disturbing. If the reference is unable to be specific, any concerns should still be noted and followed-up.

**8. What are the applicant's hobbies and recreational activities?**

Higher risk responses:

- The applicant is excessively interested and involved with consumers.
- Reference identifies hobbies, activities or volunteer work that is not identified by the applicant.
- The applicant's hobbies and recreational activities solely involve consumers.

**9. How would you rate the applicant's ability to relate to adults?**

Higher risk responses:

- The applicant has difficulty interacting with adults.
- The applicant has difficulty working as a team player.
- The applicant has problems with authority figures.
- The applicant has problems with persons of the opposite gender.
- The applicant seems immature.

**10. We need a person who can be supportive and understanding of a consumer's needs. How would you rate the applicant's ability to be genuinely supportive and understanding to a person in need?**

**11. Think of a time when the applicant was able to show genuine concern for another person who needed comfort. Tell me about that time**

These questions may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skills: Supportiveness and Boundaries.

**12. How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with consumers?'**

These questions may be used to assess the applicant's level of the Essential Skill: Boundaries.

**13. Do you have any additional comments or questions?**

Give the reference ample time to consider anything else they would like to say about the applicant. Allow the reference to answer before wrapping up the interview. If they have been withholding information and considering whether or not to provide the information, a moment of silence allows the reference to collect his/her thoughts.

## High Risk Indicators for References

- \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Date

## **Section 6. Final Evaluation**

## Essential Skills Evaluation

The following skills are considered critical for adults working with children and youth ministries. Based on all information gathered during the screening process, rate each of the Essential Skills.

**Trainability.** Able to comprehend and behaviorally incorporate new information and skills; willing to utilize training and supervision to modify and improve known techniques.

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Reluctant to accept new ideas and make changes. Has difficulty comprehending information and incorporating new skills. Responds defensively to supervision. Avoids ongoing training.		Learns new ideas and skills. Accepts supervision and feedback. Accepts the required amount of ongoing training.		Open to new ideas and embraces change. Encourages supervision and feedback. Motivated to grow professionally and committed to ongoing training.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**Policy Adherence.** Able to conform to established policies and procedures and to address issues in a manner that is consistent with existing guidelines for the program.

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Disregards policies and rules without seeking information. Views necessary rules as oppressive and unreasonable.		Typically conforms to policies and rules, but sees them as a necessary burden. Rarely offers useful suggestions about changes in procedures.		Questions policies and rules in a mature way and makes reasonable suggestions. Recognizes the value of policies and rarely breaks them.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**Patience.** Able to maintain a mature, problem-solving demeanor when faced with interpersonal conflict, personal rejection, hostility, or other stressful circumstances. Able to control anger, control frustration and demonstrate compassion in difficult circumstances.

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
<p>Responds impulsively to stressful circumstances and reacts emotionally to interpersonal conflict or personal rejection. Easily angered or upset. Openly demonstrates frustration and intolerance for stress.</p>		<p>Handles interpersonal conflict carefully and maintains control of emotional responses. Rarely fails to control anger or frustration, but may react emotionally to extremely stressful circumstances.</p>		<p>Maintains a mature, problem solving posture when faced with interpersonal conflict, rejection, hostility, repeated defiance or other stressful situations. Consistently controls anger and frustration.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**Supportiveness.** Able to show genuine concern for others, determine when a person needs comfort and provide appropriate comfort in a manner that is helpful.

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Has difficulty understanding the experiences and feelings of others. Lacks compassion. Puts own needs first. Is quick to pass judgment or criticize.		Provides support for others and responds appropriately to requests for support. Usually considers a child's needs. Avoids passing judgment or criticizing except under stressful situations		Demonstrates caring, kindness and compassion. Listens and responds to the spoken and unspoken feelings of others. Places child's needs first. Is nonjudgmental and delivers criticism kindly.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**Judgment.** Able to generate useful, effective solutions. Exhibits a realistic understanding of issues and uses reason, even when dealing with emotional or sensitive topics.

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Lacks common sense and ability to analyze situations accurately. Does not consider consequences before acting. Often chooses ineffective, thoughtless or harmful options.		Makes reasonable decisions based on available information. Often depends upon others to make decisions in complex situations.		Understands complex situations and responds thoughtfully to problems. Considers important variables to generate useful, effective solutions.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**Boundaries.** Able to maintain strong, appropriate relationships with minors that are not mistaken by others as social or sexual in nature. Maintains positive role modeling at all times.

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Consistently ignores policies about touch and professional contact with children. Considers children to be peers and fraternizes with them on a peer level.		Verbalizes understanding and respect for policies but "forgets" on occasion and needs reminders about staying professional.		Understands and abides by all policies for appropriate behavior with children. Is clear about the role of the adult protector.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

## Risk Level Evaluation

Use the following checklists to evaluate applicant levels of risk to abuse children. Consider information gathered throughout the screening process.

### High Risk Checklist for Application

- ☐ Application has gaps in dates for employment, education or residence.
- ☐ Application includes conflicting or incorrect information.
- ☐ Application has omitted or incomplete information.
- ☐ The applicant has an unstable work history.
- ☐ The applicant provides vague reasons for leaving previous jobs.
- ☐ The applicant is unwilling to use former supervisors as references.
- ☐ The applicant is overeducated or overqualified for this or other positions with children.
- ☐ The applicant is moving to a lesser-paying job.
- ☐ The application shows a pattern of work and volunteer positions with the same type of children.
- ☐ The work pattern shows themes of problems with authority.
- ☐ The applicant found out about position through dropping in on the program.
- ☐ The applicant describes children as helpless, vulnerable or perfect.

### High Risk Checklist for Interview

- ☐ Applicant gave higher risk responses from the interpretive guide.
- ☐ Applicant gave defensive/angry responses.
- ☐ Applicant gave evasive responses.
- ☐ Applicant described patterns or themes of gaining access to children.
- ☐ Applicant described preferences for particular children with no reasonable explanation.
- ☐ Applicant described patterns or themes of problems with authority.
- ☐ Applicant is not applying for a specific position and is willing to accept positions which vary significantly in pay and/or responsibilities.

**High Risk Indicators for References**

- ☐ References were reluctant.
- ☐ References did not know the applicant well.
- ☐ References have short term relationships with the applicant.
- ☐ References refused to answer particular questions.
- ☐ Reference information differed from the applicant's account.
- ☐ References described applicant as having high-risk characteristics.
- ☐ References provided evasive responses.
- ☐ References reported specific concerns about the applicant.

**General High Risk Characteristics**

- ☐ Social Isolation or difficulty interacting with adults.
- ☐ Uses excessive physical affection, particularly tickling or wrestling.
- ☐ Difficulty working as a team player or working with authority figures.
- ☐ Lets children get away with things their parents would not approve.
- ☐ Fails to set limits with children.
- ☐ Having numerous positions which relate to the same type of children.
- ☐ Has held positions for which the applicant is overqualified.
- ☐ Using poor judgment with children.
- ☐ Has difficulty handling stress or managing stressful situations.
- ☐ Presents a poor role model for children.
- ☐ Uses harsh forms of discipline.
- ☐ Excessively involved with individual children.
- ☐ Gives gifts to children.
- ☐ Gets overly involved in the lives of children.