



# Behavioral Interview Questions

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Sample Direct Support Professional Structured Interview Questions

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Based upon:

National Association of Direct Support Professionals  
(NADSP) competency areas

Instructions: This document contains sample structured interview questions for agencies supporting persons with disabilities. The questions are based on NADSP competencies. We recommend that you choose questions that suit the needs of your agency and the people to be interviewed. We suggest your agency ask the same set of questions of all applicants for a particular position.

It is not the intent of this tool that you ask all applicants all questions listed below. Evaluate the role you are hiring for and choose the questions that most appropriately align with your needs.

## Competency area 1: PARTICIPANT EMPOWERMENT

- Describe a situation when you assisted an individual recognize that he or she had several choices in how to handle a difficult problem. What was the situation, what did you do, and what was the final outcome?
- A participant at the group home in which you work has recently told you she thinks she might be a lesbian, and would like to meet other women in the gay community. What steps would you take to empower her?
- Describe a situation where you've encouraged someone to advocate for themselves?
- You and a person with disabilities you support are at a local restaurant. When the waitress comes to take your order, she looks and speaks only to you. The person you are with can give his/her own order. What would you do?

## Competency area 2: COMMUNICATION

- Describe ways in which you have communicated with a person who does not communicate verbally?
- Your new coworker, Mohamed, is Muslim. During the month of Ramadan he is fasting during the day, and has asked you to change duties with him so he will not have to cook for the people who live in the group home. You cook a great deal already and don't want to take on the extra duties for him. How do you respond to him?
- Your coworker has a habit of interrupting you at staff meetings. In the past you've waited for her to finish and bring up your point again, only to have her interrupt once more. As a result, you often leave staff meetings feeling frustrated because your issues were not addressed. How do you resolve this issue?
- Describe a situation in which your attempts to communicate with someone were ineffective. What was the situation, what did you do and what happened as a result?
- Describe a misunderstanding you were involved in at your last job. What was the situation, what did you do and what happened as a result?

## Competency area 3: ASSESSMENT

- Sally's mother expresses concern to you that Sally may be hard of hearing and tends to ignore her when she is talking. You have noticed this but have also found that when Sally is around friends or watching television her hearing appears to be fine. You suspect Sally is choosing to not listen to her mother. Sally's mother recently told you she wants her daughters hearing tested and asks you your thoughts. How might you share your assessment of the situation with her mother?
- Tell us about a time when someone was injured and you had to make an immediate judgment on what needed to be done to help the person. Describe the injury and your steps in making the assessment.
- Describe a situation in the past where you've participated in a team assessment process. What was your role?
- Tell me about the last time you solved a problem where you had to do a lot of hard thinking and analysis: what difficulties did you encounter; how did you overcome them; what was the result?

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## Competency area 4: COMMUNITY & SERVICE NETWORKING

- A person you support tells you when he was a child his family went regularly to a Catholic church and he would like to become active in the faith again. How do you support him in this goal?
- Midori is quiet and doesn't leave the house. She is not involved in any activities and has no personal relationships. Midori claims she has no areas of interest but seems unhappy with her life. How might you assist Midori in recognizing and developing areas of interest?
- Please describe some community resources you have had contact with in your own neighborhood. How might those resources be used by a person with a disability?
- Think about the last time you moved to a new community. What strategies did you use to find places to engage in your favorite leisure activities? How did you go about meeting people with interests similar to yours?

## Competency area 5: FACILITATION OF SERVICES

- Tell me about a time when you had to practice professional confidentiality. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the outcome?
- When working with persons with developmental disabilities, what do you think is key in establishing a solid working relationship?
- A few weeks after developing her support plan, Rachel changes her mind about wanting to get a job. How might you respond?
- Describe a situation in which you helped a person set a goal and then supported the person to achieve that goal. What was the goal and how did you help?
- Describe a situation in which you or someone you know needed a medical, psychological or other support service but was having trouble getting it. What was the situation, what did you do, what was the result?

## Competency area 6: COMMUNITY LIVING SKILLS & SUPPORTS

- Describe the best meal you have ever prepared for a group of people.
- Describe the household chore or duty you like least. What strategies do you use to ensure that the chore or duty is completed?
- Describe the household chore or duty you like most. What strategies do you use to ensure that the chore or duty is completed?
- What actions would you take if you recognized a person showing signs of having an allergic reaction (e.g., hives)?
- Kamol, a resident in the group home where you work was raised in an ethnic community. Lately, he has expressed how much he misses his mother's cooking and talks about the special dishes he loved as a child. How might you respond to this situation?
- Describe a time when you were required to provide medical assistance or treatment to another person. What was the situation, what did you do, what happened as a result?

## Competency Area 7: EDUCATION, TRAINING, & SELF-DEVELOPMENT

- How have you kept up on relevant resources and information about a topic of interest to you?
- What else besides your education and job experience qualifies you for this job?
- Describe the last thing you did for self-improvement?
- Tell me about the best class you have ever taken. What was the class? Why was it good?
- What is the next thing you want to learn how to do, or how to do better? What is your plan for accomplishing this?

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## Competency Area 8: ADVOCACY

- What advocacy organizations/services are available in this community that might assist persons with disabilities?
- Tell me about a situation where you have advocated on behalf of another person or a time when someone else has advocated on your behalf. What made that advocacy successful or unsuccessful?
- Describe a time when you advocated or assisted a person when they were being treated badly by another person.

## Competency Area 9: VOCATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND CAREER SUPPORT

- Mali would like to join a quilting group but she has no method of transportation other than the bus, which is a long and confusing ride. What could you do as her DSP to support her in gaining access to this program?
- Describe a time when you have supported another person in a vocational or education program or with their career development?
- Describe the things you have done in the last couple of years to advance your career. What supports did you use/receive? What was the most helpful assistance you got?
- Describe the first job you ever had. What would you do to adapt that job so that it could be performed by someone who could not walk (talk, see, hear etc.)?

## Competency Area 10: CRISIS INTERVENTION

- Betty a person in the home where you work is sensitive to loud noises. One afternoon, the maintenance crew comes to the house to do yard work and the sound of the riding mower sends her into a panic. She begins pacing rapidly while crying and covering her ears. She picks up a nearby object in attempt to throw through the window towards the maintenance worker. How would you handle this situation?
- Describe the last time you became involved in a conflict or crisis situation. What was the situation? What did you do? How well did it work? What would you have done to prevent the situation from occurring?
- Describe a difficult person you had to deal with at work or school. Describe a difficult situation you remember encountering with that person. How did they react to you? How did you deal with the situation? What did you do about your own feelings? Did you ever discuss you differences with this person? If not, why not? If yes, what happened?
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## Competency Area 11: ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPATION

- Tell me about the mission of the last company you worked for. Did you agree or disagree with that mission, why?
- Describe a situation where you played a role in making a change within your last place of employment (or church, community center or club). What was the situation, what did you do, what was the result?
- Describe a situation in which you had a conflict with a co-worker. What was the issue, what did you do, what was the outcome of the conflict?
- Describe a situation in which you had a conflict with your supervisor. What was the issue, what did you do, what was the outcome of the conflict?
- What was the best experience you have ever had as a member of a team? What was your role on the team? What made it a good experience?
- Describe a supervisor you a difficult time working with. What made your working relationship difficult? How did you work with that person to complete your job duties?
- Tell me about the last time you found yourself trying to do too many different things at the same time. How did you handle the situation?
- Describe the co-worker that you most appreciate? What characteristics or qualities of that person do you most appreciate?
- What behaviors do you think are most important/most valued by team members or co-workers in the work place? Of the behavior you just listed, please do a self-evaluation and tell me which is your strongest most positive co-worker behavior? Which might be a possible improvement area for you?
- What does teamwork mean to you? Give some examples of things you have done to be a good team member, or to improve teamwork.

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## Competency Area 12: DOCUMENTATION

- Tell me some of the reasons you feel documentation is important.
- Describe a situation in which someone you know used words to describe a person or a group of people that showed disrespect. What if anything did you do in that situation?
- Describe a situation in which you were asked to document an event. Describe what occurred, what information was documented, and the reasons behind your documentation.
- What was the best thing you ever wrote? What was the topic; what made this the best thing you ever wrote?
- Describe the most difficult writing assignment you have ever had. What was the assignment, how did you handle it?
- Describe the last paper or writing assignment you completed in school or at work. What was the assignment, what did you do, what was the outcome of the assignment?

## Competency Area 13: BUILDING AND MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Tell how you have supported someone in the development of friendships and other relationships.
- How have you encouraged and assisted a person to branch out and discover new friendships or relationships?
- Tell about a time you helped a person you supported communicate with their friends and relatives.
- Describe why you find helping people develop relationships to be a difficult task. What is hard for you about it?
- What can you do to support a person's relationship with another person who provides services to them such as social workers, case managers or financial workers.

## Competency Area 14: PROVIDING PERSON CENTERED SUPPORTS

- What is your experience with person centered supports?
- Describe a time you used person centered practices to help a person set goals or outcomes?
- What types of person centered supports are you most comfortable using?
- Describe time you had to challenge a co-worker or supervisor to use person centered practices. What was the reason and the result of the interaction?
- The competent DSP provides support to people using a person centered approach. Tell about a person centered plan you have developed or helped develop for a person you support.

## Competency Area 15: SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Describe a time you helped to promote the health and wellness of a person you support.
- What experience do you have administering medications accurately and in accordance with policy and procedures?
- Describe a time you helped a person you support act to promote healthy living and to prevent illness and accidents.
- Have you ever had to utilize first aid training you revived and how did you react to the situation?
- Tell me about how you keep track of appointments such as doctor, dentist etc.
- Have you ever assisted a person with personal cares? Tell me how you would ask someone about their needs?
- Describe a time you have needed to advocate for someone or yourself with regard to medical treatments.

## Experience, Credentials and Self-Evaluation/Opinion Questions

- Describe a typical day in your most recent job.
- Describe any classes, experiences, or training you have received that prepare you for this job.
- Most of us have more than one reason for leaving a job. What are some of yours from past or present experience?
- What one or two words would most of all of your previous supervisors use to describe you?
- What part(s) of you last/present position did you like least? What did you do to try to overcome the situation? What would you think if you know in advance that this situation would be present in your new job?
- Under what circumstances might you seek out a co-worker or peer for advice or suggestions? Provide examples of time you did that in the past.

(Competency 15 Cont.)

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- Describe your ideal job. Discuss the amount and type of supervision you prefer, contact and kinds of relationships with co-workers, job tasks, and freedom to work or to make decisions.
- Under what circumstances might you seek out a co-worker or peer for advice or suggestions? Provide examples of time you did that in the past.
- If you had the authority or power, what one thing would you change about your current/last position?
- Other than money, what rewards, benefits, or work situations are most important for you?
- How much time did you miss from work last year? The year before?
- What suggestions has your supervisor given you for performance improvement or development?
- We have all made mistakes in our job, some bigger than others. Tell me about the biggest work place mistake you ever made. What were the circumstances, and how did you deal with it? What did you learn from the experience?
- Tell me about your schedule flexibility and your work schedule preference. If you were offered this position and you accepted, what one or two major contributions do you think you would make in the short term and in the long term?

## Resources:

This guide originally based on the work of the following people

Interview questions developed by Talley Sjonberg, Karen Pederson, Amy Hewitt, Sherri Larson (Institute on Community Integration) & Julie Stocker (Hiawatha Homes, Rochester, MN).

Seminar by Harry Brull at the 1991 Association on Residential Resources in Minnesota Annual Conference, Bloomington, MN.

## Interviewing Resources:

Curzon, S.C. (1995). *Managing the Interview: A how-to-manual for hiring staff*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc.

Eder, R.W., & Harris, M.W. (Eds.) (1999). *The employment interview handbook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishers, Inc.

Yate, M. (1994). *Hiring the best: A manager's guide to effective interviewing*. Holbrook, MA: Adams Media Corporation.

Maddux, R.B. (1994). *Quality interviewing: A step-by-step action plan for success*. Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Learning