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Selecting Staff

Organisations offering services to children and youth are expected to keep the participants in their programs safe from harm within the context of reasonable standards of care.

One of the first steps in preventing harm is formalising your organisation’s recruitment processes for both staff and volunteers, including thoroughly screening the backgrounds of employees and volunteers. Legitimate workers will not be offended, and the process often scares off unwanted individuals.

The components of effective and stringent employment and screening practices include:

- Developing position descriptions and identifying clear selection criteria.
- Including *Working with Children* or criminal history checks.
- Sending information packs to applicants that outline the organisation’s goals and commitment to child protection.
- Having a minimum of 3 senior staff involved in short listing applicants
- Developing interview questions that include situational and behavioural-based questions.
- Developing a rating scale for the selection criteria.
- Utilising an interview panel.
- Verifying employment history and check references.
- Developing an orientation program for all new employees



The recruitment process provides an important opportunity to deter and prevent offenders gaining entry into children’s organisations.

Effective Interviewing

Interview questions should be value-based. These types of questions focus specifically on boundaries, relationships and ethics

In writing the questions for the interview, there are two “types” of questions that are useful in selecting staff:

1. Situational Questions

These questions gauge how an applicant would react to hypothetical situations. Some example questions are:

- What would you do if a young person (client) came up and told you they were attracted to you?
- If you suspect a child is being harmed at home, how would you respond?
- Can you describe the essential ingredients in the relationships between adults and children?
- What would you consider to be an unhealthy relationship with a child?



2. Behavioural Questions

Behavioural based questions look at how applicants responded to particular situations or dilemmas in the past. Some example questions are:

- Can you tell us about a time when you questioned a well-established policy and what the result was?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work with a child who really got under your skin.
- What are some of the ways you have fun with children?
- Can you tell us of a child you were particularly fond of and why?

Example questions adapted from *Choose with Care* (Child Wise, 2004)