

# Help Wanted:

How to Hire Great Domestic  
Violence Advocates, Course B

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WASHINGTON STATE COALITION  
**WSCADV**  
AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Lesson 1: Recruiting,  
Reviewing Applications  
& Interviewing

# Welcome to Hiring!

Elements of this module will provide you with tools and confidence to support you in your next hiring process. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> course of a two-part series.

What this course will cover:

- 1) Recruiting candidates
- 2) Reviewing applications
- 3) Interviewing



# Recruiting Candidates

Recruiting great, diverse candidates takes work. Invest time (and plan for recruitment in your hiring timeline).

- How will you attract candidates outside of your usual suspects (on-call and volunteer roster)?
- Does the job pay enough to attract bilingual/bicultural people with relevant experience?
- It's hard to be the sole representative of a race, culture, or economic class. How are you attracting people of diverse backgrounds to *all* levels of your organization?

# Recruiting Tips

The way you recruit candidates can play a big role in getting the right candidate to apply.

- Make sure the information you provide is accurate and detailed. Have someone proofread and check for important details.
- Make the hiring process simple. Too many complicated directions and steps can discourage folks from applying and can make your program look unorganized.
- Use your website and Social media as a tool for advertising

# Reviewing Applications

Read the resume first, then review the cover letter.

The work history should tell its own story.

- Are there large gaps in employment dates which you may want to ask about?
- Do previous jobs show relatable skills, like customer service or experience working with people in crisis?
- What is their experiencing working in communities or for a cause?

Cover letters are personal stories to help connect you with the applicant. In this field, we can feel empathy for someone's story. It's important not to get caught up in a heartfelt cover letter before you have the details of their work history.

# Tips for Reviewing Applications

- Check that resumes and cover letters align.
- Look for the core personal qualities you're seeking, not just DV work experience.
- Recognize personal experience in overcoming barriers in life as hard skills. Balance perfect work history vs. "school of hard knocks."
- Don't penalize for spelling errors or grammar mistakes, which would exclude English Language Learners and people who didn't finish school.
- Gaps in employment are not always bad (especially for working parents/caregivers). Ask for clarification.

# Avoid Pitfalls in Reviewing

- Selecting people just like ourselves, friends, current staff, or only people we know
- Going for professional experience but neglecting core personal qualities
- Not being open to diverse or “school of hard knocks” candidates who may not have the kind of work experience we’re used to seeing



# Listen to the Voice Inside Your Head

“I fell in love with their cover letter and immediately chose that person.”

By getting caught up in the cover letter, you may miss the lack of actual work experience.

“We have been friends for years, I didn’t think I needed to conduct an interview.”

It’s often harder rather than easier to supervise friends.

“When she said she could start immediately, all my red flags fell by the wayside.”

You’ll have to live with this hiring decision for a long time; it’s worth all the work.

“I didn’t do the reference check because they seemed so sincere.”

It is always worth your time to do reference checks.

# Interviewing

Plan for:

## The Number

How many applicants do you want to interview?

## Logistics

Map out your interview schedule for your panel and admin support

## Questions

What questions will get to what you really want to know?

## Tone

The interview sets the tone for your future employment relationship.

# Planning the Interview

- Interviews can be frustrating for you and candidates when questions are too basic or leading.
- Open-ended questions allow applicants to share their experiences, work style, values, and hopes.
- Scenarios uncover how people actually handle real problems and any gaps between what people say and what they do.
- Remember to leave time for candidate to ask questions of you and the panel.

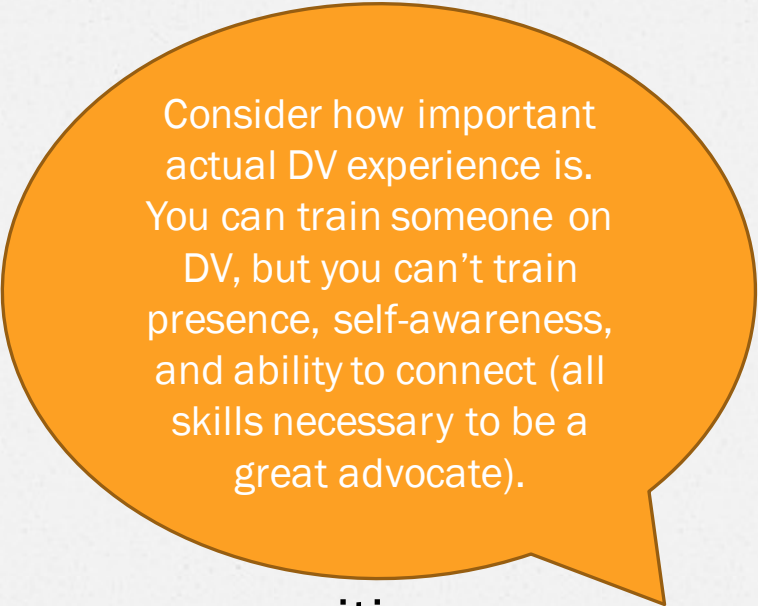
# What Do You Want to Learn?

- The questions you prepare for the interview are almost as important as the interview itself.
- Your questions should get to core personal qualities, their working style, how they work with others (survivors, co-workers, other service providers or systems), and how they handle difficult situations.
- Your goals are to gain insight on how this person will add value to your team and program, and answer questions you've noted when you reviewed their application.

# Crafting Good Interview Questions

Your questions should help you uncover what you're looking for. Prioritize questions that get at:

- Self-awareness
- Listening skills, comfort with silence
- Ability to connect with others
- Empathy, understanding DV dynamics
- Experience working in a crisis situation
- Ability to identify survivors' barriers
- Understanding of and experience in diverse communities



Consider how important actual DV experience is. You can train someone on DV, but you can't train presence, self-awareness, and ability to connect (all skills necessary to be a great advocate).

# Every Interview Question Should Have a Goal

“Thinking about your last job where do you see your skills overlapping into this position?”

- Ask this to learn more about **relevant skills**

“Describe a challenging situation in one of your previous positions and tell me how you problem solved this. What was the result?”

- Ask this to learn if and how they are a **problem solver**

“Tell me about a time that you created or developed something on the job? What was it? How did it benefit others?”

- Ask this to hear about **openness, creativity, and leadership**

# Sample Interview Questions

- “What do you do to effectively communicate with others?”
- “How do you view poverty in this country? Why are some people living in poverty?”
- “Why do you think this position is the best fit for you?”
- “Tell us about your experience being involved in any social change or community activities.”
- “What are your most outstanding qualities?”
- “Share with me some of your weaknesses or challenges, and what steps you take to improve upon them.”

(Thanks to Cris Sullivan and her manual, *Mission-Focused Management and Empowerment Practice: A Handbook for Executive Directors of Domestic Violence Programs*)

# Scenarios Help Great Candidates Shine

Ask “what would you do” questions to get a window into their working style, and avoid getting swept away by a good talker or a charismatic personality.

“Client seems difficult”

- **What you’re looking for**- Someone who is nonjudgmental and has the ability to work with real-life survivors

“Big disagreement with coworker”

- **What you’re looking for** - Someone who can agree to disagree but does not let it get in the way of day-to-day work and helping others.

“You run into a client at a coffee shop.”

- **What you’re looking for** – Someone who understand healthy boundaries and can engage without revealing information.

“Conflict with another agency.”

- **What you’re looking for** – Someone who knows how to defuse a situation and create space for conversation.

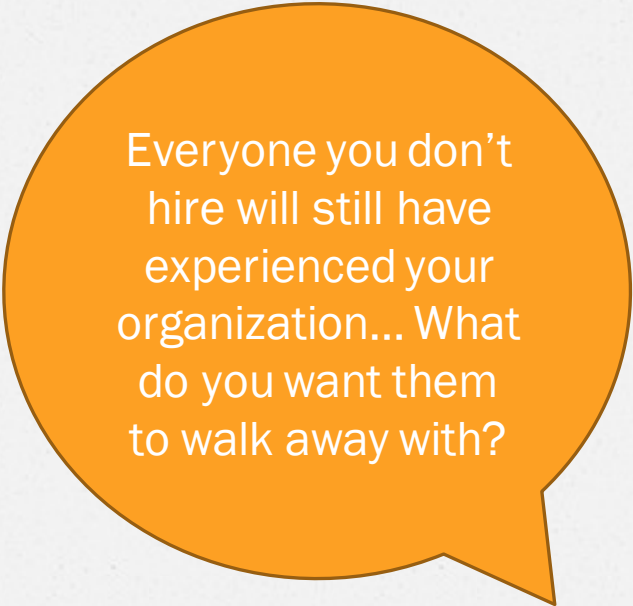


# Sample Scenario Questions

- “This position requires you do deal with people who are in crisis and stressed out. At times you will be challenged by participants who are very upset and angry with you. What would you do?”
- “Here’s a scenario: One of our participants shows up for services intoxicated, and she is disruptive to the other participants. How would you handle this?”
- “Survivors are sometimes mandated by DSHS or the courts to get our services, but they may not be interested in participating. How would you handle this?”

# Conducting Interviews

- Consider giving the candidate the questions in advance. This allows folks the opportunity to provide thoughtful responses.
- Set the stage for people to feel comfortable and do their best. Remember, they are nervous! Host them as you would a guest.
- Be prepared for applicant questions (e.g., employee benefits info).



Everyone you don't hire will still have experienced your organization... What do you want them to walk away with?

# Prepare Your Interview Panel

- Give them the applications and questions in advance.
- Decide on any follow-up questions to ask specific candidates.
- Educate your panel about unlawful questions or comments to avoid:
  - Pregnancy or marital status, health problems, religion/ethnicity, etc.
  - These can unintentionally slip out. (“What a cute dress, are you expecting?” “You look so young to have worked so many jobs!” “You are so stunning, what is your ethnicity?”)
- Remind the team to keep the process and candidates’ names confidential!

# Interviewing People You Know

- In small communities, we often interview people we know personally or professionally.
- Demonstrate respect by keeping the hiring process as confidential as possible, and names of interviewees on a “need to know” basis. Tell this to interviewees.
- Reduce awkwardness by acknowledging the relationship at the start of the interview.
- Stick to your questions, but don’t be afraid to ask follow-up questions.

# Second Round Interviews

- 2<sup>nd</sup> round interviews are useful when your top 2 or 3 candidates are so compelling that you need them to return to narrow down your options. Otherwise, don't feel obligated.
- If you choose to do a 2<sup>nd</sup> round, what new questions will you ask?
- Do they need to actually come back in for another interview or can you ask your question(s) over the phone?



# End of slides

Please return to the course  
and check out the links.