

## Suggestions for Interviewing Applicants

**RED FLAGS:** Red flags alone do not mean that an individual is a potential danger to youth. But they are possible indicators flags are signals for program leader to consider the applicant more carefully, to look a bit deeper into his or her background, and to be especially careful in making decisions to approve or disapprove the applicant that an individual may participate in unhealthy relationships with children or even be a child molester. Red

- **A specific interest in a certain age group or gender.** Child molester sometimes fixates on children of the same age they were when first molested.
- **Over-involvement with children and youth.** Excessive activity with youth may indicate a person is fixated on youth, lacks adult outlets for recreation, or is seeking access to youth in a variety of programs.
- **Lack of adult relationships.** Healthy workers have adult relationships for friendships and, when appropriate, for romantic reasons. They do not need to turn to youth to meet their basic need for relationships.
- **Lack of adult interests.** Interest in adult hobbies and in adult groups shows that youth workers have balanced lives that are not overly concentrated on children.
- **Instability in work and life.** Look out for people who move or change jobs frequently and do not have a plausible explanation for it. Child molesters often move from place to place as people become suspicious or to seek out new opportunities to molest children. Instability in work may mean that an applicant has a drug or alcohol problem.
- **Gaps in a person's life history.** An unexplained gap in a resume or history may mean that the applicant served a prison term or is covering up a difficult time in his or her life.
- **A history of abuse of family instability.** A person who experienced abuse or family problems while growing up may have unresolved emotional issues. These issues can interfere in their ability to work with children. Also, child abuse often occurs in unstable families facing problems with alcohol/drugs, mental illness, extreme poverty, etc.
- **Stressful events in the applicant's recent past.** Events such as the death of a close family member, divorce, marital problems, unemployment, etc., often cause stress. This stress can lead applicants to react in unhealthy ways.
- **Evasive or misleading answers.** Dishonesty is an indicator that a person is not trustworthy enough for working with kids and may be hiding vital information.
- **Rigidity in belief or doctrines.** Applicants may have strong beliefs, but they should demonstrate flexibility in dealing with different points of view and accepting people as they are. A larger-than-expected proportion of child abusers come from rigid, orthodox backgrounds that encourage a one-dimensional perspective on important issues. Be cautious with applicants who have an overly strong, personal agenda for youth. Look out for statements such as "I want to train children to believe in God just like I do" or "Children today are spoiled, so I want to teach them the strong discipline I grew up with."

### What To Look For

- √ Applicants with a clear explanation of why they want to work with children or youth.
- √ Applicants with well-balanced lifestyles involving work, family, friends, recreation, and spiritual

growth.

- √ Applicants who have demonstrated maturity and people skills over the long term in their life experiences.
- √ Applicants who are open to differences in people, flexible in dealing with people, and have a sense of humor.
- √ Applicants who demonstrate appropriate reactions to stress.
- √ Applicants who understand the need for screening and supervision and who react to it positively rather than defensively.

### **Interview Questions**

Start the interview with a reminder that “information will not be disclosed to unauthorized people.” Begin with light questions and ask the more personal ones as the applicant relaxes.

1. Tell me about your family when you were growing up.
2. What were your family’s religious beliefs when you were a child?
3. Tell me about your hobbies and interests outside of church.
4. What is the biggest problem in children’s lives right now? (Look for a coherent, well-reasoned answer that demonstrates the applicant has thought about kid’s problems.)
5. Give me a brief rundown of your life. (Follow up with questions to address where they grew up, their childhood, education, work experience, churches they have been a member of, job and residence changes, etc.)
6. Tell me about other work with children you have done.
7. Is there anything else I should know about you that might affect your work with children at St. Sanctuary?