

Directive 325.1
5/31/90

EMPLOYMENT AND PROMOTION INTERVIEWS

- I. POLICY This Directive establishes Agency policy on employment and promotion interviews, and provides guidelines to be followed by interviewers.
- II. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS This Directive replaces AMS Directive 325.1, dated 6/21/85.
- III. POLICY Personal interviews are recommended for use, to the maximum extent possible, in placement selections to ensure candidates have a clear understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the position, and the selecting official has the information needed to evaluate each candidate's potential. All candidates for appointment, promotion, reassignment, or other position changes will receive consideration based solely on nondiscriminatory job-related factors. Interviewers must keep in mind that:
- A. There is no requirement that all available candidates referred on a promotion memo, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Certificate of Eligibles, or a lateral reassignment list, be interviewed. The selecting official may choose which candidates to interview, but must be able to support interview decisions if challenged.
- B. All candidates being considered for a particular position will be asked the same basic questions. They should not be asked questions that appear to have more applicability to candidates of a particular sex, race, national origin, or religion.
- C. Requesting candidates to demonstrate skills relating to performance standard critical elements (i.e., typing and/or stenography) is permissible as a part of the interview process providing the interviewer follows the guidelines in Section VII, below.
- IV. RESPONSIBILITY FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS (CH-1, 6/24/94) Arranging and conducting interviews is the responsibility of the selecting official. Questions concerning the interview or selection process should be directed to the appropriate administrative officer or servicing personnel staffing specialist. If assistance is needed to arrange or conduct an interview with a person with a disability, contact the Agency's Disability Employment Program Manager.
- A. Candidates who will be interviewed should be contacted by the quickest and most effective means possible to arrange an interview. Usually this is by telephone, although a telegram or letter may be necessary in some cases. In all cases, a specific response time must be indicated to the candidate, as well as the fact that if the response time passes without contact by the candidate, it will be considered a declination of interest.
- B. If a personal interview between the selecting official and the candidate is not possible, the selecting official may arrange to have another person knowledgeable about the job requirements conduct the interview. If a personal interview is not possible, the selecting official may wish to conduct a telephone interview with the applicant.
- C. In the event that the applicant is unable, due to time and distance requirements, to travel to the interviewer's location for the interview, the interviewer may consider traveling to the applicant's location or to some other acceptable location. An applicant's inability to travel long distances or overnight

for an interview cannot be used as a basis for nonselection.

D. Divisions and Staffs may pay travel and transportation expenses for the purpose of pre-employment interviews. See AMS Directive 324.1, Payment of Travel and Transportation Expenses for New Appointments and Pre-Employment Interviews, for information on the use of this authority.

PREPARING
FOR AND
CONDUCTING

SF-171,
THE INTERVIEW
(CH-1, 6/24/94)

A. General Information. The interviewer should:

1. Thoroughly review the applicant's Form

Application for Federal Employment, prior to the interview. The Form SF-171, when available, is referred to the selecting official with a promotion memo, lateral list, or an OPM Certificate. In some cases, the candidate may need to be advised to bring a Form SF-171 with him/her to the interview.

2. Use a checklist (see Attachment 1) as an aid in conducting interviews. The use of a checklist will ensure that all major points are discussed with each candidate.

3. Provide all applicants with the same information about the position. The interviewer should not try to encourage nor discourage certain applicants by emphasizing positive or negative aspects of the job.

4. Every reasonable effort must be made to conduct all or part of a personal interview with the candidate at the actual-- or a similar--job site. The applicant should be afforded the opportunity to observe the actual work to be performed, and should be informed of any unusual characteristics or demands of the job. However, the discussion portion of the interview should be held in the privacy of an office, if possible, away from distractions such as industrial-related noise.

B. Qualification Requirements. The basic qualification requirements (education/experience) for a position, as contained in OPM Handbook X-118, are determined and applied before candidates are referred for consideration. However, should a referred applicant's qualifications appear not to meet the requirements for the standard, continue with the interview. Contact the administrative officer or personnel staffing specialist for clarification at the earliest opportunity.

C. Medical Requirements. Some positions, e.g., Agricultural Commodity Grader, have stringent physical demands which require a physical examination and completion of Form SF-78, Certification of Medical Examination, by a licensed physician before an appointment can be effected. Other positions (e.g., clerical and administrative) require that an applicant complete Form SF-177, Statement of Physical Ability for Light Duty Work. The interviewer should:

1. Be aware of the physical requirements of the position to be filled.

2. Discuss the physical demands and work environment of the position with the applicant during the interview. An onsite interview will help the applicant understand the need for the requirements.

3. Not comment on or make an assumption that some applicants may be incapable of performing certain functions. The interviewer should simply make sure the applicant is aware of the demands of the position.

4. Contact the administrative officer and the servicing personnel staffing specialist if the interviewer becomes aware

that an applicant may have a disability which would create an on-the-job hazard to the applicant or other employees.

5. Inform all candidates being interviewed of the smoking policy in effect for that particular office and of the AMS smoking policy in general.

6. Inform the servicing personnel office, through the administrative officer, if the interviewer believes the physical demands, as indicated on Form SF-78, do not accurately reflect the requirements to satisfactorily and safely perform the job. The interviewer should provide corrective recommendations.

VI.
INTERVIEW
QUESTION
GUIDELINES

The interviewer should not ask questions which might be considered a violation of an applicant's rights under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or any other law or regulation aimed at achieving equal opportunity. Unless there is a clearly defined relationship between a question and the duties and responsibilities of the position to be filled, the question should not be asked. Some of the specific subjects that the interviewer should be aware of include:

A. Age/Date of Birth.

1. Failure of an applicant to complete Block 4, Date of Birth, on Form SF-171 does not disqualify him/her. If a selected applicant has not completed Block 4, he/she should be asked to do so following selection.

2. If an applicant appears young enough to need a work permit, that requirement should be mentioned to the applicant.

B. Arrests/Convictions.

1. Applicants should not be asked if they have an arrest record.

2. Convictions should be mentioned only if any of the applicable questions on Form SF-171 are answered "YES" and complete information is not provided in the remarks section. The applicant should be requested to provide any missing information related to a conviction that is required to be disclosed on Form SF-171.

3. Questions concerning an applicant's suitability due to convictions should be referred to the Employee Relations Branch, Personnel Division.

C. Tours of Duty.

1. The interviewer should be sure the applicant is aware of the required tour of duty and the possibility, if applicable, of overtime, shift work, or weekend work. The interviewer should avoid specific questions about an applicant's availability for weekend work. They may imply that certain applicants will not be considered because of religion, marital status, or other nonmerit reasons.

2. An effort should be made to reasonably accommodate an applicant who indicates he/she is not available for weekend work due to religious observance, if the accommodation can be accomplished without undue hardship on other employees or the operations of the Agency's programs.

D. Travel/Relocation.

1. The potential for official travel, locally or outside the commuting area, should be brought to the applicant's attention. This includes, if applicable, frequency and length of travel, mode of transportation, possible need for a privately owned vehicle, use of Government-owned vehicle, and

financing of travel.

2. Interviewers shall ensure that any potential geographical relocation requirements of the position for which the candidate is being interviewed are made known to candidates during the interview. (See AMS Directive 327.1, Employment Mobility Agreements, for additional information.)

E. Citizenship/National Origin.

1. Generally, only citizens of the United States may be considered for employment. Form SF-171 addresses this issue. Applications received directly from noncitizens should be returned. Questions about a naturalized citizen's past citizenship are irrelevant and should not be asked.

2. Applications received from OPM or through merit promotion procedures should have a "YES" response to the question on citizenship on Form SF-171. If not, the personnel staffing specialist should be contacted.

F. Physical Requirements.

1. Applicants for positions having specific physical ability requirements are subject to either a self-certified medical statement or a full medical examination by a licensed physician. The decision as to whether specific requirements can be met must be made by the applicant and/or the physician. An onsite interview, enabling the applicant to observe working conditions and requirements, will assist the applicant in making this decision. Personal knowledge of what the job entails will enable the applicant to measure his/her own potential to meet the job requirements. This self-evaluation, combined with a physician's analysis as a part of the medical examination, should resolve any questions about the applicant's ability to perform the work.

2. There are no maximum or minimum height/weight limitations.

3. Although an applicant's disability may appear to be in conflict with the job requirements, the interviewer should not question the applicant's ability to do the job or voice any personal opinions on the subject.

G. Other Non-Job-Related Issues To Avoid.

1. Number and/or ages of children; plans to have a family; or inquiries on child care arrangements.

2. Credit record/garnishment record.

3. Political affiliation.

4. Religion.

5. Marital status - (including title preferred - Miss, Ms., or Mrs.).

6. Spouse's name and type of work.

VII.
STENOGRAPHY
AND TYPING
SKILLS DEM-
ONSTRATIONS

Applicants for positions which require typing and/or stenography as a performance standard critical element must be proficient in the appropriate skill(s) at the time of selection. The skills demonstration may be used only as an indication of the quality of an applicant's ability. It may not be used to determine basic qualifications nor as supporting evidence to pass over a veteran preference candidate. An applicant's refusal to demonstrate typing/stenography skills cannot be used as a basis for disqualification from consideration.

A. Status Candidates. Candidates eligible for reinstatement, transfer, promotion, or reassignment can be appointed noncompetitively without demonstrating typing or stenographic proficiency. Their ability can be determined through a review of past and current on-the-job performance as evidenced in performance appraisals and reference checks.

B. Competitive Appointments. Applicants being selected through the competitive examining process may meet the typing/stenography examination requirements by one of three methods: (1) qualifying on an OPM authorized performance test; (2) presenting a Certificate of Proficiency; or (3) self-certification.

C. Skills Demonstration. Applicants qualifying on the basis of self-certification may be requested to demonstrate their typing/stenography skills as a part of the interview process. A skills demonstration cannot be required of candidates qualifying on the basis of an OPM approved performance test or a Certificate of Proficiency; nor of candidates being considered for in-service placement; i.e., promotion, reassignment, or transfer. If a skills demonstration is to be administered to a self-certified candidate, the interviewer must ensure that:

1. If it is required of one candidate, then all self-certified applicants being considered for that same vacancy must meet the requirement.

2. The same materials (typewriter, text, etc.) should be used for each candidate.

VIII.
SELECTION

A. After completion of the interview process, the selecting official should forward the selection through channels to the servicing personnel office. The selecting official should notify the selectee that:

1. A tentative selection has been made; and

2. No personal action (i.e., quitting job, selling real estate, etc.) should be taken until the appointment is confirmed by the servicing personnel office and an effective date is set.

B. The selecting official should avoid making any unconditional commitments to selectees concerning training opportunities, travel, promotion, etc.

C. Following selection, acceptance, and clearance of any prior approval requirements, all nonselected candidates will be notified of their status. The selecting official may choose to do this, particularly for those candidates who were interviewed. The selecting official should notify the servicing personnel office if he/she elects to do so. The servicing personnel office will notify all other candidates.

L. P. Massaro
Deputy Administrator, Management

Attachment 1
AMS Directive 325.1
5/31/90

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Applicant's Name: _____

Position Title/Series/Grade: _____

Duty Station: _____

JOB REQUIREMENTS:

Position Description

Duties	_____	Mobility Agreement	_____
Responsibilities	_____	Probationary Period	_____
Qualifications	_____	Tour of Duty	_____
Physical Demands/Work Environment	_____	Transportation	_____
Performance Standards	_____	Medical Examination	_____
Advancement Potential	_____	Smoking Policy	_____
Travel	_____		

SALARY/BENEFITS:

Salary - Annual/Biweekly/Hourly	_____	Sick Leave	_____
Pay Day/First Check	_____	Holidays	_____
Hospitalization (FEHBA)	_____	Retirement/Social Security	_____
Life Insurance (FGLI)	_____	Overtime/Comp Time (Policy)	_____
Annual Leave			

OTHER:

AVAILABILITY/LOCALITY OF:
(depending on type of interview)

Clothing Recommendations	_____	Banks	_____
Equipment	_____	Schools	_____
Union	_____	Housing, etc.	_____
		Public Transportation	_____
