

The Right Fit – Finding a Direct Support Professional (DSP)

Direct Support Professional (DSP) Qualifications

The DSP is a person hired to provide services to the person with a disability. The provider agency that you are working with will help you find potential direct support professionals (DSP). Your DSP must meet the NC Innovations Waiver policies and state regulations about providing services to individuals participating in the waiver (waiver participant). It is important to remember that hiring the right employees for the job may take some time. Your service provider should assist you in all aspects of the hiring process. You may recommend friends and others that you may know to the agency that will employ your DSP.

Screening Applicants

When your provider agency has candidates for you to review, you must be prepared to “pre-interview” applicants. The conversation will be useful in helping to decide if the caller has the necessary skills and qualifications, and if you are comfortable with the individual interested in the job.

When beginning a telephone interview, it is important to give a brief description of the hours that the job requires. Ask only questions directly related to the job. Preparing a “script” of what you want to know during the initial call is very helpful.

At the conclusion of all telephone interviews, you should review notes made, and decide which of the applicants to interview in person. Consider the following in deciding which applicants to interview:

- ✓ Qualifications, experience, and ability to carry out assigned tasks
- ✓ Availability
- ✓ The feeling about the applicant’s answers to questions, including if the individual is likely to enjoy spending time with the applicant

The Face-to-face Interview

Once you select applicants to interview in person, you will work with your provider agency to schedule face-to-face interviews.

NOTE: Evaluating Applicants

You should evaluate each applicant on experience, the application, answers given during the interview, availability to work the days and hours needed, and general attitude. The evaluation determines the most promising applicant(s) to select to conduct reference and background checks.

The following are areas for consideration during this process:

- ✓ *Did the applicant answer all the questions completely?*
- ✓ *Did the applicant maintain eye contact and pay attention during the interview?*
- ✓ *Did the applicant seem interested in all aspects of the job, or just the pay and work hours?*
- ✓ *Can the applicant perform the needed tasks?*
- ✓ *Is the applicant available when needed?*
- ✓ *Does the applicant have a solid work history?*
- ✓ *Is the applicant positive, eager, and willing to learn?*
- ✓ *Would you be comfortable receiving support from the applicant?*
- ✓ *Do you have anything in common with the applicant?*

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The safest way to interview someone whom you do not know well is to have a friend or family member present for the interview or have the interview in a public place (library, community center, etc.). Most of the time, the qualified professional (QP) from the agency that you are working with will participate in the interview.

It is important to be well prepared for the interview. You should greet the applicant, facilitate introductions and ensure that both parties are comfortable before beginning the formal part of the interview. You begin the interview by describing your needs. It is important to avoid personal and potentially discriminatory questions. Discriminatory questions are those related to national origin, citizenship, age, marital status, disabilities, arrest and conviction record, military discharge status, race, gender, sexual orientation, or pregnancy status. Ask only questions that directly apply to the job requirements. The applicant should also have an opportunity to ask questions. It is best practice for you to thank the applicant interested in the position and identify the timeline of next steps at the close of the interview. In many cases, these parts of the interview will be managed by the agency QP.