

Safety Equation: Screening and Selection

Knowing the right questions to ask applicants

It's important to remember that training is only one way to keep children, and your congregation, safe from sexual abuse and the fallout that accompanies it. The environment you create can be equally important.

That's why Praesidium, Inc., the company the Church Pension Group worked with to produce its *SafeguardingOnline* series of training modules, has developed *Safety Equation* to help organizations understand how administration, board members, parish members, volunteers, and staff can work together to create an environment that's safe for all.

Throughout the year, we'll be highlighting different aspects of this learning. This article focuses on 'Screening and Selection,' which helps you successfully screen out threats by knowing what kinds of interview questions to ask applicants.

What type of interview questions should you be asking?

Asking behavioral-based questions will help you discern an applicant's past behaviors, which can help you to determine how the applicant might act as a volunteer or employee in your organization.

These types of questions can help you identify and eliminate from consideration an applicant who may pose a high risk of abusing children. Here are some examples:

- What led you to apply for this position?
- Tell me about your past volunteer work with children.
- In your previous volunteer role (if applicable), can you describe a situation where a policy helped you avoid a risky situation?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to follow rules that you may not have agreed with.
- How have you managed the boundaries between your role (as a volunteer or employee in the past) and your emotions as you've seen children's challenges?

Questions to ask references

Screening also involves checking both professional and personal references, and asking the right questions. Here are sample questions for professional references:

- How would you rate the applicant's ability to follow policies and procedures?
- Have you worked with the applicant in a volunteer capacity?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with children?
- Are you aware of any reason why we should not allow the applicant to work with the children we serve?

Questions to ask of personal references:

- How long have you known the applicant?
- Tell me about your relationship with the applicant.
- Can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to children?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with children?
- What do you know about the applicant's hobbies and recreational activities?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to be patient and stay calm?
- How would you rate the applicant's ability to relate to adults?

A robust Screening and Selection process reduces the chances of an abuser entering your organization. Careful questioning of applicants and their references can reveal who will be a stellar volunteer or employee — and who might cause a problem. Finally, be sure to comply with all applicable employment laws when screening and hiring applicants.

To learn more about Praesidium's *Safety Equation*, visit http://armatus2.praesidiuminc.com/publicCourse/kys_1/story_htm.