

### Tips for Recruiting Volunteers

- ✓ Volunteers can be recruited through word of mouth, by getting recommendations from personal contacts including other volunteers, by partnering with an organization (such as a hospital) that has a ready pool of volunteers, or by personal invitation.
- ✓ To make volunteering more attractive, try to schedule times for volunteering that meet the candidate's schedule.<sup>6</sup>
- ✓ Try to match volunteers' interest to the task assignment, and orient them thoroughly before they begin their assignments. This prevents them from becoming confused and increases their satisfaction with the experience.

## *Interviewing Strategies: Hiring the Right People for the Job*

### Common problems

Although an organization often has the vision, commitment, and resources to match staff to its mission, the actual hiring of qualified, competent staff is often very difficult. Even conscientious long term care organizations can fall prey to common hiring problems:

- Organization leaders may have failed to determine exactly what qualifications are required for a position;
- Candidates may not have been interviewed thoroughly enough; or
- A prospective employee's references or background checks may not have been adequately performed.

The major problem with staff recruitment

interviews is that they are frequently unstructured and unplanned. Unstructured interviews may occur because the interviewer may not have allowed adequate time for the interview or did not possess adequate knowledge about the position being filled to conduct the interview. Not surprisingly, there is little correlation between the way the candidate is evaluated during the interview and subsequent performance on the job. Unstructured interviews are characterized by

- being poorly planned and confusing;
- using irrelevant criteria;
- possibly violating the law;
- revealing bias; and
- leading to costly wrong decisions.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, organizations sometimes misrepresent or do not accurately or fully describe to the candidate the expectations of the position.

### How can we improve our performance?

To hire the right person for the right job, the organization's leaders first have to determine the required knowledge and skills for the position and directly relate them to the organization's mission and scope of services. The first step is to develop a competency-based job description. This is described in more detail in Chapter 3, pages 41-64.

After leaders have determined the necessary skills for the position, they can focus on finding the right person. Job candidates for long term care organizations generally are found through walk-ins, word of mouth, and position postings. These sources of applicants work well for front-line positions such as nurses and nursing assistants. As a result, the organization may actually have several individuals to consider as it starts interviewing.

However, an organization's location may be a

deterrent to filling some positions. For example, Joint Commission-accredited subacute programs require a master's prepared social worker with experience or training in caring for the populations being served to provide medical social work services or to supervise the bachelor's-prepared social worker. In large metropolitan areas, such qualified social workers may be easy to find. In rural areas, however, the organization may need to resort to other strategies for finding qualified individuals. For positions that require special qualifications, such as a licensed nursing home administrator, a master's prepared social worker, or a dementia special care unit coordinator, the organization's human resources staff frequently place ads in newspapers and professional journals.

If the organization has difficulty filling a position, it may use licensed, qualified consultants on an interim basis. If there are other individuals in the organization with the required qualifications, staff roles may be re-assigned until the position can be filled. Ultimately, new or enhanced services may need to be postponed until qualified individuals can be found.

Once qualified individuals are identified, the interviewing process can begin. Interviewing helps to determine whether the candidate possesses the appropriate level of experience, education, and skills to perform the job. Interviewing also permits supervisors to obtain information beyond what is found in applications, resumes, or references. The main purpose of the interview is to uncover information about how the candidate performed in situations similar to the position being filled.<sup>7</sup>

The applicant screening process usually starts with completion of a job application by the prospective employee. Some organizations permit the applicant to request an application and return it by mail. Many

others require applicants to complete the application while at the organization to ensure they have basic literacy skills.

The next step is the actual face-to-face interview conducted by a designated individual with recruitment or hiring responsibilities. This may be the staff development coordinator, an individual department manager, or a human resources coordinator. The interview should be carefully planned, and interviewers should use a common script to ensure that they ask the same questions of all applicants, ask everything they need to ask, and keep the interview focused.

Asking open-ended questions provides the greatest insight into an individual. "Open-ended" questions are those that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no," but rather require explanation. For example, the interviewer can ask applicants questions similar to the following to see how they would respond to real-life situations that might be encountered while at work:

- How would you handle a resident who was swearing or hitting?
- *For clinical staff:* How do you prioritize residents' needs when you have a heavy workload?
- *Housekeeping staff:* You have five isolation rooms and only three mop heads. What would you do?

This approach gives the interviewer the opportunity to evaluate the following questions:

- Are answers well thought out, even when asked on the spur of the moment?
- Are responses rigid, or can the applicant plan for different options within a scenario?
- Are the answers calculated to satisfy an interviewer, or do they seem reasonable?

The interviewer may also want to ask candidates about their perceptions of the elderly, for example, their feelings about helping residents with personal hygiene or bathroom visits, and their experience with death and dying. Staff members who are compassionate and able to communicate with the elderly are more likely to do better and stay around longer.<sup>8</sup>

There are certain interview questions that cannot be asked. Interviews should not include questions that are discriminatory in nature and that violate laws, regulation, or legislation that provide for employment rights of individuals, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act, and age discrimination regulations. In addition, questions about the individual's marital status, ethnic background, or number of children are not relevant to the position, and therefore cannot be asked during the interview process. Interviewers can ask questions that will help determine if there are any obstacles that may impede the candidate's ability to perform the job, such as, "Is there anything which will prevent you from getting to work at 7:00 am?" or "Do you feel you will be able to do this job?"

Keys to effective interviewing include

- using multiple interviewers, such as the human resources director, the manager responsible for supervising the position, and staff who would work with the candidate;
- taking careful notes;
- avoiding consideration of personal characteristics unless they are job related; for example, a person's ability to lift heavy equipment, if required by the job;
- avoiding discrimination and bias;
- demonstrating control;
- being neutral;
- maintaining eye contact;
- being honest with the candidate about the position; and
- using a rating system.<sup>7</sup>

If the individual completes the interview successfully, he or she can then be offered the job. Most organizations identify those individuals in the organization who can make the actual job offer. Frequently, the human resources coordinator assumes this role for staff positions so that pre-hire contingencies are met. The job offer should always be based on certain contingencies: references will be checked and must be satisfactory; a physical exam, including a drug screening, will be done where required by law, regulation, or policy; the employee must be able to perform the requirements of the job; and a criminal background check will be completed, if required. The applicant should be informed of these contingencies. Sometimes, when candidates understand that their backgrounds and former employment will be reviewed, they may choose not to proceed.

### *Reference Checks and Criminal Background Checks*

In a strong economy, it is often difficult to find qualified people to accept low-paying jobs, as is often the case for nursing assistant positions. Too often, the pool of candidates includes prospects with criminal backgrounds or those who prey on vulnerable people, thus making them unsuitable for caring for the elderly. For example, when Iowa adopted a criminal background check in mid-1997, 12% of nursing assistant candidates had some form of criminal conviction, including murder.<sup>9</sup>

Lawmakers are considering a national system of background checks to ensure that staff caring for the nation's elderly do not have criminal backgrounds.