



## **Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Program Director/Staff Interview Questions and Considerations**

This guide is created to help programs and communities hire staff that is well suited for the work of supervised visitation programs. The questions and considerations are designed to help interviewers listen to the qualities and skills that are inherent to a strong candidate for visitation work. The nuts and bolts of visitation work can be taught however there are particular beliefs and qualities that are imperative to this work that is more difficult to teach if someone does not already possess them. Not everyone is a good fit for this work. The ability to hold compassion and empathy as well as the ability to ensure no further harm comes to adult and child victims requires great skill and self-awareness. Please refer to the “Supervised Visitation Center Staff Qualifications” document provided by Inspire Action for further information on the qualities you may want to look for in a potential candidate.

### **1. Why are you interested in this position?**

#### **Interviewer Consideration**

The response should include a desire to work not just with children but with adults. Many people believe that visitation work is primarily focused on working with children, while this is an important part of the work, a strong candidate would have a desire to support and work with both those who have caused harm to their family as well as the parent who has experienced violence at the hands of their intimate partner.

Inspire Action for Social Change - [info@inspireactionforsocialchange.org](mailto:info@inspireactionforsocialchange.org)  
Suggestions for Consideration - Not Intended as Model Interview Questions

This project was supported by Grant No. 2017-TA-AX-K028 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

2. Describe why you believe violence against women and girls exists in our society, why it continues and what you think it will take to reduce violence and create change? Why is this important to the work of a supervised visitation center?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

It is important that the applicant not just provide a definition of domestic violence. They should provide you with a clear understanding of their beliefs about domestic violence - why they believe violence exists and why violence continues to occur in our society. You may need to ask additional probing questions to dig deeper to determine their philosophical understanding of gender-based violence in our society.

3. What do you think is the role of a visitation center?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

You will want to listen for answers that are not over punitive or appear to demonstrate a likelihood of collusion. A strong candidate would offer ideas that included providing a safe place for children and adult victims as well as a role in supporting parents who have caused harm. You will want to listen for compassion and empathy for each person using services as well as a belief that the role of a visitation monitor first and foremost is to ensure safety and that no further harm comes to child AND adult victims.

4. What is the role of supervised visitation and safe exchange program for families from [insert referral sources you anticipate e.g. Family Court, Protection Order Court, Legal Services...]?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

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In this response, you will want to hear a connection between why services are being offered and the reason why individuals are being sent to supervised visitation. Listen for an understanding that the program should be offering visitation services that are reflective of why someone is being referred for services not a one size fits all approach. For example, someone is being sent to the program for stalking, the role of the center should be to interrupt opportunities for ongoing stalking.

5. What is your approach to working with people from different cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, socio-economic classes, or abilities from yourself? What has worked well? What were some of your personal challenges?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

You want to gain an understanding of whether the applicant holds cultural humility and will have the ability to be responsive to diverse and unique needs. You will also want to determine if they demonstrate any level of judgmental and/or are aware of personal judgments they may hold.

6. What do you hope to accomplish through your work at the supervised visitation center?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

You will want to hear an answer that shows balanced beliefs about both safety and healing. Someone who describes wanting to control people or make people do something that may not be the best fit for the job. You want to hear things that indicate building partnerships, supporting safety and exploring opportunities to support individuals and families to change and grow.

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7. Describe how you prefer to receive supervision and feedback?  
Describe a positive experience you have had with a supervisor?  
What made it positive?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

In supervised visitation, it is essential for staff to be able to receive feedback and support from both supervisors and peers. There may be moments where someone will need to step in and/or intervene and it is essential that staff have the ability to not get defensive and be open to what was observed and why a co-worker and/or supervisor stepped in to help with the situation. This work is hard and sometimes very personal so we may not always know when we have been hooked in or triggered by what is happening. You will want to listen for someone who is open to learning and growing and doesn't have to always be right.

8. What are your beliefs about parenting? How would you respond to a parenting style or approach that was different than yours?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

The key here is to listen for how someone describes their understanding that parenting is unique and different in each family. You will want to hear an answer that suggests that the individual has awareness of their judgments and ideas about parenting and is willing to learn from others even if their choices and approaches are different. The applicant should be able to understand that their own parenting choices are not the only option - they will be with parents who make very different choices than they would make and they may observe choices very different from what they would like to support.

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9. Describe what community partnerships you feel would be important to establish and maintain. Why are they important?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

Applicants do not need to know specific organizations or agencies that exist in the community (these can be taught) rather you are determining whether the applicant has a holistic view of services a family might need. Listen for assumptions and/or stereotypes about families that may lead to judgments or preconceived ideas about what families need rather than listening to what families are asking for. For example, if the interviewee suggests that all participants need a referral to the foodbank an underlying assumption of the candidate could be that families using services are living in poverty or if an interviewee suggested all participants should be referred for mental health counseling you may want to explore if they hold the bias that domestic violence is the result of mental illness.

10. What are some ways to build a cohesive work team? Can you describe a time you were successful in building a team? What made it successful? What lessons have you learned that you would bring to this position?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

The work of supervised visitation requires a strong ability to work both independently and as part of a team. For leadership positions, you will want to listen for the desire and commitment to bring the team together to plan, problem-solve, build trust and continued learning. For other positions, it is important that interviewees describe a desire and willingness to work with others, share information and work to build supportive and trusting relationships with co-workers. Listen for lessons learned that account for building on co-workers strengths,

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shared leadership, vulnerability and a willingness to try new ideas and approaches.

11. What strengths do you bring to a team? What do you look for in a team and/or team members?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

Reliability, humility, and trust are key tenants to the work of a visitation center worker. The ability to think and respond mindfully in moments of chaos and crisis are important strengths. A strong sense of self and willingness to engage in self-reflection is important. Ability to ask for support and to utilize team members to think through issues and challenges that arise will be important to building a strong team that works closely together. Listen for how an interviewee looks for team members that offer strengths and/or qualities that help to round out the team and build or bring strengths that are missing.

12. How do you resolve conflicts? Describe a time you had to resolve a conflict with a colleague or a person receiving services? What worked well? What would you change?
13. Describe a time you had to respond to someone who was very angry and/or very emotional? What did you do that you found to be effective? What tools do you have that helped you in that situation? What would have been helpful?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

Exploring this question with a potential employee is important. Many individuals (adult victims and people who use violence) come to visitation with a lot of emotions and feelings. It is imperative that staff have the ability to respond calmly and

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thoughtfully to these individuals in an effort not to either escalate a situation and or minimize or dismiss the realities of adult victims of domestic violence. Each individual will have different tolerance for different types and levels of anger and/or emotion and you will want to explore the awareness of your interviewee, their skills and capacity to manage their response as well as their openness to feedback and support.

14. Respond to the following scenarios:
- A custodial parent begins to dictate how services should be delivered. For example, they are very firm in their tone and inform you of the following (1) the assigned visitation monitor is no longer acceptable and (2) they will not allow the visiting parent to bring any food during the visit nor will they allow any gifts to be brought to the center by the visiting parent.
  - How would you react to a custodial mother arriving at the center five minutes late – She indicates she is VERY ANGRY and upset with center staff because the non-custodial father, who is 10 minutes early, is waiting in his car in the parking lot.

### **Interviewer Considerations for Scenarios**

Listen for judgment that might be expressed or an overly punitive, controlling or annoyed response. Additionally, pay attention to any victim-blaming that might be expressed as part of the solution or as an excuse for the other parent's behavior. Pay attention to how empathy and compassion for the complexity of individuals lives are expressed. You will want to further explore with interviewees any answers that oversimplify what is happening or what should be done in response to any scenario you might include in the interview. Listen for

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responses that indicate they would listen carefully to each parent, hold a desire to partner and problem solve as well as a desire to want more information to better understand what is happening for each parent and why they might present the way they are.

15. What strategies do you use to identify a person's strengths?

### **Interviewer Consideration**

You will want to determine if the applicant holds a high level of care and compassion and has the ability to show respect to every person who they will come in contact within this position.

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