



Ten Tips: Interviewing a Senior Care Candidate

1. Brush up on Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is the gold standard for employment screening. Behavioral interviewing is based on the premise that the most accurate predictor of a candidate's future performance is her past performance in a similar situation. It is best to conduct a behavioral interview AFTER you have confirmed the basics such as schedule, general duties, skills required, salary range offered, and candidate availability.

Unlike traditional interviews, which request information such as prior experience providing care for an aging adult, behavioral interviewing emphasizes past performance and behaviors. Agencies that employ behavioral interviewing have predetermined the skill sets they believe are vital to success a senior home care position.

2. Sample Questions to Assess Specific Qualities

Decision Making/Problem Solving: In elder care, urgent situations develop that require immediate action. Tell me about an emergency or critical decision you needed to make on the spot, and how you handled it.

Motivation/Initiative: Describe a situation in a prior elder care assignment where you recognized a need and took initiative without being asked by your employer. How did you feel? How did your employer respond? Describe to me a typical day in your last elder care job. How was the day organized? What did you do?

HINT: Listen for clues that describe a schedule, as well as creativity/engagement with the care recipient. Meals, keeping medical appointments and monitoring pain or discomfort should be a given.

Integrity: Describe a situation in a prior job where you had to tell family members something you know they didn't want to hear. How did you approach it? What would you have done differently if you had to do it again?

Communication: Tell me about a situation where your approach to care and your employer's desired approach were in conflict. How did you handle this? Describe a situation where you had a conflict with your last family, and how you dealt with it. What was the outcome? How did you feel about it?

Planning/Organization: Describe a prior situation where you had more to do than you could accomplish. What decisions did you make? How did you handle the situation? How do you prioritize personal care along with household tasks when scheduling your time? Give me some examples.

Patience/Emotional Maturity: Everyone has one of THOSE days. Tell me about a time when the senior you worked with behaved in a way that was upsetting or offensive. What was happening? How did you feel? How did you respond? What do you find to be the most challenging (or interesting) part of working with seniors?

Dependability: Tell me about the last time you had to call out of work, perhaps due to illness or weather.

HINT: Look for clues such as the amount of prior notification, what the situation was, what the caregiver did (if anything) to avoid calling out, etc.

"I could do this myself but HomeWork Solutions is so easy to work with. Dealing with seniors every day, I know the assurance that required paperwork is completed accurately, reliably and on time for senior care is invaluable"
- Stacy C., Attorney, Washington D.C.

"Please renew my annual service. I did find a new nanny, Mary Poppins to be exact ;-), and I will be needing your services again. Thanks for a great service!"
- Janine M., Mother, Cary, NC

3. Follow Up Questions

It is very common to need more information about a situation the candidate recounts to form an accurate picture for evaluation. Some follow up questions might be:

What happened after that?
What did you say?
How did he/she react?
What was your reaction?
How did you feel about that?
What do you wish you had done differently?
What did you learn from that?

4. Ask All Candidates the Same Questions

You want to make sure you collect the same information from all candidates you interview so you can make real comparisons, rather than inferences. You may consider breaking the list into pre-screening (telephone) interview questions, and in- person interview questions.

5. Assess Knowledge of Ages and Stages

Consider the age, health needs and general temperament of the adult who requires care. Form several specific questions to assess the candidate's knowledge of, and experience with, an adult under similar conditions.

6. Disclose Special Challenges

Does the recipient adult have an unusual medical or emotional condition that the caregiver will have to deal with? The interview is the appropriate time to discuss the situation frankly. This gives you the opportunity to assess the candidate's comfort level in accepting this responsibility, as well as giving you a sense of how comfortable YOU are with the her ability to handle this special challenge. Absolutely disclose if the caregiver will be required to administer medications or routine medical treatments.

7. Create a Comfortable, Uninterrupted Atmosphere

In conducting the interview, you want to be prepared, yet flexible, and create a communication climate in which the candidate will feel comfortable. Signal your interest, but avoid leading the candidate to respond in particular ways. Listen carefully and be sure to ask secondary/probing questions. Candidate answers make excellent starting points for the reference checks you will be doing later!

8. Consider a Trial Run

Many families try to schedule a trial period – from a few hours to a few days, where family members may be nearby to help the caregiver become better acquainted with the rhythms of the household, so that both parties can consider job fit. You will be expected to compensate the caregiver for her time.

9. Verify!

Absolutely require references and use your reference check to verify critical information that the candidate provided in the job interview.

10. Trust Your Instincts

When in doubt, contact the candidate back for clarification. And all things being equal, don't overlook your intuition. Intuition is a powerful tool. If you cannot feel comfortable with the candidate for ANY reason, move on to other applicants.

Behavioral or experience-based interviewing is the gold standard for employment screening.

A common mistake families make in a caregiver interview is talking too much! You will learn the most when you ask a carefully constructed question and then sit back and LISTEN to the candidate's response.

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