

## Section 2: Recruiting Your Providers

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As part of your participation in the Participant Directed Program, you will hire providers to work with you. You may hire an agency to employ staff for you or you may directly hire your own staff or independent contractors.

### **Hiring Employees**

#### **1. Employer Identification Number (EIN)**

If you hire your own employees, you will become an employer of record, or EOR. Before getting started, you will want to confirm if you are already set up as an employer through a different program, such as

the Massachusetts PCA program. If you are planning to hire employees directly, you must sign and date several tax forms including the application for an IRS Employer Identification Number (FORM SS-4) and mail or fax the forms to PPL. Sample copies of these forms are included in **Appendix D**; these forms should be generated for you specifically by your support broker directly from the PPL Web Portal. Your support broker will need to verify if you as the participant or another family member will be set up as the Employer of Record in order to populate the forms with the appropriate person's demographic information. We will obtain this Employer Identification Number for you and it will be used to record all the wages paid on your behalf to the staff you hire. As an employer, you will be responsible for withholding employee taxes as well as paying employer taxes, but this will only be for services in your PDP budget. Becoming an employer does not affect your tax status. The Employer forms you submit to PPL will provide PPL with permission to withhold taxes, deposit, and report wage earnings on your behalf.

*It can take several weeks to obtain an EIN, so please get this information to PPL as soon as possible.*

#### **2. Criminal Background Check**

One particularly important requirement for all staff hired directly by a family is that each worker must complete a written application and give permission for a Criminal Background Check (CORI) to be completed. We have

### ***Keys to Finding Good Staff:***

- ✓ Get the word out that you are looking
- ✓ Get in touch with previous providers who worked with you to see if they are available, or if they can recommend anyone
- ✓ Be clear about what type of worker you need
- ✓ If you are hiring an individual Respite provider, be sure you have completed the employer tax forms

included an application and CORI request form in **Appendix E**. You may want to make several copies of this form so that it is readily available whenever you interview a staff person. Upon completion, you should mail or fax the form to PPL with a copy of a photo ID. In addition, this form can be downloaded under the Participant Directed Program page at [www.publicpartnerships.com](http://www.publicpartnerships.com). The CORI form is also included in the credentialing application. We know that time is of the essence in many hiring situations, and a quick turnaround for CORI requests is one of our top priorities. Staff cannot begin work until they have cleared their Criminal Background Check. If the provider is from an agency you have hired, they do not need to complete a CORI check – they will already have done this.

### **3. Verification of Qualifications**

There are specific requirements for each staff position in this Participant Directed Program that must be met by applicants in order to qualify to deliver services to you. In preparing to recruit and hire staff, make sure you include these qualifications in any job postings or advertisements you prepare so that it is clear to the applicant what education and experience they must have to be eligible for the job.

### **4. Job Description**

Your Support Plan will identify your assessed needs and will detail their goals and what services you can purchase with your individual budget to help meet those goals. It will also indicate the types of staff who can provide these services. It is important to spend time thinking about exactly what you will want staff to do. Although flexibility is a key quality for most staff, a potential job applicant needs specific information about what their responsibilities are.

#### ***Check List For Hiring Staff***

- ✓ Determine Your Budget
- ✓ Prepare Job Description
- ✓ Develop Job Application
- ✓ Advertise the Job
- ✓ Review Resumes
- ✓ Conduct Phone Interview
- ✓ Narrow Candidate Field
- ✓ Schedule Sit-Down Interview
- ✓ Prepare Interview Questions
- ✓ Request Applicant References
- ✓ Select Candidate
- ✓ Sign Letter of Agreement with Service Worker

## ***Things to Consider....***

**Let's say you want to have a support person available at dinnertime.**

**Do you want him/her to:**

- Cook dinner for you?
- Teach you how to cook?
- Help you cook?
- Be in the vicinity while you cook independently?

**What if you want someone to be with you in the mornings?**

**Do you want him/her to:**

- Help you to take a shower or remind you to take a shower?
- Make your lunch or make sure you make your lunch?

**Your Support Broker will help you develop job descriptions for the staff you want to hire.**

### ***Word of Mouth***

For some services, such as respite, ask your friends and co-workers. Remember, you can have most family members (except for spouse, parent or legal guardian) work for you.

### ***Keep it Local***

Create a flyer that describes who you are looking for. Post it at local libraries, "Y's", community centers, houses of worship. Another way to find staff is by "word of mouth." Call an early intervention center and ask if they have staff who would be interested in working evenings or weekends. If you are the parent of a child who is receiving Special Education services, ask his/her teacher or aide to get the word out for you.

### ***Try Student Employment Services***

Local colleges can be a great resource for young, energetic support workers. Many campuses have their own newspapers where you can advertise or you can post a job through the student employment office. Try to get the position posted at a college.

### ***Place Ads in Newspapers***

Paid advertisements can get the word out to a large number of people. In general, start with smaller, local papers first. If you don't know what papers serve your town, call your Support Broker and they can help you.

## **How Do I Write a Job Ad?**

### **Creating an Ad**

How to advertise is as important as where to advertise. You will want to describe the position being offered, list any necessary qualifications (e.g. Master's Degree, clinical license or Mass Driver's license), and identify a means by which applicants can contact you. When placing ads, you should be careful not to indicate preferences according to sex, race, or age. You may, however, want to identify your gender, especially if the person will need to provide some personal care.

It's best not to put in a specific wage but a range can be a good idea. This will reduce the number of phone calls from people who are not able to work for the salary offered. Remember the wage you offer must comply with the rates set for each service by the Participant Directed Program. Give some information about the hours you need but don't be too specific. For example, say evening hours rather than 4-8 pm. As you get to know the person, you may be able to create a schedule that works for both of you. Below are some sample ads to give you an idea of what you might like to include in your advertisement.

### **SAMPLE JOB LISTING 1:**

#### ***General Duties:***

Help me to take care of myself and my home as independently as possible.

#### ***Specifics:***

1. Review mail and help me write due dates on a calendar.
2. Help me plan evening meals.
3. Help me cook meals.
4. Remind me to do the dishes.
5. Review chore schedule with me and help me complete daily "big chores".
6. If I have a social event on an evening you are working, help me get the right clothes, remind me to have enough money and to bring my cell phone with me.
7. If I get behind on my chores, help me to figure out how I will catch up.

#### ***Qualities:***

Remember that I am the boss. Be flexible and patient. Help me to think of new ways to help myself. Don't talk to anyone about me without my permission.

## SAMPLE JOB LISTING 2:

### **General Duties:**

Help me to learn how to manage my money and work on the computer.

### **Specifics:**

1. On Tuesday, help me collect all my bills. Sit with me while I write checks for all bills due. Make sure I use the calculator correctly so I know how much I have left.
2. Make sure I will have enough money for next week's bills. If I don't, help me to plan what I will do.
3. If I don't have enough money for a big bill like the rent, call Mary Smith my service coordinator and leave a message for her. Do this in front of me.
4. For the rest of Tuesday and on Sunday night, help me with my new computer.
5. Show me how to open and read my e-mail. If I want to e-mail someone, show me how to do it.
6. Show me how to get on the internet and to find my favorite sites.

### **Qualities:**

I don't like worrying about money and so I tend to forget to pay my bills. Be patient with me but don't let me forget to pay my bills. Also, I need reminders about how to find things on the computer. Pictures and arrows are good for me.

After I learn how to e-mail and find things on the internet, we will make some new goals.

**Your Support Broker will help you develop job listings for the staff you want to hire.**

### **Phone Screening and Scheduling Interviews**

Hopefully you will receive many phone calls after you place your ad! You will want to make a good impression when you make these calls. You will need to get some specific information, so keep paper and pencil handy.

It is a good idea to change your answering machine greeting to indicate that the job seeker has reached the right number. You don't need to get into specifics, just say something like "if you are calling about the ad in the paper, please leave your name and number and a good time for me to call you." Or, "if you are calling about the job opening, I am scheduling interviews for Thursday night."

### ***Phone Interview Tips***

Useful information you need from a phone interview are:

- ✓ What experience does the person have?
- ✓ What are the salary requirements?
- ✓ What hours can the person work? Not work?
- ✓ How will the person get to your home?
- ✓ When could the person start if hired?

## **Telephone Screening**

In general, it's better to interview too many people rather than too few but it wastes everyone's time if your schedules are incompatible or they have no way of getting to where you live. That's where the telephone screening can help. You will want to ask a few specific questions to help you both decide whether an interview is worthwhile.

If you are satisfied with their answers, tell them a little more about the job including approximate hours and salary. *Tell the job candidate(s) that you will need to conduct a Criminal History Background Check (CORI) as part of the hiring process and before they begin working.* Then schedule a time for them to come meet with you.

It can be awkward if it turns out you are not interested in interviewing the person but remember it's even worse to waste the person's time by conducting an interview when you know you don't want to hire the person. If you are not interested, you can just say that you are currently interviewing a number of candidates and that you will contact them if there is still an opening after the round of interviews is completed.



## **Scheduling Interviews**

Interviewing staff can be stressful especially if you are doing it for the first time. Even though it can be tiring, it's best not to spread out the interviews over too long a time. If you do, you may lose a good candidate that you interviewed in the beginning because they got another offer while waiting for you to complete an interview. It's good to see several candidates in one day because it will be easier to compare them while they are fresh in your mind.

*Ask the job applicant to bring names and phone numbers of two references with them to the interview.*

Also, when scheduling interviews, keep in mind that some candidates will not show up. Be cautious about giving any candidate a second interview time if they do not show without calling first. Do you want to hire someone who doesn't call to let you know that they cannot make it into work?

## **Application**

All individuals and agencies included on the Provider Directory maintained by the Participant Directed Program have already had a CORI check completed and their qualifications verified. Therefore, it is not necessary for

these individuals to complete a credentialing application. However, if you choose an individual or agency not on this list, they must complete the application included in Appendix E respectively so that a CORI check can be conducted and their credentials verified. The provider must self-register on the PPL Web Portal and complete the online credentialing application at the following website

[fms.publicpartnerships.com/PPLPortal/login.aspx/MAPDP](https://fms.publicpartnerships.com/PPLPortal/login.aspx/MAPDP). The application and the criminal background check are required to begin work in this program. A step by step overview of the process can be found in **Appendix F**.

No individual may begin to work without a response from the Criminal History Board. PPL will notify DDS and your Support Broker that your provider has successfully completed their Criminal History Background check.

### **Interviewing**

Conducting a good interview takes practice. You may be nervous in the beginning, but remember—so will the job seeker!

You may want to have your Support Broker or a family member or friend with you while you are interviewing staff. They can observe the interview and you can compare impressions afterward. Remember though, you will be the boss so you need to do most of the talking or the job seeker may be confused about who they will be reporting to.

Don't try to conduct an interview without a list of questions to work from. You will be less anxious and get more information if you do so. If you have someone who is with you for the interviews it may be a good idea for them to write down the answers, that way you can concentrate on how the person makes you feel when they talk to you.

One important thing to remember is your ability to communicate with



the person you are hiring. Although it takes time to build a relationship, it's important to think about whether you are comfortable with this person. Are they respectful? Can you imagine asking this person questions? Would it be difficult to tell this person what to do?

you.

Even if the person has lots of experience, they may not be the right person for

### ***Interview Tips***

- ✓ If possible, watch the candidate interact with you to see if they are compatible.
- ✓ It is a good idea to have someone with you while you are interviewing staff.
- ✓ Don't try to conduct an interview without a list of questions to work from. See the next page for sample questions to ask your job applicant.

**Your Support Broker Will Help You Prepare Interview Questions to Ask Each Applicant About Their Experience and Education.**



**What Not to Ask – federal laws prohibit you from asking certain personal questions**

The following table outlines what you can and cannot ask during a job interview. *Adapted from Consumer Training Manual, Access Alaska Inc., 121 West Fireweed, Suite 105, Anchorage, AK 99503*

Subject	May Ask or Do	Do NOT Ask or Do
Marital Status		Are you married? Single? Divorced? Engaged? Separated? Maiden Name? Do you plan to have children?
Children		Do you have children at home? How old? Who takes care of them? Do you plan to have more children?
Housing	If you have no telephone, how can I reach you?	Do you own your own home? Do you rent? Do you live in an apartment or a house?
Criminal Record	The mandatory application form asks about convictions. There is also a mandatory criminal background check.	Have you ever been arrested or spent time in jail?
Military Status	Are you a veteran? Do you have any job related military experience?	What type of discharge do you have? In what branch did you serve?
National Origin	Are you a U.S. citizen? If not, do you have the legal right to remain permanently in the U.S.? Languages applicant speaks and writes fluently are okay. Name and address of person to notify in case of an emergency.	Of what country are you a citizen? Nationality of applicant's parents. Native-born or naturalized? Languages commonly used by applicant. Name and address of nearest relative.
Religion	After hired, you may ask about religious observances, which could interfere with work.	Religious denomination, affiliations, church parish, pastor, or religious holidays observed.
Age	Are you over 18? Age may be asked when an employee must be of a legal minimum age.	How old are you? Estimate age.
Ethnic Background		Ask about ethnic origin. Note complexion or color of skin.



## References

All providers included in the Provider Directory have had their references checked. However, you are free to request additional references if you wish. Remember, this is someone who is going to be working with you and you in your home. You want to be sure you are hiring someone good. Checking references will not only give you information about the person, it will also help the job applicant know that you are serious about being the boss.

*Even if you think you have found the perfect worker, it is still important to check their references.*

Sometimes people don't like to give a reference for their current employer and that is okay. Just make sure you get references for recent jobs. If the person does not have much work history get the name of someone who could comment on the quality of their work. This may be a teacher or a supervisor of their past volunteer work. Some employers will only confirm what dates a person worked but won't comment on the quality of their work. If you get a reference like that, go back to the applicant and get one or two more references.

## Section Review: Pulling the Pieces Together



Tasks	Comments
Define Job Duties	It's a good idea to write up a job description.
Write an Ad based on Job Duties	Remember to be specific about your needs
Place an Ad	Local is best. Save receipts if paid through your budget.
Have screening questions and job description next to your phone	Remember to change your answering machine to reflect job opening.
Screen calls and set up interviews	Schedule several in 1 day; you will have no-shows.
Give applicants application & CORI	You can mail these after screening or give at interview.
Interview applicants	Try to have someone with you during interviews. Don't interview without planning questions.
Check References	Ask for other families or employers
Make a job offer!	If accepted, have them contact PPL.