

Valley Youth House (Easton, PA)

Interview with BHRS Supervisor

Finding and Applying for Jobs

- 1) What are some examples of the types of counseling-related positions in your organization?

There are many programs including: family based mental health, family solution focused based program (each have therapists built into the program). There are mobile therapists in the behavioral health and rehabilitation services program. There is also an intensive behavioral health and rehabilitation program. We hire full-time therapists in the independent living programs that work with kids, housing needs, and the “moms and babies program.” The “moms and babies” program is for 17-20 year olds. We provide housing, case management, therapists in group-homes and the residential (PATHS) program.

- 2) How do you recruit for positions? If there are multiple methods, which do you prefer?

We use Careerbuilder. We network with children and youth and also within our agency. Sometimes full-time therapists will be recruited from individuals working part-time. We also have a lot of outside resources (individuals we meet through trainings).

- 3) What advice do you have for candidates seeking internship experiences or full-time work?

It is very important that applicants be open with what they're looking for. It is hard when a candidate wants to “jump ship.” The positions within the organization are detailed and specific. We provide a lot of training and it is important that the individual be interested in the position. Applicants should be honest about their credentials, background, diagnoses and population (including ages) they have worked with. It is important to make sure applicants are prepared for the service requirements because some positions require going into families homes.

- 4) Do you ever recruit from colleges or universities? Do you attend career-fairs?

We attend career-fairs and have recruited from colleges in the past. Have in the past. Depending on program, we may target specific certification programs in colleges. For behavioral health and rehabilitative program we have looked at many community colleges and hired therapeutic support staff members and also individuals for our mentoring program.

- 5) What credentials do you look for? Is licensure required in your organization and if so, which kind?

Licensure is not required for any of the programs. You must have your master's degree for the majority of the programs and typically one year of experience with kids or adolescence. Some of the other programs are more picky and want a year experience in the CASSP program. Family based programs have OMHSB guidelines. They want CASSP program experience and sometimes 5 years with kids or adolescence (they sometimes have more strict training credentials).

- 6) Could you describe the application process in your organization, including all the application materials you request from candidates (letters of recommendation, etc.), and how the resume/CV screening process works.

We always want transcripts (they may be unofficial). It is possible to then see their background, coursework and if it may be a "good fit." We want to see an applicants resume and at least 3 references.

We sometimes have one interview and maybe two if there is a discrepancy. Full-time positions usually involve 2 interviews depending on the position. We check a person's driving records and their clearances. We also have an application packet that is filled out after hire. We periodically re-check clearances (monthly basis) to double check every employee in the database.

Resume

- 1) What do you require- a resume or a CV?

I do not have a preference. I focus more on the resume than the cover letter. Cover letters are specific and meant for the company but resumes may be more important because it highlights a candidates education and qualified experiences.

- 2) When you review resumes or CV's in terms of overall content, what specific information are you most interested in?

I really focus on their experience and what positions they have had. I also want to see what they have done in their positions. I look at the education section to see where they went to school. I prefer to see a candidate's graduate GPA listed (the undergraduate is not as important). I do not need to see someone's hobbies listed on their resume (only if it involved the specific criteria of the job position).

- 3) Do you look for lists of assessment tools the candidate is knowledgeable of?

Sometimes- I may look for it if I am not entirely convinced of the candidate's experience. If a candidate has extensive experience, I may not be as inclined to look at the assessment tools they have used.

- 4) How important is it for candidates to list the counseling theoretical orientations they have knowledge of and/or have demonstrated?

It is not necessary to list the theoretical orientations because it will probably be addressed during the interview.

- 5) When screening resumes or CV's, are there personal qualities that you look for? If so, what are they? How are they demonstrated on good resumes or CV's?

I look for someone who is creative, communicative, open, and out-going. It is hard if the person is not outgoing to go into people's homes. I look for someone who is organized (especially in the behavioral specialist consultant position).

- 6) What kind of computer skills do you look for?

Computer skills are not too important. The applicant should have basic skills such as Word and Excel (proficiency is not needed).

- 7) What is the level of detail you prefer in the "experience" sections of resumes? (Population served, specific tasks, methods and/or assessments used, outcomes).

Detailed experience does not necessarily need to appear in the resume (sometimes it is more information than needed). It may be something I look at if the resume is not supportive of the position they are applying for.

- 8) What are some of the biggest mistakes you have seen candidates make on resumes or CV's?

People sometimes throw in jobs on their resumes that are not applicable to the position they are applying for. It is fine if it has been your only experiences. Example: If someone is applying for a position with kids and they list Blockbuster as a position they have held. Someone else listed that they are proficient in English (given in our society). Some people list details about things that are not important. You should always include dates to make sure I have a comprehensive view of your education and work history.

People who throw in jobs that don't mean anything. Fine if it has only be your experience. Example: putting experience with kids- then blockbuster. Proficient in English (given). Details about things that are not important. Dates missing. Like to see dates.

Interviews

- 9) How does the interview process work (how many rounds, and who conducts them).

It depends on the program supervisors. If there is a 2nd interview, it typically includes the senior or executive vice president of the company. Interviews are normally one round unless it is a more complex, or full-time position. Part-time positions usually involve one interview with one person. There have been times where 3 people sit in on an interview to get multiple perspectives. Typically, the more hire up the job position, the more people involved.

- 10) Who ultimately makes the hiring decision?

In the behavioral health and rehabilitation services program, the program supervisor makes the decision. In certain cases, if there is a question about the candidate (driving record is not clean or employer is on the fence) the president or CEO will help make a decision and give the final OK> BHRS- program supervisor. Certain cases- if there is a question (driving record not clean or on the fence) President or CEO will help make decision (give OK). President and CEO may feel strongly about certain things. Program supervisor must pass the decision and senior VP.

- 11) In your opinion, what is the best way for a candidate to prepare for an interview in your organization?

They should research the agency, look at websites, get to know what they are applying for. They can also research specific positions and look into the various programs the organization offers. Research other agencies and be able to tell me why “us” and not “them.” You should know what you are going for and be yourself. It is frustrating when a person is hired who is not the person who came into the interview.

- 12) Do you use behavioral interview questions and if so, which ones?

We all use pre-screening types of interview questions. We may talk about other things then the preselected questions if there was a red flag on the resume. I may ask someone who has been fired from a position about the experience. Some people are naturally easier to talk to then others. We may even talk about random things to get to know the person through the interview. Some people are not as talkative which is difficult working in the counseling profession.

- 13) What are the most important “Soft Skills” that you evaluate in candidates?

I like candidates who are outgoing, open with communication, empathetic, sympathetic, and genuinely like working with kids and families. I am really impressed with people who come in and like to get “down and dirty with kids.” Some people with master’s degrees are willing to apply for positions that pay less so that they can have more direct involvement with the children and that shows someone who is genuine. I like someone who is nice and can carry a conversation. It is apparent when

people are giving rote answers and people whose interviews are shorter; it is generally not a good sign.

- 14) What are some of the biggest mistakes you have seen candidates make during interviews?

I have had candidates who have cried and dwelled on past mistakes. I do not like when people bash old companies or previous employers. It is ok to say why you have been fired from a position and defend yourself. I do not like when candidate's criticize others or spend too much time focusing on opportunities for advancement or other positions. It is ok for people to be concerned about not wanting to work with certain families and you can have a preference about the ages and diagnoses but you cannot always choose with who or where you work. I have seen people who check their cell-phones during interviews which is entirely inappropriate (you may let me know that there is a reason-like an emergency).

- 15) Certainly, all candidates should be prepared to answer any interview question. But which question or questions are the most important ones that candidates should be prepared to answer?

They should be able to openly discuss their skills and strengths. These are the most important areas because it tells everything. You cannot make-up or train basic qualifications. I want applicants to be able to have a conversation about what they are looking for and tell me about themselves. Open communication and dialogue is important...if a person cannot do that- then there will be a breakdown. If someone cannot communicate with an employer, then they may have a lot of difficulty going into someone's home.

Valley Youth House is always accepting resumes. We will keep them for a year. If it matches a program that is hiring, we will direct it to hiring individual. Otherwise, the HR department will receive it and then keep it on file for a year. If I begin hiring, I will take a look at recent applications and possibly pick ones I liked. Some positions are posted and hire often such as TSS and mentors because they are high turnover rate positions.