



Preparing for your interview:

Step 1: Do your homework on the department or facility

Do research to answer the following questions:

- What is the culture like?
- What are their strategic and/or quality improvement goals?
- Are there any external factors influencing the department or the field, such as new technology or legislature?

Use multiple sources for your research:

- **Visit the website:** Many departments and facilities have a unique web presence on mission-health.org or on MOD (available to internal employees on Mission computers). Look to see what you can find out on their website. Try looking up departmental leaders on www.LinkedIn.com to see if you can learn more about their professional goals and interests.
- **Talk to contacts in the department:** Do you know an employee in that department, or someone who has worked in that department previously? Use your contacts and reach out to ask them about what it is like to work in that area and get any relevant information.

Step 2: Nail the First Question

“Tell me about yourself?” - This is the single most common interview question, and it's often the very first question asked. Prepare your answer by filling in the script below.

1. Current work/school information: (Department and Facility, for example Guest Services at Mission Hospital)
2. Why you're the best (skills/qualities/experience): (example: I am organized, enthusiastic, punctual, and eager to make a difference in the community)
3. Your call to action (What interests you about this position? Which of your strengths apply to the role?)

Example:

"I'm currently a Patient Registration Rep, and I have 3 years of customer service and office experience, having previously worked as an Administrative Assistant. I'm most proud of my organizational and time management skills, as I have supported two busy departments here at Mission. I love working for this organization and am looking forward to discussing how I may bring value and grow myself professionally by becoming an Executive Assistant for this department."

Customize a quick personal overview, so it feels natural and comfortable. Being prepared to nail the initial question will help you make a good first impression and allow you to settle into the interview.



Step 3: Practice Behavioral Interviewing Skills

Many departments at Mission use behavioral interviewing. Managers will ask you questions about specific examples or your previous work to learn more about your skills and abilities.

Why do we use this approach?

- All candidates *claim* they have skills, but stories **demonstrate** your skills in action.
- Stories provide depth and context. They are a great way to convey what you've accomplished and what you are capable of doing.

Below are some sample behavioral questions.

1. Tell me about a time you overcame a huge obstacle.
2. Describe a time you were faced with a deadline that was difficult to meet. How did you handle it?
3. Provide an example of a time when you using one of your greatest skill(s) to get results.

It can be really hard to come up with answers to these questions in the heat of the moment. We'll show you our favorite method to prepare on the next page.

We strongly recommend taking the time to come up with some meaningful stories from your work experience ahead of time. If you don't have extensive work experience, you can draw on school or volunteer projects.

- Preparing your stories in advance often helps candidates avoid nervous ticks such as "ums," fidgeting and poor eye contact.
- Each specific example can be tweaked and used as an answer for many different questions—the more examples and stories you prepared, the easier it will be to answer questions on the spot during your interview.

Take some time to think about specific moments in your work experience where you had to use the kinds of skills and strengths that would make you successful in your new role. It's difficult to guess exactly what questions they might ask, but thinking about what **core competencies** will be essential can help guide your story choices.



You can use the **STAR method** below to help you prepare your answers.



Situation: Set the scene.

Where were you working or volunteering?
Who were the key players?
What was your role?



Task: Define the challenge.

What was the specific assignment or challenge you faced?
What were the obstacles you had to overcome?



Action: What did YOU do? Be specific.

Step 1- How did you decide upon and plan your action:
Step 2- First action taken:
Step 3- Second action taken:
Step 4- Third action taken:



Results: What did you accomplish?

What happened? Did you accomplish the goal? Was the problem resolved?
What did you learn?

Tip: Be specific as possible, and focus on results. The results are what truly demonstrate your skills!

Tip: Quantify your results! Did you increase/decrease/save/profit/improve money, percentage or time?

Example of a STAR Answer:

Situation: Recently we had all of our employees complete annual education on LMS, but there were challenges.

Task: I noticed that the system was moving slower than normal and there was another coinciding event that caused LMS to slow down.

Action: I brought this to the attention of managers, contacted our LMS point person, and also recommended we extend the deadline for completion of annual education. The draft of my email was also added to MOD and in a SCOPE article to help spread the word of the deadline extension.

Result: Caregivers across Mission were able to complete their LMS by the extended deadline, after the system kinks were addressed by their IT department. The communication was spread efficiently and effectively to minimize inconvenience to everyone involved.

Think about your STAR answer as a story, with a beginning, middle, and an end.



Examples of Behavioral Interviewing Questions:

- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond to get a job done.
- Describe a situation in which you had to handle a difficult or demanding patient. What was the outcome?
- Describe some situations in which you had to adjust quickly to changes in organizational priorities. What were the changes? What was the impact of the change on you? What was your reaction?
- Give a specific example of how you have demonstrated your ability to handle multiple priorities and deliver results. Describe the situation and the manner in which you addressed it.
- Tell me about a time you contributed to the success of your team. What did you do specifically to help your team achieve that success?

ALIGN Interview Questions (based on StandOut):

- What tasks did you love doing in the last week?
- What tasks did you dislike doing, or put off, in the last week?
- What is a recent accomplishment that you are proud of?
- How do you feel doing _____? (key task from the role description)
- What activities do you have a "gift" or a "knack" for doing?
- What activity, at home or at work, did you most look forward to last week?
- Do you ever do an activity and feel that "time flies?" What are you doing?
- Note: if you have taken StandOut, it may also be helpful to name your strengths.

Stories always sound better with practice. Having trouble constructing your stories? Need more practice?

- **Try recording a video of your response and playing it back. You can make notes for improvements, and/or share it with a trusted friend or advisor for review.**
- **Consider taking advantage of the free services of the Career Center at NC Works- just drop in before 3:00 pm to their office at 48 Grove St, Asheville, 28801. They also have local offices in outlying areas: www.ncworks.gov**



Step 4: Prepare Questions to Ask the Employer

We can almost guarantee you that an employer will give you an opportunity to ask questions during or at the end of your interview. Be prepared and have questions ready to ask!

1. If hired, who would be my primary coworkers? How would you describe their workstyles?
2. What are the main responsibilities of this position?
3. What is a typical working day like?
4. What are the some challenges facing your staff or team?
5. What would it look like for me to be successful in this position? What would I need to do?
6. What have you enjoyed most about working here?
7. What is the top priority for the person in this position over the next three months?
8. How does this team communicate?

Tips:

- Until you've been offered a position, avoid questions about salary and benefits.
- Avoid questions that are clearly answered on the department's web page.
- The best questions are open-ended. Avoid questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no."
- Bring a notepad- not only can you take notes that you'll use to craft your thank you communication, you'll also have a place to write your questions for the interviewer.

Today's The Day:

Step 1: Getting ready for your Interview

Dressing for an interview or any meeting with an employer can be a make or break experience when it comes to your job or internship search. It is critical to wear appropriate attire to demonstrate your image as a person who respects both the employer and the interview process. Take note that dressing up for an interview or employer/business event is not the same as dressing up for a social event. Dress professionally and conservatively to make a good first impression. If you aren't sure that a clothing choice is appropriate, always err on the side of caution.



See the images below for some visual hints for your interview. Many of our clinical caregivers may be coming to an interview directly from the unit or department—take the time to change into professional attire prior to the interview, to show you take the opportunity seriously.

WHAT DO I WEAR?



Business casual is the minimum standard- dress pants or a conservative skirt/dress. Some departments (sales, administrative/executive) may call for business professional.

If you aren't sure whether business casual or business professional is more appropriate, feel free to ask the recruiter. A well fitted blazer is always a safe and professional looking option for any interview. Keep accessories in line with this conservative approach- the focus is on your professional capabilities.

Grooming

Take a little extra time on this step today!

Perfume or cologne should be used sparingly- or not at all. Make sure you're not bringing any odors with you by mistake- strong cooking smells, body odor, etc. If you are a smoker, be extra cautious to avoid bringing the smell of smoke to your interview. Interviewees should make sure that hair and facial hair are well-groomed and nails are clean. Pull hair back if it is distracting to you or others. If you wear make-up, it should be subtle and low key. Make sure fingernails are clean and if you wear nail polish, choose a conservative shade.

Just before the interview, brush your teeth or use a mint (just don't chew gum during an interview).



Step 2: Tips For Your Big Day

Get there.

If you've never been to the location before, consider driving there and finding the area in advance, rather than waiting until the day of. Be sure you know where you'll park or get dropped off, and how long it will take to get to the interview space after that. A practice run can ease your nerves and ensure things go smoothly for the real deal!

We are a large health system—call the help desk at your location if you are unfamiliar with the unit or department you are going to. Don't rely on mobile technology for navigation, as construction can change the results. Additionally, GPS only shows the address- you still have to find the right room!

Be early.

Plan on being in the parking lot 20 minutes early. This will help account for traffic and weather.

Walk in to the designated interview location 5-10 minutes early. Respect the employers time and schedule by being early- but not *too* early. If you arrive way ahead of time, walk around public spaces for a little bit or wait elsewhere.

Turn your phone OFF.

Your phone can only serve as a distraction, so turn it OFF during the interview to avoid the tell-tale vibrating ring tone. It is very poor etiquette to check your phone or send text messages during the interview, even during transitions.

Body language: Sit up straight, breathe, smile.

It's natural to be nervous! It's easy to forget to smile when you're worried. It can help to think of something positive (such as a pet or vacation destination) while you wait, to avoid making yourself more nervous. You've done the prep ahead of time, so take a deep breath and sit up straight.

You've got this!

Be nice to everyone you meet.

It is common for hiring managers to solicit the opinions of everyone on the staff. Be cordial and respectful to the receptionist, janitor and all staff.

Stay calm and bounce back.

Somewhere during the interview, you're likely to be asked a question that causes you to stumble. *That's OK.*

You don't need to pitch a "perfect interview" to get the job. Brush off your shaky answer and move on to the next one.

You're not done yet! What to do after the interview:



Step 1: Send a Thank You Email or Handwritten Card within 24 Hours

Some hiring decisions happen very quickly. Make a good impression with a prompt, appreciative email or card to the interviewer. If you interviewed with multiple people, consider sending a separate email to each person. See the example email below. Keep it short and simple and be sure to proofread it—now is not the time for spelling and grammar mistakes!

Thank you notes should:

- Express your sincere appreciation
- Reemphasize your strongest qualifications. Draw attention to the good match between your qualifications and the job requirements.
- Reiterate your interest in the position. Use the opportunity to provide or offer supplemental information not given.
- Restate your appreciation.
- Anything important you forgot to mention

Example Thank You Notes

1. Thanks for the opportunity to discuss the ____role with (department name). I believe my (A) and (B) skills, combined with significant (C) and (D) experience, would be an asset to your team. I look forward to future discussions to learn how I can contribute to the BIG(GER) Aim. Sincerely,
2. I very much enjoyed our conversation yesterday about the _____ opportunity on your team. After our time together, I'm positive that my experience can make a measurable impact on your department's deliverables. I hope to hear from you in the near future. Best regards,
3. It was a pleasure meeting you yesterday to learn about the _____ position with (your department). I am very interested in learning more and continuing our conversation. I feel my background is a strong fit for your team. Thanks for the opportunity to meet, and I look forward to hearing from you. Very truly yours,
4. I truly appreciate the time you shared yesterday to talk about the ____ role in your department. Your insights about the position were very helpful, and I would enjoy the opportunity to further continue our dialogue and learn more about a career growth within Mission. Thanks and regards,
5. Thank you for our interview this week; the time and insight you shared were very much appreciated. After our meeting, I'm even more enthusiastic about the _____ opportunity with your department and am confident that my experience and medical background would allow me to quickly make a contribution to your team. I look forward to future discussions. Thanks again,



Step 2: Follow Up

What to do when you haven't heard back from the employer:

To find out an employer's deadline for making a hiring decision, be sure to ask at the end of your interview. If that deadline has past and you haven't been contacted, consider following up with a professional and friendly email. It is absolutely imperative that this email is polite and respectful. Remember, the employer does not "owe" you a job. See the example follow-up email below.

Example Follow-Up Email

Dear Ms. Armstrong,

Please allow me to follow up on my candidacy for the Executive Assistant position I recently interviewed for. I remain very interested in the position and am checking in on the status of the hiring decision. I can be reached via telephone at 555-555-5555 or via email at abcdef@fakedomain.org. Please feel free to reach out with any further questions you may have.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Wishing you a wonderful day.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Caregiver

Next Steps:

Option 1: You get the offer!

Things to consider once you receive a job offer:

- It is appropriate to ask the employers for details about the job offer. This is the time to ask about your start date, salary and benefits, if they will be changing.
- If you need time to make your decision, feel free to ask the employer for that time. Asking for two days or even a week is quite common. If you need an extension, let the employer know. Your reason for the request should be a good one. Of course, the employer has no obligation to accept your request. Be polite and act professionally in making any requests to the employer.
- Internal transfers are usually within 30 days—you will most likely start on the beginning of the pay period that is closest to 30 days. If you need more or less time, please let them know that as soon as possible. Your transfer to your new department will be a discussion between your current and future manager.

Salary Negotiation

When you're negotiating a job, knowing how to negotiate your way to a successful result requires preparation and strategy. If you counter, provide examples of your relevant experience and



education, suggest a specific number, and be polite! Use the following link for negotiation tips and strategies.

<http://www.monster.com/blog/b/how-to-negotiate-a-job-offer-and-salary/>

Option 2: Not Selected

Where to go from here:

After all of your preparation, this is not what you want to hear. Most job seekers will feel frustration and disappointment, and that's perfectly understandable. Take heart in knowing that getting the interview alone is an accomplishment- a random sample of nonclinical jobs currently posted on our site shows an average of 45 applicants for each role.

Keep in mind that you still have some professional development opportunities at this point. You want to leave the department with a great impression- you may have been a top contender and only narrowly missed out! Thank the recruiter for the interview and the chance to learn more about the department, and you may wish to follow up with the person who conducted the interview as well.

Here's an example of a thoughtful follow up email:

"Thanks so much for considering me for the _____ position. I'm sorry not to move forward at this time, but I hope you'll keep me in mind for future openings. I truly enjoyed learning more about the ___ department and workflows, and I'll keep my eye out for future postings. Please let me know if you have any feedback about my candidacy or interview."

While not all hiring managers will have the time to follow up and offer feedback, it doesn't hurt to ask. The recruiter may also be able to offer you some insight into the selection process. It's helpful to know if you need to polish up your interview skills, or if the other candidate just had more experience, etc. Sometimes feedback can be hard to hear, but it offers us the chance to grow and improve!

Take some time to reflect on the experience and use it to become even more prepared for the next go round.