

# **Interview Questions for Foster Grandparents: A Tool for Project Directors & Staff**

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Recruiting Foster Grandparents is an important role of project directors and staff. Once the sponsor has signed a Memorandum of Understanding and an assignment description is in place, interviews can help you make the best match for potential Foster Grandparents and children served.

## **Eligibility Requirements for Foster Grandparents**

If you have not already done so, a personal interview will allow you to determine whether prospective Foster Grandparents meet age and income eligibility requirements. For detailed guidance on Foster Grandparent enrollment eligibility, consult the FGP Operations Handbook. The handbook also provides suggested interview topics and selection criteria, including the ability to consistently serve for a significant number of hours per week and an interest in and ability to develop a one-to-one relationship with a child or children with exceptional or special needs. In addition to Corporation guidance, familiarize yourself with any requirements of the sponsoring agency and/or volunteer station, as well as guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding prohibited interview questions.

## **General Interview Tips**

As you interview prospective Foster Grandparents, keep these tips in mind:

- Make the interviewee feel comfortable. Remember, this is not a formal job interview; you want potential volunteers to feel relaxed and welcome.
- Give a clear description of the assignment. This will help you and the potential Foster Grandparent determine suitability.
- Ask open-ended questions whenever possible. A conversational format will put prospective Foster Grandparents at ease and help you learn more about them.
- Ask only questions relevant to the placement. Once FGP eligibility requirements have been satisfied, eligibility may not be restricted on the basis of formal education, experience, race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, handicap, or political affiliation.

## Suggested Interview Questions

Because Foster Grandparents tutor and mentor children and youth with special needs, you will likely target your interview questions to assess suitability and previous experience in these areas. Prospective Foster Grandparents will have a variety of personal skills, educational backgrounds, and professional experiences. The following questions will help you uncover those skills, backgrounds, and experiences especially relevant to tutoring and mentoring.

Many direct questions, especially those about education and work experience, are best asked on the FGP application. Take what you learn from the application into consideration as you prepare for and tailor your in-person discussion. It's not necessary to ask all of the suggested questions; choose only those that are relevant and appropriate to the assignment. Finally, the Corporation strongly recommends that sponsors establish policies concerning criminal background checks for Foster Grandparent candidates.

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### Literacy Skills & Education

While the level of formal education of prospective Foster Grandparents will vary widely, exploring candidates' life experiences will help you assess their suitability to tutor and mentor children and youth.

- Do you have any experience in educational settings and/or teaching? If yes, please describe.
- Do you speak any languages other than English?
- What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
- Have you completed any classes or coursework in education-related topics?
- Describe any experience you have reading to or with children or helping children with their schoolwork.
- Do you regularly read books or magazines for pleasure? Tell me about your reading habits.

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## Experience with Children and Youth

Working with children and youth with exceptional needs brings unique rewards and challenges. Prospective Foster Grandparents may have specific experience, preferences, and expectations that you should consider when making a match.

- What experience do you have working with children and youth?
- Tell me what you most enjoy about working with children. What are some of the challenges?
- Describe any experience you have as a tutor or mentor to children or youth.
- How would you approach finding and selecting children's books? Do you have any favorites? What are they?
- Often people have a favorite age group to work with. What is your favorite age group to work with? Why? Are there any age groups that you prefer *not* to work with?
- Are there any placement situations that you would feel uncomfortable working in?
- One of the goals of the Foster Grandparent Program is to provide a consistent person-to-person relationship for children and youth with special needs. Because children benefit from such consistency, Foster Grandparents are required to serve an average of 20 hours a week. Are there any circumstances that would prevent you from serving consistently?



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## Experience and Knowledge of Local Community

Often, prospective Foster Grandparents have lived in their communities for many years. Because Foster Grandparents are recruited in response to specific assignments, explore candidates' knowledge of the community and the school where they will be placed.

- How long have you lived/worked in the community?
- Please describe any connection you have to the school(s) under consideration for placement.
- Do you participate in any community- or faith-based education activities or partnerships that support schools and/or education? Tell me about them.

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## Personal Goals and Motivation

Seniors become involved in the Foster Grandparent Program for an array of reasons. Find out as much as you can about candidates' motivation to serve, personal goals, special needs, hobbies, and interests in order to make the best placement possible.

- How does the assignment description fit with your personal goals?
- How would you characterize the qualities and skills you bring to this assignment?
- Describe the ideal working and volunteering environment for you.
- What are the most difficult aspects of jobs or volunteer experiences you have held?
- Describe a situation in which you worked as part of a team. What were your contributions to the team effort?

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## Attitudes Toward Education and Schools

For many prospective Foster Grandparents, much time has passed since their own experience with schools. Rely on tough interview questions to uncover attitudes or experiences that could make tutoring or mentoring children difficult or inappropriate for some individuals. Often volunteers come from cultures very different from the children with whom they will be working. Probe for indications that volunteers will be sensitive and responsive to a variety of learning styles and backgrounds.

- Think back to your own school situation. What memories come to mind?
- People often talk about how different schools are today than “when they were kids.” How do you experience this?
- What are your thoughts about discipline in schools?
- What would you say if a student cursed during a session?
- What strategies would you use if a child didn't want to work with you?
- When children work together, disagreements often occur. What are some strategies you might use to resolve such disagreements?
- Imagine that you are working with a small group of children, and one or two become disruptive. How would you respond to the situation?

