Staff selection processes

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The implementation team is responsible for assuring the availability of competent interviewers (selection, training, and coaching of interviewers) and establishing recruitment and selection plans. A specific person is responsible for coordinating the quality and timeliness of interview processes for practitioners using an innovation.

General human resources staff can do advertising and can screen applicants for basic qualifications. Advertising for new people to be hired can include information on the training and coaching support and opportunities to learn innovative practices (see www.activeimplementation.org for an example position description). Based on interviews with practitioners who met fidelity criteria, statements in the recruiting ad about support and learning were attractive and led them to apply. Advertising for people already employed in an organization might take the form of an email alerting staff about the intended use of an innovation and the name of a person to contact if anyone is interested.

The following example of a best practices interview process is conducted by those who have a stake in hiring the person; that is, those who will "live with" the decision to hire. Typically, interviewers include a coach or trainer who knows the innovation well and has a "feel for" successful (and not successful) practitioners, a manager or director responsible for the use of an innovation, and a practitioner who has met fidelity criteria. See www.activeimplementation.org for a best practices interview process that includes:

- Initial phone call: 10 minutes to describe the position, the use of the innovation, and supports for using the innovation as intended; 40 minutes asking the applicant about relevant experience, asking for self-ratings on verbal and written communication experience and abilities, and asking the applicant to respond to simple scenarios that provide examples of the kinds of work to be done using the innovation; 10 minutes asking the applicant questions about her resume or other application materials related to experience and qualifications, and answering any questions the applicant may have.
    - Look for candidates who are engaging and enthusiastic; who ask questions related to the innovation and not just the position (salary, benefits); who exhibit knowledge, skills, and abilities that are a good fit with the innovation.
    - Invite a promising applicant for an in-person interview.
- In person interview – Part 1: 10 minutes for discussion to answer any questions the applicant has about the postion, the work to be done, and the supports provided to do the work with fidelity; 20 minutes asking the applicant to respond to more complex scenarios taken from

the experience of practitioners. The interview is conducted in a conversational and friendly way with some humor and banter to help the applicant relax and display her best behavior.

    - Look for candidates who are engaging and enthusiastic; who exhibit knowledge, skills, and abilities that are a good fit with the innovation; and who provide reasonable responses to the scenarios. The scenarios elicit hints about an applicant's personal philosophy and values that can be explored further with a few observations and questions.
    - For many candidates, this is the end of the interview process. They have not met the standards of the interview team. Let the candidate know when a decision will be made and how they will be contacted.
    - For candidates who still look like potentially good hires, take a quick break then begin Part 2.

- In person interview – Part 2: 40 minutes to conduct two role plays. For each one, the lead interviewer (role play leader) presents a situation (complicated, but not too difficult) and asks the applicant to put her/himself in the role of the practitioner. The second interviewer (confederate) plays the role of the intended recipient of the innovation services (child, parent, patient, community member). The role play is scripted so the confederate knows what to say and not say as the applicant engages the "recipient." At the end of role play #1, the lead interviewer provides descriptive praise for two or three aspects on the applicant's behavior and provides constructive criticism of one thing the applicant did or omitted. After assuring understanding of the appropriate alternative behavior, the lead interviewer re-starts the role play at a point where the applicant has an opportunity to engage in the new behavior with the "recipient." Then do role play #2 and repeat the process. 20 minutes for questions and next steps.
    - During the role plays the interviewers pay close attention to how well the candidate accepts the positive descriptive feedback and the constructive critical feedback. Candidates who deny doing the positive things or want to argue about the content of the critical feedback likely will not accept coaching very well and are poor candidates for demanding practitioner or implementation staff positions.
    - For those candidates who do well during the role plays and incorporate the feedback in the re-practice part, engage them in a discussion about what the experience was like for them and put the role play experience in the context of how training, coaching, and fidelity assessments are done in the organization.

The role plays are the most telling aspect of the interview process. Perhaps 2 or 3 candidates out of 10 who make it to the in-person interview also excel in the role play scenes and are hired, and there always seem to be one or two surprises in each group of candidates – apparent stars who fade quickly during the role plays. Even after candidates are informed that they are not hired, they often thank the interviewers for providing a very interesting experience.

Role-Play Scenes

An example of role play scenes used in the interview process for hiring new Implementation Specialists (Implementation Team members) is provided here.

<u>Instructions to the Interviewer:</u>

Prepare the applicant by stating that we are going to present some “real life” role-play situations based on the work we have done. Introduce the confederate. Prior to each role play, give the applicant the instruction sheet and answer any questions after the applicant has read it. State a couple of times that we are not looking for any specific procedures; “there are no right answers so just do what you think is right to be helpful.”

Take notes during the role-play. After the role-play has concluded offer positive feedback on one or two things that the applicant said or did related to the specific role play. You also can offer positive feedback on one or more of the following generic skills: ability to offer empathy, active listening skills, respect for the person and team members, asking follow-up questions to get relevant information (e.g. second-hand observation skills), non-judgmental statements, hopeful words, attending to feelings, clinical judgement, ability to arrive at ‘next right steps,’ and ability to get buy-in for next right steps. Spend most of the time on the positive things the applicant did.

Then, pick one concept area and offer constructive feedback. Describe what the applicant said or did that needs to change (“what you said/did was …”), describe the appropriate alternative behavior clearly (“another way of saying/doing that is …”), label the skill (“this is an example of ….”), provide a rationale for why the appropriate alternative behavior is an improvement (“the reason this is important is ….), ask the applicant to practice doing/saying the appropriate alternative behavior with you “to make sure you’ve got it,” answer any questions the applicant may have, then restart the role-play at a point where the applicant can use the “new skill” in the interaction with the confederate.

Pay close attention to the applicant’s abilities in each of the concept areas during the interactions with the confederate and with the Interviewer. Also, carefully note the applicant’s ability to accept praise, accept critical feedback, learn the new skill you teach, and use that new skill in the re-start of the role-play situation. This is a mini-training session and a mini-coaching session wrapped up in one so pay careful attention to how teachable/coachable the applicant is (a “general mental ability;” the ability to quickly learn and use new information and skills).

At the end of a re-started role-play offer only positive statements about how the applicant performed. Then, move on to the next role-play.

Instructions to the Role Play Leader:

The following role-play asks the applicant to engage a regional implementation team member in problem solving to get past didactic teaching.

Problem solving consists of engaging the Confederate in SOCS – identifying the Situation, generating Options, considering the Consequences of each option (i.e. advantages and disadvantages), and generating one or more possible Solutions.

During the role-play take notes on how the applicant engaged the confederate in constructive problem solving instead of complaining, what advice the applicant had for solving the problem, and what help the applicant offered to solve the problem (try to get quotes of what he/she said). Also note the extent to which the applicant is willing to take responsibility for helping to use those solutions in practice (e.g. all "you do" or do solutions include "we do"?).

After the role-play has concluded offer positive descriptive feedback on any skill components that were used. If none were used, offer praise for ability to offer empathy, active listening skills, clarity of instructions, or other generic skills.

Then provide constructive criticism on one or more missing components related to SOCS, engagement, and taking responsibility. In general, try to get the applicant to do as much of the problem solving interaction as possible without overwhelming the applicant. Then restart the role-play at a point where the applicant can use the "new skill" in the interaction to do problem solving with the confederate.

When giving constructive criticism, pay close attention to the applicant's ability to accept praise, accept critical feedback, listen and learn the new skill you teach, and use that new skill in the re-start of the role-play situation. This is a mini-training session and a mini-coaching session wrapped up in one so pay careful attention to how teachable/coachable the applicant is.

At the end of the re-start offer only praise for trying again and engaging in the process (no matter how well or poorly the applicant performed).

Instructions to the Confederate:

You are the leader of an implementation team that has just started working with a provider organization. You have engaged the leadership of the organization and are working with the staff to establish implementation supports for practitioners in the organization. You are very frustrated and upset that the people in the organization are not following your advice (Theme of this role play: You have been providing only didactic training with no active modeling or observation-based coaching). You have made presentations to them, you had them do homework on the Ai Hub and report what they learned at meetings, you have developed reminder cards, and so on. The people in the organization still are not preparing leadership, developing competencies, and changing organization practices as required (i.e. not changing their behavior).

Make statements to the Implementation Specialist about how working with this group is a waste of your time and how you are willing to move on to work with another organization if the Implementation Specialist agrees. Make statements about how you have tried everything and nothing seems to work.

You start by complaining about the lack of progress. Be excited and a bit angry at first then calm down once the Implementation Specialist interrupts your monologue or asks a question. Be positive and accepting of any advice.

<u>Instructions to the Applicant (Implementation Specialist):</u>

You are an Implementation Specialist and the leader of NIRN's efforts to establish a regional implementation team that will work with several organizations to establish implementation supports for practitioners. You have been working with the regional implementation team for several months. You are meeting with the leader of the regional implementation team who has told you he/she is frustrated with lack of progress.

Respond to the situation as you see fit. There are no right or wrong approaches. Don't worry about the specifics (names, places, events). Make it up along with any other information you want and [confederate name] will go along with you in the role-play.

Staff selection in practice

Staff recruitment and selection requires planning and organization. The Table below provides a list of key aspects to consider as selection with implementation in mind is established for the first time in an organization determined to make full and effective use of a selected innovation.

Best practices for recruitment and selection of staff	***In Place***
Accountability for development and monitoring of quality and timeliness of selection services is clear (e.g. lead person designated and supported)	
Job description for human resource staff; clarity re: accountability and expectations	
Pre-Requisites for employment are related to "new practices" and expectations (e.g. basic group management skills)	
Interactive Interview Process	
• Behavioral vignettes and Behavior Rehearsals	
• Assessment of ability to accept feedback	
• Assessment of ability to change own behavior	
Interviewers who understand the skills and abilities needed and can assess applicants accurately.	
A regular process is in place to feed forward interview data to training staff & administrators & coaches (integration)	
A regular process is in place to feedback from exit interviews, training data, turnover data, opinions of administrators & coaches, and staff evaluation data to evaluate effectiveness of this Driver	