



Questions to Prepare for a Public Interest Interview

Public interest employers place a high premium on candidates who demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to their mission. Most public interest employers seek to hire applicants who have shown a specific interest in their core issue area(s) and/or have experience working with the populations that the organization serves. You can demonstrate your interest and commitment through thorough, detailed research into the organization and specific personal or professional experience with the organization's constituents and/or issue areas.

In addition to the standard interview questions that you should anticipate and prepare for, consider how you would respond to the following questions:

- Why are you interested in the issue(s) that the employer focuses on?
- Why do you want to work in this specific type of practice setting (direct legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, etc)?
- Describe your commitment to public or government service. What previous experience have you had with public or community service?
- What has been the greatest challenge you have faced during your volunteer efforts? How did you overcome such a challenge?
- What do you know about the communities or individuals served by the employer?
- What experience do you have working with individuals who are very different than you?
- What do you think would be the most challenging aspects of the work for you?
- What do you see as the basic rewards for working for a legal services or public interest organization?
- What strategies would you use to develop a rapport with clients who come to you in distress and seeking immediate assistance?
- Why did you choose to work at the organizations you previously worked for?
- How do you define professional success?
- How comfortable are you working independently? Have you done that before?
- What are your short and long term career goals?

See also the [Interview Skills Overview](#) for questions specific to government, legal services, public defender, and prosecutor interviews.

Most interviewers will provide an opportunity for you to ask them questions. This is your chance to demonstrate to the employer that you have done your research and that you are thoughtfully imagining yourself in the position. Some sample questions to ask public sector employers:

- Why did you [the interviewer] join this organization? What are the most rewarding and challenging aspects of the work?
- How does your organization get new cases or clients?
- How is your organization funded?
- What is the structure of your organization?
- Does your organization partner with outside/pro bono counsel or other organizations?
- What is the typical professional path of an attorney who joins your organization?
- What challenges do you foresee the organization facing in the next year or five years?