



## **TIPS for Student Job Seekers**

Job hunting and preparing for a professional career can be stressful. The following are a few tips that may help to make that task more comfortable and successful.

### **WHILE IN SCHOOL AND PRIOR TO BEGINNING YOUR JOB SEARCH:**

1. Become a member of the campus social work organization.
2. Join and participate in at least one professional organization related to your field of interest. If you are interested in school social work (SSW), join the state SSW association or one of the three national associations that represent SSW. Attend one of the professional conferences. Generally, there is an affordable student membership and/or conference fee.
3. Volunteer in your community, preferably in a school. If that is not available to you, volunteer in a child or youth related organization such as the Boys and Girls Club.
4. Secure an internship if possible, again within a school or child/youth related organization.
5. Use your volunteer work and internship to develop relationships with mentors and supervisors who will write strong recommendations for you.
6. Develop strong organizational and time management skills.

### **PRIOR TO JOB INTERVIEWS:**

1. Compose a brief, one to two page resume that highlights your experience and skills. Do not make it lengthy.
2. In the resume, use key words that are included in the job ad of your target employers. There are some key words that are used frequently in school social work descriptions (ex: PBIS--Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports; RTI--Response to Intervention; trauma sensitive schools; evidence-based practice; data-driven decision making; social-emotional learning, etc.). Use some of them, as appropriate--and know what they mean.
3. Change the resume as necessary to reflect the needs of the target employer.
4. Research the school district. Know the demographics of the student population and teachers. Understand the stated mission of the district. Find the school district's school improvement plan online and study it. Be able to articulate the long- and short-term district goals--and how your skills will help the district to meet those goals. Do your homework!
5. Organize materials you may want to share or highlight during the interview.

## DURING THE INTERVIEW:

1. Be yourself!
2. Dress professionally. This means no T-shirts, golf shirts, jeans, sandals (unless dress sandals). Sun dresses and spaghetti straps don't say you take the job seriously. If unsure what to wear, ask someone you respect for advice.
3. Be able to answer the following questions:
  - a) *Tell me about yourself.* -- Develop a short, one to two minute response that touches on your education, work experience, and accomplishments. Be specific but don't share your entire family history.
  - b) *What is your strength?* -- Talk about tangible skills, not generalities. For example, share that you are able to reduce truancy rates with specific student populations (ex: teen moms, drug involved youth, etc.). Don't say you can "establish rapport with teens." That doesn't tell the interviewer how your skills will help them to meet the district goals.
  - c) *What is your area of weakness?* -- Answer the question briefly--and don't list all of them! When possible, tell how a "weakness" became an advantage. For example, "I have a tendency to be overly detail oriented, but because of that I was able to help a new administrator to understand a particularly challenging special education student."
  - d) *Why do you want this position? Why should we hire you? What do you bring that no one else does?* Or any other version of this. -- This is the time for your "sales pitch", to highlight why you are the best person to fill the job. It is the time to describe how your skills and experience will help the district to meet its goals and help students become capable, educated adults.
4. Salary. Generally it is not a good idea to ask about salary during a first interview. While this is a piece of information that may be a major factor in whether you take a job, it is best to be a final candidate for a position before you discuss salary and benefits. If, however, you are asked what you want in terms of a salary, it is entirely appropriate to: (a) state that you don't yet know enough about the position to make that judgment or (b) ask what range the employer has in mind. By doing research prior to the interview you will be able to find out whether the position is on the teacher union's scale or independent of it. If independent, one way to find out typical salaries is to call human resources departments in neighboring districts and ask.
5. Take a deep breath. It's natural to be a little anxious so don't be too concerned about it. Relax!!