

NAMI Peer-to-Peer Mentor Interview Tool

This tool has been developed by individuals who are currently involved in recruiting and evaluating consumers for NAMI programs. It is offered as a relevant and effective guide for interviewing applicants.

Initial screening is a critical part of the mentor application process. Be sure you have read the application before conducting the screening interview. This tool is utilized to help “screen out” individuals who may not be good candidates for Peer-to-Peer mentor training due to their current state of health, lack of communication skills, inability to make and keep commitments, inability to read, desire to merely look for a leadership position, or the likelihood of using the position of mentor for their own rather than the class’s needs. Concern for both the basic comfort level of applicants during the training, and their potential for safe and effective teaching are primary considerations in the screening process.

Starting the interview with the job requirements

The application includes the following information about the job requirements for NAMI Peer-to-Peer mentors:

- ✓ Willing and able to undergo an intensive three-day training
- ✓ Agree to adhere to fidelity to the NAMI Peer-to-Peer model at all times
- ✓ Make a commitment to teach at least two classes within one year of training
- ✓ Agree to report class data
- ✓ Willing to identify potential new course participants
- ✓ Are or become a member of NAMI
- ✓ Comfortable reading aloud to the group
- ✓ Are in recovery
- ✓ Have an attitude of sincere, uncritical acceptance

At the beginning of the interview, interviewers should review these requirements, and ask the candidate if s/he understands them.

Moving to key interview questions

There are a number of important questions relating to job requirements which can usefully be asked during the interview process. It is not necessary to ask all of the questions. They are presented to provide assistance in the interview evaluation.

Following each question are both “red flags” and “points to listen for” in responses. These are just suggestions to help determine how ready candidates for training are to take on the responsibilities of a presenter and/or how successful they might be. Red flag responses might be a signal of qualities which would rule out a candidate and need to be explored a little with the applicant to clarify anything of concern. Look for a pattern of red flags in order to determine if a candidate is not a good match for the position.

A form is provided for notation of candidates’ responses to the questions. (Page 7)

Interview Questions

1) Why do you want to be a Peer-to-Peer mentor?

✓ Points to listen for:

- Want to give back
- Want to help others
- Would like to be part of a national program that helps educate and support others
- Want to contribute to my community

✓ Red flags

- I want to tell others how to make their lives better
- I know what people want/need to know about recovery with a mental illness
- I like to be in charge
- If I get this job I can get another job
- I am glad to do this because I will get paid

2) How do you define recovery?

✓ Points to listen for:

- Wellness
- I participate in life
- I am engaged in my community
- I am at peace with myself
- I am able to manage my daily living
- I use coping skills to help myself
- I am able reach out and help others through my own experiences
- I am alert for signs of relapse and make the necessary adjustments in a timely manner

✓ Red flags

- Talking of going off medications without consulting a doctor
- Wanting to give others advice
- Wanting to tell others how to __ (fill in the blank. ex: use alternative medicine, pray)
- Not able to identify coping skills or detail any type of treatment plan

3) How are you doing in recovery right now?

✓ Points to listen for:

- I've been doing well for x-period of time
- I have a wellness plan in place
- I can trust family or friends to let me know if I am not doing well

Listen carefully to how the person defines his recovery status.
Ask for some short term goals that have been accomplished

✓ Red flags

- I think I'm okay but other people have told me they think I need help
- I just recently got out of the hospital

4) Why do you feel you are ready to “give back” to others through Peer-to-Peer?

✓ Points to listen for:

- It makes me feel good knowing that I can help others
- Answer reflects a positive attitude
- Helping self through helping others

✓ Red flags

- There are a lot of people who need to know what I know
- I am looking forward to giving advice to others on how to succeed

5) What do you know about NAMI's Peer-to-Peer Program? (If nothing, explain the program.)

✓ Points to listen for:

- Ask for a verbal explanation then strengthen the knowledge base if necessary. You might want offer the NAMI document on mission and goals

✓ Red flags

- I have lots of experience teaching and will use my learned skills for Peer-to-Peer (not necessarily negative if they indicate an ability to learn and change)

6) Do you have extensive knowledge about mental illness? (If yes, do you think you can keep from giving your students advice?)

✓ Points to listen for:

- If professional knowledge is apparent please carefully ask if they can refrain from giving advice to students

✓ Red flags

- I am a professional and know about mental illness. (Again, not necessarily negative if they indicate an interest in learning with an ability to change)

7) Are there any special needs or considerations we should know about when considering your application?

✓ Points to listen for:

- My wellness plan includes the following

✓ Red flags

- If you feel there are concerns please list them

8) Do you feel you have accepted your mental illness?

✓ Points to listen for:

- Acceptance of any illness is a process
- I accept it but don't have to like it
- I am still in a grieving process
- I do feel I accept my mental illness

✓ Red flags

- Recovery means I am completely well and no longer need to be in treatment

9) Are you able to share your experiences and what you've learned?

✓ Points to listen for:

- I am eager to help others by sharing my personal experiences
- I have learned from my mistakes and am willing to share with others

✓ Red flags

- I have difficulty talking about my illness

10) Have you had prior experiences with making time commitments similar to this? If yes, how did that work out for you?

✓ Points to listen for:

- Yes, it worked out well; I didn't have any problems
- Yes, it was hard, but I was able to be there most of the time
- Yes, I wasn't well enough to follow through, but now I'm fairly sure I am

✓ Red flags

- No. Ask if they think they are ready now.
- Yes, I tried to keep it but I didn't do well. (Ask if they think they can do it now and why)
- Yes, not well. It's really hard for me to follow through on commitments because of my illness

11) Have you ever been convicted of a felony? **

✓ Points to listen for

- No, I have never been convicted of any crime
- Yes, I once during a manic episode I wrote a bunch of bad checks. I am still working to pay them off
- I have been clean and sober for many years now but I used to steal to support a drug habit
- Generally takes responsibility for their actions vs. getting defensive

✓ Red flags

- I got caught sleeping with a minor, but he initiated things
- One time I got so mad I took a gun and threatened to kill my sister
- I have been in jail a bunch of time. In fact, I just got out last week
- Does not take responsibility/acts defensive

** Conviction of a felony does not automatically disqualify a participant from becoming a mentor. It is important to consider a person's growth over time and ability to acknowledge and take responsibility for their actions. Note any concerns you have during the interview, and make a decision based on your assessment of the person's current standing in relation to the past action. Also, the interview taken as a whole will give you the most accurate picture of how a person is doing today and whether they are ready to become a mentor.

In addition, it is important that you know and adhere to any state laws regarding working with people convicted of felonies.

12) Do you have your own transportation?

✓ Points to look for

- Yes, I have a....

✓ Red flags

- Yes, but my car is in the shop again

13) If you do not have your own vehicle do you use public transportation?

✓ Points to look for

- Yes, I rely on the bus to get me where I need to go
- No, but I am willing to ride share with another mentor in my affiliate

14) Do you feel comfortable reading out loud to others from a text?

✓ Points to look for

- Yes I feel comfortable reading out loud
- I sometimes have trouble reading out loud, but am willing to study the text in order to present the material well
- I have been told I am a good reader and that I project well

✓ Red flags

- To tell you the truth I am not a very good reader
- I would rather not practice reading out loud in front of you right now
- Yes I am a good reader, but I oppose this as a teaching method

15) Give them a sample piece of P2P text to practice reading from out loud. This will help you assess their skills as a reader. If the interview is being conducted over the phone have them read out loud from a newspaper or book they have on hand.

Closing

Thank candidates for the conversation you've had.

Let them know when they will be notified about the results of their application and screening. Remind them that even if they attend the training, if there is a question on their part, or on the trainers' part, about their abilities they may not be certified at that training. If the timing is bad for them it may be suggested that they wait until the next training.

NAMI Peer-to-Peer Mentor Interview Questions

Applicant's name: _____
Address: _____
City _____ Zip _____
Home phone _____ other phone _____
Email: _____

NAMI Affiliate: _____
Date of Interview: _____

Job requirements

- ✓ Willing and able to undergo an intensive three-day training
- ✓ Agree to adhere to fidelity to the NAMI Peer-to-Peer model at all times
- ✓ Make a commitment to teach at least two classes within one year of training
- ✓ Agree to report class data
- ✓ Willing to identify potential new course participants
- ✓ Is or become a member of NAMI
- ✓ Comfortable reading aloud to the group
- ✓ Participates in an active treatment plan
- ✓ Attitude of sincere, uncritical acceptance of students and co-mentors

_____ Applicant understands the job requirements

Reminder: It is not necessary to ask all questions. These are just suggestions to help you to evaluate for how ready the consumer is to take on the responsibilities of a facilitator and/or how successful they might be.

1) Why do you want to be a Peer-to-Peer mentor?

2) How do you define recovery?

3) How are you doing in recovery right now?

4) Why do you feel you are ready to “give back” to others through Peer-to-Peer?

5) What do you know about NAMI’s Peer-to-Peer Program? (If nothing, explain the program.)

6) Do you have extensive knowledge about mental illness? (If yes, do you think you can keep from giving audience members advice?)

7) Are there any special needs or considerations we should know about when considering your application? (If yes, record for future reference.)

8) Do you feel you have accepted your mental illness?

9) Are you able to share your experiences and what you’ve learned?

10) Have you had prior experiences with making time commitments similar to this? If yes, how did that work out for you?

11) Have you ever been convicted of a felony? (If yes, look for ability to take responsibility rather than becoming defensive)

12) Do you have your own transportation?_____

13) If no, do you use public transportation? _____

14) Do you feel comfortable reading out loud to others from a text? _____

15) Ability to read out loud: _____

16) Additional comments:

Compliment the person genuinely after they finish the interview.

Let them know that you will get back to them in _____ days/weeks.

**(Whenever decisions will be made on who will be invited to participate in training.)
Remember to get back to them.**

I recommend this person to attend the Peer-to-Peer Mentor training – yes ___ no ___

Signature of Person Conducting Interview

Date