

## **WHAT IS A PANEL INTERVIEW?**

A panel interview is an interview where the applicant is questioned by more than one person. Panels consist of usually three to seven persons. Usually, panel members take turns asking questions of the applicant. All applicants are asked the same set of questions.

## **TIPS ON PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW**

1. Find out as much as you can about the Howard County Fire and Rescue Department. The best source of information is the department website.
2. Practice interviewing.
3. Make sure you know the exact place, date, and time of your interview. If unfamiliar with the location, drive there ahead of time.
4. Arrive at least ten to fifteen minutes early for your interview.
5. Go alone. Do not take friends or children.
6. Greet the interviewers with a handshake and make eye contact.
7. Be polite and try to relax
8. Listen carefully to the questions asked. Ask the interviewer to restate a question if you are confused or did not hear it clearly.
9. Answer questions as directly and completely as possible.
10. Be upbeat and make positive statements.
11. Use examples of how your skills and abilities fit the job.

## **SAMPLE OF QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED IN INTERVIEWS**

1. Tell me about yourself. (This is often an ice-breaker question. Keep the answer job or skill related.)
2. What do you know about the type of work we do? (This is your chance to tell what you know from the research you completed ahead of time.)
3. What is your weakness? (Always make this a positive answer. For example, "My spelling is not always perfect, so I always use a spell checker.")
4. What are your strengths? (Describe your skills in a way that will show you as a desirable employee for the company.)
5. Why did you leave your last job? ( Answer with a positive statement. Try not to say: "I was fired," "terminated," "quit," "had no babysitter," or "couldn't get along with coworkers or supervisor". However, you can say: "new job," "contract ended," "seasonal," "temporary," "career change," "returned to school," to raise a family," or "relocated.")
6. Why have you been unemployed for such a long time? (Tell the truth. Emphasize that you were looking for a good company where you can settle and make a contribution.)

7. Why should we hire you? (Make a positive statement, such as "I would like the opportunity to work with you and believe that I can do the work.")
8. Do you have references? (It is most important that you contact your references ahead of time and have their name, current address, and telephone numbers.)

### **SOME REASONS WHY PEOPLE DO NOT GET HIRED**

1. Untidy personal appearance; inappropriately dressed for the interview.
2. Inability to express and/or convey information clearly; incomplete and/or inappropriate responses to questions.
3. Displaying a lack of genuine interest in or enthusiasm for the job.
4. Wanting more money than advertised for the position.
5. Displaying a negative attitude; making negative comments about past co-workers and/or supervisors or the work environment.
6. Lack of eye contact.
7. Incomplete or sloppy application.
8. Being late for the interview.

### **CLOSING**

At the end of the interview, thank the interviewers for their time and restate how interested you are in the position. This is also the time to ask any questions you may have. A very brief summary of your qualifications for the job can be made.