

A list of tips compiled by: Sue Stock, Ph.D., Barry Schreier, Ph.D., Jeff Brooks-Harris, Ph.D.

Identifying Job Possibilities

a. You may become aware of CC job openings through

1. Print media: APA Monitor, Chronicle of Higher Ed, ACPA Developments
2. Listservs: from your training director, clinical director, and/or center director
3. The internet, e.g.:
 - ACPA <http://www.myacpa.org/>
 - The Counseling Center Village <https://ubwp.buffalo.edu/ccvillage/>
 - The Chronicle <http://chronicle.com/>
 - APA <http://www.apa.org/>
4. Various other classified/resume posting sites:
 - on-site Placement Services, such as at ACPA and APA
 - mailings sent to CCs or academic departments
 - personal contacts and word of mouth

b. Avoid ruling out excellent jobs on the basis of geographic (e.g. west coast) or lifestyle preferences (e.g. rural vs. urban). You probably won't be at your first job forever. You need to apply for lots of jobs to get one you like.

c. If your search is geographically limited, write to all possible employers whether or not they are advertising a position.

d. When you identify a job for which you plan to apply you may choose to call the agency to get more information, particularly to get a sense of what special needs the center has that need to be filled and that you can address in your letter of application. These needs may include an area of expertise (e.g. LD assessment) or an area to coordinate (e.g. outreach).

e. Consider applying for every position that could be a possibility. The worst case scenario is that you will have a paycheck and will garner some additional experience.

f. Consider how you react to stress and prepare for this as well. Job searching is not just preparing paperwork—it is also about preparing yourself.

Cover letter

a. Your first sentence should announce the position for which you are applying and that you are writing in response to the position announcement in X (state where you saw the announcement).

b. Show how you meet the minimum qualifications.

c. Highlight your strengths in the areas that have been indicated in the announcement or during a phone call. Be careful, however, not to pigeon-hole yourself as a specialist--most CCs value generalists who can also bring some special skills or talents.

d. If applicable, highlight appropriate generalizable skills from other jobs.

e. A cover letter introduces you to the selection committee and should highlight things that will be detailed in your vita. Keep the cover letter to 1-2 pages.

f. Emphasize what you can offer the site, not what you could learn from them.

Vita

a. Vitae vary in length, detail, and style. To decide how to present your vita, review vitae of successful applicants who have obtained employment in a similar position.

b. Headings should include education, clinical and/or professional experience, outreach and consultation experience, publications and presentations, and professional affiliations. You may also want to include licensure status and committee service or other relevant experience. The greatest variation in length is usually due to how much detail is included under professional experience--for example, listing all of the groups you have facilitated or all of the outreaches you have presented.

c. Avoid padding your vita with extras such as conferences you've attended, classes you've taken, numbers of supervised hours, etc. Also, do not exaggerate what you have done.

d. Be sure that your vita is visually appealing and easy to read.

Letters of Reference

a. Choose people who are familiar with your relevant work and can speak to your strengths.

b. Avoid those who write a standard or form letter. Avoid letters that are general with no specific or significant information. Reconsider those that ask you to write the letter that they will simply sign.

c. If you are unsure about the type of letter a particular recommender might write, it is possible to request that a copy of the letter be sent to you first, so that you can decide if you want it sent to potential employers.

d. Remind recommenders (in writing) of the contact that they have had with you. Talk to them about experiences and skills that make you particularly qualified for the position(s) you are seeking. Remind them of details you would like them to include in their letter.

e. Provide references with a copy of your vita, a "brag sheet" (in which you have summarized your experiences and accomplishments), a copy of the position announcement, the date the letter is due, and stamped envelopes (when necessary).

f. Be sure to send a formal thank you to anyone who has written you a letter of reference—keep those bridges in good shape!

Convention Interviews

Some CCs interview candidates at the annual ACPA Convention held in March. If you are conducting a national CC job search, this is an excellent opportunity to meet many employers and to let them interview you. A convention interview is a way for candidates and employers to interact at much lower cost (in time, effort, and money) than an on-site interview. As many as thirty CCs may have open positions through the job placement service and you may have the opportunity to participate in as many interviews for which you have time.

You may also get tips about job possibilities from CC staff who are not themselves hiring, but know of openings at other sites. Meetings and sessions held by ACPA's Commission for Counseling and Psychological Services (CCAPS) are good places to meet CC staff from around the country.

- a. Most ACPA interviews are a half-hour or an hour, and are with one or two people. Your interviews will be held at either the allotted table at the convention center or in another place such as a hotel lobby.
- b. You may have informal contact with prospective employers at the social hours and night-time entertainment, so it makes sense to be on "professional behavior" at all times. These are nice relaxed times to schmooze and shake hands.
- c. You should interview with some centers that you might be interested in if you are not invited to campus by your top choices. This will enable you to expand your employment possibilities, give you interviewing practice, and give you a chance to learn about some new sites. Don't be too picky, but don't burn yourself out by interviewing too much, either.
- d. Offers are rarely made on the basis of an ACPA interview. However, the ACPA interview may help you get invited to campus.
- e. Send follow-up thank you letters after ACPA, especially if you are interested in the job.

Campus Interviews

Most CCs interview candidates on campus before hiring them. Most CCs will pay all expenses; if they don't, this may indicate fiscal problems within the university or center. If you end up paying your own expenses, make sure that you are going to a site that highly interests you and that you are a true candidate for the job.

Interviews vary from a few hours to two full days. They may or may not include evening contact (e.g. a reception or a meal with staff). You will often be asked to meet with staff or faculty outside the center and with higher administrators. You may or may not be required to do a presentation.

Before the interview:

- a. Negotiate time, travel arrangements, and responsibility for expenses. Be flexible but assertive. Make sure you get in early enough to get a good night's rest before the interview. If you want some extra time to look around the town, ask for it.
- b. Gather information about the interview process: Who will you meet with? How long will the process take? You should be provided a full itinerary of your visit, which should include the types of activities, with whom you will be meeting, and the time allotted for each activity.
- c. You may be required to do a presentation. Presentations may be related to therapy, outreach, research, case studies, or other things. You will need to ask them what they want and also highlight your strengths. Ask ahead of time for any materials (e.g. an overhead projector) you need. Some centers may also ask you to do a role play. Practice your presentation in front of an audience beforehand.
- d. It's important to be knowledgeable about the site before you go. Do your homework about the site, staff, institution, locale, etc. Request written materials about the center: annual report, brochures, etc. Check them out on the Web. (A catalog of CC Web pages is provided by the Counseling Center Village, at <http://ccvillage.buffalo.edu/ccdir.html>)

At the interview:

- a. Make sure you present yourself professionally but also show your personal side. They will be evaluating whether you will be enjoyable to work with as well as a competent colleague.
- b. Many sites will be looking for more than a good therapist. Be prepared to talk about your skills in outreach, supervision, grant writing, university committee work, etc., and/or your experience working with Greek Affairs, Residence Life, Athletics, etc.
- c. Make a list of the information you want about the center or the information you want to share before you leave and make sure you cover everything. Have questions prepared ahead of time.
- d. Remember that "social events" (i.e., receptions or dinner with staff) are times when you are still being evaluated.

- e. Before you leave, ask about salary, benefits, contract conditions, evaluations, supervision, etc. You may want to get an idea how flexible or firm the salary range is.
- f. Before you leave, ask about the time frame of the rest of their decision-making process.

- g. Be prepared to be exhausted afterwards, as you will be "on" for several hours at a time.

After the interview:

- a. Send a list of expenses and receipts to whomever was designated.

- b. Send materials to anyone you promised.

- c. Send a thank you letter.

Accepting an offer

Usually, you will get "good news by phone, bad news by letter." If they offer you a job, they will call you.

- a. Make sure you understand all of the conditions before you make a decision.

- b. After they have made an offer and before you accept it is the time to negotiate things like salary, start date, moving expenses, etc.

- c. If you want more money, ask for more money. Your best leverage is if you have another job offer for more.

- d. If you get an offer from a place that is not your first choice, you typically can ask for some decision-making time. However, this time period is not indefinite—it usually ranges from a couple of days to a week. If you have an upcoming interview scheduled (soon), you can ask to postpone your decision until after that interview. If you are awaiting another offer from a more favored site, get on the phone and ask where they are in the process.

- e. After a verbal acceptance, you will probably need to sign a formal contract clarifying your acceptance and the terms of the contract.

- f. Congratulations and good luck