INTERVIEWING TIPS FOR 1LS PROGRAM OUTLINE  
December 2019  
Consult CDO’s Interviewing Advice in the Toolkit for Student Jobseekers

POST-APPLICATION FOLLOW UP  
o  It is appropriate to follow up by email or phone with nonprofit employers within a couple weeks of applying to inquire about the status of your application. This is not typically productive with law firms and large government employers.  
o  It is appropriate to follow up with employers if you will be traveling to their area or if you receive other interview invitations and wish to nudge them along.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS  
o  varies depending on individual employer  
  ✓  Review Summer Employment Evaluations in CMS to see how students describe the interview process  
  ✓  Ask the employer  
o  The “no interview” interview  
  ✓  hired based on your application – numerous international opportunities  
o  Video or telephone interview  
  ✓  Most government and nonprofit for candidates not in town  
o  In person interview  
  ✓  Most law firms; government and nonprofits if candidate is in town

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR DIFFERENCES IN INTERVIEWS  
o More in common among employers than different  
  ✓  All employers seek to hire students who are interested/committed to the work of the organization, are intellectually capable of doing the work, and have strong interpersonal skills.  
o  Public interest interviews  
  ✓  Care about your committed to public service work and your passion for their cause and clients  
  ✓  Examples from Summer Employment Evaluations:  
    ▪  Center for Constitutional Rights asked me questions about my past activism experience and about my thoughts on movement lawyering - how to work with underprivileged communities, winning causes without winning cases, etc.  
    ▪  ACLU San Diego - Be prepared to answer specific questions about Constitutional Law and Civil Procedure. They asked me to describe what interested me most in these subjects and discuss cases that struck me.  
o  Public defense and prosecution interviews  
  ✓  May use hypothetical questions like “Would you have trouble defending an accused child abuser?” or “Would you be able to ask for a maximum prison term?”  
  ✓  You need to exhibit respect for the criminal justice system and understand what your role would be  
  ✓  Example from Summer Employment Evaluation  
    1.  Public Defender Service for DC, Parole Division: The interview lasted for almost an hour, including a range of tough ethical questions, confrontational personal questions, intentionally emotional hypotheticals, and legal questions about a case I had been assigned to read in advance.  
o  Law firm interviews  
  ✓  Not very rigorous - typically no legal questions  
  ✓  Do you have a sincere interest in what we do?  
  ✓  Do we have a chance of getting you to come back and work for us in the future?

PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS  
o  Know Yourself  
  ✓  Be able to talk about everything on your resume and writing sample
✓ What is in the public domain about you? To the extent possible, clean up your online presence
✓ Think of 2/3 qualities you want interviewers to know about you -- are you a particularly proud of your writing, research, problem solving, oral advocacy, attention to detail, dedication?
✓ Write qualities down with examples

- **Know The Employer**
  ✓ Review employer website and Summer Employment Evaluations. Connect with students and alumni
  ✓ Know their primary practice areas and the types of clients they serve
  ✓ Be able to explain your specific interest in this employer by discussing your interest in and commitment to the organization’s work

- **Know The City**
  ✓ This is most relevant for law firms because of their interest in hiring you after the summer
  ✓ What is your connection to the city? If your interest is not really in the city, but in the organization, say that and explain why
  ✓ Does the city offer a particular type of practice of interest to you (i.e. regulatory work in DC)?
  ✓ Does the city offer particular social/personal interests? Family, significant other, friends, surfing, skiing?

**BE IN INTERVIEW MODE**

- Have a professional voicemail message and check your messages regularly so that you can return calls within one business day
- Keep accessible a copy of your resume, your research for each employer, your cover letter to that employer, 2/3 questions to ask that employer
- If an employer calls unexpectedly, you don’t have to talk right at that moment. Politely explain that you are heading into class and offer to reschedule. If you take it, get yourself to a quiet space.

**ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Review the Sample Interview Questions. Write out answers to particularly difficult questions for you
- Practice those questions with your CDO counselor, a friend or in a mock interview
- Be an active participant – take initiative to ask a question if there is a lull
- Be positive – don’t complain about prior employers or about school
- Avoid one word or long meandering responses
- Make efforts to bring up your 2/3 best qualities but that said, ultimately, go with the flow of the conversation. If the interviewer wants to talk about some obscure thing on your resume, about sports, or about current events, go with it and enjoy the conversation. Chances are if you enjoy the conversation, your interviewer will as well.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK**

- It is very important to have thoughtful questions to ask during interviews
- Review the Sample Interview Questions. Ask questions that show off your research not questions easily answered by material.
- Watch the tone of your questions
  ✓ Don’t put the interviewer on the defensive. Instead of “Why do you have so few women in supervisory positions?” Perhaps ask about efforts the organization has made to advance women in the legal community.
- Human Resources type questions should wait until after you have an offer including questions about split summers, pre-planned vacation and salary.

**ADVICE FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS**

- Smile, it improves the sound of your voice (ask any voice coach) and sit up straight (or stand)
- Eliminate background noise – music, TV, pets, children, roommates
- Use simple affirming interjections - they can’t see you nodding enthusiastically so you are going to need to verbalize. Things like “yes” “sure” “fantastic” “that’s great” all work well.
- Don’t interrupt – because you have no visual cue, wait a second to make sure (s)he’s finished speaking
- If you sense a natural pause, you can use it as a chance to ask a question of your own
Don’t refer to or take too many, if any, notes. It can be difficult to use notes while at the same time paying attention to the conversation.

**ADVICE FOR VIDEO INTERVIEWS**
- Find a quiet place – talk to CDO if you’d like our help in setting something up.
- Test the connection before the interview and make callback plan in case call is dropped during the interview
- Wear business attire
- Look at the camera

**ADVICE FOR IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS**
- Format will vary depending on the employer - you may meet with one person for 30 minutes or spend half a day meeting with 4/5 lawyers in the office and then having lunch with a couple more.
- Before your interview, ask:
  - How many attorneys will I meet? Can I have their names in advance? How long should I expect to be there? What materials should I bring? Will the organization reimburse my travel expenses (most firms will and most public interest employers will not)?
- Have a firm handshake, smile, make good eye contact, have positive body language, and exhibit enthusiasm.

**INTERVIEW ATTIRE**
- Present a professional image. Even for public interest employers who may dress casually, you should dress in formal interview attire, unless specifically told otherwise.
- Conservative is always safe
- Consult CDO’s Interview Preparation advice for more detailed attire advice
- YLS Loan Policy for Suit Reimbursement - if you are on financial aid (loans and/or grants) you can request a one-time loan of $500 to purchase a suit. If you enter the COAP program after graduation, this loan will be covered. Talk to Jackie Outlaw in the financial aid office BEFORE purchasing a suit.

**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**
Take the time to understand your rights during the recruiting process. Contact a CDO counselor with any questions or concerns.
- CDO Recruiting Policies, including the Nondiscrimination Policy
- NALP’s Principles for a Fair and Ethical Recruitment Process
- Yale’s Sexual Misconduct Policies (which apply to conduct by third parties directed towards students)
- CDO’s Inappropriate Interview Questions and How to Handle Them
- CDO’s Advice on Navigating the Job Search for Yale Law Students with Disabilities

**POST INTERVIEW INFORMATION**
- Thank you emails are not necessary. If you do send one, remember that it is a writing sample and must be perfect. See CDO’s Thank You advice for samples.
  - It can serve as a vehicle for sharing additional information that didn’t come up in the interview
- Employers vary in how quickly they provide offers or rejections after interviews – you may hear the next day, several weeks later, or longer.
- Once you hear back, the time you have to accept or decline will vary
  - CDO Recruiting Policies provide that offers should remain open for two weeks
  - If you need additional time to respond, ask for it but under no circumstances should you accept and later renege.
- You may wish to negotiate a split between two employers. Review CDO’s Responding to Offers advice, which includes advice on navigating splitting.
- Recall that FIP is the week of August 3-7, 2020.