



**JOBS FOR THE FUTURE**

# ADDING A GENDER LENS TO NONTRADITIONAL JOBS TRAINING

CREATED BY WIDER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

APRIL 2017

## **TOOL 3.6 HANDLING ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH POLITE RESPONSES**

A number of civil rights and employment laws and regulations at the federal, state, and local levels govern employment relations during the interview process. This tool outlines what those types of questions are, suggests sample responses, and enables students to brainstorm their own responses.

*This tool is also part of the pre-apprenticeship Multi-Craft Core Curriculum of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO.*

### **WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL**

Occupational training instructors, with their students; case managers; job developers; soft skills instructors; career coaches

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This tool is part of Adding a Gender Lens to Nontraditional Jobs Training, created by Wider Opportunities for Women for the GreenWays initiative and revised by JFF as part of the Delivering the TDL Workforce initiative. All tools are available online at: <http://www.jff.org/newlensonjobs>.

Supported by the Walmart Foundation, Delivering the TDL Workforce expanded high-quality transportation, distribution, and logistics training programs in ten regions and promoted best practices in program design and delivery, employer engagement, and workforce partnership development. GreenWays was supported by grants from the U.S. Department of Labor through Pathways Out of Poverty and the Green Jobs Innovation Fund.

A number of civil rights and employment laws and regulations at the federal, state, and local levels govern employment relations during the interview process. These laws explicitly prohibit an interviewer from asking questions that relate to qualities that are considered immutable. It is critical to prepare how to handle illegal interview questions with polite responses.

Issues employers may ask about, even though they should not, include:

- > Race, ethnicity, and skin color
- > Gender and sexual orientation
- > Age
- > Marital status
- > Religion
- > Veteran status
- > Sexual preference
- > National origin
- > Medical condition

Keep in mind that an interviewer may not ask these questions with malicious intent and that they are often asked by an inexperienced interviewer.

There are different options for answering questions you know are illegal. It is important to keep in mind the ramifications of confronting an apprentice committee or an employer asking illegal questions directly.

Instead of confronting an interviewer, ask them to clarify how the question relates to the work you would do as an apprentice. You can also respond by saying that the question makes you uncomfortable.

Planning ahead with some tactful answers can be the best way to address an illegal or inappropriate question. You will need to assess how best to answer an illegal question without compromising your opportunity. This means that the more prepared you are the better.

# DEVELOPING RESPONSES TO ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Review the illegal interview questions below and develop possible responses that are appropriate to your particular situation. An example of a potential response is listed for each question. Brainstorm other questions that might fall into this category and develop answers to tactfully address them.

## QUESTION: WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

*Example: "If you are wondering whether or not I'm authorized to work in the U.S., I am."*

How would you respond? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTION: WHAT ARE YOUR CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS?

*Example: "I am confident that I can manage any and all time demands of the apprenticeship program and the job."*

How would you respond? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTION: WHAT ARE YOUR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES?

*Example: "I prefer to keep personal and business matters separate."*

How would you respond? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTION: HOW MANY DAYS DID YOU MISS BECAUSE OF ILLNESS LAST YEAR? DO YOU HAVE ANY DISABILITIES?

*Example "I feel confident that I have the physical capacity and fitness to handle the job requirements."*

How would you respond? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTION: HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ARRESTED?

*Example: "You will find that I am a trustworthy and reliable employee."*

How would you respond? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTION: ARE YOU PLANNING TO HAVE CHILDREN ANYTIME SOON?

*Example: "I prefer to keep personal and business matters separate, but I can reassure you that my family responsibilities will not hinder my commitments to the apprenticeship program."*

How would you respond? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_