

# **Preparing for your Oregon VR internship interview**

September 2025

Oregon VR looks forward to learning about your skills and career goals during the internship interview. The process is virtual, with a panel of interviewers, and follows the same structure the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) uses for job interviews. This gives students a chance to practice before applying for employment with VR.

Your interview panel will include VR staff and managers from each of the VR offices you listed in your internship application. The members of the VR Statewide Internship Coordination Team also participate. Everyone on your interview panel has been through similar interview processes themselves. Many of us have also completed our own internship interviews with VR. Everyone on your panel understands how important this interview is to you—it's important to us too!

## **Setting up the interview and planning for accommodations**

At least a week before your interview, the VR Internship Coordinator will send you an online survey. It asks for optional demographic information, whether you are a current or former Oregon VR client, and if you need any disability-related accommodations for the interview. Demographic questions follow [state law](#) and Oregon Administrative Rules. While most responses can be anonymous, you will need to include your name if you have/had a VR file or if you request accommodations. Only the VR Internship Coordinator will see your specific responses, regardless of whether or not you include your name.

## How is the demographic information used?

We use demographic data to evaluate VR's internship program. Your answers will be combined with other applicants' responses. The combined data, which is not identifiable for any internship applicant is used to:

- Make sure our process is fair and equitable.
- Help the Statewide Internship Coordination Team focus recruitment on any gaps.
- Provide required reports to ODHS, the Oregon Legislature, and the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration.
- Share information with the State Rehabilitation Council if needed.

## The interview questions

Oregon VR can offer internship placements for undergraduate and graduate students, both in our local offices and in our Administration Unit. Three working days before your interview, the VR Internship Coordinator will send you **the list of questions that will be used** during the interview and **a copy of the VR Intern position description** for the type of internship you have applied for. This is intended to help you prepare for the interview and decrease any anxiety you may be feeling about the interview itself. Use the interview questions to guide your research, make notes about specific examples/situations you want to share, and generate the questions you will ask the panel during the interview. We expect students to use their notes during the interview to ensure that they respond with clear, detailed, and complete answers.

You will be given three options for how the interview questions will be asked. There is no “right” answer, and your choice is **not** part of the scoring for the interview. Choose the option that works best for you and allows you to be most comfortable during the interview. Your options are:

1. The VR Internship Coordinator reads all the questions aloud
2. The panel members take turns reading all the questions aloud
3. You guide the discussion by reading the question aloud and then answering it.

Your interview panel will be scoring your responses based on a 5-point scale. There may be follow-up questions from panel members based on your responses. Providing details in your answers generally increases your score on each question. Include information from your internship application materials in your answers. The panel members will have reviewed your application packet, but unless you discuss the information during the interview, they will not be able to include it in their scoring. Because your panel members are taking notes about your responses, you may not get a lot of eye contact. Don't be put off by this—they're listening closely!

## Preparing for Questions

### Common Types of Interview Questions

- **Behavioral Questions:** These questions ask about past experiences to understand how you've handled various situations.
- **Situational Questions:** These questions present hypothetical scenarios to assess how you would handle them.

- **Technical Questions:** These questions test your specific knowledge and skills related to internship activities.
- **Competency-Based Questions:** These questions focus on specific skills or competencies required for success as an intern.

### Common Topics in VR Interviews

- Counseling approaches and practices
- Disabilities and their functional limitations
- Equity and inclusion
- Problem solving and teamwork
- Time and workload management

### Answering Questions

- **Listen Carefully:** Pay close attention to the question. If needed, ask the interviewer to repeat or clarify it.
- **Provide Complete Responses:** Answer fully without going off-topic. Address all parts of the question and ensure your details are relevant.
- **Highlight Skills and Experience:** Give clear and thoughtful responses that showcase your skills and experience.
- **Discuss Challenges and Successes:** Share how you overcame challenges and highlight your successes and achievements.
- **SOAR Method:** Use specific examples to provide clear and structured responses.

## Answering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Questions

VR interviews include questions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Practicing these questions ahead of time can help you feel more prepared and relaxed.

- **Be Specific:** Share specific examples from your work history, academic career and your life experience that highlight your commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion while still protecting the confidentiality of the individuals or groups of individuals you are using in your examples.
- **Promote Equity and Inclusion:** Show how you've actively worked to foster an inclusive environment and promote equity.
- **Understand Importance:** Show your understanding of why diversity, equity, and inclusion are crucial in the workplace and how they benefit the organization.
- **Stay calm under pressure:** If you don't know the answer to a question, stay calm. Think through the problem and explain your thought process. Interviewers care about how you handle challenges.
- **Avoid "drawing a blank":** Preparation is key. Practice common interview questions, review your story bank, and be ready to answer questions about the role and key attributes from the Oregon VR Intern position description.

## Maximizing Your Interview Score

- **Scoring Based on Responses:** Your responses to the questions are what you are being scored on.

- **State Everything Explicitly:** Panelists can only consider information you provide in your responses, not what they may already know about you. **Be sure to include the information they have read in your internship application in your answers during the interview.**
- **Request Feedback:** If you don't advance in the process, ask the [Internship Coordinator](#) for feedback to identify areas for improvement.

## **“Do you have questions for us?”**

Your interview panel expects you to ask questions about VR, the internship experience, the communities we serve, and the way we provide VR services. Ask questions that will help you decide if VR is a good fit for your goals for internship and your future career. This is your best opportunity to show that you did your research about us. It also helps us understand what factors are important to you as you consider VR as a potential internship site.

## **Managing Nerves**

- **Stay Calm:** Take deep breaths and trust in your skills, you're prepared for this!
- **Relaxation Techniques:** Before the interview, do something that helps you relax and stay focused.
- **Positive Visualization:** Imagine yourself succeeding in the interview. Visualizing positive outcomes can boost your confidence.
- **Practice:** Conduct mock interviews with a friend or in front of a mirror to build confidence and reduce anxiety. However, avoid over-practicing

as it can make your responses sound rehearsed and increase stress. Aim for a balance to keep your answers natural and spontaneous.

- **Healthy Habits:** Ensure you get enough sleep, eat well, and stay hydrated to keep your mind in top shape for your interview.

## After the interview

Once the panel has completed all the interviews for students interested in internship placement, the local office managers and staff will tell the VR Internship Coordinator which students they would like to extend offers to. Offers and regrets (no placement offer) will be sent on the same day to all students who interviewed for placement at VR offices across the state. VR commonly has students from several colleges and universities across the US who interview for internship placement. Regrets are usually related to local offices not having the capacity to support students effectively. Sometimes they are necessary because a student does not seem to be a good fit for the VR office.

Internship offers are extended with the request that students respond by a specific date (generally 2-3 weeks later) to inform the VR Internship Coordinator whether or not they are accepting the offer. We realize VR is one of many possible organizations that might offer students internships. We want students to select the placement site that best matches their goals and interests. Declining an internship offer **does not** impact students' ability to gain future employment with VR.

## Mandatory Pre-Placement Background Check(s)

All offers for internship placement are conditional until students have passed the mandatory background check. Background checks are completed by the Oregon Department of Human Services' Background Check Unit. The process includes a review of any criminal history, findings of child/elder/animal abuse, and the individual's 3-year driving record. Fingerprints may be required.

Having a criminal history **does not** automatically prevent an applicant from passing the background check for internship placement or for employment. If you are offered and accept an internship placement with us, the Internship Coordinator will connect you with the person who handles internship and practicum background check requests. Students who are accepted for both practicum and internship are required to complete two background checks because the roles and activities for practicum and internship are different. Beginning 2-3 months before your first day onsite, the Background Check Coordinator will walk you through this process. They will provide the final background check determination(s) with you, your program faculty, the VR Internship Coordination Team, and the Branch/Program Manager where you were offered an internship placement.

**Thank you for your interest in completing your internship with Oregon VR. We look forward to meeting you at your interview!**

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If you need this information in a different format, have questions, or need other information about Oregon VR's Internship Program, [email the VR Statewide Internship Coordination Team](#).

Some of the information in this document was created by the Oregon Department of Human Services' Career Advocates Team. Career Advocates are employees in ODHS HR who assist with recruitment for ODHS and VR employment opportunities and support ODHS employees in advancing their careers.