



Conducting Exit Interviews

Wise employers request exit interviews with departing employees. Although typically requested from only those who depart voluntarily or on good terms, it is sound risk management to request exit interviews with every employee. The consistency in your approach can serve your nonprofit well if you face a legal claim alleging wrongful termination.

The goal of the exit interview is to provide the departing employee with information about separation from employment (continuation of benefits, last paycheck, pay for unused vacation or sick leave, and unemployment eligibility) and to gain information about employee's work experience.

The interview is more successful if the person conducting the exit interview is someone other than the person's supervisor or person who terminated the employee. This role falls to someone in the human relations department of a large or midsize nonprofit. Another senior manager might serve in this role at a small nonprofit.

During the Exit Interview

- explain the nonprofit's reference policy;
- remind the departing employee about the importance of keeping sensitive client or agency information confidential (and the confidentiality agreement he/she signed as a condition of employment);
- collect keys, building access cards, company credit cards or phone cards, and company equipment (laptops, wireless phones, pagers);
- test that passwords on record give access to password-protected data;
- gauge the employee's emotional reaction to departure; and
- ask if the employee has witnessed or experienced discrimination, harassment or other illegal conduct.

The Interviewer Should

- post open-ended questions about the employee's work experience;
- probe for the employee's view about management issues (fairness, sensitivity to concerns, racism, sexism, fair compensation); and
- place a summary of the interview and copies of any document shown or discussed with the employee during the interview into the employee's personnel file.

An effective exit interview can bring closure to separation, make it easier for the nonprofit to anticipate legal challenges, spot internal issues that otherwise would have gone unreported, and create a record that important mandatory notices were communicated to the departing employee.