

Structured Oral Interview

Candidate Orientation & Preparation Guide



Austin - Travis County EMS

Medic Position

Updated: May, 2019



Introduction

This guide has been designed to inform you about and help you prepare for the upcoming Structured Oral Interview (SOI) process for the Austin-Travis County EMS Medic position. In this guide, you will learn about the SOI, the types of questions you may encounter while participating in the SOI, and instructions and tips that will help you do your best on test day.

Be sure to read this entire guide carefully. By understanding and knowing what to expect from the process, you will become more self-confident which will only increase your chances of performing well during the assessment.

Our primary goal is working with our clients to facilitate the selection of candidates who meet minimal qualifications and are best qualified for the position. We are committed to doing this in a manner that treats all candidates fairly. The goal of this and other candidate preparation materials is to make candidates feel comfortable about the assessment process and to ensure everybody is operating from the same set of instructions. We seek to maximize the fairness of the process for all candidates. This guide will assist you in performing your best on the Austin-Travis County EMS Medic structured oral interview process. The following topics will be covered in this guide:

- Structured Oral Interview Overview
- The Assessors
- SOI Content and Preparation
- Suggestions for Responding to the Oral Interview Questions
- Test-day Instructions and Tips
- Security Issues
- Wrap-Up

Structured Oral Interview Overview

The SOI consists of a series of questions that will assess the skills and abilities necessary to perform as a Medic for Austin-Travis County EMS. These questions can range from hypothetical scenarios to specific questions about how you tend to deal with situations. Your answers will be rated by a panel of assessors.

In the SOI room, you will meet with three assessors. You will have a copy of all questions on a table directly in front of you. An assessor will read each question to you and time your response. These questions will be presented to you one at a time by the assessor and you will be allowed a fixed amount of time to respond to each question. Each question will have an individual time limit that will be specified ahead of time.

At the beginning of your assessment, you will be given two minutes to discuss a little bit about yourself and your experiences. This question is designed to get you “warmed up” and familiar with the structure of the assessment. Notes will not be taken nor will any of the information you provide for this question be scored.

A note pad will also be provided for your convenience. You may take notes as you prepare to answer a question. You may refer to your copy of the questions and any notes you have written while providing your response to the assessors. If you have completed your response before the assessor indicates that your time is up for that particular question, you can verbally announce that you are finished with that question—this is perfectly acceptable. On the other hand, if you have not completed your response in the allotted amount of time, the assessor will prompt you that you have run out of time. You will then directly proceed to the next question. This format will continue until you have responded to all interview questions with that particular panel. There will be a total of eight (8) questions presented. After you have provided your response to all of the interview questions, you will be dismissed and the panel will then finalize your ratings and score.

The individuals on the panel will be taking notes throughout your response. You should look at, and talk to, the assessors when you provide your responses. Only verbal responses will be assessed. Keep in mind that you must provide detailed responses to interview questions in order to score well on the question. Comprehensive answers will contain enough information for someone to be able to understand your actions and behavior in a given situation. Short and concise (such as a one-sentence answer) responses will most likely not provide enough information to obtain a favorable score for that question.

All dimensions found relevant for assessment have been included in *Appendix A*, at the end of this document.

The Assessors

As stated previously, your performance during the SOI process will be evaluated by a panel of assessors, who will all be acquainted with the essential duties, skills and abilities of the Medic position. The assessor panel may possibly consist of a representative from the ATCEMS Human Resources Department, ATCEMS Commanders and/or an ATCEMS Captain.

All assessors are thoroughly trained before participating in the SOI. The assessor's role is simply to determine if each of the specific rating criteria have been met. Consensus between assessors on the panel is required in determining whether you have met or exceeded particular criteria. Therefore, the process is extremely objective. You can therefore be confident that these assessors will be able to evaluate your behavior and abilities in a fair and competent manner.

SOI Content and Preparation

The SOI is designed to assess the most critical job-related abilities. Some of the dimensions that may be assessed in the oral assessment include the following: honesty and integrity, teamwork, empathy/compassion, stress management and adaptability, multi-tasking, self-motivation/discipline, decision-making/judgment, relating with diverse people and oral communication.

The first step to prepare for the interview process is to become comfortable with presenting information in a question and answer format. It may benefit you to use a video camera and work with another individual to practice answering mock questions. The more comfortable you become with this type of interaction, the better you will perform on the day of the interview. Therefore, a key component in preparation is to practice under these conditions with a partner who is able to quickly point out your weaknesses and flaws.

Here are a few steps you can take to prepare for the structured oral interview and feel confident on the day of your interview:

- Most questions carry a three-minute time limit. When practicing, ensure you give yourself three full minutes to respond to your mock questions. This process will familiarize yourself with how long three minutes actually is.
- Practice listening to questions with multiple parts while taking concise notes about what is being asked. Then, provide your response to all parts of the question.
- Make an audio and/or video tape of your practice session or watch yourself practice in a mirror. Identify any distracting mannerisms that you may have and try to correct them.
- Conversely, you might conduct an interview session with a study partner. Each individual can prepare a unique set of questions, and you can practice by answering your partner's questions.
- Familiarize yourself with the roles and responsibilities of the position. This will help you learn as much as you can about the position and what will be expected of you. You may be asked questions regarding how you will handle certain hypothetical situations that relate to the EMS Medic position. Therefore, it is important to understand what duties you will be responsible for on the job.
- Review your job experience. Think about some specific examples of skills performed in your past work experiences and have examples you can draw from that will match the dimensions listed in appendix "A".
- Be well rested. Get a good night's sleep for several nights in a row before the interview date.
- Allow plenty of time to get to the SOI location. If you are rushed and late, you will arrive upset. This may set a negative trend for the day. Plan to arrive well ahead of your scheduled time for check-in.

- Keep a good attitude. There are several ways to adjust your attitude. Look at this SOI as a challenge but try not to become too stressed out about it. By using this guide and practicing the strategies outlined in this section, you can prepare yourself to give your best possible performance.

Suggestions for Responding to the Oral Interview Questions

The following is an outline of suggestions to help you provide your best possible responses to the questions:

- After listening to the interview question, take some time to formulate an organized response. Do not be afraid to pause for a short period to consider your answer and organize your response in a meaningful way to make the most amount of sense to those individuals who are rating your responses. The more organized and well thought out your answers are, the more favorably they will be viewed by assessors. You will be provided with paper and a pen if you want to write down your thoughts before providing your response.
- Answer the question exactly as it is asked. It is common for interview candidates to answer a question other than the one posed. Interviews are stressful, and it is common for a candidate to misunderstand or misinterpret the question and then provide an answer that is completely off the mark. Be sure to listen carefully to the question and provide an answer for that specific question.
- It is your responsibility to monitor your three-minute time limit. Whether you plan on first writing down your thoughts and then providing a response or immediately providing a response, ensure you leave yourself an adequate amount of time to fully answer the question. A visible timer will be available for you to reference throughout the interview to better help you gauge your remaining time.
- Questions are printed on paper for each candidate to reference. Review the question to ensure you have answered all parts of the question.
- Provide a complete response to each question. It is common for a candidate to answer a question and repeat the same answer multiple times. Offer an answer that is complete but does not reiterate your response multiple times. Keep your answer concise but ensure that you provide a comprehensive response to the question that is posed.
- Mentally organize your thoughts before answering the question. It is better to give more information than less. However, do not ramble about things that are not relevant or jump from idea to idea in a manner that would be difficult for the assessors to follow.
- Speak clearly. Oral communication skills are obviously paramount in an oral interview. Oral communication ability will be rated by each panel. The rating of oral communication ability

is an important element of the structured oral interview. Convey a professional demeanor by speaking clearly and demonstrating good posture and appearance. Strong communication skills will only accentuate your response to a question.

- Provide an honest answer to each question and be yourself throughout the assessment.
- **Assessors will not repeat a question after it is read.** This is why the questions are printed and presented for your use.
- You will not be allowed to ask for clarification regarding a question and the assessor will not ask you to clarify an answer that is incomplete or confusing. Thus, you must be prepared to answer the questions to the best of your ability with the information given in the question.
- SOIs often do not allow candidates to give an introductory statement and do not allow candidates to prepare or present outside material—you will respond to the specific questions (or instructions) asked of you in the exercise. An SOI follows a consistent script for each candidate with the goal of measuring the skills and abilities found to be relevant for the position.
- Avoid responding to questions using terms like “we” or “us”. The purpose of the interview questions is to gain insight on your past and future behavior. It may be difficult for someone judging your response to determine exactly what you did in the situation.

Test-Day Instructions and Tips

The following instructions and advice apply for the scheduled day of your SOI:

- Be on time. Allow yourself plenty of time to get to the site, as this will give you one less thing to worry about that day.
- Remember, the first question is an opportunity for you to discuss your experiences and get you comfortable with the interview process. Use this time for exactly that purpose!
- Do not bring cellular phones or paging devices into the interview room.
- Your personal appearance makes an impression. Be sure to look your best.
- It is natural to be nervous. Be sure to keep a positive attitude and an open mind as you participate in the process so that the assessors can see you perform to the best of your ability!
- Don't act! Be yourself.
- Test proctors will be available on-site to answer any questions on test day.

Security Issues

You will be competing with a number of other candidates for the position. Keep in mind that offering information about the process to others creates an advantage for those individuals and a disadvantage for yourself. First, if you share information and if this is determined, you will be removed from the selection process. Secondly, it is to everyone's benefit to remain silent about this process and the interview questions until all candidates have completed the SOI. By participating in this process, you agree not to divulge information about the nature of the questions or the manner in which they are administered. The administrators, assessors, and candidates all share in this responsibility. You will be required to sign a confidentiality form prior to starting the SOI.

Wrap-Up

We encourage you to follow the tips in this guide and participate in the process with confidence. By providing this guide to all interview candidates, we hope to better familiarize you with the SOI and expectations relating to the process. Remember, use all the tips and suggestions provided within the scope of this guide to better prepare yourself to do your best. We wish you the best of luck!

Appendix A: Possible Dimensions for Assessment in the Structured Oral Interview (SOI)

The following presents a list of relevant dimensions for the SOI. The acronym FIELD signifies the dimension will be asked for candidates applying to become a Field Medic. COMM signifies the item will be asked for candidates seeking a position as a Communications Medic. The acronym BOTH means the dimension will be assessed for both roles.

1. **Honesty and Integrity (BOTH):** Ability to act in an honest and fair manner. Willingness to accept responsibility for actions when things go wrong. Ability to display a high degree of integrity and professionalism in action and word.
2. **Teamwork (BOTH):** This skill involves working with team members in a positive, goal-oriented manner. Involves putting the team's best interests above one's own. Willingness and ability to accept a particular role in a team and selflessly carry out that role. Willingness to actively support command staff policies and decisions.
3. **Empathy/Compassion (BOTH):** This characteristic involves demonstrating sensitivity toward people and empathizing with his or her situations. This characteristic affects the extent to which an individual is likely to sympathize with others and understand the feelings of others.
4. **Stress Management and Adaptability (BOTH):** Ability to remain calm and rational under pressure, to include tolerance to abusive language, slander and/or criticism as needed to maintain control of situations; to maintain composure; to display appropriate flexibility in situations involving change; to modify a course of action based on changes in the situation.
5. **Multi-Tasking (COMM):** The ability to perceive information from multiple sources simultaneously and act in an expeditious and efficient manner toward the fulfillment of your objectives.
6. **Self-Motivation/Discipline (BOTH):** Ability to remain motivated to perform one's job despite difficult circumstances, distractions or monotonous work. Ability to take charge when necessary and conduct tasks without being told to do so. Ability to work without supervision and accomplish tasks without prodding.
7. **Decision-Making/Judgment (BOTH):** The ability to understand when a decision must be made and the willingness to make such a decision. The ability to determine an appropriate course of action quickly and efficiently to target a particular situation. Also includes the ability to use common sense and intelligence in handling day-to-day activities, problems and decisions.
8. **Relating with Diverse People/Customer Service (FIELD):** Identifying the needs and concerns of others and making a concerted effort to deliver services that address those needs and concerns professionally. Understanding the manner in which the organization needs to be presented to the community at large and making the necessary effort to work with the public while protecting the integrity of the organization.
9. **Oral Communication (BOTH):** The ability to speak effectively and articulately to clearly convey thoughts and ideas, to use good listening skills, and to understand the meaning of words or phrases.