



Servas Canada: furthering peace through multicultural dialogue

Guide for SERVAS Interviewers

Introduction:

Welcome to the wonderful world of Servas interviewing! This function sets Servas apart from many other hospitality programs. Hosts all over the world are opening their doors to strangers, with the assurance that each has been personally screened, that the traveller or host is likely trustworthy, reliable, and interested in the aims of SERVAS.

The guidelines outlined below are intended to increase the likelihood of meaningful visits, as free as possible from misunderstandings, and to simplify the tasks of SERVAS key volunteers.

National Coordinator/Interview Coordinator Contact Information: Remember, you are not alone. If you have any questions as an interviewer, feel free to contact the national coordinator:

Alison Reid
areid@northwestel.net
Box 20889
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 6P1

Who needs an interview and/or 2 references:

- If they haven't been a traveler or host in past 5 years, need an interview **and** references
- If they haven't been a traveler or host in past 2 years, need an interview (**no** references)
- If hosts haven't travelled, review traveller information since they may not have been oriented as travellers. Orientation for people travelling overseas is particularly important.
- Canadian hosts travelling in Canada do not need an interview or references.
- Children under the age of 18 travelling with parents do not require their own LOI or references, but should be included on one of the parents' LOIs.
- **You may not validate your own or family members' LOIs.** It must be approved by another interviewer and fees sent by them.

A. INTERVIEWING TRAVELLERS

All current Servas forms are available on the website (<http://canada.servas.org>). Your responsibilities as an interviewer are summarized in the following steps:

1. Pre-interview Preparation
2. Checking the Letters of Reference
3. Assessing the Traveller
4. Explaining Servas Philosophy and Methods

1. Pre-interview Preparation

- Ask the prospective traveller to bring or email the following to the interview:
 - two letters of reference (if needed; see above *Who needs an interview and/or 2 references*)
 - a draft of the personal background statement that they plan to include in their LOI.

- You may find it helpful to have them email you their reference letters ahead of time, to give you time to read them and prepare questions.
- If the traveller is renewing their traveller membership, have them contact the national co-ordinator (see contact info above)

2. Checking the Letters of Reference

- Read the letters of reference. They can be from teachers, employers, professional associates or friends who know them well, but not family. If in doubt, contact the national co-ordinator.
- If these letters establish good character, concentrate on other areas during the interview.

3. Assessing the Traveller

- All travellers should attend the interview (including children).
- In your conversation with the traveller, try to draw out from them their values and attitudes, so that you may answer the following questions of yourself:
 - Would you be comfortable hosting the traveller yourself?
 - Will they be a good representative of SERVAS and Canada?
 - Can they adjust to different life styles, share experiences, contribute as well as learn?
 - Do they sincerely want to meet and share with other people, or are they just looking for cheap accommodation?
 - Are they actively working for peace, or to improve the world in some way?
- Look for consideration, sincerity, and an ability to tactfully deal with problems. Questions you might ask are:
 - Have you read the guidelines for travellers on the Servas Canada website?
 - What do you know about SERVAS?
 - Why do you wish to be a SERVAS traveller (Why not hostels, hotels, etc.)?
 - What do you have to offer/expect from hosts?
 - Are you prepared to help out with tasks such as food preparation or meal clean-up?
 - Are you prepared to contribute to meals that you might be asked to share or supply your meals?
 - What would you do if you can't contact a host with whom you expect to stay?
 - Do you have physical, including diet, restrictions that you should tell prospective hosts?
 - Can you spend quality time with a host?
 - Does your schedule allow time for adequate notice to potential hosts?
 - Will your plans allow you to set approximate arrival dates?
- **SERVAS IS NOT FOR EVERYONE.** You may reject a traveller if you do not think that they demonstrate the characteristics required of SERVAS travellers. SERVAS may not suit their style of travel or personality. Remember, we want hosts to enjoy spending time with the traveller.
 - If you reject a prospective traveller, send their name and reasons for concern to the National Coordinator

4. Explain Servas Philosophy and Methods

If you have decided to approve the traveller(s), you must ensure that they understand their responsibilities and the expectations of SERVAS hosts.

- Review the following documents, emphasizing the important points:
 - the Traveller Guidelines
 - Traveller Privacy Information
 - Traveller Privacy and Confidentiality form.
- Inform the traveller that their Letter of Introduction will be completed online, and that the online process will be guided by the national co-ordinator. Tell them that you will be sending their name and email address to the national co-ordinator, who will be in touch with them.

- Ensure that they are clear that they must send their completed and e-stamped Letter of Introduction with any requests for hospitality.
 - Encourage the traveller to complete a Travel Report form. The Travel Report is important to SERVAS. The traveller is often our best source of current information, especially for the countries whose lists are not updated every year.
 - Ensure that travellers understand that accommodation cannot be guaranteed with SERVAS. Even when an entry lists NPNR, as a courtesy, provide as much notice as possible (at least a day). Also, note that hosts in major cities may be busier than other areas, and travellers can increase their chances of accommodation (and possibly the quality of their experience) by choosing hosts in more out of the way places who often sincerely want more travellers.
 - Stress with travellers that they are members of the SERVAS organization and that, as such, they have both responsibilities and benefits. They are part of a network of hosts and travellers, who have in common not only a love of travel and friendship, but a common goal of promoting peace and understanding in the world. By connecting with other hosts and travellers here at home, they can help to strengthen these connections and foster the goals of SERVAS. They can play a helpful role in promoting SERVAS by sharing their experience with others.
 - Inform Travellers of ways they can share experiences, such as submitting contributions to the newsletter, posting on facebook (www.facebook.com/ServasCanada) or blogs, participating in local gatherings of hosts, making presentations about their travels to other groups they are involved with, etc. Again, ensure that they understand the need for permission and privacy when posting anything on line or sharing photos and names.
5. Send their names and email addresses to the national co-ordinator.

INTERVIEWING (ORIENTING) NEW HOSTS

As with travellers, it is important to determine the suitability of prospective hosts. Follow the same interviewing procedure you would to assess a traveller. Do you feel they would make good hosts? Remember that it is not the quality of the accommodation but of the interactions they will have with guests: their reasons for hosting, their interest in people, etc.

There is no fee to be a host in Canada.

Some questions to consider:

- Have you reviewed the host guidelines available online at the Servas Canada website?
- What do you know about SERVAS?
- Why do you wish to be a SERVAS host?
- What do you have to offer/expect from guests?
- What would you do if you had agreed to host someone and then something came up and you couldn't fulfil your commitment?
- How would you respond if guests displayed values different from your own, or if you found them critical or demanding?
- How comfortable are you in interacting with strangers, particularly if their command of your language wasn't good?
- Does your schedule allow you to spend time interacting with your guests?
- In what ways have you been able to contribute to the promotion of peace and understanding in the world? How do you see the role of host contributing to this?

Note that hosts should also be oriented to the traveller guidelines. This is important for two reasons:

- Canadian hosts may travel in Canada without any further orientation or approval as travelers. Although they don't pay fees, they should still follow Servas principles for traveler-host interactions.
- It is important that hosts know what to expect from the travelers who visit them. If hosts' behaviours deviate significantly from Servas guidelines, it can set up inaccurate expectations. They should also know when to challenge traveller behaviours that are inappropriate.

If you have decided to approve a host:

- Tell them that you will be sending their names and email addresses to the national co-ordinator, who will guide them through the process of completing their online profile.
- Please stress the importance the role hosts will play in maintaining the integrity of the Servas system. Servas members now have access at any time to world-wide contact information, and the only way of ensuring that all travellers have been approved and have paid the appropriate fees is for hosts to accept only travellers who have valid, current LOIs.

Send their names and email addresses to the national co-ordinator.

A Guide for SERVAS Interviewers

QUICK REFERENCE:

1. Interviewer contact for questions/comments: national co-ordinator, Alison Reid
areid@northwestel.net, 867-332-5835
2. **Interview and reference need:**
 - a. If they have not been a traveler or host in past 5 years, need an interview and references
 - b. If they have not been a traveler or host in past 2 years, need an interview (no references) *if hosts haven't travelled, review traveller information. Some hosts may not have been oriented as travellers. Orientation for people travelling overseas is particularly important.
 - c. Canadian hosts travelling in Canada do not need an interview.
 - d. Interviewers may not approve themselves or family members.
 - e. Traveller renewals are referred to the national co-ordinator.
3. **Traveler/host requirements**
 - a. Understanding of Servas (review both host and traveller info with hosts)
 - b. Values and attitudes: consideration, sincerity, and an ability to tactfully deal with problems.
 - c. **Traveler only:** travel period is one year from date that the treasurer receives their fee.
 - d. 2 references if needed, per 1. above
4. The national co-ordinator will tell them how to complete and submit the privacy and confidentiality form.
5. If you reject a prospective traveller, send their name to the national co-ordinator.
6. **Fees:** the national co-ordinator will tell them how to submit their fees.
 - a. To be a host: \$0
 - b. Travellers: starting January 1, 2019
 - i. International travel: \$70/year for all non-youth, non-students, including hosts and volunteers [until Dec 31, 2018, \$35/year for non-youth hosts and free for volunteers]
 - ii. Travel in Canada: non-hosts \$70/year [until Dec 31, 2018, \$35/year; hosts travel free
 - iii. Youth 18-30, & all students: \$20
7. **For travellers** - Host lists: no deposits for any host lists. When more countries are online, travellers can access host lists directly. For now, many countries are **not** fully online, so the national co-ordinator will arrange for them to get the lists. Ask travellers to please keep their host lists in a secure place and ensure that they remain private (do not share with any non-Servas members). They should not use their lists for future travel, as the lists soon become out of date— They should either obtain new lists or look online for current host information.
8. **For travelers** – travel reports: send to Canada@servas.org.
9. Interviewer sends the names and email addresses of approved members to the national co-ordinator.