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.

All you do is review references and/or interview!

Consider interviewing by skype, etc. to reduce time and travel, if those are issues.

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

Who needs an interview and/or 2 references:
- Traveler or host in past 2 years, no interview or references
- Not a traveler or host in past 2 years, but yes within last 5 years, need an interview (no references)
- Not a traveler of host in past 5 years, need both 2 references and an interview
- 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 approve your family as members. They must be approved by another interviewer.

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. Reviewing the Letters of Reference
3. Assessing the Traveller

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Explaining Servas Philosophy and Methods

Sending the name, email and roles accepted (host, traveller, member) for the newly accepted member.

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.
     a. If the traveller is renewing their traveller membership, have them contact the one of the online administrators (please alternate among them) (see contact info below).

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 interviewer 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.
     o If you reject a prospective traveller, send their name and reasons for concern to the Interviewer Coordinator.

4. **Explain Servas Philosophy and Methods**

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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 an online administrator. Tell them that you will be sending their name and email address to one of the online administrators (contact info below), 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.

- Ensure that travellers understand that accommodation cannot be guaranteed with SERVAS. Even when an entry says no prior notice is required, 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.

- Review the fee structure with them:

  - Membership fee (hosts and travellers) - $24 per person for a calendar year; for new members, $2/month for partial years. After September 1 of a year, new members pay $2/month for the rest of the calendar year plus $24 for the next year’s membership. For example, someone newly joining in September would pay $8 membership for the current year, plus $24 for the following year, for a total of $32. Youth (18-30) and post-secondary students are exempt.
  
  - Plus, for travelers:
    - To travel internationally, each traveller pays $70 except
      - Youth (18-30) or post-secondary students who pay $35
    - To travel domestically, each traveller pays $70 except
      - Hosts and day hosts who travel free
      - Youth (18-30) or post-secondary students who travel free
    - Children (under 18 years) travelling with parents: Free
6. Send their names, email addresses and the roles they want to assume (host, traveller or both) to one of the online administrators.

Online administrators: (please alternate between them)
- Ethel Laidlaw: e.laidlaw@shaw.ca
- John Whidden: jcwhidden@shaw.ca (John is reasonably comfortable in French)

**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.

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 one of the online administrators, 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.

- Review the fee structure with them:
  - Membership fee (hosts and travellers) - $24 per person for a calendar year; for new members, $2/month for partial years. Youth (18-30) and post-secondary students are exempt.

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Send their names and email addresses to one of the online administrators:
(please alternate between them)
- Ethel Laidlaw: e.laidlaw@shaw.ca
- John Whidden: jcwhidden@shaw.ca (John is reasonably comfortable in French)
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QUICK REFERENCE:

2. Interviewer contact for questions/comments: interviewer co-ordinator:

3. Interview and reference need:
   a. Traveler or host in past 2 years, no interview or references
   b. Not a traveler or host in past 2 years, but yes within last 5 years, need an interview (no references)
   c. Not a traveler of host in past 5 years, need both 2 references and an interview
   d. *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.
   e. Canadian hosts travelling in Canada do not need an interview.
   f. Interviewers may not approve themselves or family members.
   g. Traveller renewals are referred to one of the online administrators.

4. 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

5. An online administrator will tell them how to complete and submit the privacy and confidentiality form.

6. If you reject a prospective traveller, send their name to the interviewer co-ordinator.
   - Fees: the online administrator will tell them how to submit their fees.
     o Membership fee (hosts and travellers) - $24 per person for a calendar year; for new members, $2/month for partial years. Youth (18-30) and post-secondary students are exempt.
     o Plus, for travelers:
       - To travel internationally, each traveller pays $70 except
         o Youth (18-30) or post-secondary students who pay $35
         o To travel domestically, each traveller pays $70 except
           o Hosts and day hosts who travel free
           o Youth (18-30) or post-secondary students who travel free
           o Children (under 18 years) travelling with parents: Free

7. For travellers - Host lists: Many hosts in many countries, but not all, are on the Servas International website. The online administrator can arrange for pdf host lists to be sent to them. 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, email addresses and roles (host, traveler or both) of approved members to one of the online administrators.

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