

CT Intern Academy 2013  
Speaker questions

Cara Passaro  
Policy Analyst, Connecticut House Democrats

1. What do you look for in a resume?

Your resume makes your first impression. It should appear well-organized, logical, professional, and tailored to the job you are seeking.

2. What classes do you recommend for students interested in your field? What skills are important to develop? (writing, fiscal analysis, public speaking, etc.)

Communications and writing, because it is important to convey your message succinctly, effectively, and in a way that is appropriate for your audience. Also, health administration, public administration, and policy and legislative development will give you a background on how policy and legislation are made. It also helps to have a basic understanding of public health, health insurance and Medicaid.

3. What keeps you motivated in your job day-to-day?

I'm motivated by new policy questions and having access to the necessary resources to locate the answers; the ability to improve access and service delivery; and the opportunity to serve as a resource to legislators and other staff.

4. Do you work in a constantly changing field and how does that affect your job?

Yes, the work I do is often determined by current events and policy problems identified by legislators, agencies, constituents and others. This means I am often switching gears and becoming a sort of expert on a particular topic, then moving onto something completely different.

5. What was your career and educational path to your current position?

After receiving my undergraduate degree in government, I tried out a few different jobs before landing at House Democrats. While these jobs were not necessarily the right fit, I gained a lot of valuable skills, including how to deal with daily challenges and be productive in a professional environment. These were great opportunities to demonstrate my work ethic and professionalism and develop references.

6. What risks did you take?

I left a stable, permanent and predictable job for a short-term, exciting one with no guarantees of job security. This gave me the opportunity to show my strengths. Fortunately my efforts were noticed and it all worked out.

7. What terms and acronyms do people need to know?

It helps to know state agency acronyms: DPH, DSS, DCF, DMHAS, DDS, CID, OHA, OHCA (aka: the Departments of Public Health, Social Services, Children and Families, Mental Health and Addiction Services and Developmental Services; the Connecticut Insurance Department; the Office of the Healthcare Advocate and the Office of Health Care Access.)

8. What sources of info do you check regularly?

The Kaiser Health websites, Health Affairs Blog, NPR, Politico, CT Mirror, CT News Junkie, and the Hartford Courant.

9. What's your best advice to students? What to do and what not to worry about

Go above and beyond: take every internship, job opportunity and contact as an opportunity to make an impression, build your reputation, prove your work ethic and learn new skills. Don't be afraid to push past your comfort zone, take on new responsibilities and try something new—that's how you identify your own strengths and weaknesses.