

VOICES OF SERVICE

College and Adult Interviewer Program

Training, Procedures, and Participant Guide

For college participants and adult community volunteers

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Program Purpose

Voices of Service prepares college participants and adult community volunteers to research, record, document, and preserve oral history interviews with veterans. The interview is treated as both a human relationship and a historical primary source. Every interviewer follows the same ethical, consent, recording, documentation, and file-transfer requirements, while academic work and volunteer assignments are tailored to each track.

Choose the Appropriate Track

Track	Designed for	Primary expectations
College participant	College courses, internships, service-learning, public history, museum studies, journalism, communications, and digital humanities	Faculty-approved academic work plus required Voices of Service training and program procedures
Adult community volunteer	Community members serving as interviewers, researchers, recording monitors, transcribers, metadata assistants, or archival-preparation volunteers	Assigned role preparation plus required Voices of Service training and program procedures

Requirements Shared by Both Tracks

- Complete the approved interviewer training before conducting an interview.
- Follow narrator-consent, privacy, trauma-informed interviewing, and recording requirements.
- Complete assigned historical research and receive approval of the interview guide.
- Use approved equipment, metadata, file naming, and secure transfer procedures.
- Do not publish recordings, photographs, clips, or quotations through personal accounts.
- Transfer original materials and documentation through the program for preservation by the Lakeside Historical Society.

Module 1: Why First-Person Accounts Matter

Learning target

I can explain what oral history contributes to the historical record and evaluate how perspective and memory influence an account.

Opening

Ask participants to compare a textbook paragraph about a major event with a short firsthand account from someone who experienced it. What can each source tell us? What can neither source establish alone?

Key teaching points

- An oral history is a recorded, purposeful conversation created for historical preservation and interpretation.
- A narrator offers lived experience, language, emotion, meaning, and details often absent from official records.
- Memory is selective and changes over time. A sincere account can contain mistakes, uncertainty, compression of events, or later interpretations.
- The interviewer also shapes the source through topic selection, wording, sequence, follow-up questions, and nonverbal responses.
- Historical understanding becomes stronger when oral testimony is compared with documents, photographs, maps, timelines, and other accounts.

Participant source-analysis prompts

1. Who created this account, when, and for what purpose?
2. What did the narrator directly experience? What might they know secondhand?
3. What details, emotions, or meanings does this account add?
4. What claims could be checked against other evidence?
5. What might the narrator choose not to discuss, forget, reinterpret, or emphasize?

Exit ticket

In 3–4 sentences, explain why an oral history is historically valuable even when it cannot be treated as a complete or perfectly objective record.

Module 2: Research Before the Interview

Non-negotiable requirement

Participants may not conduct the interview until the program coordinator approves the research dossier. Preparation demonstrates respect, supports accurate questions, and allows participants to recognize names, events, locations, vocabulary, and chronology mentioned by the veteran.

Required research areas

- Veteran's military branch and the branch's role during the service period.
- Approximate years of service and major national or international events during that period.
- Known rank, occupation or specialty, unit, duty station, ship, aircraft, base, or deployment location.
- Relevant conflict, operation, home-front development, policy, or social context.
- Geographic research using at least one map.
- A short glossary of military terms, abbreviations, equipment, or organizations likely to arise.

Minimum source requirement

Use at least three credible sources, including one primary source when reasonably available and two reliable secondary or institutional sources. Appropriate sources may include government agencies, museums, archives, service histories, historical societies, reputable books, scholarly databases, and established news organizations. Wikipedia may help identify search terms but should not be one of the final three sources.

Research dossier

Component	Requirement
Timeline	5–10 dated events connecting the service period to broader history
Context brief	Approximately 300–500 words explaining what the participant needs to understand before the interview
Source notes	Citation, key facts, author or institution, and evidence of credibility
Known/unknown chart	What is established, what is uncertain, and what should be asked
Vocabulary	At least 8 relevant terms or abbreviations
Question seeds	At least 10 possible questions arising from the research

Module 3: Building the Interview Guide

Question principles

- Ask one question at a time.
- Prefer open-ended invitations: “Tell me about...” “What do you remember...” “How did...”
- Begin with accessible life-history and background questions before moving into complex events.
- Use researched facts to orient a question without displaying knowledge or correcting the narrator during the interview.
- Avoid leading questions, judgmental wording, assumptions, and requests for classified or private information.
- Prepare questions, but listen closely enough to depart from the list when the narrator introduces something important.

Question sequence

Stage	Purpose	Example
Opening record	Identify participants, date, general location, and purpose	“Please state your name and confirm that we have your permission to record this interview.”
Early life	Establish personal and community context	“What was your life like before you entered military service?”
Decision and entry	Understand motivations and transition	“What do you remember about deciding to enlist or being drafted?”
Training and duties	Document daily experience and responsibilities	“Walk me through a typical day in your assignment.”
Historical events	Connect lived experience with researched context	“What did you understand about the situation at the time?”
Reflection	Invite meaning without imposing it	“How did your service shape the person you became?”
Closing	Return control to the narrator	“What have we not discussed that you believe future generations should understand?”

Follow-up prompts

Useful follow-ups include: “Can you tell me more?” “What happened next?” “How did you feel at the time?” “Who else was there?” “What did that term mean in your unit?” and “How did your understanding change later?”

Module 4: Ethics, Consent, and Respect

The narrator retains agency

- Participation is voluntary. The veteran may decline any question, pause, stop, reschedule, or withdraw according to program agreements.
- Permission to record is not automatically permission to publish. Separate release and donation documentation may be required.
- Participants must clearly identify when recording begins and ends.
- Do not promise confidentiality that the school or program cannot provide.
- Do not post clips, photographs, quotes, or behind-the-scenes material on personal social media.
- If the narrator discloses private, classified, medically sensitive, or potentially harmful information, do not pursue it. Notify the program coordinator or program representative after the interview.

Trauma-informed interviewing

Veterans may discuss combat, injury, loss, discrimination, moral conflict, or difficult transitions. Participants are not counselors or investigators. They should listen without demanding detail, allow silence, offer a break, and accept a change of subject immediately. The goal is preservation through consent—not extracting the most dramatic story.

Before recording

6. Introduce everyone and review the purpose, approximate length, intended preservation, and possible public access.
7. Confirm that required releases have been explained and completed by the responsible adults or organizations.
8. Ask whether any topics are off limits and whether the veteran has accessibility or break needs.
9. Confirm permission on the recording itself before beginning substantive questions.

Module 5: Interview-Day Procedures

Roles for a interview team

Role	Responsibilities
Lead interviewer	Welcomes the veteran, asks main questions, listens, and follows up.
Second interviewer	Tracks the guide, notes names and terms, and asks approved follow-ups.
Recording monitor	Tests audio/video, watches battery and storage, and records file information.
Documentarian	Completes metadata and field notes; handles approved photographs or artifacts under supervision.

Equipment and room checklist

- ☐ Quiet, accessible location with comfortable seating and minimal interruptions
- ☐ Camera or recorder positioned and tested; lens and microphone unobstructed
- ☐ Power, charged batteries, available storage, and approved backup method
- ☐ Neutral background, stable lighting, and no confidential documents visible
- ☐ Phones silenced; water and planned breaks available
- ☐ All names, date, general location, and recording settings documented

Recorded lead-in

Sample: “Today is [full date]. We are at [general location]. My name is [participant name], and I am interviewing [veteran name] for the Lakeside Veterans Wall of Honor Oral History Program. The original interview and related materials are intended for preservation by the Lakeside Historical Society. Do we have your permission to begin recording this interview?”

During the interview

- Maintain eye contact and attentive body language rather than reading continuously from the guide.
- Allow pauses. Do not fill every silence.
- Do not interrupt to correct a date or detail; make a note for later verification.
- Ask for spellings and explanations of unfamiliar terms at a natural point.
- Watch for fatigue and offer a break.
- Close by asking whether the veteran wants to add, clarify, restrict, or correct anything.

Module 6: After the Interview

Immediate file handling

10. Stop the recording and confirm the file saved correctly.
11. Do not rename, edit, compress, upload, text, email, or post the original unless directed by the program's file-transfer procedure.
12. Create the approved working or backup copy without changing the original file.
13. Complete the metadata sheet and identify any restrictions, corrections, or follow-up commitments.
14. Transfer files and paperwork to the program coordinator or designated program representative.

Historical verification

Participants should verify names, dates, units, locations, and public historical claims using credible sources. Corrections should be documented respectfully. The goal is not to “fact-check” the veteran’s feelings or personal meaning, but to distinguish recollection from independently established context.

Required participant products

- Final research dossier with citations
- Approved interview guide
- Metadata sheet and field notes
- Time log or program-selected transcript excerpt
- 500–750 word reflection or contextual biography
- Source comparison identifying where the interview confirms, complicates, or differs from other evidence
- Thank-you letter to the veteran, reviewed by the program coordinator before delivery

Public access workflow

Participants should understand that preservation, review, and publication are different stages. The Lakeside Historical Society will house approved original materials. The Wall of Honor organization and its partners will determine what may be published on the website or official YouTube channel. The memorial’s single QR code may connect memorial visitors to approved veteran profiles; it should never bypass the review and permissions process.

College Participant Track

College participants use the same ethical and procedural foundation but should complete a more rigorous research, documentation, and public-history assignment appropriate to the course. The extension can support history, public history, museum studies, archives, education, journalism, communications, film, digital humanities, service-learning, and internship programs.

Recommended college-level expectations

- A faculty-approved research proposal identifying the historical question, narrator, scope, and intended product.
- An annotated bibliography using relevant primary sources, scholarly secondary literature, and institutional sources.
- A formal interview protocol that connects researched historical questions with open-ended life-history inquiry.
- A complete or substantial transcript, verified time log, controlled vocabulary, and repository-ready metadata.
- Corroboration of names, dates, units, locations, events, and public historical claims without treating personal memory as a simple fact-recall test.
- A final interpretive product such as a contextual biography, research paper, digital exhibit, public presentation, edited access copy, or archival collection package.
- A reflective analysis of narrator agency, interviewer influence, memory, evidence, ethics, preservation, and public access.

Possible college contributions beyond interviewing

- Historical research and source verification
- Transcription, caption correction, indexing, and metadata
- Video editing and preparation of approved YouTube access copies
- Veteran biographies, profile pages, and digital exhibits
- Archival arrangement and documentation for transfer to the Lakeside Historical Society
- Program evaluation, teacher support, and community presentations

Institutional review: College faculty and administrators are responsible for determining whether institutional ethics, research-review, internship, service-learning, accessibility, or risk-management requirements apply in addition to the program's releases and procedures.

Adult Community Volunteer Track

Adult volunteers may conduct interviews independently or serve as interview partners, research mentors, recording monitors, transcription assistants, metadata specialists, or archival-preparation volunteers. They follow the same research, narrator-consent, privacy, recording, documentation, and file-transfer requirements as participant interviewers.

Volunteer preparation requirements

- Complete the full interviewer orientation and demonstrate understanding of first-person accounts, memory, perspective, and corroboration.
- Prepare and receive approval of a research dossier and interview guide before each assigned interview.
- Sign volunteer, confidentiality, media, and acceptable-use agreements required by the Wall of Honor program and the Lakeside Historical Society.
- Complete any background screening or school volunteer clearance required when working directly with minor participants.
- Use only program-approved equipment, accounts, file names, storage, transfer methods, and publication workflows.
- Work within the assigned role and refer ethical, technical, historical, or participant concerns to the program coordinator.

Differentiation and Accessibility

Supports for multilingual learners and participants needing scaffolds

- Provide a vocabulary bank, model questions, sentence frames, and an annotated sample source.
- Allow collaborative research roles and a co-interviewer format.
- Preview military abbreviations and unfamiliar geographic names.
- Permit bilingual interviews when the veteran, family, school, and program can support accurate consent, description, and access.
- Offer audio reflection, visual timeline, or structured outline options when consistent with course requirements.

Advanced extensions

- Compare two veterans' accounts of the same era, branch, location, or policy.
- Analyze how a veteran's recollection changes or complicates an official report or textbook narrative.
- Create an annotated digital exhibit proposal using approved materials.
- Research local demographic, economic, or political connections between Lakeside and the military.
- Produce a standards-based historical essay using the interview as one source among several.

Accessibility for veteran participants

Plan for mobility, hearing, vision, fatigue, communication, transportation, and technology needs. Provide questions or themes in advance when requested. Captions, transcripts, clear audio, accessible web presentation, and flexible scheduling should be treated as core program requirements, not optional additions.

Program Administration Checklist

- ☐ School, college, or volunteer assignment and supervisor confirmed
- ☐ Every interviewer is at least 16
- ☐ Parent/guardian permission completed for every participant under 18
- ☐ Adult volunteer orientation and any required screening completed
- ☐ Veteran matched and preliminary contact completed
- ☐ Veteran participation and recording permission completed
- ☐ Publication, copyright, and Lakeside Historical Society donation terms explained
- ☐ Research dossier approved
- ☐ Interview guide approved
- ☐ Accessibility and logistics confirmed
- ☐ Equipment tested and backup plan documented
- ☐ Original files and metadata transferred securely
- ☐ Veteran review, restrictions, and corrections documented
- ☐ Approved website/YouTube/publication decision recorded
- ☐ Thank-you and follow-up completed

Recommended companion forms

- Veteran pre-interview information form
- Oral history participation and recording release
- Deed of gift to the Lakeside Historical Society
- Participant and parent/guardian media release
- School partnership agreement and supervision plan
- Interview metadata and restriction sheet
- Post-interview narrator review and correction form
- Digital file transfer and receipt record

Selected Professional and Educational Resources

This curriculum draws on the following authoritative guidance. Instructors and program coordinators should consult the current versions when adapting school or repository procedures.

- California Department of Education. California Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/finalelaccsstandards.pdf>
- California Department of Education. History–Social Science Framework and Content Standards resources. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/>
- Library of Congress. Veterans History Project Field Kit and Sample Interview Questions. <https://www.loc.gov/vets/>
- Oral History Association. Principles and Best Practices. <https://oralhistory.org/best-practices/>
- Oral History Association. Core Principles. <https://oralhistory.org/oha-core-principles/>
- Oral History Association. Oral History Classroom Guide and Educator Resources. <https://oralhistory.org/best-practices-guidelines-and-toolkits/>

Local program note: Final school procedures, consent language, file specifications, and transfer requirements should be approved jointly by the Lakeside Veterans Wall of Honor, participating schools, and the Lakeside Historical Society before participant interviews begin.