

Interview guide

Top healthcare soft skills and how to evaluate them

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Soft skills are in demand

For hospitals, not having employees who excel at soft skills can directly impact the bottom line.

The Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey collects data to measure patient satisfaction with care received at hospitals. The patient experience measures of HCAHPS are both process-driven and behavior-driven. That means relying on employees who bring high degrees of both hard skills and soft skills is crucial to meet and exceed your organization's HCAHPS goals.

¹ [LinkedIn survey](#)

89%

of failed new hires
are due to
a lack of soft skills¹



Modern candidates are prepared for interviews. They've done their research, scouring your company website and careers page. They know the ins and outs of the job description – making sure they have talking points for each quality and skill desired for the role.

That means their answers are often similar or generic, making it difficult to identify their true personalities and motivators. But if you know the right questions to ask at each step of the recruiting process, you can get to know your candidates better and accurately evaluate their hard and soft skills.

This guide will help you identify key soft skills for healthcare roles and the questions to ask to help you find candidates with the soft skills needed to provide exceptional patient care.



How to set expectations and evaluate soft skills

1. Determine which **soft skills are most important** for the role you're looking to fill.
2. List the desired soft skills in the **job description**.
3. **Review resumes** for volunteer work, evidence of team-building and self-improvement.
4. **Develop a list** of interview questions that screen for soft skills.
5. **Leverage digital reference checking** to get insights on candidate soft skills and key behavioral competencies.



How to get the best answers

- **Select two or three soft skills to assess.**
Customers who use iCIMS Talent Cloud platform assess an average of two essential soft skills during pre-screening.
- **Prioritize asking open questions and exploring scenarios.** You also need to formulate your question or series of questions so that the applicant can respond concisely, accurately and with examples.
- **Only accept complete answers.** Ask for concrete examples and ensure the candidate provides the level of detail required.
- **Give candidates enough time to answer.** The best response requires some time to think.
- **Go more in-depth** and ask the candidate to provide more detail.

Use the STAR method to elicit productive responses



Top 10 soft skills to look for in interviews

- 1 Time management
- 2 Attitude
- 3 Compassion
- 4 Stress management
- 5 Cognitive flexibility
- 6 Ambition
- 7 Effective communication
- 8 Problem-solving
- 9 Delegation
- 10 Adaptability



Top 10 soft skills to look for in interviews



1. Time management

Ability to manage time, be productive and manages resources soundly

- How important is time management for you?
- How do you prioritize your work?
- What are a few methods you use to manage your time wisely?



2. Attitude

A settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior

- Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult patient, family member or guardian with impossible requests. How did you handle the situation?

Top 10 soft skills to look for in interviews



3. Compassion

Recognition of the suffering of others and the motivation to take action to help

- Give me an example of a time when your compassionate attitude caused a patient or family member to stay positive and calm.
- Describe a time when you had to deliver challenging news to someone.
- What is your process for delivering negative news versus positive news?



4. Stress management

How one deals with stressful situations, how they make the most of it

- What stresses you out the most at work? What are your stress triggers?
- How do you work under pressure? What situations cause you to strive and which cause you to freeze?
- How do you reduce your stress level in a critical situation?

Top 10 soft skills to look for in interviews



5. Cognitive flexibility

Ability to switch from one behavior to another depending on requirements and reflect on several options to solve problems quickly

- Tell me about a time when you reviewed someone's work and found it to be unsatisfactory. What did you do?
- What do you do to show the people you're talking to that you're listening but disagree?



6. Ambition

Determined to succeed, surpasses their own expectations, develops

- What does professional success look like to you?
- What quality are you looking to strengthen that you feel would help you further your career?

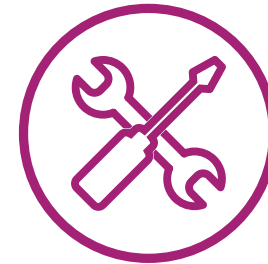
Top 10 soft skills to look for in interviews



7. Effective communication

Verbal and nonverbal communication skills, along with active listening and patient teach-back techniques

- Communication with patients and caregivers can sometimes be rushed in a busy healthcare setting. How have you ensured that you get the most important points across?
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to solve a problem by listening to your staff or patients.



8. Problem-solving

Asks the right questions, thinks through all outcomes thoroughly and can find solutions to complex problems quickly

- Describe your decision-making process when you come up against a problem.
- What is the last important decision you made, and what pushed you to go in that direction?

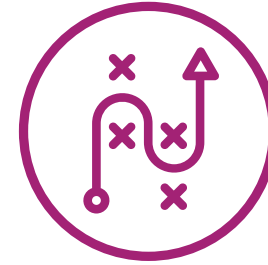
Top 10 soft skills to look for in interviews



9. Delegation

Ability to support and appoint team members to successfully accomplish desired results

- How have you considered people's unique skills and developmental needs when assigning work?
- Scenario: How would you handle the following?
 - You feel that a team member (who you manage) is not producing quality work and you could've done better in their place – what do you do? How do you react?
 - What is the best way to help develop your employee's skills?



10. Adaptability

The quality of being able to adjust to new conditions

- In a healthcare setting, priorities and circumstances can change rapidly. How have you maintained effectiveness in this type of environment?
- Can you tell me about a situation in which you persevered?

Better assessments can lead to better patient outcomes

iCIMS Talent Cloud can help you successfully assess candidates' soft skills to hire the best person for every role.

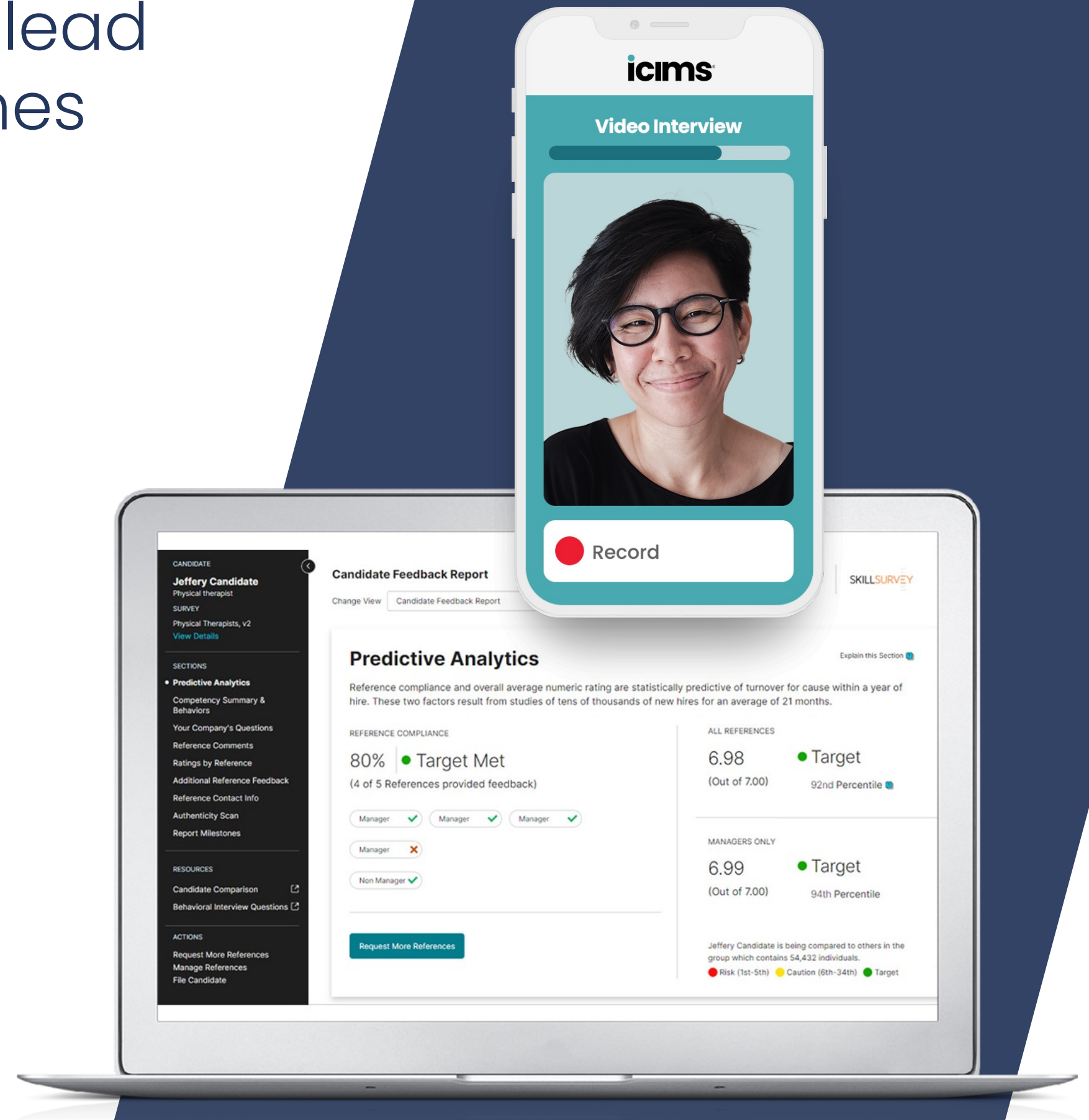
iCIMS Video Interviews

- Get insights into candidates' communication styles
- Assess how well they prepare and their ability to think critically
- Allow candidates to record their answers at their convenience

iCIMS Skillsurvey

- Get predictive insights about candidates based on feedback from their references
- Capture the precise soft skills for each role with industry and job-specific surveys, including 150+ for healthcare roles

[Learn how](#) iCIMS helps healthcare organizations support patient care.





The right talent acquisition tech can help you solve your greatest hiring challenges.

See how our all-in-one recruiting platform helps attract, engage, hire and advance the best talent.

[Learn more](#)