



The Police Application Process

by

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Introduction

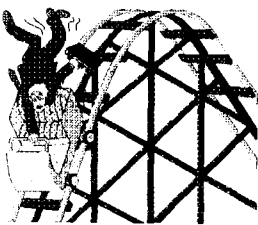
Obtaining employment in the law enforcement or policing profession appear to many to be a very complex and tedious process. Government employment is encumbered with complex laws and established procedures that are required in order to comply with federal and state laws as well as local regulations and policies on public service employment. Policing and other public safety professions, by virtue of their being supported by public tax dollars are required to comply with a wide variety of complex laws including the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), the Age Discrimination Employment Act (ADEA), and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) guidelines. Consent decrees imposed by state and federal courts further complicate the hiring process in public employment. The complex nature of the hiring process frequently give the appearance of making the process of obtaining employment in public service overwhelming. An unfortunate, and unintentional side effect of the complex process is that it breeds impatience and frustration by the police applicant and often times the applicant give up on their goal of becoming a police officer succumb to these frustrations.

There is no universal or standard procedure for obtaining employment in law enforcement and policing fields. Procedures vary from state to state, and department to department within the same state; dependent upon the procedures mandated by their respective legislative and governmental bodies. While each state has its own unique set of laws that influence the public employment process, the courts have also exerted their influence on police employment. The legislature has

enacted laws while the courts have interpreted these laws and applied various legal principles which will ultimately influence the hiring practices of police departments. Ultimately a very complex set of procedures has evolved to maintain the integrity of the hiring process in order to insure that all applicants have an equal opportunity to obtain public employment.

This is not to imply that obtaining a position with a police or other law enforcement agency is impossible. A general rule of thumb the larger the agency the more aware, and influenced they are of the various laws and regulations apply to the police application process. The material contained herein will discuss the police application processes that are generally followed. Different agencies will vary in the order of the testing steps and some agencies may not utilize all the steps outlined here. However, if you are prepared for all of steps discussed below you will be prepared for the hurdles you will encounter regardless of the agency you are applying to. This material designed to aid you in obtaining your first position in the policing profession by minimizing some of the hurdles you will encounter.

Lets begin by looking at a general overview of the steps you will encounter.



Steps in the Police Application Process

The steps you encounter while participating in the police application process will vary from agency to agency, and state to state. Federal agencies are also different in the type of applicant they are hoping to employ, however, all agencies will generally include some or all the steps outlined below.

The testing process involves a series of steps designed to evaluate the candidates and ultimately eliminate applicants from the pool of possible candidates. Agencies are looking for the most qualified candidates and to accomplish this they seek to find candidates with undesirable characteristics, behaviors or backgrounds and eliminate them. The selection process is designed to “weed out” all but the most qualified candidates. Departments first look to eliminate those candidates which do not meet a set of minimum standards established by the agency. Those who do not meet those standards are then eliminated from future consideration.

Most of the testing procedures described below will be based upon a pass or fail system of evaluation. If you pass a test you proceed to the next phase; of course if you fail you are dropped from further testing and removed from the list of eligible candidates. One point to remember is that just because you are not eligible for one agency does not mean you are ineligible for all police employment. For those tests where practice and continued effort will benefit you may be passed at a later time during a different testing process. It should go without saying that those areas where you can practice and prepare, you should. This is especially true of the written test, physical agility test, and the oral board examination.

Those departments which have very specific “bonafide occupational requirements” may require that all candidates adhere to certain special requirements, while other agencies are not as specific and, therefore, some variation is probable from agency to agency. Most agencies notify all applicants of the testing requirements and the minimum standards to meet those requirements. Examples of these special requirements would be in departments which are responsible for fire protection or emergency medical services; departments which have large amounts of water to patrol or mountain rescue service.

Two tests are most often used to determine a numeric score for the candidate from which a rank order is generated. The written exam and oral board interview are the two tests most often given numerical scores based on some quantitative measurement. Some departments use the oral board as one-hundred percent of the final score while other departments may use the oral board score as fifty percent of the final score, the written examine score being the other fifty percent. For the pass - fail option there is typically no additional points for finishing first or last, just that you finished the test.

Once the test scores are totaled they are arranged in numerical order descending in value from one-hundred percent to the lowest score generated. Generally a score of seventy percent or higher is required to be given additional consideration as a candidate. In some departments where there are a high number of candidates, or they choose to have a higher cutoff score the department may choose to require a higher final score. Regardless of what the final cutoff score is, once the candidates are ranked based on their numerical test scores they are usually offered positions based on that ranking in some form of sequence.

Some larger agencies may utilize a type of lottery process where everyone is given an equal chance of being hired regardless of the score. Everyone who is eligible based on their overall score is placed into a pool of eligible candidates. A random selection process is implemented and those candidates that are selected by this "lottery" are offered a position. In the lottery system overall ranking is of little value since once you pass all the tests everyone has the same opportunity for a job regardless of their final scores. There is considerable debate as to the integrity of the process and the type of candidates that are being selected. While the proponents believe a lottery process creates an even playing field for selection, the opponent believe the

process defeats the concept of hiring the best person for the job based upon objective examination and evaluation.

In other jurisdictions candidates are selected by going down the list in numerical order until the available positions are filled. This process also has some critics as it removes the ability to pass over a candidate because of a condition not identified by the testing process. An example would be where given two or three point variation on the final scores, the number three candidate provides stronger interpersonal skills, or is perhaps more experienced in dealing with people in crisis. Such skills, and others, are generally not part of the evaluation process, but would create a greater desire on the part of the department to hire a particular candidate.

Some agencies are permitted to select a candidate if they score in the top three at the end of testing process. Each of these candidates would generally be interviewed and selected on their performance during the final interview. Other agencies are permitted to select anyone who has successfully passed the process without deference to their overall score. Each procedure, just as the lottery system, has its own good and bad characteristics.

Basic Eligibility Requirements

Before being allowed to apply for a police or law enforcement position the candidate must meet certain minimum requirements to be admitted to the testing process. As in all other phases of the police application process there are variations from agency to agency; so it is with the basic requirements. The basic requirement for most police departments across the United States are as follows:

1. Must be a US citizen
2. Be at least 21 years of age
(Some states require 19, some federal require 23)
3. Vision corrected to 20/20,
(no worse than 20/100 uncorrected)
4. No color blindness
5. Possess a valid driver's license
6. High School Education or GED
(Some departments require some college or a degree)
7. Good moral character
8. No felony convictions or crimes involving moral turpitude.
9. Excellent health

Getting an application

The first step in any application process is to find out what police departments are accepting applications for police positions. Departments may be establishing a roster to have a pool of applicants from which to choose if a position becomes vacant at a future time. In this scenario the department is not currently trying to fill a position but merely establishing a roster to hire from at some future time. Most rosters once they are established remain valid for two years, however, in some departments a roster may only be valid for one year.

More commonly when departments conduct testing they are trying to fill a vacant position they currently have. This may be due to an increase in personnel allocations (authorized staffing is increased) or filling a vacancy, or anticipated vacancy created by retirement or resignation of current employees. It is advisable to determine if the department has current vacancies or is merely establishing a roster for future use. Occasionally while going through the application process there will be scheduling conflicts between testing dates at the various departments you are going through the testing process with. Knowing whether or not a department is currently hiring to replace employees leaving or merely establishing a roster for future use is one of the factors

you should consider when determining which testing process you will continue in and which you will no longer pursue.

Information on departments that are beginning the application process may be obtained from a variety of sources. Newspaper advertisements are the most common resource. Police departments often advertise they are taking applications in several newspapers in and surrounding their area. Departments may also advertise in areas where they would like to select their future officers. Examples are at colleges, from specific departments in the college, or in certain areas of the state. Posting of the testing process may also be done through special interest magazines and newsletters. Several police related magazines post employment opportunities as a service to their readers. Some publications specialize specifically in advertising for candidates in public safety professions.

The electronic superhighway (Internet) is another source of information on position announcements. Many police departments have their own Web sites where they post information on positions they are trying to fill. The internet will also allow you may to gather valuable information on the community, activities, and people in the area where you may be interested in working.

Finally, if you are interested in a specific department you may contact them either by phone or by letter to see if they are accepting applications. This is especially true if you are planning to move to a new area or different part of the country. One caution; the police application process has many steps and going through the process may require multiple trips to a department. This process is generally spread out over a period of weeks or months and travel is normally done at the expense of the candidate. Therefore, if your looking at moving great distances it may be

advantageous to contact the department and inquire about accelerated testing process for out of town candidates.

Application Form

Once you know a department is accepting applications you will need to obtain their application form. Application forms required by police departments vary as much as any other part of the testing process and even though two neighboring agencies are taking applications their application forms may differ greatly. To obtain an application contact the agency in the manner prescribed by the advertisement for the testing process. This may be done by calling the department to have the employment application mailed to you or you may be asked to pick up an application in person. A formal letter of inquiry to the department asking for recruiting information and application materials may also be utilized to obtain the application form.

Applications must be completed in full. Missing information only delays the processing of your application or it may result in rejection of your application entirely. Application forms should be typed whenever possible, and if not written legibly in black ink. Often the application is copied several times as you go through the hiring process and by having the application in a neat and legible form will provide a positive image of you with the department. The application form is your first opportunity for you to make a positive impression on those who will be evaluating you in the future.

All areas on the application form should have some type of response. If a section does not apply to you, (i.e., spouse information and you are unmarried) indicate the section does not apply with "NA" in the section. This will indicate to the screening personnel that the section does not apply to you and not that you missed the section.

Be sure to make a note of the date the application is due; applications are not be accepted after that date. Missing a deadline is the quickest way to ensure you will NOT be employed by that police department.

One final word on the application form. Only submit the information called for on the application or with materials contained in the application package. Many candidates will want to submit resumes or letters of reference with the application form. If your not sure what materials will be accepted ask the agency if they want this information submitted with the application or at some later time in the selection process.

A word or two of caution regarding the application form. Everything on the application form will be subjected to a thorough investigation when you arrive at the final stages of the testing process. Later in the selection process you may be required to submit to a polygraph examination and/or background investigation that will cover all information previously obtained, including the information on the application form. Be sure to truthfully and completely answer all questions. Be sure that all information (dates, addresses, contact person) are accurate and up to date. One sure way to delay the processing of your application, or to disqualify you from further consideration is to have a background investigator or polygraph examiner find that you have been inaccurate or incomplete on your background information. Honestly is always the best policy and this includes complete disclosure of all information regarding your background.

In addition to accepting application forms there is a growing trend by police departments to assess an application fee that is required at the time the application is submitted. Many police departments have found the cost of testing and investigating police candidates to be increasing to a point their budgets become scratched. The application fee is intended to both offset the cost of

testing and eliminate those who are not serious about a job in policing.

Orientation Session



This stage of the police application process is the first time the candidate obtains information first hand from the agency they are applying to. Orientation sessions are designed to familiarize the candidate with a background of the department, the basic requirements of the job, the salary and benefits of the position, an explanation of the steps in the selection process and any other information the agency desires to share with the entire pool of applicants. This will also be the first opportunity for the candidates to ask questions about the position, agency or the selection process with those directly involved. The agency may also use the orientation session to review the application form with the individual candidates for accuracy and completeness.

In some departments the orientation session is conducted by members or officers from the department. In other areas the orientation is held by representatives from a Human Resources or Personnel Office. Regardless of who provides the orientation session it is the first opportunity for the candidate to ask specific questions regarding the position they are applying for. Generally someone from the department is present to answer specific questions about the department.

Written Exam

The written examination is generally one of the first tests administered to police applicants. The written examination is designed to test a number of desirable capabilities the candidate should possess. Most professionally prepared police entry examinations have been rigorously developed

and tested to insure they test those traits they are suppose to test. In addition, the examinations are further tested to insure all applicants have an equal chance of successfully passing the examination regardless of gender, race, or sex. Most examinations are designed to test your reading comprehension, reasoning and problem solving ability, vocabulary, mathematical skills, powers of observation and retention, and other skills that may be directly related to the policing operation. Examples of these skills are map reading and the recall of suspect faces and features presented to you immediately prior to examination. The written examination **cannot** be on specific knowledge related to the policing function, such as law, search and seizure, or police procedures. It would be of little benefit at this stage of your job hunting experience to spend a lot of time on subjects that are part of the training curriculum at the police academy.

However, there are a number of things you can do to prepare for the written exam. In several studies conducted by Standard and Associates in Chicago they have found that a sizable percentage of those candidates who applied for police positions are not able to meet the minimum requirements. In one study Standard and Associates found that of the 21,000 applicants who took the National Police Officer Selection Test since 1992, a sizable percentage of the candidates could not pass the entry level examination. Fifteen percent of the applicants failed in the mathematics section; grammar sections eliminated fourteen percent of the applicants; writing skills were not sufficient twelve percent of the applicants and nine percent of the candidates failed the reading comprehension section (Law Enforcement Technology, February 1997, page 16).

Clearly the one area a candidate can prepare themselves for is the written examination. The basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic are vital to a law enforcement officers daily activity and these skills can be evaluated and improved upon by the candidate.

There are several books available that have sample pre-employment tests for people that wish to practice taking written examinations. Barron's Educational Series publishes a workbook called How to Prepare for the Police Officer Examination which is updated periodically. Another text, Police Officer Examination Preparation Guide, is published by Cliffs Notes and published its first edition in 1994. Both of these references provide not only a series of sample tests but include scoring guides to aid you in analyzing your responses and improving your test scores.

Several companies also specialize in evaluating and preparing persons who wish to be employed by police organizations. These companies are advertised in several leading law enforcement magazines and are available through the Internet. While there is not assurance you will be employed if you follow their recommendations, they do provide sample testing and evaluation of your skills.

Physical Agility Testing

Completing the physical agility examination phase of the police application process is another area the candidate can prepare themselves prior to taking the test. Most departments will provide you with complete details on the physical agility test or tests they will administer as well as the scoring criteria. Many of the tests are similar from department to department within the same state as there is a minimum required test to pass. In some areas, based upon specific needs or desires of the department, additional tests may be required. Again, just as with many other parts of the testing process, the test must be based upon a bonafide occupational qualification of the job.

Physical agility tests are designed to test your strength, endurance and flexibility. Test requirements may be based on sex or age, however there is considerable controversy over this



dual standard and many departments are now beginning to adopt a single scale that all candidates must pass. In some states (such as Illinois) there is a state mandated minimum requirement for physical agility testing before completion of the training academy. Departments may vary from the standard, however all recruits must pass the state minimums to graduate from the academy and ultimately become certified by the state as a police officer. Departments may adopt a number of different tests to determine the candidate's fitness levels for the individual needs of the department. These tests are often completed on a Pass-Fail basis with no accumulated scoring that is added to the overall ranking of the candidates. Customarily departments use a number of the following tests:

- One and one-half mile run timed
- Sit-ups completed in one minute
- Push-ups completed in one minute
- Pull-Ups
- Flexibility test
- Weight lift, usually a percentage of body weight
- Obstacle course
 - (Dead weight drag; Six foot wall climb; Running stairs)

Some departments, based on a bonafide occupational qualification may require that a candidate demonstrate a specific physical skill. For example, in jurisdictions where there is a departmental responsibility for patrolling in a water environment, departments may also mandate that you pass a swimming test. You may be asked to fire a handgun or drive a standard police vehicle to demonstrate your ability to perform these tasks. Physical agility tests must however be based on the primary responsibilities of the job and not just to determine who is the strongest or fastest candidate. The era where only the biggest or strongest persons were hired as police officers has ended. What does remain is the need for the candidate to demonstrate they are in

good physical condition and are able, to some extent, protect themselves from the rigors of the job.

Illinois has a state mandated minimum physical agility requirement that all candidates must pass prior to being allowed to become certified by the training academy. The "Police Officer Wellness Evaluation Report" or POWER Test, consists of four components. Each component is directly related to a police officer's performance and is scientifically valid. The test consists of the following components.

1. Sit and Reach - This is a measure of the flexibility of the lower back and upper leg area. The test involved stretching out to touch the toes or beyond with extended arms. The scoring is based on the number of inches reached on a yard stick.

2. One minute sit up test - This is a measure of the muscular endurance of the abdominal muscles. The score is based on the number of bent leg sit-ups performed in one minute.

3. One repetition Maximum Bench Press - This is to measure the upper body strength you can generate. The score is based on the amount of weight pushed divided by the body weight.

4. One and one-half mile run - This is a timed run to measure the heart and vascular systems' capability to transport oxygen. The score is in minutes and seconds.

The following table provides you with the State mandated minimum requirements to pass the P.O.W.E.R. Test in Illinois. Remember however that departments may in certain circumstances require that candidates pass a more rigorous physical agility test to meet the department's individual needs.

	MALE				FEMALE			
Test	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
Sit and Reach	16	15	13.8	12.8	18.8	17.8	16.8	16.3
1 minute Sit up	37	34	28	23	31	24	19	13
Maximum Bench Press Ratio	0.98	0.87	0.79	0.7	0.58	0.52	0.49	0.43
1.5 mile run	13.46	14.31	15.24	16.21	16.21	16.52	17.53	18.44



Oral Interview

The oral board interview is another highly critical step in the selection of police candidates. In some agencies the oral board constitutes the entire final score, in others the oral board score constitutes a percentage of the total score. The oral board interview allows for a greater inquiry of your qualifications, background, and verbal abilities. The oral board will generally consist of several persons interviewing candidates individually to assess the candidates' capabilities in the areas previously listed. This stage of the selection process, as in the other stages, vary from department to department, as well as from state to state. It is imperative that you know your own

talents, abilities and limitations.

The following is a list of ten areas that are typically explored during an oral board interview.

1. Police contract, arrests, convictions, military discipline and discharge status, honesty and integrity.
2. Nature and extent of military experience.
3. Work history including technical knowledge and experience relevant to police work.
4. Extent and nature of formal education.
5. Motivation, interest, goals relevant to police work, understanding of the nature of the job and its demands.
6. Reasoning ability, judgement, common sense, decision-making ability.
7. Verbal communications, self-expression.
8. Interpersonal sensitivity, sociability, ability to relate to others comfortably and harmoniously, extroversion.
9. Alertness
10. Maturity

(Law Enforcement Career Guide. 5th Edition. The Gordon Company, Winter Haven Florida. page 6)

It is critical that you look at the oral board interview as your opportunity to sell yourself to the board. This will be your best opportunity to present yourself in the light you want to be portrayed. It is imperative that you are prepared to answer their questions in a professional, intelligent and well thought-out manner. In order to do this you must have prepared for the interview. Your first goal is to gather as much information as possible about the agency you are applying for. Each oral board will be looking for certain characteristics in a candidate that are consistent to the philosophy and mission of the department. You must know what the mission and philosophy of the department is in order to appear to be the best candidate for the job.

Practicing for the interview is very beneficial activity you can do before the interview. Practice with another person so you may receive feedback on your presentation or you may also utilize a video camera to see how you are presenting yourself. Both techniques will not only

make you a better presenter but will also help you to organize your thoughts so the presentation appears as natural and professional as it can be.

Below is a list of possible questions you may be asked during an oral board interview.

1. Why do you want to be a police officer?
2. Why have you chosen our department?
3. What do you consider to be your most outstanding trait or asset?
4. What are your short range and long range career goals and objectives?
5. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
6. What do you feel are the most important qualities a police officer should possess, and why?
7. What have you done to prepare yourself for a career in law enforcement?
8. What have you done to prepare for this testing program?
9. How would you handle a situation that might occur while you are off duty?
10. Why do you feel you would make a good police officer?
11. What are some of the responsibilities of a police officer?
12. Could you tell us a little about yourself?
13. How do you feel that any of your past jobs or activities have helped you prepare for a law enforcement career?
14. What do you consider to be some of your weakness' and how do you plan to improve upon them?
15. How would you describe yourself?
16. Tell us about your educational background.
17. Tell us about your present job?
18. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction in your life and why?
19. Describe your most rewarding experience.
20. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable
21. How do you function under pressure?
22. How would you describe the ideal job for you?
23. What have you learned from your mistakes and give us one example?
24. Why should we hire you over any of the other candidates?
25. Why would you be an asset to this department?
26. Do you honestly feel that you could take a life, in self-defense or to protect another person, if you had to?
27. Do you feel there are temptations of this job and why do you feel you will resist the temptations?
28. Is there anything you would like to add before we finish?
29. Tell us about yourself.
30. Have you done similar job to this one before?
31. Could you tell us about your job-related skills?
32. What is important to you in a job and why?

33. Why do you feel you will be successful as a police officer?
34. What would you like to know about this job?
35. "What If" questions to see how you react to pressure, and your capability to think on your feet.

Be prepared for a follow-up question or two to any of those listed above. Justification of your answers will allow the interviewers to see how your thought processes work as well as permitting them an opportunity to see how you function under the pressure of justifying your statements. If you cannot justify your answer you will appear insincere and as though you are unable to explain your feelings and actions; both undesirable qualities of a police officer.

It can not be stressed enough that preparing answers to these questions and practicing speaking before others are two very important tasks you can do in preparation for the oral board interview. This is especially true if you are not an accomplished public speaker or you become nervous talking to strangers. In general, unless you are use to highly stressful situations and having to defend yourself, practice is essential to your success in the oral board interview.

The following tips may prove helpful to you during the actual interview.

1. Dress appropriately for the interview.
 - Men should wear dark colored suit
 - Women should wear business attire
2. Proper grooming of hair and nails
3. No heavy aftershave or perfume
4. No jewelry except for wedding bands or school rings;
 - Earrings should be limited to small studs (women only)
5. Upon entering the interview room, shake hands with interviewers as they are introduced to you and sit when and where asked to.
6. Remember the names of the interviewers, and use their names when possible
7. Maintain eye contact with the interviewers at all times
8. Maintain poise and composure even under pressure.
9. Pause after each question, replies should be well thought out and logical
 - Do not repeat questions unless asked to do so.
10. Officers want to work with someone who has common sense
11. Have a prepared opening and closing statements and use them if asked.

12. Have questions prepared about the department if asked for:
Examples - promotional opportunities, salary, benefits, special units, etc.
13. At the conclusion thank each interviewer for their time.
14. Do not act cocky or arrogant, like an "Know-it-all"
15. Do not slouch or appear nervous or anxious.
16. Do not speak negatively of current or past employers.
17. Once you have given an answer to a question, stick with it; there are no right or wrong answers to questions,

Background Investigation

The background investigation is the phase of the police application process where the agency gathers documentation to establish the truthfulness and completeness of the applicant's information up to this point. The background investigation is also the phase where the candidate's background and character are verified. Each department will conduct this investigation at a different phase of the process but they will conduct one. **Honesty is always the best policy** and this is one of two phases where deception on the part of the applicant will be apparent.

On the application, or at some other time in the process you will be asked to provide to the employer a wide variety of information. Lists of your friends, family information, the schools you attended, previous addresses, previous employers, financial information and a listing of references. You will be asked to account for all time in the last ten years or more, as well as complete information on your present activities. The background investigation will involve taking all of this information and conducting a series of interviews of people to determine what activities they have been involved in during their past. They will not only interview the references you list but also others you may not have listed. Neighbors, coworkers, roommates, other associates are all potentially going to be interviewed. The background investigator will not only verify your statements but also ask the reference for their opinions on your behavior, character, work ethic,

and level of trust. Each one of these people will be able to provide their opinions on YOU to the perspective employer.

Contact your references and current employers before the investigation to notify them the background investigation is forthcoming and obtain their consent to provide their names and information. Some employers will only confirm dates of employment and official records related to your employment. It is advisable that if you have one of these employers in your past that you also have someone who worked with you, or whom you worked for, act as one of your personal references. This will allow the company to officially acknowledge your employment history as well as having someone to provide personal observation about your work history while there.

- This phase involves the verification of your driving record and any criminal history you may have. In one study conducted forty percent of the applicants had arrest records and fifteen percent had been convicted of a crime. This study involved a national testing firm that specializes in candidate testing for entry level police positions and has over seven-hundred clients across the United States. The study took the candidates from three years of testing and included over 10,000 applicants. Clearly many people who apply for a position in law enforcement are not qualified, therefore, it is incumbent upon the department to do a thorough background investigation of a candidate before they are hired. Any department that fails to conduct a complete and accurate background investigation is opening themselves up to potential future legal and public relations problems such as those which have occurred in Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago and a number of other cities agencies across the United States. The courts are holding departments liable for the actions of their officers especially when the department should have known an employees past record. Incidents in Miami, Los Angeles's Police Department's Rampart scandal,

and the use of force scandals in New York have focused national attention on these cities and their departments, and the question is being asked, “how did they get hired.”

To be prepared for the background investigation, and to assist you in completing the applications, you should prepare a package of background information containing documentation of all aspects of your past. Here is a partial list of those items which should be included in the package.

1. A copy of your birth certificate
2. A copy of your naturalization papers.
3. A copy of your high school diploma
4. A copy of your college transcript
5. A copy of your military discharge papers (DD214)
6. A copy of your Selective Service Registration Card
- 7. A copy of your marriage license or divorce decrees
8. A copy of your driver's license, state identification card, or military identification card
9. A listing of all marriages including the dates, maiden name, and date of birth of spouse
10. The names, ages and address of all children born to you
11. The names, ages and addresses of any other dependents
12. The occupations and work addresses of all immediate relatives
13. The occupation and work addresses of your spouse, as well as their salary and supervisors name
14. Listing of all addresses you have ever lived at, including the dates of residency
15. Listing of all bank accounts, the bank's address for you and your spouse
16. Listing of any additional sources of income you or your spouse may have
17. Listing of all present debts, child support, including all account numbers
18. The location, date and reason for any bankruptcy that you or your spouse have
19. The names, address, and occupations of at least five (5) people not related to you and not former employers
20. A list of any medical connotation which require hospitalization.
21. The names, addresses, and phone numbers of all previous employers. Include your title and duties, salary, supervisors name, dates of employment and reason for leaving.
22. Explanations of any disciplinary action or termination from previous employer(s)
23. List of any other police departments you have applied to, and the reason you were not hired if known
24. List of all civil and criminal court action you have been involved in
25. Description of military service and any disciplinary actions.
26. Current and previous driver's license information
27. History of revocation of vehicle insurance.

28. Record of all traffic accidents you have been involved in.
29. Record of traffic citations you have received and dispositions.
30. Complete record of any previous criminal action against you.
31. Complete description of any of your relatives, or that of your spouse, that have every been arrested, (especially for felonies).
32. Complete details of all illegal drug usage you have ever participated in.
33. Complete listing of all medications your are taking.
34. List of all schools you have ever attended and dates.

(The Call to Duty, CNS Enterprises, Inc. 1994, page 77 - 79)

If you have received any commendations or other awards associated with police work, volunteer work, or other community service, this should also be available for inspection and part of this background package. You will not need all of the information listed above for all agencies; however, by assembling all of the materials listed you can easily and quickly complete applications and have all necessary documentation immediately available.

Psychological Evaluation

This is one phase of the employment process that you can not practice for, train for, or prepare for in a few weeks or months. The psychological testing will evaluate your psychological make-up which has developed over your lifetime. There is no one universal test that is used. Most of these tests do not have any right or wrong answers as they are designed to measure your psychological fitness for a law enforcement position. Some agencies use the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) or the California Psychological Inventory (CPI). Some departments have also developed their own psychological tests or contracted with a professional mental health practitioner to administer the psychological testing.

The testing may involve one, or several steps for completion. The first step is normally a paper and pencil test consisting of a lengthy and detailed set of questions to evaluate your personality.

This test may be part of the written examination administered previously or a separate test conducted either in a group setting or on an individual basis. You may also have an interview conducted by a psychologist or other trained professional to analyze and interpret your results. These results are then given to the department and they may, or may not, disqualify you for the vacancy.

There is very little you can do to prepare for these tests. There are however, a number of things you should NOT do while taking these tests.

- Do not worry about the testing, stress will influence your performance
- Do not answer how you think they want you to answer
- Do not try to figure out a pattern on the test or the reason questions are asked
- Do not randomly answer questions - read the entire question
- Do not lie or attempt to deceive the agency by giving answers you do not really believe.

Polygraph Examination

The polygraph, or lie detector examination is used to test the truthfulness of the answers to questions you have given prior to this time in the selection process. The polygraph examination is the second stage of the selection process we will discuss where deception will easily be detected. Typically the polygraph examination will be one of the last tests administered to the candidate before beginning employment. In some cases the polygraph examination given after a conditional job offer is made. The Polygraph examination is completed by the use of a sophisticated instrument that will measure your physiological responses to a set of prepared questions. You are connected via several electrodes to an instrument that will measure your pulse rate, blood pressure, respiration, and skin responses. The polygraph examiner will set the machine to your physiological activity at the time of the test. You will then be asked a series of questions relating to your background while the machine is being calibrated to your physiological responses.

Once the polygraph is calibrated correctly you will be asked a series of preplanned questions relating to the information you have submitted during the selection process or which has been gathered during a background investigation. Your physiological responses to those questions will then be measured by the instrument and recorded. At the conclusion of the test the recorded reactions will be analyzed by the polygraph examiner and the results determined. The test, with identical questions, will normally be administered several times to verify the readings the examiner obtains and to assist in clarifying any inconclusive readings that have been obtained on one of the recordings.

Generally the results will show either no deception, deception, or an inconclusive reading. The results of a polygraph examination are not admissible in a court of law for purposes of criminal prosecution, however, they are a valid and common procedure to determine the truthfulness of the candidate.

One word of advise at this point; we all have something that we regret or are embarrassed about. Nothing that will generally disqualify you for a law enforcement career, but none the less, something that will probably create a stress reaction inside of you that will register on the polygraph. Be honest with the department you are applying to, and relax during the examination and you will stand a much better chance of getting through the process.

Physical Examination

The physical examination is conducted by a physician to determine that you are free from any medical conditions that would make you unable to complete the tasks required as part of the job. Currently there is considerable controversy over what conditions should exclude you from employment and which do not. Under the guidelines of the Americans With Disabilities Act

(ADA) many conditions which previously excluded you from police work are no longer automatically disqualifying you from employment. Police departments are required to comply with the guidelines of the ADA and to be disqualified for employment the disability must be such that it interferes with an essential Bonafide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ) and a reasonable accommodation can not be made. Exactly what is a BFOQ and what is a reasonable accommodation are the main issues under considerable debate in the law enforcement profession at this time. Many departments are in the process of redefining job descriptions and establishing job task requirements so the essential BFOQ can be stated clearly and verified by task analysis.

Physical examinations are generally not conducted until after there has been a conditional job offer made. Prior to this time questions pertaining to physical health and physical limitations can only be asked under the strictest of circumstances.



Miscellaneous Procedures

Each department may have additional steps in the selection process they feel are necessary to determine your ability to be a police officer for their department. Under some civil service commission rules the chief or sheriff is required to interview the top three candidates before making the job offer. Other jurisdictions require that the chief of sheriff offer vacant positions to the highest scoring candidate, then going down the list in numerical order under the positions are filled. In some areas the chief or sheriff may select anyone on the list and offer them a job. Lotteries to select the candidates are also used in a number of larger police agencies. Exactly how the candidate is selected to receive a job offer is established by the governmental body that oversees the hiring process (for example Civil Service Commission, Merit Board, etc.).

I made it through the process, Now What?

Once the police application or selection process has been completed there begins one of the hardest and most frustrating parts of the selection process; waiting for the results. This waiting game can take several weeks to several months to complete. Generally, if you have been disqualified you will hear the results sooner than if you have completed the various steps successfully. Therefore, no news is good news. Many times the agency will tell you ahead of time how you will be notified of the results, either by mail or telephone. They may also provide you with a telephone number to contact them for further information and a date after which you may obtain your test results. Do not be impatient. The process to obtain a job in law enforcement is often times a slowly moving mechanism that can create tremendous frustration and anxiety in the candidates. Repeatedly calling recruiters or the agency will not improve your chances of obtaining a position.



While you are waiting for your test results you should review the testing process you have just completed and how you could improve upon any of the steps you have completed. Use the errors in the past to improve upon the tests you take in the future. You can also use this time to consider a number of factors in choosing an employer.

Factors To Consider In Choosing In Employer

Most people applying for a police or law enforcement position would be happy with getting any job offer and the furthest thing from their minds is to turn down one job to wait for another. Unfortunately, sometimes their own best interests would be served by doing just that. There are many things to consider when selecting an employer. Hopefully you have already carefully considered these factors before you began the process. If not, here are a few things to think about

when selecting an employer and accepting a position.

- **Salary and Benefits** are the amount of money you will receive and benefits like paid sick leave, paid vacation time, educational incentive pay, medical and dental insurance, and dependent insurance.
- **Agency growth potential** or the possibility of the agency increasing in size which would lead to increased promotional and specialty position opportunities.
- **Advancement opportunities**, how much potential is there for promotion within the agency which would lead to increased responsibility and salary.
- **Crime rate of jurisdiction** which would give you an indication on how active your patrol shift would be during your tour of duty.
- **Departmental Qualifications** which includes not only the requirements for employment but also the required qualifications for specialty positions and promotions.
- **Testing Process** which includes for initial employment but also any testing that may result from in-service training throughout your career.
- **Quality of training offered** to officers throughout their careers. This includes both basic training and field training programs for recruit officers, and continued in-service training.
- **Cost of living in area** (housing, taxes, utilities, etc.) where you will be working. In some areas the rate of pay for police officers is less than the cost of affordable housing and cost of living expenses.
- **Quality of schools and educational system** for both the officer and his family.
- **Quality of medical care** should you or a member of your family require medical care for any sickness or injury.
- **Recreational opportunities** that you and your family would be able to participate in while not on duty.
- **Yearly climate** for the area you are living in. If you hate cold weather with ice and snow, the northern plains states would not be the best place to look for work.

Other considerations the candidate may wish to examine are: (1) the opportunities to participate in specialized units, (SWAT, K-9, DARE, etc.); (2) other career advancement opportunities the position may offer such as educational reimbursement or tuition waivers for the officer. (3) The effects of the police position on the location you will live in on spouses, children and other family members: (4) How is your accepting a police position going to affect those within your immediate family as well as you.

Closing Comments

The information presented here is intended to make your quest in pursuit of a job in law enforcement easier. The process will take time and effort to successfully complete. Do not become discouraged by the obstacles in your quest for employment in your chosen career. At times the process seems insensitive, cold, and tedious. The selection process, much like other parts of public service, is a slow moving vehicle. However, it does move, and if you keep with it, do not give up, and continue in spite of obstacles, your quest will be a successful one.

Good Luck!

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