

ABSTRACT

Currently pre-employment law enforcement candidates must undergo an extensive process before achieving their goal of becoming sworn law enforcement officers. The authority and responsibility of law enforcement demands high standards. The Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards; the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, federal statutes prohibiting job-related discrimination; professional police organizations; and professionals in the mental health field, primarily police psychologist have all played important roles in creating today's screening system. The existing system helps ensure that only psychologically suitable people are identified to serve as law enforcement officers, and those unsuitable are also discovered.

This paper and its research were obtained from various sources, such as, professional journals, law enforcement administration literature, personal interviews, and from the Internet.

The research reveals how the screening process began at the state level and was improved upon by the federal government's protective role. The research also demonstrates how professional law enforcement organizations also improved the process and developed model policies for agencies. Finally, the contribution by professionals in the mental health field is also examined.

The research demonstrates that the pre-employment process demands the continuing, active, collaborative, and cooperative roles of the above-mentioned entities and professionals to ensure a suitable law enforcement officer.

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INTRODUCTION

The citizens of the State of Michigan and their elected representatives have deemed it necessary to entrust each individual law enforcement officer with tremendous authority. A law enforcement officer may exercise this authority along a continuum. Examples start with the rather mundane and continue to the most extreme illustrations depending on the circumstances. Even when a law enforcement officer conducts an ordinary traffic stop he/she temporarily deprives that citizen of their individual freedom during that interaction.

A law enforcement officer's authority also extends to the arrests of citizens. Arrests may result from the issuance of a warrant by an objective, non-interested magistrate or by the law enforcement officer affecting an arrest based on his/her own decision on whether probable cause to arrest under the circumstances exists.

Although the vast majority of arrests occur peacefully an arrest by definition requires a citizen's submission to the officer(s) affecting the arrest. Law enforcement officers are authorized to arrest a citizen with the aid physical force, such as chemical irritants, impact weapons. Simply stated an officer may use violence to achieve a citizen's submission to the lawful arrest.

The authority of violent force extends all the way to the end of the continuum, which is extreme violence- deadly force. A law enforcement officer may, under certain severe circumstances, use deadly force to stop (arrest) a violent offender. The decision is usually arrived at in seconds without the review,

consent, or approval of any other person or government entity. Thus, the law enforcement officer in the State of Michigan is authorized to commit an act which no other government official, entity, or court has the authority to commit.

In the State of Michigan law enforcement officers also have access to confidential information. The information originates from police contacts with informants, criminal investigations, files, and numerous computer databases which may be in-house, county based, or organized and run by the state and/or federal government. All of this information contains protected personal information about citizens.

Each law enforcement officer must be able to protect the confidentiality of this information from dissemination to people or enterprises outside of the appropriately authorized governmental agencies. Furthermore the security of law enforcement information, or the lack there of, may be the difference between thousands of tax dollars wasted on an investigation or in the worse case scenario, the injury or death of an informant or even a law enforcement officer.

After reflection upon the duties of law enforcement officers is well thought-out, two considerations quickly reveal themselves. A law enforcement officer in the State of Michigan has tremendous *power* and *access* to information. Both of these considerations require the necessity that each potential law enforcement officer candidate is the *right* kind of person to be entrusted with such responsibilities.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The State of Michigan, individual law enforcement agencies, professional law enforcement organizations, scholars, and medical/psychological professionals and institutions have all formulated, refined, evaluated, and then re-evaluated elaborate processes and procedures to hopefully guarantee to the public and social institutions that the law enforcement candidates hired are capable of maintaining the trust of society. All of the resultant plans and procedures are then considered against the federal government's equal employment bodies and of course the courts.

This paper provides an overview of important legal and procedural aspects of the pre-employment psychological screening process for potential law enforcement officer candidates. This paper presents a generic review of the psychological screening process. The paper provides some history of the process; the requirements of the state of Michigan, as mandated by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards; the federal laws prohibiting job-related discrimination, through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Americans with Disabilities Act; the mentoring role of professional administrative law enforcement institutions- namely the leading role of the International Association of Chiefs of Police; and an explanation of the attributes sought for in law enforcement candidates which will be revealed by the psychological screening process.

The paper is generic due to the overwhelming differences between individual law enforcement agencies' hiring and screening policies. However it should be remembered that even though each law enforcement agency has a unique process most are quite similar and vary only by nuance and all law enforcement agencies must comply with the State of Michigan's standards, federal law and court decisions.

Informational Overview

The Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards

The State of Michigan Legislature created and the Governor signed into state law the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES or the Commission) with the passage of Public Act 203 in 1965. The Act authorized the creation of a Commission to "prepare and publish" minimum hiring standards for the entry-level law enforcement officer candidate and training standards.¹

The Commission is composed of high-ranking officials across the state of Michigan. State law sets the Commission's membership. It is composed of numerous law enforcement executives, namely Chiefs of Police and Sheriffs. Cities and Counties with large populations are mandated seats on the Commission. Other seats rotate to included police chiefs and sheriffs from less populated areas of the state. The governor, attorney general, director of the Michigan State Police and even the larger police unions all have seats on the Commission.

¹ MCOLES, Policy and Procedure Manual, Chapter I - Unit 3, page 1 of 8.

Originally, the Commission's standards were only advisory and voluntary for the state's law enforcement agencies. The Commission's authority to compel standards changed in 1971 after amendments were added to Public Act 203 by the state legislature.² Since that time all standards published by the Commission are mandatory for law enforcement agencies across the entire state.

The Commission has authority over law enforcement agencies that employ one person to over 5,000. The law enforcement agencies under the authority of the Commission include all city, township, county, state, university, airport, railroad, and conservation.³

The Commission published, revised, and re-published its minimum employment standards for law enforcement candidates throughout the years. Currently, the Commission requires these standards for entry-level law enforcement candidates. The requirements are fully listed in the Michigan Administrative Code; R 28.4102, R 28.4103, and R 28.4108. The requirements are divided between non-medical selection qualifications and medical selection qualifications. Non-medical selections qualifications included but are not limited to the following:

1. Be a citizen of the United States.
2. Have attained the minimum age as established by the hiring agency, which shall not be less than 18 years of age or as otherwise provided by law.
3. Have obtained a high school diploma or have attained a passing score on the general education development test indicating a high school graduation level.
4. Have no felony convictions.
5. Possess good moral character...

² Ibid, page 1 of 8.

³ Ibid, page 1 of 8.

6. Possess a valid Michigan motor vehicle operator or chauffeur's license.
7. Read and write at a level necessary to perform the job of a law enforcement officer as determined by passing the COMMISSION'S examination... R 28.4108 (d).
8. Demonstrate physical ability at a level necessary to perform the job of a law enforcement officer as determined by passing the COMMISSION'S examination... R 28.4108 (d).
9. Test negative on a test prescribed by the COMMISSION that is designated to detect the illicit use of controlled substances....
10. Successfully complete the basic police training curriculum at a COMMISSION approved school.
11. Take and attain a passing score on the COMMISSION'S certification examination within one year of completion of training....
12. The standards of the American Psychological Association that are contained in the publication entitled "Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures", third edition, 1987, are adopted by reference in these rules....⁴

The Commission also published the necessary medical selection qualifications. The majority of the medical selection qualifications are technical in nature but they assure that the prospective candidate has the necessary hearing and vision to perform as a law enforcement officer. However the last two of the section should be listed in their entirety:

1. Be free from any other impediments of the senses, physically sound, in possession of his or her extremities, and well developed physically with height and weight in relation to each other as indicated by accepted medical standards.
2. Be free from any of the following which may tend to impair the efficient performance of a law enforcement officer's duties which might endanger the lives of other or the law enforcement officer.
 - A. Physical defects
 - B. Chronic diseases
 - C. Organic diseases
 - D. Organic or functional conditions

⁴ MCOLES, Policy and Procedure Manual, Chapter II – Unit 1, page 3 - 4 of 11.

E. Mental and Emotional instabilities⁵

The Commission also lists what a law enforcement agencies responsibilities are in regards to a prospective law enforcement candidate. The Commission has published numerous directives to the law enforcement agencies, which include but are not limited to fingerprinting the candidate for a search of a criminal history, a background investigation, and an oral interview of the candidates. The Commission also requires:

Cause the applicant to be examined by a licensed physician to determine that the applicant meets the standards set forth in Rule 3 of Michigan Administrative Code R 28.4102a. A declaration of the applicant's medical history shall be made available to the examining physician and shall become a part of the background investigation. A determination of compliance with the provisions of R 28.4102 a (e) (v) may be made by a licensed psychologist.⁶

The Commission's mandates comprehensively cover the whole process of a prospective law enforcement officer candidate's route from the beginning of the process to the conclusion. The Commission's lawful authority compels law enforcement agencies to see that its standards are met during hiring and training of entry-level personnel. However, many have realized that the Commission has produced exactly what it set out to accomplish- minimum requirements. Many other law enforcement agencies have established policies that exceed the State of Michigan's minimum legal requirements. Although the state of Michigan sets minimum standards, law enforcement agencies most also navigate the federal laws prohibiting job-related discrimination.

⁵ Ibid, page 4- 7 of 11.

⁶ Ibid, page 7 of 11.

Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Related Discrimination

Hiring personnel in any field requires adherence to laws prohibiting discrimination. Past abuses by employers in the private and public sectors have established the need for laws protecting people from employer-based discrimination. Such discrimination has taken various forms throughout the years but the federal government and states have responded by passing laws to respond to inappropriate conduct by employers.

Law enforcement agencies are no different from private companies in their obligation to obey state and federal equal employment laws. Law enforcement agencies and those charged with hiring personnel must have a strong understanding of the federal government's Equal Employment Opportunity Laws. These laws entail what is considered discrimination. A lack of knowledge of job-related discrimination laws would offer no protection to such an irresponsible employer.⁷ The following are a list of federal laws which ensures protections of individuals from job discrimination:

1. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), prohibits employment discrimination based on race color, religion, sex, or national origin.
2. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 (EPA), which prohibits men and women who perform substantially equal work in the same establishment from sex-based wage discrimination.
3. The Age Discrimination employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), which protects individuals who are 40 years of age or older.
4. Title I and Title V of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), which prohibit employment discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in the private sector, and in state and local governments.

⁷ Collins, Timothy, Captain City of Ferndale Police Dept. Personal Interview. 4 September 2003.

5. Sections 501 and 505 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibit discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities who work in the federal government.
6. The Civil Rights Act of 1991, which, among other things, provides monetary damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination.⁸

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces and investigates reported violations of all of the above federal laws. Although agencies must comply with all federal laws prohibiting discrimination, it is the Americans with Disabilities Act that impacts most on the pre-employment psychological screening process. Administrators need to pay especial attention to the details of this relatively new law. The ADA procedurally changed how businesses, state, and local governments conducted candidate screening and questioning.

In order for a law enforcement administrator to comply with the ADA s/he must understand whom the law protects. The ADA protects people that have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities e.g. sitting, standing, or sleeping. The ADA also protects people with a record of a substantially limiting impairment, such as a history of a debilitating or chronic disease. Finally, the ADA also protects people who are regarded, or treated by the employer as if s/he has a substantially limiting impairment.

Importantly though the ADA only protects people who are *qualified* for the job s/he desires. The individual must meet job related requirements and s/he must be able to perform the job's *essential functions* with or without a reasonable

⁸ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination, Questions and Answers. Page 1 of 11. <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html>

accommodations.⁹ This clause of the ADA exempts many law enforcement agencies from hiring persons with disabilities that would be unable to perform essential functions of the job.

The ADA does not only regulate hiring it impacts many other aspects of employment. Under the ADA it is illegal to discriminate in any aspect of employment including: hiring and firing; compensation, assignment, or classification of employees; transfer, promotion, layoff, or recall; job advertisements; recruitment; testing; use of company facilities; training and apprenticeship programs; fringe benefits; pay, retirement plans, and disability leave; or other terms and conditions of employment.¹⁰ Administrators must be mindful not only during the screening process but throughout a person entire period of employment.

Law enforcement administrators must also understand what the ADA demands from an employer. The ADA requires the following from employers with personnel or candidates seeking employment that come under the protection of the act.

1. An equal opportunity to apply for jobs and to work in jobs that they are qualified for.
2. An equal opportunity to be promoted once they are working.
3. Equal access to benefits and privileges of employment that are offered to other employees.
4. Not harassed because of their disability.¹¹

⁹ U.S./EEOC. The American with Disabilities Act: A Primer for Small Business. Page 2 of 6. <http://www.eeoc.gov/ada/adahandbook.html>

¹⁰ U.S./EEOC. Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination, Questions and Answers. Page 2 of 11. <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html>

¹¹ U.S./EEOC. The Americans with Disabilities Act: A Primer for Small Business. Page 3 of 6. <http://www.eeoc.gov/ada/adahandbook.html>

The ADA has been a source of numerous lawsuits throughout the country, including both the public and private sectors. Law enforcement administrators could avoid the pitfalls of noncompliance with relative ease- if they simply review the law. The EEOC offers employers a simple rule of thumb for employers to follow during the hiring process. The employer may only ask disability-related questions after making a conditional job offer to the prospective candidate. All medical examinations and/or psychological screening must also occur after the conditional employment offer. All medical examinations, psychological testing/screening, and/or questions about a disability must be identical for all applicants in the same job category.¹²

The International Association of Chiefs of Police

Other institutions have led the way by studying and publishing their findings of how law enforcement agencies can and should hire and retain a higher standard of law enforcement officer.

Founded in 1893 the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is an association comprised of many upper-level law enforcement executives. The membership is comprised of experts in the field of law enforcement who are themselves a tremendous source of skilled knowledge.¹³

The IACP is a non-profit organization that exists to improve the quality and ability of police services throughout all communities, across the country, and even the world. The IACP also endeavors to; develop progressive law enforcement administration, encourage technical innovations, encourage

¹² Ibid. Page 3 of 6.

¹³ <http://www.theiacp.org/about/history.htm>

cooperation between agencies, foster the exchange of information, improve recruitment and retention systems, and promote exemplary ethics.¹⁴

However, the IACP does not restrict its membership to upper-level management. It promotes and funds studies and services to all law enforcement agencies from the Federal Bureau of Investigation to any local police department. The IACP seeks to be useful to all law enforcement agency executives no matter the size of the agency. Consequently, the IACP services, studies, and model policies are often applicable to most law enforcement agencies.

The IACP studies current police issues and then publishes model policies for law enforcement agencies. The IACP has numerous sections within the organization to ensure its value to all law enforcement. The IACP even has a Police Psychological Services Committee Section.

The Police Psychological Services Committee has studied the role of psychology in the law enforcement profession. It studies how psychology can improve law enforcement recruitment, suitability, retention, and traumatic events. One area of special concern to upper-level law enforcement administrators is the recruitment of suitable individuals into the law enforcement agencies.¹⁵

The Police Psychological Services Committee published its objectives after the IACP Executive Board voted it into existence in 1984. The Police Psychological Services Committee earned full section status in 1986. The objectives of the Police Psychological Services Section are as follows:

¹⁴ <http://www.theiacp.org/about/history.htm>

¹⁵ http://www.psycheval.com/iacp_guidelines.htm

1. Provide an immediate and knowledgeable information source on police psychology and related mental health fields to law enforcement in general, and to the IACP in particular.
2. Advance police psychological services in general.
3. Identify police psychology resources, including the development of a directory of law enforcement mental health professionals.
4. Make training available to the IACP membership concerning police psychology and related fields.
5. Provide information and training to mental health professionals so they might develop and upgrade skills in the law enforcement mental health area.¹⁶

Many administrators throughout the state of Michigan and throughout the country have recognized the need to go beyond state's mandates for minimum requirements. Minimum requirements do provide a strong base for suitable candidates but it does not address the issues of recruiting people into law enforcement who are psychologically suited for a career in law enforcement.¹⁷

The Police Psychological Services Section, under the auspices of and adopted by the IACP, published its Pre-employment Psychological Evaluation Guidelines in 1989. These guidelines offer law enforcement administrators stratagems and professional advice to consider the role and use of the pre-employment psychological examinations of law enforcement candidates. The guidelines are specifically designed for positions in law enforcement that entail the authority to arrest. The Police Psychological Services Section also recommends these guidelines to law enforcement agencies' administrators who must be able to support and defend hiring practices that may be scrutinized.¹⁸

¹⁶ http://www.psycheval.com/iacp_guideleines.htm

¹⁷ Forsberg, Linda, M.S., Ph.D. Personal Interview. 8 April 2003.

¹⁸ <http://www.iacp.org/documents/index.cfm>

The Pre-Employment Psychological Evaluation Guidelines are composed of five separate sections. Each section is a step along a logical and deliberate process to determine ultimately the suitability of a law enforcement candidate. Each section also advises law enforcements administrators of perils to avoid.

The first section is Development, which is summarized below:

1. Pre-employment psychological assessments should be one component of the process.
2. Practitioners should be familiar with psychological testing for public safety positions, and state and federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act.
3. Only licensed or certified psychologists trained and experienced in test interpretation and law enforcement assessment techniques should conduct screening.
4. Data on attributes considered most important for effective performance should be obtained for a job analysis.
5. Administrators should have information regarding the benefits and limitations of psychological assessment procedures.
6. Provisions should be made for the security of testing materials and, access to, and retention of the report and raw data.
7. Prior to the administration of psychological instruments and interview, the candidate should sign an informed consent.¹⁹

The second part of the Guidelines is Testing. The section is summarized as follows:

1. A test of job related, validated instruments should be administered. Test results should be available to the evaluator before screening interviews.
2. Only validated written tests should be used.
3. If computer tests are used are used, the psychologists conducting the interview should verify and interpret results.
4. The evaluation must be conducted in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines after a conditional offer has been offered.²⁰

¹⁹ IACP; Police Psychological Services Section. Pre-Employment Psychological Services Section. 1989. <http://www.iacp.org/documents/index.cfm>.

The third part of the Guidelines is the Interview. This section is summarized as follows:

1. Face-to-face interviews should be conducted before a final report is submitted.
2. A semi-structured, job-related interview format should always be employed.
3. Interviews should be scheduled to allow for sufficient time to cover appropriate background and test results verification.²¹

The fourth part of the Guidelines is Evaluation. This section is summarized as follows:

1. Administrators involved with employment decisions should have written reports. Reports should evaluate the candidate's suitability based on all material, including tests and interview results. Reports should contain a rating and/or recommendation for employment, justification for the recommendation and any reservations the psychologist may have.
2. Clinical diagnoses of candidate's should be avoided. Screening should be focused on a candidate's ability to perform the essential functions of the position.
3. Specific cut-off scores should be avoided. If cut-off scores are utilized, the report should provide the basis for using the specific cut-off level. Conclusions about candidates' qualifications should be based on consistencies across data sources.
4. A disclaimer that reports evaluating current emotional and behavioral traits will not be deemed valid after a specific period of time.²²

The final section of the Guidelines is Follow-Up. It is summarized as follows:

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

1. Pre-employment tests should be used only for making pre-employment decisions and for monitoring during probation. Research may be conducted with agency approval and where identities are protected. Reports should not be used for positions not considered at the time of the evaluation, nor for discipline or forensic matters.
2. Continuing efforts by the agency and psychologist should be made to validate suitability ratings using behavioral criteria.
3. Each agency should maintain adverse impact analyses in order to detect any discriminatory patterns.²³

The above guidelines offer law enforcement administrators and their respective departments comprehensive, reliable, and defensible process to achieve the goal of recruiting and retaining an officer that surpasses the state's minimum standards. However, many agencies find 'minimum standards' insufficient for their respective agencies. The majority of suburban law enforcement agencies in southeastern Michigan have adopted the above guidelines or a related version of the same. Administrators have adopted these guidelines to ensure a higher quality officer and a person with the psychological make-up to remain in the profession for a career.²⁴

Attributes Sought by the Psychological Screening Process

Professionals in the mental health field and more specifically police psychologists have long studied what kind of person is best suited to be a law enforcement officer. The pre-employment psychological examination offers a way to discover what applicants will best fit the structure and responsibilities of law enforcement service. Proper screening also reduces turnover caused by

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Collins, Timothy, Captain City of Ferndale Police Dept. Personal Interview. 4 September 2003.

people leaving law enforcement service after discovering it is not a suitable career for them. Such turn over is costly to any agency.²⁵

Furthermore there is also *most* basic need for pre-employment psychological screening of law enforcement candidates. Law enforcement agencies need to find people with the potential and/or attributes to be good officers, likewise, agencies also must identify people that should not have the *power* and *access* that law enforcements officers are entrusted with by society and government. Dr. Gary Fischler Ph.D. has studied and written about the pre-employment psychological screening process for law enforcement candidates. He lists a number of attributes that could be considered “most important.”²⁶ His findings are summarized below.

The challenge that law enforcement officers face everyday calls for the appropriate level of intelligence. Officers must be able to reasonably analyze situations that range from the mundane to the exceptional. Fischler writes that an officer must have at least average general intelligence. Above average intelligence may be a benefit but not always. Persons with below average intelligence should not be considered.²⁷

Officers respond to drastically varying situations. Officers must make appropriate and decisive decisions under difficult circumstances. The ability to exercise proper judgment under a range of environments is critical to public

²⁵ Collins, Timothy, Captain City of Ferndale Police Dept. Personal Interview. 4 September 2003.

²⁶ Fischler, Gary, Ph.D. Psychological Examination of Peace Officer Applicants: Theory and Practice. The Institute of Forensic Psychology. Page 1 of 6. http://www.psycheval.com/preemployment_screening.htm

²⁷ Ibid. Page 2 of 6.

safety, proper service and success of an agency. People demonstrating poor judgment should not be recommended.²⁸

Officers must react quickly but not without first considering the ramifications of their actions. Law enforcement demands decisiveness but not impulsiveness. Applicants that demonstrate an impulsive tendency should not be recommended. Examples of impulsivity are gambling, poor personal financial management, and alcohol abuse/ miss-use.²⁹

Honesty and Integrity are important in any profession but especially so in law enforcement. An agencies public image and an officer's career will surely fail if the truthfulness is in doubt. A candidate's honesty can be evaluated through testing and the willingness to provide information that is consistent with the background investigation.³⁰

Candidates must demonstrate conflict resolution skills through the ability to diffuse conflict and anger without resulting to aggression. Testing or a history of fighting or verbal abusiveness may discover overly aggressive attitudes.³¹

Few people, if they are honest, could admit to having no biases or prejudices. Law enforcement officers are ordinary people but they have extraordinary professions. Their professional ethics demand that they leave bias and prejudice at home. Officers must be able to enforce laws and interact fairly

²⁸ Ibid. Page 2 of 6.

²⁹ Ibid. Page 2 of 6.

³⁰ Ibid. Page 2 of 6.

³¹ Ibid. Page 2 of 6.

with people. Testing may reveal biases but so may the background investigation of friends and acquaintances.³²

Law enforcement agencies are paramilitary organizations. Few professions have the strict appearance codes and formalized personnel structure of a law enforcement agency. Candidates must demonstrate an ability to successfully interact and cope with a highly structured work place. Officers must be able to receive criticism from their superiors and work within a chain-of-command. Candidates that cannot accept criticism or the work structure of an agency should not be recommended.³³

Law enforcement officers must be able to work as a team even though an increasing number of agencies utilize one-officer patrol cars. Candidates must demonstrate a willingness to develop positive relationships with fellow officers. Few careers demand such a strong reliance on teamwork. Veteran officers know that teamwork saves lives. A history of healthy relationships indicates the tendency to develop positive work relationships as well. People lacking such social tendencies may be unsuitable for law enforcement.³⁴

Candidates that express a desire for power are generally unacceptable. Unfortunately, many citizens have had the unhappy encounter with the overly authoritative officer. Such individual officers understandably cause resentment with the public and damage the image of the whole of law enforcement.

³² Ibid. Page 2 of 6.

³³ Ibid. Page 2 of 6.

³⁴ Ibid. Page 3 of 6.

Candidates ought to express an appropriately positive motivation for becoming a law enforcement officer.³⁵

The entertainment industry and media present a ridiculously fictitious image of non-stop action in law enforcement. The truth is that law enforcement is generally tedious and routine. The overwhelming majority of law enforcement officers never shoot their firearm, in the line of duty, during their entire career. Candidates need to show an ability to manage routine events repeatedly. Thrill seekers are generally not good candidates.³⁶

The law enforcement culture demands a high degree of dependability. As mentioned above, the law enforcement profession is highly structured. Part of that structure is consistency. Officers are expected to be punctual for roll call line-up everyday throughout a career. Candidates that do not demonstrate a higher degree of responsibility should not be recommended.³⁷

Few professions will terminate an employee for cowardice. But law enforcement agencies have rules and regulations that demand courage of their officers. People that demonstrate an overly averse to risk or demonstrate a high degree of passivity should not be recommended. An overly passive officer is a danger to him/herself, colleagues, and the public.³⁸

Candidates must not be substance abusers. This prohibition includes illicit drug use and the abuse of alcohol. Along with integrity, how could the public and other law enforcement officer and administrators accept an officer that uses

³⁵ Ibid. Page 3 of 6.

³⁶ Ibid. Page 3 of 6.

³⁷ Ibid. Page 3 of 6.

³⁸ Ibid. Page 3 of 6.

illegal drugs? Likewise the days of officers or departments protecting an officer that abuses alcohol are finished. Testing should reveal potential substance abusers; also a history of abuse is an indicator to not recommend a candidate.³⁹

People that suffer from psychosis or a debilitating mental condition are also unfit for law enforcement service. A history of treatment for personal reasons is not an immediate disqualifier. However, certain psychological disturbances are incompatible with law enforcement. Major depression, a psychotic disorder, or certain phobias are examples of disqualifying conditions.⁴⁰

An officer's work experience can prove highly stressful both physically and mentally. Candidates must have the ability to handle consistent moderate to high levels of stress. Candidates who lack such ability will eventually leave law enforcement for another profession. Stress tolerance may be judged from testing, history, or even the psychological interview.⁴¹

Similar to the candidate that desires a law enforcement career for the power, a candidate that demonstrates an anti-social or dangerously aberrant sexual proclivity cannot be recommended. Law enforcement officers are often in positions of power over others that may be detained or vulnerable. A dangerous sexual tendency may place helpless people in harm's way. Although a candidate's sex life is generally a private matter, individuals that demonstrate dangerously deviant sexual attitudes or tendencies should not be recommended.⁴²

³⁹ Ibid. Page 3 of 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Page 3 of 6.

⁴¹ Ibid. Page 3 of 6.

⁴² Ibid. Page 4 of 6.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Law enforcement has made significant gains in recruiting and retaining appropriately suited people over the last four decades. These improvements are directly related to the involvement of the above-mentioned entities, professions, and experts. The State of Michigan's Commission on Law Enforcement Standards set reasonable, prudent, and appropriate standards for entry-level law enforcement officers. The profession needs the involvement of MCOLES to help ensure that the proper people become law enforcement officers.

The federal government's role compliments the State of Michigan's role and also protects applicants from employer job-discrimination. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and laws like the ADA, offers necessary protections to people seeking employment in law enforcement. Lack of such protections could return law enforcement to the days of corruption, nepotism, sexism, and racial discrimination.

Leading professional organizations, like the International Association of Chiefs of Police, offer agencies and administrators' templates and policies to properly and correctly recruit, hire, and evaluate suitable candidates. These concerned professionals have played a vital role in improving the personnel in their field.

Finally, the professionals in the mental health field, specifically police psychologists, have studied and created complicated psychological screening programs. The examinations have revealed what type of person ought to serve and succeed in today's dynamic, and at times delicate, policing environment.

Today, the idea of not having the State of Michigan's regulation and involvement, the EEOC, professional police organizations and professional psychologists involved in a matter as important matter as law enforcement candidate screening would be ludicrous. Each has played a vital role in improving the quality of law enforcement officers. Likewise, each must continue their active, cooperative, and cooperating roles to make certain that this positive trend continues.

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