

Background Investigations Overview and Considerations for Law Enforcement Personnel in Alaska Native Villages



COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

Introduction to Webinar

- During this presentation you will learn the following:
 - The importance of conducting background investigations for law enforcement personnel
 - How background investigations can inform hiring decisions
 - Resources for conducting background investigations
 - Basic law enforcement academy options in Alaska

Introduction to Webinar

- COPS Office Tribal Resources Grant Program (TRGP) and COPS Hiring Program (CHP) Requirements
 - Background Investigations: Applicants must budget for—and if awarded conduct—background investigations for all full-time career law enforcement officers funded by the grant.
 - Basic Law Enforcement Training: Applicants must budget for—and if awarded complete—basic law enforcement training for all full-time career law enforcement officers funded by the grant.
- FAQs
 - [https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2020AwardDocs/FY20Background Investigation and Basic TrainingFAQs.pdf](https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2020AwardDocs/FY20Background%20Investigation%20and%20Basic%20TrainingFAQs.pdf)

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Why We Do Checks

- Protection of our community
- Respect of community members
- Respect by other public safety agencies and courts
- Reducing potential individual and agency liability
- Upholding the integrity of the law enforcement profession
- Grant requirements



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What Criteria to Use?

Before you begin hiring or screening you must determine the minimum qualifications for the position and what past conduct will eliminate an applicant.

If you don't have written standards, they can be hard to enforce and subjective, and they can open the agency to claims of bias and favoritism.

Agree on your criteria, then adopt, document, and share them.

Alaska has adopted minimum state standards, but they do not apply to tribal organizations or officers unless the agency chooses to use them.



First Steps

- Set your criteria
- Obtain a written application and signed waivers and Release of Information (ROI) forms (required). Your application process should include personal history questions that address
 - personal references;
 - residence and employment history;
 - criminal history questions.
- APSC has a suitable form that can be used or modified, if you wish:
[F-3 for Village Police Officer Applicants ONLY](#)
- If applicant meets minimum qualifications and is not eliminated by information on their application, begin conducting your background investigation.

Background Resources (FREE)

- Alaska Police Standards Council:
<https://dps.alaska.gov/APSC/Home>
- Alaska CourtView Records System:
<https://records.courts.alaska.gov/eaccess/home.page.3>
- Alaska Municipal League: <https://www.akml.org/>
- AML Joint Insurance Agency: <http://www.amljia.org/>

What to Look For

Past behavior predicts future behavior, *particularly* in similar environments or circumstances. This is the central theme that will run through all of your investigation efforts.

The investigator's job is to find relevant circumstances and measure how the applicant behaved in those situations.

Find evidence that shows either that this applicant can meet the job expectations or that they are unqualified.





Steps to Consider



- Application (APSC F-3)
- Physical fitness test
- Oral board interview
- Psychological or polygraph screening (or both)
- Final hire approval from decision-maker

Require an Application

Measures Attention to Detail

A job application allows the employer to see how well the applicant can collect information and present it in a readable format, which is an essential job skill for law enforcement work. It also measures how well the applicant can read, follow directions, and meet a submission deadline.

Law enforcement agencies in Alaska use the F-3 form from the Alaska Police Standards Council, which can be found on their website:

<https://dps.alaska.gov/APSC/Agency-Forms>

Provides Starting Place for Investigation

The information that is typically collected on a law-enforcement application includes prior employment, previous supervisors and co-workers, residence history, education history, criminal history, and other relevant facts that you can use to begin your investigation.

It should also include email and telephone information for each individual that you can use to reach out and assess the applicant's suitability.

Physical Fitness Test

An Essential Requirement of the Job

Physical fitness is a bona fide occupational qualification for law enforcement officers.

Job analyses on law enforcement officers have repeatedly demonstrated it to be an underlying factor in determining physiological readiness to perform a variety of critical physical tasks necessary in law enforcement work.

Maintains Officer Wellness

Good physical conditioning has been shown to

- reduce the incidence of injury and heart attack;
- enhance recovery from injury;
- improve ability to maintain good judgment and make correct decisions;
- provide options other than the use of deadly force;
- provide an outlet for relief from stress.

Oral Board Interview

Measures Communication Skills

Most of what a law enforcement officer does is talk to people, then write it down in a police report.

Good *verbal* communication skills are the first part of this skill set and are essential in an officer's ability to articulate their authority; elicit information from suspects, victims, and witnesses; and de-escalate a conflict.

Measures Ability to Perform Under Stress

An oral board interview can be a stressful test, requiring an applicant to give answers to questions they don't know in advance while presenting in front of several board members.

This is a very similar environment to what officers face every day when they respond to a call for service and don't yet know what the problem is but will quickly be required to find a solution.

Psychological/Polygraph Screening

Verify the Information on the Application

A polygraph screening allows the employer to verify the information given by the applicant.

Knowing in advance that a polygraph will be conducted also encourages the applicant to be truthful on the application in the first place.

Determine Suitability

In ways that no other career can, law enforcement work brings vicarious trauma, tests emotional intelligence, and requires excellent self-control.

A screening by a qualified psychologist ensures that the applicant doesn't have psychological issues that would prevent them from handling the mental aspects of the essential job duties.



Trends

Remember, past behavior predicts future behavior . . .

LE officers hold a position of power

How has applicant handled positions of power?

Domestic violence?

Leadership roles in community?

Supervisory roles in prior jobs?

Involves emotional situations

How has applicant handled emotional situations?

First responder experience?

Demonstrates self-control?

Crisis management experience?

Requires self discipline and planning

What has applicant shown in these areas?

Personal finances?

Physical fitness?

Prior job performance?



TRENDS

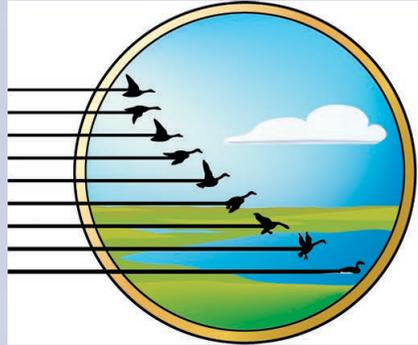
Final Hiring Decision

Ultimately, the results of the background investigation will be given to a final authority for consideration. Because of the highly subjective nature of these decisions, it is recommended that multiple parties be included in the decision.

YOU'RE
HIRED!



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Yuut Elitnaurviat

P E O P L E ' S L E A R N I N G C E N T E R

Promoting high-wage jobs for local workers through vocational training and educational opportunities

Yuut Campus

All Public Safety students, including local residents, live, eat, and train on campus.





Yuut Programs



- Adult Education
 - College Readiness
- Aviation Maintenance
- Construction Trades
- Driver Education
- Healthcare
- Public Safety

Yuut Public Safety Trainings

- VPO/TPO Academies
 - 15 days
 - \$4,500 tuition, \$2,100 R/B
- VPO/TPO Advanced Academies
 - 10 days
 - \$3,050 tuition, \$1,400 R/B
- Partner with Association of Village Council Presidents





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What We Provide



- Training on 20 topics
- Uniforms
- Boots
- Tactical belt
- OCS and carrier
- Baton and holster
- Handcuffs and case
- Flashlight and holder
- Digital camera and recorder
- Notebook for reports



Training Topics

- Fire Training
- Medic First Aid CPR/AED
- Miranda
- Arrest: When & Where
- Report Writing
- Patrol Procedures
- Rural DUI Procedures



Training Topics, continued



- Evidence Procedures
- Search & Rescue
- Criminal Codes
- Criminal Complaints
- Search & Seizure
- Interview Techniques
- Crime Scene Investigation

- Use of Force
- Defensive Tactics
- Expandable Baton
- Juvenile Procedures
- Mental Subjects Title 47
- Protective Custody
- Domestic Violence





Closing

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For more information about the COPS Office and its resources, please visit www.cops.usdoj.gov.