



I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Standard Operating Procedure is to outline the duties and responsibilities of the Applicant Detectives who conduct background investigations on all sworn and non-sworn employees for the Fairfax County Police Department.

II. POLICY

The Applicant Section is comprised of 5 sworn police officers and 5 civilian investigators as Applicant Detectives. Upon arriving to the Applicant Section, a newly assigned detective is trained by a senior Applicant Detective regarding the duties and responsibilities as it pertains to background investigations.

III. PROCEDURES

A. All eligible candidates that are being considered for employment are subject to a thorough background investigation. The Applicant Detective will verify the information that has been provided by the applicant. Further, the individual's character and reputation will be evaluated. The extent of a background investigation depends upon the type of position. Generally background investigations, Police, Cadet and Animal Control Officer Applicants are investigated more in depth than non-sworn background investigations thoroughly than others. The background Applicant Detective is responsible for the following activities:

1. Conducting a personal interview with the applicant
2. Making extensive criminal and traffic record checks.
3. Contacting current and previous employers.
4. Verification of at least three character references.
5. Conducting a neighborhood canvass.
6. Obtaining educational data.
7. Obtaining credit history.
8. Scheduling appointments as necessary.
9. Compiling additional information as necessary.
10. Preparing neat and accurate files.
11. Completing a process summary.
12. Preparing a thorough recommendation based on all available factual information that is job related.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS, CROSSING GUARDS AND VARIOUS OTHER CIVILIAN AND ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

County Personnel will forward a particular Referred List to the Human Resources Division. Subsequent to receiving the Referred List, the individual resumes are reviewed and considered for interviews by the requesting entity.

The number of applicants to be interviewed is 50% of the number of applicants on the Referred List plus one. So, for example, if a Referred List for the position of Administrative Assistant II had 16 applicants on the list, 9 interviews would be scheduled ($50\% = 8 + 1 = 9$).

The individuals that are selected for an interview are sent a letter instructing them to contact the supervisor in the particular area where the vacancy exists. The affected supervisor will schedule interview dates and times. The interview affords the candidate an opportunity to observe two significant conditions:

After all of the interviews have been conducted, the supervisor will furnish a list indicating the most qualified to the least qualified candidates. The Applicant Supervisor will assign the highly qualified applicants to an Applicant Detective for a background investigation.

- ❖ **Crossing Guards:** The responsibility for locating prospective applicants rests with the District Station where the vacancy exists. Generally, the Assistant Station Commander or another designated supervisor will coordinate those activities, and is required to inform the Human Resources Division (HRD) of any such anticipated. As necessary, the position will be announced as "Open for Applications" on the county website. Applicants are required to apply for the School Crossing Guard position using the NEOGOV system on the county website, as hard copy applications are no longer accepted for this position. Once a resume is received by the Human Resources Division from the Department of Human Resources (DHR), it will be forwarded to the Personnel Resources Division (PRD). A letter will be sent to the applicant by PRD, providing the locations and times of the open school crossings, along with instructions to observe the crossing and to notify PRD that they are, indeed, interested in pursuing the position at the open location. Once an applicant contacts PRD as directed in the letter, a Personal History Statement (PHS) packet is mailed to the applicant by PRD. Once the completed PHS is returned and reviewed, basic record checks are conducted. If the applicant is deemed to be highly qualified, the applicant is then assigned to a background detective or investigator, and is scheduled for a medical examination.
- ❖ **PCA** positions generally have an interest in a particular District Station. If a

station vacancy exists and no particular internal candidate is interested in transferring, the position will be announced as “Open for Applications” on the county website. Applicants are required to apply for the Police Citizen Aide position using the NEOGOV system on the county website, as hard copy applications are no longer accepted for this position. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) will send the Referred List of applicants to Human Resources Division (HRD) director, who will send to the requesting commander in order to develop an interview list for the selection process. The requesting commander will set up interview dates for candidates to participate in the selection process.

Upon completing the selection process and determining the top candidate, this information will be forwarded to HRD director for assignment to the Applicant Section for background investigation. The Applicant Supervisor will keep the requesting commander apprised of the background investigation status.

C. PROVISIONAL HIRES

Some civilian positions, to include Traffic Enforcement Officers and Crossing Guards may be hired on a provisional status.

- ❖ **Provisional hiring** usually is initiated when a Police Department civilian or sworn supervisor from the various branches has an essential staffing need requiring immediate filling.

Most times the receiving entity wants to hire the applicant as soon as possible. All potential police department applicants shall be subject to a background investigation. This typically this process takes several weeks to conduct a full background investigation. Provisional hiring an applicant is another opportunity to meet the staffing needs of the Department as it pertains to civilian personnel only. The steps taken during the Provisional Hire background investigation is accelerated, with no standards being compromised. Applicants who require successful completion of a medical examination as part of the job requirement may not be hired provisionally. They must complete the examination prior to being hired.

When a supervisor from an entity of the Police Department is seeking to fill an essential staffing requirement and has an immediate need to fill such position they can request to provisionally hire an applicant.

When an applicant is provisionally hired they are told *“they are being appointed with the knowledge that should detrimental information be obtained concerning their background, they will be terminated as a provisional employee.”*

Subsequent to provisionally hiring applicants a full background investigation must resume. Upon completion of the background investigation a brief summary assessment should be written in memorandum format closing out the case from “**Provisional**” hire to “**Permanent**” status with the Department.

D. INITIAL PROCESS SUMMARY- INTERIM JOB OFFER

The “Final Process Summary” is a document prepared by the background detective with the purpose of providing the full background investigation and assessment of the police applicant. The “**Initial Process Summary**”, in lieu of the completed “Final Process Summary” is now being utilized to hire police applicants at an accelerated rate, as compared to the traditional hiring process.

The completed “**Initial Process Summary**” is forwarded to the PRD Commander for review and approval. The core phases of the background investigation are completed, without any of the department’s hiring standards being compromised.

This “**Initial Process Summary**” is intended to temporarily alleviate the Detective from turning in the full length “Final Process Summary” and to expedite the hiring of potential police applicants.

Once the applicant is hired and processed, the case is returned to the detective to complete the “**Final Process Summary.**”

The implementation of an “**Interim Job Offer Letter**” is utilized as a safety net, in unison with the probationary agreement letter. This “**Interim Job Offer Letter**” is intended to cover the Police Department in the event any derogatory or detrimental information were somehow missed in the “**Initial Summary**” and later discovered after the individual was hired.

This “**Interim Job Offer Letter**”, which is signed by the applicant, at the time of his/her Final Interview, would be utilized at a later date to dismiss the employee based on subsequent derogatory or detrimental information.

E. POLYGRAPH EXAMINATION

Police Officer and Cadet: Eligible candidates for these positions are required to submit to a **polygraph examination** which is administered by a licensed polygraph examiner. The entire polygraph procedure to include licensing, eligibility qualifications and standards of practice is regulated by the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation and applicable sections of the State Code.

Initially, each applicant receives written notification of the scheduled polygraph date.

Further, they are instructed to call Police Personnel to verify the appointment and to receive certain instructions. Personal History Statements are also mailed to scheduled applicants. These statements must be completed prior to the polygraph date and submitted when the individual appears for the examination.

The applicant is also required to sign a Authorization for Release of Personal Information form, as well as a Conditional Job Offer form.

Personal History Statements are mailed to out of state applicants prior to scheduling; these applicants are required to complete the Personal History Statement and return it by mail to Police Personnel. This procedure allows a more thorough examination of the applicant's qualifications. Better Qualified classified applicants are notified in writing, thus saved from the expense and time of traveling to Fairfax County.

The **polygraph examination**, which is performed by a licensed examiner, is designed to determine if the individual has provided truthful information on the application and Personal History Statement. Further, questions are posed to the applicant to determine if there has been any undetected involvement in illegal activity. Standardized pre-test and actual test questions are utilized for the examination. These questions are job related and meet applicable legal requirements.

Prior to the polygraph exam, a conditional job offer is made in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The conditional offer of employment necessitates that the following conditions are met before a final offer of employment is made

At the conclusion of the polygraph exam, each polygraph examiner meets with the Polygraph Supervisor. The results of each polygraph examination will be reviewed. As a result, the supervisor places each applicant in one of three (3) categories:

- **Highly Qualified**- Eligible for further processing.
- **Better Qualified** - Better qualified applicants are available.
- **Denied** - admissions which are inconsistent with Departmental employment standards.

In some cases an applicant's file is forwarded to the Personnel Resources Division Commander or his assistant for approval or denial of a second polygraph examination. The Personnel Resources Division Commander or his assistant authorizes an additional examination based on an applicant's appeal or for other discretionary reasons. At their request, applicants who showed deceptive responses on their charts, but appear to be eligible in other respects, are generally scheduled for a second examination.

The Applicant Supervisor authorizes an additional examination based on an applicant's appeal (As authorized by the Personnel Resources Commander or assistant).

After case review, the Applicant Supervisor authorizes an additional examination based on a polygraph examiners recommendation due to inconclusive results.

F. PHYSICAL ABILITIES TEST

Physical Abilities Test is administered, to determine the candidate's ability to perform activities which correspond to essential job functions. Reasonable accommodations will be offered when consistent with business necessity. The Physical Ability Test is a validated and pre-determined course of activity which is administered in a consistent manner. Following the Physical Ability Test, the best qualified individuals are scheduled to participate in the first phase of Psychological Testing.

G. MEDICAL EXAMINATION

A free comprehensive **medical examination** is administered by a licensed physician employed by Fairfax County, in accordance with uniform medical standards established by the County of Fairfax. A copy of the results of such examination is kept in the background investigation file of each candidate

H. PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION

Psychological examination conducted and interpreted by a licensed psychologist under contract with Fairfax County. The psychological evaluation is administered by Special Psychological Services Group of Fairfax, Virginia. The program uses a two phase process. In Phase I: applicants are administered test instruments to examine three general areas: screening for psychopathology (measuring cognitive functioning, and assessing interpersonal dynamics). Phase II: a structured clinical interview is used to confirm test results. A copy of the results of such examination is kept in the background investigation file of each candidate. The evaluation uses a five point rating scale just as a traditional report card. Accordingly, letter grades A, B, C, D or F, are awarded.

I. BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

A **background investigation** is conducted according to guidelines established by the Personnel Resources Division.

Throughout the entire process, contact is maintained with each applicant informing them of the next step and any status change.

After the conclusion of all examinations and completion of related reports, a **final assessment** is made. The completed applicant files are reviewed at the supervisory level and include any appropriate comments. The files are reviewed by the Commander and Assistant Commander of the Personnel Resources Division. The highly qualified candidates are selected for final interviews.

J. FINAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVIEW

After the conclusion of all examinations and completion of related reports, a **Final Assessment** is completed. The completed applicant files are reviewed at the supervisory level and include any appropriate comments. The files are then reviewed by the Commander or Assistant Commander of the Personnel Resources Division. The highly qualified candidates are selected for final interviews.

Civilian candidates may be, but are usually not interviewed by the Personnel Resources Division Commander. All Police and Cadet Applicants are interviewed by the Personnel-Resources Division Commander. At the conclusion of the interview, an offer of employment is extended if appropriate and a hire date is established.

K. ADMINISTRATIVE PAPERWORK

Immediately following the final interview, the candidates who have received employment offers are processed by the Applicant Section Administrative Assistant. The following documents are either received or completed:

- ❖ A copy of the General Orders on personal appearance and grooming.
- ❖ Non - smoking agreement with required signature (Police and Cadet).
- ❖ A copy of the Emergency Services Personnel Memorandum
- ❖ Probationary agreement with required signature.

In addition, the Position Control Coordinator will conduct “on boarding” processing of the candidate to include:

- ❖ Employment Eligibility Verification
- ❖ Child Support Disclosure
- ❖ Direct Deposit Authorization
- ❖ Underfill agreement if needed
- ❖ Orientation on benefits/retirement systems for non-sworn positions

Following processing by the Applicant Administrative Assistant and Position Control Coordinator, each individual for the position of Police Officer will meet with the Applicant Supervisor. Civilian applicants will be referred to their work locations. Activities that are required during the probationary period are discussed.

Individuals selected for hire are sent letters of congratulations and are reminded of the reporting date and location. The Applicant Administrative Assistant completes an appointment notice which is distributed (via e-mail) to the appropriate entities.

New employees will normally be required to report for duty on the first Monday of a new pay period. The employees are directed by the Applicant Section Administrative Assistant to the Fairfax County website where they can download and print the required forms necessary for new employee orientation. Finally, they are referred to their work locations.

L. REAPPOINTMENT

Reappointment of former employees: Former employees may be reinstated to the same position or class that they held prior to leaving employment with the Police Department. Reinstatements are governed by Chapter 9 of the County **Personnel Regulations**. Eligibility is dependent upon these conditions:

- Probationary period was completed prior to separation.
- Separation was in good standing.
- Individual did not retire.
- Break in service of less than one calendar year.

➤ **REQUIREMENTS**

- Successful completion of a polygraph examination (police and cadet applicants).
- Limited background investigation.
- Physical ability test (police and cadet applicants).
- Medical examination after a conditional offer of reappointment (police, cadet, crossing guards and other positions as determined by job requirements).
- Review and approval by the Commander of the Personnel Resources Division.

Individuals who have had a break in service which exceeds one calendar year are subject to the usual applicant process.

M. DENIAL and REAPPLICATION

Procedure for Denial and Re-Application:

Each applicant's performance and suitability is assessed at many stages. The Applicant Process is competitive. Every effort is made to select the best qualified candidates. As a result, many applicants are not selected simply because of better qualified individuals.

Applicants who are not selected for employment shall be notified in writing of the specific reason for non-selection of the specific reason for non-selection within 30 calendar days. A decision to remove an applicant from the process is subject to approval by the Personnel

Division Commander. Normally this action occurs at one of the following stages:

- ❖ Entrance Examination - Failing score.
- ❖ Initial Interview - Unable to meet departmental standards.
- ❖ Polygraph Examination - Disqualifying admissions (Police and Cadet).
- ❖ Physical Ability Test - Unable to perform task(s).
- ❖ Selection of best qualified applicants to advance in process.
- ❖ Background Investigations - Development of substantiated information that is contrary to departmental standards.
- ❖ Medical Examination - Unable to meet medical standards.
- ❖ Final Assessment - . All relevant information is considered to select the best qualified candidates.

Applicants who desire to appeal a decision are scheduled for an interview with the Personnel Resources Division Commander. As a result, the Personnel Resources Division Commander will take one of the following courses of action:

1. Re-affirm the original decision
2. Authorize additional testing
3. Authorize re-admission into the process