

Response to Questions on the FY 2017 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Herrity

Question: Please provide additional information on polygraph-related positions. How many, and what types of staff are doing this work? Has it been outsourced in the past?

Response: The Fairfax County Police Department Polygraph Section is made up of a total of eight positions. Of this total, one is a civilian supervisor, three are civilian polygraph examiners and four are uniformed Police Officer II positions. It is important to note that 2/2.0 FTE positions have been included in the FY 2017 Advertised Budget Plan to support the polygraph section based on workload requirements. In addition, the Police Department is in the process of converting polygraph examiners from civilian to uniformed based on issues associated with retention. Civilian examiners have limited opportunities for growth within the Police Department while uniformed positions are able to utilize the experiences obtained in the Polygraph Section to further their career. The Polygraph Section is responsible for the following:

1. Pre-employment polygraph examinations to applicants applying for the position of Police Officer, Police Cadet, and other positions identified by the agency.
2. Examinations for all Sheriff's Office, Fire Department applicants, and applicants of outside agencies upon request.
3. Support to the Criminal Investigations Bureau and Criminal Investigations Section detectives, and patrol officers requesting criminal specific issue examinations.
4. Administration of specific issue examinations for the Internal Affairs Bureau upon request of the Chief of Police.
5. Additionally, Internal Affairs examinations are administered for outside agencies upon request by that agency's Chief of Police or appointed authority upon a formal request to the Fairfax County Chief of Police.

Examiners play a critical role in the process of identifying qualified applications as approximately 70 percent of all applicants that complete a polygraph exam are eliminated due to criminal and/or unacceptable behavior identified during the polygraph examination. Every individual hired for Police Officer/Cadet and specialty positions successfully complete a polygraph examination, as do all Office the Sheriff and Fire and Rescue Department hires.

In addition, examiners play a critical role in the prosecution of crimes as an estimated 90 percent of all cases where confessions are obtained through a polygraph examination could not have been successfully prosecuted without the confession. The majority of these cases are serious felony crimes such as homicides, child molestations, assaults, robberies, etc.

In FY 2015, the FCPD Polygraph Section performed approximately 2,000 polygraph tests at a cost of just over \$1 million. The Police Department has indicated that there are no known private polygraph examination businesses in this area that could handle this volume of examinations in a timely fashion. Most local organizations, such as the one

used by the Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC), are staffed by a limited number of polygraph examiners and have limited capacity.

In addition, the Police Department feels there is significant value in having examiners (uniformed or civilian) exposed to the Police Department's interview schools, processes and techniques. Polygraph Examiners employed by the Fairfax County Police Department have a vested interest in ensuring that only the highest qualified applicants are hired as employees. It is important to note that nearly every surrounding jurisdiction utilizes in-house examiners versus contractors. The Police Department reviewed 17 departments – including Prince William, Arlington, Montgomery and the State of Virginia and Maryland – and only the Metro DC Police Department and the Metro Airport Police Department utilize an outside contractor to perform polygraphs.

Further, having in-house examiners is critical to the prosecution of crime as these examinations are often time-sensitive, requiring both immediate attention, and a high level of experience to properly administer. Having the scheduling flexibility of trained staff members always on call to perform an emergency exam, is critically important to the Department.

As noted above, the Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC) utilizes outsourced polygraph examiners in its hiring process based primarily on the backlog within the Police Department's Polygraph Section. DPSC utilizes a local organization, Northern Virginia Polygraph, to perform approximately 70 examinations annually at cost of approximately \$15,000.