



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

GENERAL ORDER ADM-32 SELECTION OF PERSONNEL

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 6, 2020

This General Order contains the following numbered sections:

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I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Howard County Department of Police (HCPD) to maintain a fair, effective, and efficient process for the selection of new members that results in the appointment of individuals who best possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for a career with an effective and respected law enforcement agency.

II. PROFESSIONAL AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. The HCPD is granted the authority to hire and train persons to be sworn law enforcement officers pursuant to the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC), Code of Maryland Regulations 12.04.01.
- B. The HCPD will work closely with the County Office of Human Resources. The County's Human Resources Administrator coordinates all original appointments in the classified service in accordance with County Law.
- C. All reasonable efforts will be made to minimize adverse impact in the selection process.
- D. Though authority for selection is shared, the Police Department has the primary responsibility for background investigations, oral interviews, and probationary period assessment. These processes will be coordinated and administered by the Human Resources Bureau (HRB) in conjunction with the County Office of Human Resources.
 - 1. The Chief of Police will retain certain responsibilities in the selection of personnel, to include identifying specific needs of the Department and determining the skills and personal attributes required for positions.
 - 2. The Chief of Police or his designee may conduct an oral interview of prospective employees eligible for selection.
 - 3. The Chief of Police shall make the selections for all vacancies pursuant to applicable Howard County Code.
- E. The HCPD will maintain a detailed Howard County Police Department Recruitment and Selection Manual that details the provisions for the selection process of sworn members and outlines the order of events in the selection process to ensure proper administration.

F. Selection Process Validity

1. The validity of the selection process is determined primarily through construct and content validation mechanisms used for statistical validation to assess skills necessary for the job of a sworn officer.
2. Portions of the process supplied by outside vendors will possess evidence of validation. Many commercially produced tests have documentation that will support validation. This evidence will be coordinated by the County Office of Human Resources.
3. All testing, including written tests supplied by the private sector, an organization, or a vendor, will meet the requirements of validity, utility, and minimum adverse impact as determined by the County Office of Human Resources.

G. Uniform Selection Application¹

1. The selection process may be comprised of many elements depending on the position, including but not limited to:
 - a. A written examination,
 - b. A physical ability test,
 - c. Practical exercises,
 - d. The completion of a Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ),
 - e. An oral interview,
 - f. A polygraph examination,
 - g. A background investigation,
 - h. A pre-placement physical, and
 - i. Psychological screening.
2. All elements of the selection process will be:
 - a. Administered, scored, evaluated, and interpreted in a uniform manner under the auspices of the County Office of Human Resources;² and
 - b. Job related to the position applied for.³

H. Selection Material Security⁴

1. Selection materials used by the HCPD and the County Office of Human Resources will be stored in a secure area when not being used. Access to the materials will be permitted only to those Departmental employees who are involved in the administration of the selection process.

¹ CALEA 31.4.1

² CALEA 31.4.3

³ CALEA 31.4.2

⁴ CALEA 31.4.6b

2. The County Human Resources Administrator and the HCPD's HRB Commander or their designees shall monitor the disposal of discarded selection materials. Selection materials no longer in use will be disposed of by shredding to prevent disclosure of the information they contain.

I. Selection Process Evaluation

1. The entire selection process will be evaluated annually by the HRB Commander.
2. The entire selection process shall be evaluated prior to its utilization in the selection of new employees.
3. The HRB will review recent literature and case law on selection, Fair Employment Practices, and a variety of selection issues on a continuing basis. The HRB will submit any selection process recommendations to the County Office of Human Resources for review purposes.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

- A. The Department will electronically publish a notice identifying all elements of the selection process, the approximate duration of the hiring process, and the HCPD policy regarding reapplication when sworn candidates formally register, prior to taking the written exam.⁵

B. Ineligible Candidates

1. Candidates not appointed for hire on the basis of a single test, examination, interview, or investigation will be informed electronically in writing within thirty (30) calendar days by the HCPD Personnel Section Supervisor.⁶
2. Reasons for ineligibility may include but are not limited to:
 - a. Expiration of the eligibility list.
 - b. The candidate does not meet minimum hiring standards.
 - c. The candidate is acceptable in all areas but is not the best candidate being considered.

C. Re-application

1. The County Office of Human Resources allows re-application, retesting, and re-evaluation of candidates not appointed to probationary status.
2. A candidate may not reapply for six months if they fail the written test.
3. A candidate may retake the physical ability test (PAT) if they fail any portion of the PAT during the same selection process. The physician's authorization form must be valid (within six (6) months of signature).
4. If a candidate passes the written test and PAT but is eliminated by another step, the applicant may reapply during the next process.

⁵ CALEA 31.4.4a, b, and c

⁶ CALEA 31.4.5

D. Record Disposition

1. The HCPD will comply with all local, state, and federal requirements for the privacy, security, retention of, and access to information of all candidates' records and data.
2. All records of candidates not appointed to probationary status will be maintained by the HCPD Personnel Section.
3. Records will be maintained for the length of time determined by the County Office of Human Resources.
4. Written examinations for an applicant who fails to qualify may be destroyed after the applicant is provided notification of the test results, provided no appeal of any kind is pending.

IV. NON-SWORN VACANCIES

A. When there is a civilian vacancy within the HCPD, the Personnel Section will send an employee requisition request to County HR after approval by the Deputy Chief for Administration. The County HR Administrator is responsible for ensuring public notice of approved vacancies is made.

1. The Job Announcement notice will be posted online through the County's website and will include a closing date or testing date. Job announcements shall include:
 - a. A description of the duties, responsibilities, requisite skills, educational level, and other minimum qualifications or requirements;
 - b. A notation that the HCPD is an equal opportunity employer;
 - c. All elements of the selection process;⁷
 - d. The expected duration of the selection process;⁸ and
 - e. The agency's policy on reapplication.⁹
2. When the HCPD identifies a position that requires a particular skill set, the HRB may initiate additional outreach efforts to target the appropriate applicant pool. This may include outreach to community leaders and professional associations.

B. The Personnel Section Supervisor will preliminarily review all applications and identify those candidates that match the qualifications, experience, and other eligibility requirements.

1. Applications shall not be rejected due to minor omissions or deficiencies that can be corrected prior to the testing or interview phase.
2. The Personnel Section Supervisor shall provide a list of the recommended candidates to County HR who will finalize a list of at least three (3) and up to ten (10) who are deemed most qualified for the position.
3. County HR then forwards the finalized list of candidates to the Personnel Section Supervisor who will coordinate with the hiring manager/supervisor.

C. The Personnel Section will attempt to contact each candidate to schedule an interview.

⁷ CALEA 31.4.4a

⁸ CALEA 31.4.4b

⁹ CALEA 31.4.4c

1. After interviewing all available applicants, the supervisor shall recommend a candidate for the position. The supervisor will forward a memo through his chain of command to the Chief of Police with a recommendation and justification for the selection.
 2. Upon approval, a background investigation will be completed through the HRB. After completion of the background investigation, the appropriate Deputy Chief will make his recommendation to the Chief of Police.
 3. Upon approval from the Chief of Police, the County HR Administrator will extend an offer of employment to the selected candidate.
- D. The Personnel Section Supervisor shall be responsible for maintaining documented contact with applicants through the final employment decision.
- E. Applicants not selected for hire will be informed via the County's website in writing by the Personnel Section Supervisor.¹⁰

V. OCCUPATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR SWORN MEMBERS

- A. Physical, Age, and Education Qualifications
1. Physical and age qualifications for entry level and lateral sworn positions within the Department of Police are established by the County Human Resources Administrator. These qualifications will meet professional and legal standards for job relevancy, usefulness, and fairness.
 2. These qualifications are contained in the County Office of Human Resources position description and include the following for the position of Recruit Police Officer and Lateral Police Officer:
 - a. Minimum age of 21 years by the date of the swearing in ceremony;
 - b. Minimum educational requirements of sixty (60) college credits at the time of application; sixty (60) college credits within 18 months of hire; two (2) years active-duty military; or two (2) years out-of-state or non-MPCTC certified, full-time, full-service law enforcement.
 - c. Only the following experience/equivalency exceptions will be considered:
 - i. Experience as a full-time Howard County Police Cadet, with each year of service equivalent to 30 college credits.
 - ii. Active service in a branch of the U.S. military, with each year of service equivalent to 30 college credits.
 - iii. Experience as a law enforcement officer from a state other than Maryland or from a non-MPTSC certified, full-time, full-service law enforcement agency with each year of service equivalent to 30 college credits if approved by the Chief of Police.
 - iv. Lateral police applicants are exempt from the requirement for sixty (60) college credits but must hold an MPTSC certification with two (2) years of law enforcement experience.

¹⁰ CALEA 31.4.5
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3. Ability to pass a Physical Ability Test (PAT), a pre-placement physical, and psychological screening, including but not limited to:¹¹
 - a. Demonstrated cardiovascular and pulmonary function capacities adequate to perform essential functions;
 - b. Hearing acuity adequate to perform essential functions;
 - c. Minimum visual acuity of 20/100 uncorrected or corrected to 20/20, and color and depth perception adequate to perform essential functions; and
 - d. Demonstrated ability to perform the essential functions without undue risk to self, co-workers, or the public.
- B. Physical Ability Test¹²
 1. A PAT of each candidate will be conducted prior to appointment to probationary status that utilizes valid, useful, and nondiscriminatory procedures.
 2. A signed Howard County physician's authorization form will be provided by the applicant prior to the physical ability test.
 3. Tests given during the physical ability test measure the physical fitness level of the candidate and are evaluated according to the person's age and gender.

VI. ORAL INTERVIEWS¹³

- A. An oral interview of each candidate will be conducted prior to appointment to probationary status using valid, useful, and nondiscriminatory procedures.
 1. Each candidate will be interviewed by an Oral Interview Board.
 2. The Oral Interview Board will consist of Police Department personnel approved by the Chief of Police in conjunction with the Human Resources Bureau.
- B. A list of standardized questions will be asked of each candidate. Follow-up questions may be asked for clarification purposes. Interviewers take notes on candidate responses. After the candidate has completed the interview and left the interview room, the notes may be referred to for the different dimensions and in making an overall rating.
- C. The Chief of Police or his designee may interview the top candidates at the end of the selection process. The Chief of Police will recommend to the County Human Resources Administrator the names of those candidates who he is choosing for appointment to probationary status.
- D. The Personnel Section Supervisor will provide interview training as needed, which may include a manual outlining guidelines on the interview process and describing the dimensions and qualities of the candidate to be evaluated.

VII. POLYGRAPH EXAMINATIONS¹⁴

- A. The polygraph examination is a critical element of the selection process and complements the other aspects of the process. Polygraph examinations are conducted for certain positions following the Oral Interview Board process.

¹¹ CALEA 22.2.2, 31.4.1, and 31.5.6

¹² CALEA 31.4.1

¹³ CALEA 31.4.1

¹⁴ CALEA 31.4.1

- B. The polygraph examiner and polygraph exams administered to HCPD member candidates shall adhere to the requirements detailed in General Order OPS-70, Polygraph Examinations.
- C. Candidates who are scheduled for polygraph examinations will be provided with the areas that will form the basis of the polygraph questioning.¹⁵
- D. An indication of deception during the polygraph examination will not be used as the single determinant of employment status; however, pre-test and post-test discussions that reveal adverse information will be documented and used in the subsequent selection process.

VIII. BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS¹⁶

- A. The background investigation will be conducted after any required polygraph examination. The polygraph examination may point out areas that need attention during the background investigation.
- B. All background investigators will be given the necessary training to accomplish the objective. This training will be given under the direction of the Screening Section Supervisor or HRB Commander.¹⁷
- C. The background investigation of each selected applicant will be conducted prior to appointment to probationary status.
 - 1. Background investigations shall include:
 - a. Reference checks;¹⁸
 - b. A review of criminal history checks;¹⁹
 - c. Verification of credentials and education;²⁰
 - d. Employment history verification;²¹ and
 - e. Review of relevant national or state decertification resources;²²
 - 2. Background investigations may also include but not be limited to:
 - a. A home visit with the candidate and his family;
 - b. Interviews with neighbors, whenever practical;
 - c. At least three (3) personal interviews;
 - d. Financial data; and
 - e. Other MPTSC requirements.
- D. The retention of background investigative records is an important safeguard for the candidate and the HCPD and all records shall be stored in accordance with Appendix A.

¹⁵ CALEA 31.5.3

¹⁶ CALEA 31.4.1

¹⁷ CALEA 31.5.2

¹⁸ CALEA 31.5.1c

¹⁹ CALEA 31.5.1b

²⁰ CALEA 31.5.1a and d

²¹ CALEA 31.5.1e

²² CALEA 31.5.1f

IX. FINGERPRINTING²³

- A. All sworn and civilian applicants shall be fingerprinted following completion of the background investigation.
- B. All applicants shall receive a copy of the Law Enforcement/Civilian Applicant letter prior to being fingerprinted.
 - 1. Applicants shall read and sign the letter, indicating they understand the content. Should an applicant refuse to sign the letter, no fingerprints will be obtained, and the Personnel Section shall be notified immediately.
 - 2. A copy of the signed letter shall be given to the applicant prior to fingerprinting.
 - 3. The original signed letter shall be forwarded to the Personnel Section for inclusion in the applicant's file.

X. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCREENING²⁴

- A. A psychological screening designed to assess the emotional stability and psychological fitness of each candidate will be conducted by a qualified psychologist prior to appointment to probationary status for certain positions. The screening will use reliable, valid, and nondiscriminatory procedures.
- B. A record of the results and recommendations of the psychological examination will be retained with the applicant's records by the Office of Human Resources.

XI. PRE-PLACEMENT PHYSICAL²⁵

- A. A pre-placement medical examination will be provided following a formal offer of employment and prior to appointment to probationary status will be conducted to confirm a candidate's ability to perform essential functions. The examination will employ valid, useful, and nondiscriminatory procedures.
- B. A record of the examination results will be retained with the applicant's records by the County Office of Human Resources.
- C. Only licensed practitioners will be used to certify the general health of candidates.

XII. PROBATIONARY PERIOD

- A. All entry-level sworn officers shall maintain a probationary status for a minimum of eighteen (18) months from the actual date of hiring. Officers may be granted permanent status upon successful completion of the probationary period.
 - 1. All entry level sworn officers must successfully complete the Field Training Officer (FTO) program before being granted permanent status.
 - 2. Probationary officers shall be evaluated every two (2) months upon completion of the FTO program, in accordance with ADM-33, Performance Evaluation. Evaluations will be more frequent during the actual FTO program, in accordance with General Order ADM-27, Field Training and Evaluation Program.

²³ CALEA 31.4.1

²⁴ CALEA 31.4.1 and 31.5.7

²⁵ CALEA 31.4.1 and 31.5.6

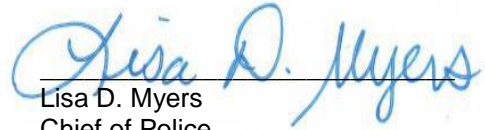
3. All probationary officers have the right to appeal any evaluation that they think is not accurate or fair. The affected officer should first discuss his concern with the evaluator and the evaluator's supervisor, if the evaluator is not a command officer.
- B. All lateral officers shall maintain a probationary status for a minimum of twelve (12) months from the actual date of hiring. Officers may be granted permanent status upon successful completion of the probationary period.
 - C. Any request for extension of the probationary period for a sworn officer will be forwarded through channels to the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police or his designee will review the supporting documentation and forward any request for extension to the County Human Resources Administrator for final approval.
 1. The eligibility criteria for requesting extension of the probationary period can be found in the current Union Contract.
 2. Requests to grant permanent status or to terminate employment will be submitted to the Chief of Police through channels with appropriate justifying documentation. Such requests shall be submitted at least thirty (30) days prior to the end of the probationary period.
 - D. The rate of appointment of sworn candidates from probationary to permanent status will be monitored for any evidence of adverse impact. If adverse impact is detected, it will be necessary to reevaluate procedures, techniques, and examinations used during the probationary process in order to eliminate the adverse impact.
 - E. Upon initial appointment to a position in the classified (civilian) service, an employee will serve a probationary period consistent with the Howard County Employee Manual.
 - F. At the end of the civilian probationary period, the appointing authority shall notify the County HR Administrator that he recommends the employee:
 1. Be placed on permanent status;
 2. Have the probationary period extended for a time not to exceed six (6) months; or
 3. Be terminated because his performance does not meet the required performance standards for the position or job assignment. A probationary termination is not appealable.
 - G. A classified employee who is promoted shall serve a probationary period equal to the length of the probationary period for that position.
 1. If during the promotion probationary period the appointing authority determines the member's performance does not meet the required performance standards for the position, the appointing authority may dismiss the employee.
 2. If a classified employee is dismissed under this paragraph, the appointing authority shall make a good faith effort to place the employee in a vacant position before the employee is terminated.
 - H. Movement from a designated trainee class to a full performance class is not a promotion.

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XIII. CANCELLATIONS

This General Order will cancel and replace General Order ADM-32, Selection of Sworn Personnel, dated February 15, 2006; General Order ADM-63, Selection of Civilian Personnel, dated April 9, 2015; and Standard Operating Procedure SOP PER-06, Fingerprinting of Applicants, dated November 16, 1990.

AUTHORITY:



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