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Survey of Police Departments' Usage of Pre-Employment Psychological Testing

Report given to:

ILLINOIS LAW ENFORCEMENT EXECUTIVE INSTITUTE

ILLINOIS LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING AND STANDARDS BOARD

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

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SUMMARY

The survey was mailed to 1,200 Illinois law enforcement agencies. Four-hundred, and forty-two (422) departments responded. The department size that participated in the study ranged from 1 sworn officer to 13,500 (Chicago) officers. Two-hundred and fifteen (215) agencies reported utilizing some form of psychological testing. Eighty-one percent (81%) used a Ph.D. Clinical or Organizational Psychologist. Seventy-four percent (74%) indicated testing was “very helpful” in the selection process. The reported cost for psychological testing ranged from \$0 to \$2,500 per evaluation, with an average cost of \$350. Thirty-eight percent (38%) stated yes, there should be legislation for the regulation of police psychological testing, while thirty percent (30%) said no legislation is needed.

There was concern expressed by several departments with regards to cost and that maybe the government should pay for the evaluation, if it would become mandated. There was also division as to the value of testing ranging from “an absolute must” to “we have not used psychological testing and we have excellent officers.” The use of psychological testing is utilized 100% in larger departments and with non-use found in small departments.

The enclosed data will present the results for your information. If you have any questions, please contact:

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IL Survey of Police Departments' Usage of Pre-employment Psychological Testing

-1,200 law enforcement agencies in Illinois received a survey regarding their usage of psychological testing. 422 responses were mailed or faxed back.

-Below is a breakdown of the rank, position or title of the person who filled out the survey:

Chief	(273)	64.7%
Deputy Chief	(34)	8.0%
Sergeant	(12)	2.8%
Captain	(9)	2.0%
Sheriff	(32)	8.0%
Commander	(6)	1.0%
Superintendent	(2)	0.5%
Major	(1)	0.2%
Lieutenant	(8)	2.0%
Commission member	(11)	8.0%
Office of Human Resources	(5)	1.0%
Office Secretary	(4)	1.0%
Inspector	(1)	0.2%
Director of Public Safety	(4)	1.0%
Patrolman	(4)	1.0%
Coroner	(6)	1.0%
Colonel	(1)	0.2%
State's Attorney	(3)	1.0%
Coordinator	(1)	0.2%
Rank or title unknown/	(5)	1.2%
Did not answer		
	422	100%

- 5) The size of the departments that participated in the study ranged from 1 sworn officer to 13,500 (Chicago) sworn officers, with the average being 26.7 officers or "27" officers (not including Chicago).
- 6) Of the 422 participating agencies, 215 indicated utilizing some form of psychological testing for police testing, while 207 agencies denied using psychological testing.

-Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 84 respondents or 48% used at least the MMPI-2, 33 respondents or 11% utilized at least the CPI, 47 respondents or 17% utilized the IPI, 46 respondents or 16% indicated using neither the MMPI-2, CPI, and IPI, and 22 respondents or 8% did not respond to the question.

-Of the respondents who used the MMPI-2 in their assessment process, 56 or 41.5% reported using the MMP-2 as a stand alone instrument to evaluate candidates, while 79 respondents or 41% reported using the MMPI-2 in a battery of tests. (NOTE: A battery of tests is defined in this context as two or more psychological tests).

-Of the respondents who used the CPI in their assessment process, 1 respondent or 11% used the CPI as a stand alone instruments to evaluate candidates, while 32 respondents or 97% reported using the CPI in a battery of tests. (NOTE: A battery of tests is defined in this context as two or more psychological tests).

-Of the respondents who used the IPI in their assessment process, 8 respondents or 17% used the IPI as a stand alone instrument to evaluate candidates, while 45 respondents of 96% utilized the IPI in a battery of tests.

-Of the respondents who indicated using other tests in the assessment process which do not include the MMPI-2, IPI, or CPI, 8 respondents or 17% use a singular test as a stand alone instrument when evaluating candidates. Thirty-eight (38) respondents or 83% utilize a battery of tests that do not include the MMPI-2, CPI, or IPI.

7) -Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 165 respondents or 77% indicated that “Ability to communicate in writing” was assessed for, while 50 respondents or 23% said it was not.

- Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 190 respondents or 88% indicated that “Intelligence or cognitive ability” was assessed for, while 25 respondents or 12% said it was not.

- Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 197 respondents or 92% utilized a “face-to-face interview by an examiner,” while 18 respondents or 8% did not.

- Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 193 respondents or 90% indicated that the psychological report gives a clear pass/fail or qualified/unqualified summary, while 22 respondents or 10% said the report did not give a clear pass/fail summary.

- Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 84 respondents or 39% said the psychological report concludes with a rating scale.

- Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 15 respondents or 7% indicated that the test report does not provide a clear opinion with regards to the suitability of the candidate, while 200 respondents, or 93% said the report does provide a clear opinion as to the suitability of the candidate.

8) - Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 130 respondents or 60.5% indicated that the psychological evaluation is given before the candidate is given a valid job offer, 82 respondents or 38.1% said the evaluation is given after a valid job offer has been given, while 3 respondents or 1.4% did not answer the question.

-Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 64 respondents or 30% reported that the person conducting the examination and submitting the report has had the same basic background done as would be conducted for a police officer candidate, 123 respondents or 57% indicated that a background was not conducted on the evaluator, while 28 respondents or 13% did not answer the question.

- Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 123 respondents or 57% indicated the individual who conducts the psychological exams would be considered a police psychologist, while 84 respondents or 39% said the evaluator was not a police psychologist.

- Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 206 respondents or 95.5% conduct an extensive background investigation of each candidate (including an officer making personal contacts with family, past employers, etc.), 8 respondents or 4% stated that they do not conduct a background investigation, while 1 respondent or 0.5% did not answer the question.

-Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 22 respondents or 10.2 % reported that it would hire a candidate even if they had an unfavorable psychological rating if the agency believed in the candidate, 188 respondents or 87.4% indicated that they would not hire a candidate if they received an unfavorable rating from the psychological evaluation, while 2 respondents or 1% did not respond to the question.

9) Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, below is a breakdown of the examiner's credential:

(NOTE: many agencies listed more than one evaluator with different credentials)

Medical Doctor	(5)	2%
Ph.D. licensed clinical psychologist	(175)	66%
Ph.D. industrial organizational psychologist	(41)	15%
Education Doctorate (Ed.D.)	(12)	5%
Masters degree in social work (M.SW).	(3)	1%
Master of Arts degree (M.A).	(22)	8%
Master of Arts degree with some licensing such as L.C.P.C., N.C.C., etc	(2)	1%
Master of Science	(3)	1%
Did not answer	(3)	1%

10) -Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 160 respondents or 74% indicated that the psychological component of the hiring process is very helpful, 26 respondents or 12% indicated that it is somewhat helpful, 23 respondents or 11% stated it is simply a necessity, and 6 respondents or 3 % did not answer the question.

11) -The average or mean cost of the psychological assessment according to the 215 agencies that indicated they use psychological testing was \$350, with a reported range from \$0 to \$2,500 per assessment. The mode or most frequently reported evaluation rate was \$500 per evaluation, being reported 27 times. The second most reported evaluation rate was \$400, being reported 17 times. 3 respondents or 1.4% indicated that they receive the psychological evaluation at no cost. 2 respondents or 1% indicated that the candidate pays for the psychological evaluation and 20 respondents or 9.3% did not answer the question.

12) -Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, the following is a breakdown of the reported length of evaluation time:

0-1 hour	(0)	0%
1-2 hours	(12)	6%
2-3 hours	(19)	9%
3-4 hours	(26)	12%
4-5 hours	(62)	29%
5-6 hours	(48)	22%
6-7 hours	(8)	4%
7 + hours	(8)	4%
More than 1 day	(3)	1%
Did not answer	(29)	13%

13) -Of the 215 agencies that indicated using psychological testing, 82 respondents or 38% reported that Yes, regulation is needed to regulate the testing of police candidates, 53 respondents or 25% indicated Somewhat that legislation is needed, 64 respondents or 30% indicated No, legislation is not needed, and 16 respondents or 7% did not answer the question.

Illinois Survey of Police Departments' Usage of Pre-Employment Psychological Testing

COMMENTS

“Minimum psychological testing standards, which can establish a specific level of a police candidate’s psychological compatibility with the duties/functions of the law enforcement profession, should be developed.”

“Unless psychological examinations are funded under the legislation that would regulate how all departments must hire, it would not be affordable. A small department such as ours could not meet the cost. I am not sure that psychological testing will be able to detect what will or will not make a good policeman. I have seen those selected off of the tested qualification list fail, and others who were not tested become good policemen. I do not believe we have found a pat formula let alone legislate it.”

“We have found the psychological testing a valid and important part of the hiring process.”

“I feel that if a person does pass and makes a good face interview with a psychologist, this may not make him a good police officer. We as a department must remember the most important thing that we are dealing with different type of people. I have seen first hand that not all good book type make good police officers.”

“A standardized test should be established and all potential officers should be required to take it.”

“I am not familiar with psychological testing, therefore, I have no opinion concerning needed legislation.”

“It might be wise to require agencies to do testing, but I believe the decision concerning pass/fail should be left to the individual agencies.”

“This is a small town and police officers are hired by the village board. The Chief is not even able to sit and listen to any questions or answers. The candidate is checked for criminal background.”

“We need to head off some of the problems that later cause great liability for chiefs and government agencies. We need to be hiring the best people we can and testing is very important. The cost of the testing can be far less than legal fees later.”

“I just do not think it is necessary. We have enough mandated laws and this for small departments is a financial drain; due to the department being used for a training ground for larger departments. We just do not have the money for this testing, however, if the state pays for the testing, I would be all for it.”

“I like our process of testing. There are some departments that hire marginal candidates. For those departments, we could use some minimum standards.”

“The hiring should be left up to the entity hiring the candidate, instead of burdening a department with the cost of psychological testing.”

“I strongly believe that psych testing is an essential component of the hiring process. We are very satisfied with the program that we currently employ. There are always concerns that legislation could have a potential negative impact of how we operate.”

“Our village only employs myself, as its only Patrolman/Chief. Although my experience in working for other departments for the past years, 8 years to be exact. My experience has shown me a serious problem with alcoholism in the police field. If this can be determined by psychological testing, then I believe it would be very helpful. I must say, that my experience, has been with smaller town police departments only.”

“A well-designed psychological evaluation program should be considered by the legislature. With so much riding on a Police Officer’s ability to do his/her job, under different levels of stress, nothing should be left to chance.”

“In departments the size of ours, and there are many in Illinois, we lack the resources and find it increasingly difficult to keep up with non-funded state mandates.”

“I believe screening should be mandatory due to the nature of the position, protect society and avoid possible litigation against the employer.”

“Psychological testing is on the agenda. All officers here have come from other departments that have tested. We have been able to hire experienced officers. If the point comes where we hire non PTI – psychological testing will be part of the testing procedure.”

“Many communities do not conduct a psychological evaluation. It is an accreditation standard and I believe we are ethically required to protect the public from persons who are potentially mal-adjusted, zealots or people who cannot control their temper and emotions.”

“A standard testing process should be established throughout the state with set testing site located in sections of the state. Once an applicant completes the testing process he/she can then able to various police departments for employment. The background and interview will weed out candidates.”

“I believe there should be consistency amongst the examiners in utilizing the best testing process available. It seems there isn’t one standard test that is given. Research the best test and make it mandatory statewide.”

“There is a need to establish some form of psychological testing, but I am not confident as to how extensive this should be.”

“I feel psychological testing is a must. A standard should be developed and instituted through state licensing certificates to psychologists for continual exact processing.”

“We have not used psychological exams and have excellent police officers.”

“Legislation should not preclude the decisions of local authorities to determine when/where testing is necessary at any time during a Police Officer’s career, whether it is pre-employment or several years into employment.”

“I have always believed that police candidates should be tested. I see a need for legislation, so all police departments would be required to do it.”

“I don’t feel psychological testing is cost effective for small departments. Smaller departments are often used as stepping stones to larger more productive departments. Small departments can not afford the high cost of psychological tests.”

“Psychological testing is a very useful tool which some departments don’t use due to past practice, lack of money, or other factors. An officer not suited for the work for psychological reasons will probably surface with a potentially catastrophic outcome.”

“Not all departments could afford the cost. We have been successful with the system we have now. We are doing physical agility testing, written, police background and oral interview before a board of six.”

“I believe it could give departments more leverage in lawsuits against officers when their judgment is being questioned. Also, when soundness is in question about stability. Our department would like to be able to give psychological examinations in the future to candidates for employment. This is something we need to look into and research further.”