

PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS OF VA POLICE OFFICERS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive clarifies the duties and responsibilities of VA health care or contracted psychologists or psychiatrists who perform psychological evaluations for VA Police Officers.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:

Amendment dated February 5, 2021:

- a. Updates the implementation schedule located in paragraph 6.
- b. Clarifies requirements for selecting two psychological tests.
- c. Updates rating criteria for evaluation dimensions.
- d. Clarifies that examiners are not required to use the specific templates in the Appendices; examiners are required to provide documentation that addresses the content areas outlined in each of the templates.

This directive:

- e. Establishes responsibilities related to the psychological evaluations of VA Police Officer applicants and VA Police Officers.
- f. Provides templates and evaluation criteria for the psychological evaluation component of VA Police Officers and applicants for VA Police Officers.

3. RELATED ISSUES: VA Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service, dated August 3, 2017; VA Handbook 0720, Procedures to Arm Department of Veterans Affairs Police, dated January 24, 2000; VA Handbook 0730, Security and Law Enforcement, dated August 11, 2000.

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (11MHSP) is responsible for the contents of this directive. Questions may be referred to OMHSP at vha11mhspmentalhealthandsuicidepreventionaction@va.gov.

5. RESCISSIONS: None.

6. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE: The implementation date of this directive is June 1, 2021.

7. RECERTIFICATION: This VHA directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of December 2025. This VHA directive will continue to serve as national VHA policy until it is recertified or rescinded.

DATE

VHA DIRECTIVE 0730

**BY DIRECTION OF THE OFFICE OF THE
UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH:**

/s/ Kameron Matthews, MD, JD
Assistant Under Secretary for Health for
for Clinical Services

NOTE: All references herein to VA and VHA documents incorporate by reference subsequent VA and VHA documents on the same or similar subject matter.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS OF VA POLICE OFFICERS**1. PURPOSE**

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive establishes the duties and responsibilities of VHA health care providers who perform pre-employment, periodic, and other requested psychological evaluations for VA Police Officers. **AUTHORITY:** Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 7301(b); Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) § 339.301.

2. BACKGROUND

a. VA Handbook 0730, Security and Law Enforcement, Appendix A, dated August 11, 2000, describes the medical standards for VA Police Officer Applicants and Incumbents. VA Handbook 0730 states that the VA Police Officers must possess emotional and mental stability. These guidelines are consistent with VA Handbook 0720, Procedures to Arm Department of Veterans Affairs Police, dated January 24, 2000. These standards are based on 5 C.F.R. § 339.301.

b. In 2002, a VA Memorandum provided more specific guidance related to psychological screening of VA Police Officer applicants. The memorandum describes a review of standards outlined by the Office of Personnel Management that authorized VA to develop written procedures and ensure that all screenings and evaluations are valid predictors of success on the job. The memorandum further describes the process and parameters for pre-employment psychological evaluations.

c. In 2005, further guidance was provided through an Office of Security and Law Enforcement (OSLE) Fact Sheet titled "Officer Physical Examinations and Psychological Assessments." Particularly relevant to mental health, the Fact Sheet points out the conditions under which psychological testing may be administered for incumbent Police Officers and the process for pursuing psychological testing, in compliance with VA Handbook 0730, Appendix A.

d. Standards of practice for police psychology have evolved over the past decade, resulting in greater availability of reliable, evidence-based methods for assessing psychological stability. This VHA directive reflects current standard of practice, ensuring that it is consistent with Federal rules and regulations, and current consensus in the health care field related to psychological stability of VA Police Officers.

e. Over the past decade, VA has identified a range of issues related to the psychological requirements for personnel matters such as inter-facility transfers, re-employment, directed or special examination, and similar topics. This directive provides a comprehensive policy that addresses the inter-facility, re-employment, directed or special examinations for VA Police Officers who require medical clearance.

3. POLICY

It is VHA policy that, in order to ensure that VA Police Officers meet all of the functional requirements for their jobs, VA psychologists or psychiatrists, including

contracted psychologists or psychiatrists, perform all psychological evaluations as part of VA Employee Occupational Health (EOH) medical examinations for applicants and current VA Police Officers upon request from VA Office of Human Resources and Administration.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health is responsible for ensuring overall VHA compliance with this directive.

b. **Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services.** The Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services is responsible for supporting the implementation and oversight of this directive across VHA.

c. **Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations.** The Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations is responsible for:

(1) Communicating the contents of this directive to each of the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN).

(2) Assisting VISN Directors to resolve implementation and compliance challenges.

(3) Providing oversight of VISNs to ensure compliance with this directive and its effectiveness.

d. **Director, Office of Occupational Safety, Health and Green Environmental Management System Programs.** The Director of Office of Occupational Safety, Health (OSH) and Green Environmental Management System (GEMS) Programs is responsible for providing consultative guidance and technical assistance to implement the requirements stated in this directive at the VISN and VA medical facility level, in accordance with Federal, State, and local laws and regulations listed in paragraph 10, References.

e. **Director, VHA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.** The Director of Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention is responsible for:

(1) Providing programmatic advice and guidance for all VHA mental health staff regarding this directive.

(2) Coordinating with OSH and GEMS Programs to communicate the requirements that a) medical examinations and psychological evaluations be completed prior to hire and within 60 days of each other and b) for currently employed Police Officers, medical examinations be completed within 12 months of previous physical medical examinations.

(3) Working with Director of OSH and GEMS Programs to implement a standardized psychological evaluation program throughout VHA that supports the requirements of this directive and VA Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service, dated August 3, 2017.

(4) Developing and communicating compliance, policy, procedures, special initiatives, news releases, and any performance metrics.

(5) Serving as liaison between various program stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- (a) VA Central Office.
- (b) VISNs.
- (c) VA program offices.
- (d) VHA program offices.
- (e) VA medical facility Directors.
- (f) VA Mental Health Chiefs.
- (g) VA Psychology Service Chiefs.
- (h) VA Psychiatry Service Chiefs.

f. **Veterans Integrated Service Network Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for:

(1) Communicating the contents of this directive to each of the VA medical facility Directors.

(2) Ensuring that each VA medical facility Director has the sufficient resources to fulfill the terms of this directive in all VA medical facilities within that VISN.

(3) Providing oversight of VA medical facility Directors to ensure compliance with this directive.

(4) Relaying written communications that pertain to psychological evaluations of Police Officers from OMHSP, OSH and GEMS Programs to VA medical facility EOH staff.

g. **VA Medical Facility Director.** The VA medical facility Director is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring that the Chief, Mental Health Services or Chief, Psychology Service, or Chief, Psychiatry Service at their VA medical facility implements the standardized national program developed by OMHSP.

(2) Ensuring that adequate staffing, funding, training, support, and resources are provided to the relevant program at the VA medical facility for implementing effective policies and requirements for the psychological evaluations of VA Police Officers and applicants for VA Police Officers.

h. **Chief, Mental Health Services or Chief, Psychology Service or Chief, Psychiatry Service.** The relevant clinical Chief or Chiefs, depending on the VA medical facility organization, is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring that privileged VA psychologists and psychiatrists are available, receive training, meet examiner qualifications, and have dedicated time to perform psychological evaluations of VA Police Officers and applicants in VA medical facilities that perform in-house evaluations.

(2) Ensuring that VA psychologists and psychiatrists performing psychological evaluations of VA Police Officers and applicants are privileged in accordance with VHA Handbook 1100.19, Credentialing and Privileging, dated October 15, 2012.

(3) For VA medical facilities that contract psychological evaluations, collaborating with VHA Human Resources to identify qualified contractors, and working with Human Resources to ensure that the contract requires that contracted psychologists or psychiatrists performing the evaluations meet the requirements of this directive. Contract requirements include, but are not limited to, contractor qualifications, responsibilities, training, reporting structure, and clear payment structure as determined by the VA medical facility.

i. **Psychologists and Psychiatrists.**

(1) Psychological evaluations of VA Police Officers are done by VA psychologists and psychiatrists at the VA medical facility of employment, at another VA medical facility through a Memorandum of Understanding, or by contract. The same standards apply for qualifications and procedures in all instances.

(2) When psychological evaluations of VA Police Officers are contracted out, OSH and Mental Health Services staff must be involved in the process of identifying qualified contractors to ensure that the contractors have the requisite qualifications and training. However, the approval and finalization of contracts is made by VHA Human Resources staff.

(3) Psychologists and psychiatrists, to include both VA employees and contractors, who are conducting evaluations of VA Police Officers and VA Police Officer applicants are responsible for:

(a) Using the applicable components outlined in section 6 of this directive.

(b) Completing a psychological report and submitting the completed psychological recommendation report to the EOH Agency Medical Officer at the VA medical facility of employment. See paragraph 6.e. for additional information and Appendix C for a report template.

5. EXAMINER QUALIFICATIONS.

a. The work of psychologists who conduct psychological evaluations of Police Officers is complex and demanding. Evaluations shall be conducted only by licensed

psychologists and psychiatrists who are qualified by their education, training, and experience to conduct psychological assessments. These individuals must have expertise in clinical assessment as well as the assessment of normal personality characteristics relevant to personnel selection. These qualification requirements apply to VA and contract examiners.

b. VA and contracted psychologists or psychiatrists must be trained in psychological evaluation of Police Officers, including assessment of clinical and normal personality characteristics relevant to Police Officer selection and retention. VA medical facilities that use VA employees to perform psychological evaluations of VA Police Officers must provide support for training.

c. Dual relationships are prohibited. All dual relationships have the potential to reduce objectivity or violate the necessary boundaries between a clinician and an applicant or employee which may also have ethical implications. In this context, dual relationships are relationships in which VA psychologists or psychiatrists concurrently participate in two or more role categories with an applicant or employee. Such dual relationships may be benign (as when both are members of the same social group) or exploitive (e.g., a sexual relationship), but all dual relationships have the potential to cause harm and violate the necessary boundaries between a VA Police Officer or applicant and a VA examiner, which may also have ethical implications.

(1) VA or contracted psychologists or psychiatrists may not perform psychological evaluations with any Police Officer or applicant they are treating in any setting.

(2) In cases of dual relationship or conflicts of interest, the following evaluation alternatives may occur: contracting; assignment to another qualified examiner; cross-facility evaluations; evaluation by psychologists or psychiatrists employed by other Federal agencies or another alternative that the VA medical facility may identify.

d. Examiners must be familiar with VA policies relevant to the evaluation and selection of Police Officers. Examiners must also be knowledgeable in employment law impacting the administration of these types of personnel evaluations, including but not limited to the Americans with Disabilities Act As Amended (ADA/ADAAA), Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Privacy Act of 1974 (see links in Section 10, REFERENCES).

e. Performance of psychological evaluation of Police Officers must be included in VA employee's privileges. The VA medical facility must develop a standardized process for evaluating competence, in accordance with VA and VA medical facility policy.

6. PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF VA POLICE OFFICERS

a. Psychological evaluations of VA Police Officers are distinct from typical clinical evaluations in that the primary focus of the evaluation is to assess the applicant's or employee's psychological fitness to meet the functional requirements of the position.

While clinical issues may be involved in the evaluation, identifying clinical concerns or establishing a diagnosis are relevant only to the extent that these issues, if present, are anticipated to impact the applicant's or employee's ability to meet the functional requirements.

b. The following core elements must be utilized for psychological evaluation of VA Police Officers: an authorization form to conduct the psychological evaluation; a psychological evaluation report (Appendix B provides an optional template); and a recommendation report that the examiner submits to the VA medical facility EOH Agency Medical Officer (Appendix C provides an optional template).

c. Types of VA Police Officer Psychological Evaluations.

(1) **Pre-employment Psychological Evaluation.** The pre-employment psychological evaluation focuses on the functional requirements for the position of a VA Police Officer, as well as suitability and stability for the role. It must consist of a standardized interview and standardized objective psychological testing with symptom validity scales. At least two psychological tests must be administered. The psychological evaluation must also include exploration of substance abuse and symptoms of other mental health disorders that may be considered an impediment to effective functioning as a VA Police Officer.

(2) **Periodic Evaluations.** Periodic or annual evaluations focus on functional requirements for maintaining the position of a VA Police Officer. To initiate the evaluation, VHA Human Resources must provide a written request for the periodic evaluation and provide a documented reason to the employee when ordering the exam. A standardized interview must be conducted, and psychological testing should only be conducted when concerns are raised about the psychological fitness of the Police Officer during the psychological evaluation. Screening instruments, such as the Personal Health Questionnaire 2 (PHQ2), PTSD Screen for Primary Care (PC-PTSD), Alcohol Use Identification Test (AUDIT) or other standardized instruments, may be used if additional testing is needed. A positive response on any screening instruments is an indication that further testing is required and cannot, in and of itself, be used as grounds for the final recommendation. If the interview or the screening and assessment tools raise concern for functional ability, stability, or suitability, further psychological testing may be done. **NOTE:** *Periodic psychological evaluations of Police Officers recur every 12 months.*

(3) **Directed or Special Examination.** Incumbent VA Police Officers may be referred for a directed or special examination when there is objective evidence as determined by VHA Human Resources to indicate the employee's ability to perform essential job functions may be compromised. A directed or special psychological examination may be required when it appears that the incapacity is due to a mental or psychological disorder. This must be done in the context of an occupational health evaluation outlined in VA Handbook 5019 to ensure that medical conditions that may manifest with psychological, mental, or behavioral disturbance are identified. VHA Human Resources must provide a written summary articulating the reason that the employee's ability has come into question and provide the reason to the employee

when ordering the exam. If the employee's position does not have properly established medical standards or physical requirements, or if there is no basis to order the examination based on a "job related" or "business necessity," then there is no regulatory authority to order a fitness-for-duty evaluation, psychiatric examination, or psychological assessment.

d. **Evaluation Components.**

The psychological evaluation is composed of several components, to include:

(1) **Authorization Form.** Prior to conducting any psychological evaluation of an applicant or VA Police Officer, the VA or contracted psychologist or psychiatrist must obtain an Authorization Form from the applicant or employee in writing. At a minimum this consent must include the nature and objectives of the evaluation and must identify the intended recipient(s) of the information, the probable uses of the evaluation information, and the limits of confidentiality. It is best practice to review the key elements of the authorization form with the applicant or employee prior to conducting the psychological evaluation. **NOTE:** See Appendix A for an Authorization Form template for VA Police Officer psychological evaluations.

(2) **Interview.** All evaluations must incorporate an individual interview by a VA or contracted psychologist or psychiatrist for all evaluations of applicants and incumbent Police Officers. The interview must be conducted in a consistent, comprehensive manner that focuses on the collection of information relevant to the purpose of the evaluation and adheres to professional and industry standards.

(3) **Psychological Testing.** A written psychological test battery relevant to the purpose of the evaluation must be utilized in accordance with the guidance provided in this Directive. For new-hire evaluations, at least two psychological tests must be administered: one broadband measure of normal-range personality traits and the other a broadband measure of psychopathology and personality problems. For annual or special evaluations, testing should only be used if the interview or the screening and assessment tools raise concern for functional ability, stability, or suitability. **NOTE:** Instruments, such as the PHQ2, PC-PTSD, AUDIT or other standardized instruments, may be used for screening; A positive response on any screening instrument is an indication that further testing may be necessary and cannot, in and of itself, be used as grounds for a final recommendation.

(a) The Mental Health Assistant (MHA) software tool must not be used to administer or score psychometric instruments for Police Officer applicants or incumbents. Since the MHA is accessed through the Electronic Health Record (EHR)-either the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) or Cerner Millennium Power Chart, MHA should be not used for Human Resource personnel evaluations. Keeping personnel evaluations outside the EHR will protect the confidentiality of VA Police Officers. VA medical facilities should work with local fiscal teams to purchase test licenses or single test administrations direct from the test publishers, taking care to protect employee privacy when using online testing platforms.

(b) To ensure security and privacy, examiners must not enter employees' Protected Health Information (PHI) or Personally Identifiable Information (PII), even temporarily, into a test publisher's online platform. Please note that any document connecting VA employees to simulated identification data must be kept securely within VA's encrypted firewall, in keeping with VHA's records policies.

e. Required Evaluation.

(1) The psychological evaluation shall focus on the functional requirements for the position of VA Police Officer, as well as suitability and stability for the role. Information about the required duties, responsibilities, working conditions, and other psychologically relevant job characteristics should be obtained from Human Resources or the VA medical facility EOH prior to beginning the psychological evaluation. The psychological evaluation should focus on identifying skills, behaviors, attributes and other personal characteristics associated with effective and counterproductive job performance.

(2) The evaluation of VA Police Officer applicants and employees must include a review of the individual's history that is pertinent to the purpose of the evaluation.

(3) The evaluation of the functional requirements for the position of VA Police Officers must be done using the constructs provided by the ten empirically derived psychological screening dimensions developed by the California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Psychological Screening Manual. The POST manual is recognized as the leading best practice in the field of psychology evaluations of Police Officers. These dimensions, described in detail in the Evaluation Report Template in Appendix C, are: social competence, teamwork, adaptability/flexibility, conscientiousness/dependability, impulse control/attention to safety, integrity/ethics, emotional regulation/stress tolerance, decision-making/judgment, assertiveness/persuasiveness and avoiding substance abuse/other risk-taking behavior. Details on the development, definitions, and use of these psychological screening dimensions are available in the California POST Officer Psychological Screening Manual, which can be obtained at no cost at <https://post.ca.gov/peace-officer-psychological-screening-manual>.

(4) VA or contracted psychologists or psychiatrists should submit a recommendation report with discussion of the issues to be included in the Employee Medical Folder. The VA medical facility EOH Agency Medical Officer is responsible for providing the final fitness for duty recommendation to VHA Human Resources.

(5) For pre-employment evaluations, the written history review in the recommendation report is comprehensive in nature and must include but not be limited to: education, work history, financial record, legal history, substance use and mental health concerns. In all cases the information obtained must be based on the information necessary to assess the individual's ability to perform requirements of the position and role.

(6) For periodic evaluations of incumbent Police Officers, the written history review must focus on the employee's recent job performance and any behaviors and events

that could potentially indicate the presence of emotional or psychological symptoms that would interfere with the employee's ability to perform the essential functions and role of a Police Officer.

(7) For directed or special examinations, the written history review must focus on the behaviors or events precipitating the evaluation, as described in the written summary from VHA Human Resources, and any information needed to assess the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the job as a Police Officer. It is recognized that in these types of evaluations a comprehensive history review is often required to assess the nature and severity of any psychological concerns that may be identified.

(8) If relevant to the evaluation of the applicant's or employee's psychological stability and suitability, mental health records may be requested from treating health care providers in accordance with VA Handbook 5019 and paragraph 9, Records Management, of this directive, and reviewed before a final determination is made. Obtaining these records requires written authorization from the applicant or employee for the release of the records.

(9) When no background medical records have been submitted by the applicant or employee, VA or contracted psychologists or psychiatrists must make note of this in the report and indicate that all reported history is based on the applicant's or employee's self-report and could be subject to reconsideration based on subsequent submission of additional medical records by the employee.

(10) VA or contracted psychologists or psychiatrists must not conduct any type of background investigation independently, such as, but not limited to, an internet search or a search using social media.

(11) The psychological recommendation report will include only the minimum level of disclosure regarding functional requirements for the job and only the level of detail necessary for medical clearance by the EOH Agency Medical Officer. See Appendix B for an evaluation template and Appendix C for a report template.

(12) The detail in the recommendation report must be adequate for the EOH Agency Medical Officer to understand the rationale, make a determination of qualification or disqualification, and explain the decision to the applicant or employee, should they ask. The rationale for this is the psychological evaluation is one component part of the overall EOH medical examination and thus should be discussed in the context of the whole evaluation.

(13) Medical disqualifications for a position are made by the EOH Agency Medical Officer based on all the evidence provided (including the medical examination and psychological evaluation). Psychological evaluation is one piece of information in the context of the entire fitness for duty evaluation to ascertain the applicant's or employee's ability to meet the functional requirements of the job, and the psychological test results alone cannot be used as evidence for medical disqualification. Similarly, a mental health diagnosis itself cannot be used as evidence of medical disqualification for a position. If a clinical diagnosis is made by the examining psychologist or psychiatrist

and certain other factors exist such that the symptoms associated with the diagnosis impair the individual's ability to meet the functional requirements, the functional impairment, not the diagnosis, would be the disqualifying reason.

NOTE: *If a diagnosis is made, it must be made using the most current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders currently utilized in VA at the time of the evaluation.*

(14) Recommendations made by VA or contracted psychologists or psychiatrists to the EOH Agency Medical Officers must be unequivocal (i.e., the applicant or employee does or does not meet the functional requirements). In the case of a negative recommendation, any functional requirements that are compromised must be documented. In the case that the findings of an evaluation are not sufficient to provide an unequivocal determination, the reasons of insufficiency must be described in the report. See Appendix C for a report template.

(15) For the purposes of VA field facility transfers, Police Officers with current appointments must have an annual medical examination completed if the required annual at the departing VA medical facility is not current. All findings and testing should be completed and reviewed prior to the transfer.

(16) When a former federal employee is re-employed by an agency, the provisions set forth for standard pre-placement specifications will be adhered.

7. TELEHEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

a. For evaluations conducted remotely through video communication technology, administration procedures should be kept as close as possible to the traditional, in-person procedures and documented in the written report.

b. Remote audio-visual monitoring of the test administration, even with self-administered instruments, is essential. Select a non-public facing video teleconference platform that is compliant with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Rule requirements and apply administrative, physical, and technical safeguards to protect information.

c. Consult publishers for guidance on video technology adaptation of specific psychological assessment measures.

d. Notify persons being assessed that video applications potentially introduce privacy risks and enable all available encryption and privacy modes when using such applications.

e. Guidance on preferred video tools and other resources can be found at <https://vaww.telehealth.va.gov/>. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

8. TRAINING

Formal training requirements include reviewing the following policies: VA Handbook 5019 (Employee Occupational Health Service) and VHA Directive 0730 (Psychological Evaluations of VA Police Officers). VA and contracted psychologists or psychiatrists must be trained in assessment of clinical and normal personality characteristics relevant to Police Officer selection. The Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention is responsible for sharing information about training resources and best practices.

9. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

a. The psychological recommendation report from the psychologist or psychiatrist must be maintained in the Employee Medical Folder for the employee or applicant. Employee medical records are subject to VA privacy and confidentiality restrictions, as outlined in VA Handbook 5019, as well as all other applicable privacy and disclosure laws.

b. The recommendation report may not be disclosed to anyone without a written release of information from the applicant or employee unless such disclosure is authorized under the Office of Personnel Management/Govt-10, Employee Medical File System Records requirements.

c. Employees must sign an authorization to release information prior to undergoing any directed or special physical examination and made aware that results of the examination may be shared with leadership or others with a need to know in an effort to continue the mission of VA. Failure of the employee to submit to a directed or special physical examination or to sign the authorization form may result in application rejection or disciplinary action, including removal from employment with VA. See VA Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service.

d. Raw data (such as raw assessment data) must be maintained in accordance with VHA and Human Resources policy. Per the OSLE Fact Sheet, titled "Officer Physical Examinations and Psychological Assessments," raw examination materials (testing documents, interview notes, etc.) remain in the custody of the psychologist, and neither Human Resources nor the selecting official has a routine need to see the raw test materials.

e. All records regardless of format (e.g., paper, electronic, electronic systems) created by this directive shall be managed per the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) approved records schedules found in VHA Records Control Schedule 10-1. Questions regarding any aspect of records management should be addressed to the appropriate Records Officer.

10. REFERENCES

a. P. L. 93-112.

b. P. L. 110-325.

c. 5 U.S.C. § 552a.

- d. 28 U.S.C. § 621.
- e. 38 U.S.C. § 901-902.
- f. 38 U.S.C. § 4301-4335.
- g. 5 C.F.R. § 339.301.
- h. 45 C.F.R. §§ 160 and 164.
- i. VA Handbook 0730, Security and Law Enforcement, dated August 11, 2000.
- j. VA Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service, dated August 3, 2017.
- k. VHA Handbook 1100.19, Credentialing and Privileging, dated October 15, 2012.
- l. VA Memorandum, Psychological Assessment of Applicants for Police Officers, dated April 19, 2002, <https://vaww.portal2.va.gov/sites/COH/Administrative%20Examinations/Police/Psychological%20Assessment%20of%20Applicants%20for%20Police%20Officer%20Positions%20Memo%20041902.pdf>.
- m. American Psychological Association. (2018). Professional practice guidelines for occupationally mandated psychological evaluations. *American Psychologist*, 73(2), 186–197. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000170>.
- n. California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training Psychological Screening Manual. Spilberg, S. & Corey, D. (2014), <https://post.ca.gov/peace-officer-psychological-screening-manual>.
- o. EEOC Enforcement Guidance: Disability-Related Inquiries and Medical Examinations of Employees under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/guidance-inquiries.html>.
- p. EEOC Enforcement Guidance: Pre-employment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations, <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/preemp.html>.
- q. EEOC Employment Tests and Selection Procedures, http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/factemployment_procedures.html.
- r. EEOC Policy Guidance on Executive Order 13145: To Prohibit Discrimination in Federal Employment Based on Genetic Information, <https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc-policy-guidance-executive-order-13145-prohibit-discrimination-federal-employment-based-genetic>.
- s. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Security Rule. Pub. L. No. 104-191 (2013).

t. Joint Task Force for the Development of Telepsychology Guidelines for Psychologists. (2013). Guidelines for the practice of telepsychology. American Psychologist, 68(9), 791–800. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035001>.

u. International Association of Chiefs of Police (2018) Psychological Fitness-for-Duty Evaluation Guidelines Ratified by the IACP Police Psychological Services Section. <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/Fitness%20for%20Duty%20Evaluation%20Guidelines%202018.pdf>.

v. Office of Personnel Management/Govt-10, Employee Medical File System Records, <https://www.opm.gov/information-management/privacy-policy/sorn/opm-sorn-govt-10-employee-medical-file-systems-records.pdf>. **NOTE:** *This linked document is outside of VA control and may not be conformant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.*

w. Office of Security and Law Enforcement, Fact Sheet-Police Officer Physical Examinations and Psychological Assessments, dated February 7, 2005, <https://vaww.portal2.va.gov/sites/COH/Administrative%20Examinations/Police/Fact%20Sheet%20Police%20Officer%20Physical%20Examination%20and%20Psychological%20Assessments%2070705.pdf>. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

AUTHORIZATION FORM FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Applicant/Incumbent Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Social Security Number (last 4 numbers): _____

The following information is provided to allow full disclosure of the purpose of this evaluation and the rights you have in this evaluation process.

PURPOSE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Each applicant or incumbent Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Police Officer is required to successfully complete a psychological evaluation prior to employment and as part of the periodic medical evaluation.

The purpose of this psychological evaluation is to provide information to the Employee Occupational Health (EOH) Agency Medical Officer about your suitability and emotional stability, both of which have been determined to be essential to performing the duties of a VA Police Officer. This evaluation will assist the EOH Agency Medical Officer in recommending hiring or retention as a VA Police Officer. This psychological evaluation is not for counseling or health care purposes. The findings concerning your psychological qualifications for suitability as a VA Police Officer are not a statement of opinion about your general psychological health, or your suitability as a Police Officer with a different agency, or suitability for a different position within VA. This psychological evaluation is not intended for any use other than its stated purpose of evaluating your qualifications for employment as a VA Police Officer.

This psychological evaluation may consist of taking psychometric tests. You will be answering questions in written or computer administered examinations that will measure your psychological characteristics.

Additionally, you will participate in a clinical interview. This will include questions about relevant employment, educational, or behavioral experiences and you may be asked about your responses to test questions in order to aid in test interpretation.

You have the right to terminate this process at any time, although your refusal to complete this evaluation could result in withdrawal of an offer of employment, if you are an applicant, or administrative or personnel action if you are an incumbent VA Police Officer.

INTENDED RECIPIENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

All psychological test materials, test data, and personal information you provide will be the property of VA. The psychologist or psychiatrist performing this evaluation is employed by or under contract with VA. The psychologist or psychiatrist findings are disclosed to the VA

medical facility EOH Agency Medical Officer only. The EOH Agency Medical Officer is responsible for providing the final recommendation regarding employment to VHA Human Resources.

FEES

VA will pay all fees connected with your referral for psychological evaluation services. VA does not cover the cost of any other reports or information you would like to provide to the VA psychologist or psychiatrist or EOH Agency Medical Officer.

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

You have the right to be treated in a professional, respectful manner. The primary responsibility of your examining psychologist or psychiatrist is to the VA. Your psychological evaluation is part of an evaluation for fitness for duty and is not considered treatment as part of an established doctor-patient relationship. Your confidentiality and its limits described below and are different than in a treatment relationship with a doctor. You will not be given any feedback or a copy of your evaluation results unless requested by filling out VHA Form 10-5345 and VHA Form 10-5345, Request for and Authorization to Release Health Information.

The examining psychologist or psychiatrist may consult with other health and mental health providers. The other providers are legally and ethically bound to keep the information confidential.

The psychologist or psychiatrist, whether employed or contracted by VA, is working for the VA and the primary responsibility is to VA.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION

The psychological evaluation will be used as one of several elements to determine your qualifications for this position and whether or not you will be hired or retained as a VA Police Officer.

All of the information obtained from this psychological evaluation belongs to VA. Results of your evaluation will not become part of your personnel file. Your psychological evaluation will be safeguarded with due regard to your personal privacy.

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prohibits employers and other entities covered by GINA Title II from requesting or requiring genetic information of an individual or family member of the individual, except as specifically allowed by this law. To comply with this law, we ask that you not provide any genetic information when responding to this request for medical information. "Genetic information," as defined by GINA, includes an individual's family medical history, the results of an individual's or family member's genetic tests, the fact that an individual or an individual's family member sought or received genetic services, and genetic information of a fetus carried by an individual or an individual's family member or an embryo lawfully held by an individual or family member receiving assistive reproductive services.

A report of this evaluation, including pertinent findings and conclusions and the professional opinion as to your qualifications for this position, will be provided to the EOH Agency Medical Officer. If there are indications of any mental or emotional disorders or maladaptive behavioral patterns which could significantly interfere with your ability to safely and effectively perform the duties of a VA Police Officer, or if you are not truthful while participating in this evaluation, your conditional job offer or continued employment as a VA Police Officer may be withdrawn.

The recommendation report generated will contain the minimum amount of information to achieve the intended purpose to satisfy the requirements of evaluation and support its findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The report will be provided only to the VA medical facility EOH Agency Medical Officer. Information will not be released to other sources except as required by law or with your authorization with certain exceptions. Some of the circumstances in which the examining psychologist or psychiatrist has a legal duty to release information include, but are not limited to: abuse of children or other vulnerable persons; threats of harm to others, the examining psychologist or psychiatrist, or yourself; upon binding court order or in the process of a lawsuit; and where disclosure is required by State or Federal law.

In addition, results may be used in validating the screening process, teaching, and research or development of police psychological screening procedures. If used in such ways, your name or personally identifying formation will not be associated with results or otherwise disclosed.

DISCLOSURE ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RELEASE

- I have read and understand the information in this Authorization Form.
- I give my authorization to participate in this psychological evaluation.
- I understand that confidentiality will be maintained. I understand that this psychological evaluation is only one component of a larger process in determining my qualifications for employment as a VA Police Officer.
- I understand this evaluation is not for the purpose of evaluating any mental health conditions.
- I further understand that the examining psychologist or psychiatrist will provide a recommendation report to the VA medical facility EOH Agency Medical Officer as to my qualifications for employment as a VA Police Officer.
- I understand this report is the property of the Office of Personnel Management and is under the custody of the VA medical facility EOH.
- I release the examining psychologist or psychiatrist from all liability or claims of damage associated with furnishing this report to the VA medical facility EOH Agency Medical Officer, including the opinions and recommendations of the examining psychologist or psychiatrist.
- I authorize the examining psychologist or psychiatrist to use and disclose the findings as to my psychological qualification, suitability, or fitness for the position of a VA Police Officer to the VA medical facility EOH Agency Medical Officer.

- I do not need to sign this authorization. However, my refusal will mean that the required psychological evaluation will not take place. This fact may have implications for my employment as a VA Police Officer.

QUESTIONS

Should you have any additional questions or concerns about the psychological evaluation, you may direct them to the evaluator conducting this evaluation or the VA medical facility EOH Medical Officer.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the terms above, and that you are choosing to proceed with your participation in the evaluation as described above.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Examiner Signature: _____

Date: _____

POLICE OFFICER EVALUATION GUIDE

Evaluation Type: Applicant Periodic Directed/Special Examination

Applicant/Employee Name:

Last 4 of Social Security Number:

Employing VA Medical Facility:

Date of Evaluation:

Date of Report:

Evaluated by:

REFERRAL INFORMATION

Reason for Referral:

Indicate if (choose one): pre-employment, periodic/annual, or fitness-for-duty (directed or special examination).

*[If the evaluation is a **directed or special examination**, include a description of events or behaviors that prompted the evaluation. Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Human Resources must provide a written summary articulating the reason that the employee's ability has come into question and articulate the reason to the employee when ordering the exam. If the findings suggest that the Police Officer is not capable of performing the functional requirements of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Police Officer, the evaluation must include objective evidence that would indicate the employee is not capable of performing the functional requirements, and what evidence suggests that this impairment in functioning is due to an emotional or psychological condition.]*

Referral Question:

Is the individual psychologically fit to perform the functional requirements of a Police Officer for VA?

For Directed or Special Examinations Only: Employee's perception of events of concern:

HISTORY REVIEW

NOTE: Only information pertinent to the findings of this evaluation will be provided in the report. Information should be included in recurring evaluations only when it is determined that the employee does not meet the functional requirements for a VA Police Officer.

December 8, 2020

VHA DIRECTIVE 0730(1)
APPENDIX B

Education:

Employment history:

Military history:

Marital status:

Legal history:

Financial status:

Medical history:

Mental health history:

Other information pertinent to referral question:

Background or collateral information received from sources other than employee:

MENTAL STATUS ASSESSMENT

INTERVIEW RESULTS - Summarize

PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

Tests administered:

Testing validity:

Test findings:

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

See Appendix C for the evaluation dimensions for VA Police Officers.

Discussion of any psychological dimensions in which applicant was determined to be "Unsuitable":

LIMITATIONS TO FINDINGS

POLICE OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION REPORT TEMPLATE

Evaluation Type: Applicant Periodic Directed/Special Examination

Name:

Last 4 of Social Security Number:

VA Medical Facility:

Evaluated by:

Date of Evaluation:

Tests Administered:

*Include the following note if background information or other collateral were **not** available:*

NOTE: This evaluation is based entirely on the applicant’s self-reported history and no background information or collateral information was available for this evaluation. Additional information regarding the applicant’s history and behaviors could result in different findings and conclusions.

[For each of the ten dimensions below, select whether the assessment findings indicate that the applicant does, or does not, meet the functional requirements. Anchors for each dimension are provided at the end of this template; the anchors below can be retained in the text of the final report to orientate the VA medical facility Employee Occupational Health (EOH) Agency Medical Officer review of this report.

Psychological Dimensions for VA Police Officers	Meets Standards	Does NOT Meet Standards
1. Social Competence: Able to communicate with others in a tactful and respectful manner and show sensitivity and concern in one’s daily interactions.		
2. Teamwork: Works effectively with others to accomplish goals, as well as subordinates’ personal interests for the good of the working group and the organization.		
3. Adaptability/Flexibility: Able to change gears and easily adjust to the many different, sudden, and sometimes competing demands of the job.		

Psychological Dimensions for VA Police Officers	Meets Standards	Does NOT Meet Standards
4. Conscientiousness/Dependability: Demonstrates diligent, reliable, conscientious work patterns, and performs in a timely, logical manner in accordance with rules, regulations and organizational policies.		
5. Impulse Control/Attention to Safety: Takes proper precautions and avoids impulsive or unnecessary risky behavior to ensure the safety of oneself and others.		
6. Integrity/Ethics: Maintains high standards of personal conduct, including honesty, impartiality, and trustworthiness, and abides by laws, regulations, and procedures.		
7. Emotional Regulation/Stress Tolerance: Able to maintain composure and stay in control, particularly during time-critical emergency events and other stressful situations.		
8. Decision-Making/Judgment: Has common sense, “street smarts,” and the ability to make sound decisions, demonstrated by the ability to size up situations quickly to determine and take the appropriate action.		
9. Assertiveness/Persuasiveness: Able to unhesitatingly take control of situations in a calm and appropriately assertive manner, even under dangerous or adverse conditions.		
10. Avoiding Substance Abuse and Other Risk-Taking Behavior: Avoids participation in behavior that is inappropriate, self-damaging, and can adversely impact organizational functioning.		

ANCHORS FOR EVALUATION RATINGS

Meets Standards: No significant concerns were identified in the applicant’s or employee’s test findings, interview results, or reported history. It is anticipated that any performance problems in this dimension could be resolved through training, experience and/or supervision.

Does NOT Meet Standards: Evidence from at least two sources of data, or compelling evidence from a single source, indicates it is more likely than not that the applicant does not meet the functional requirements of this dimension at this time.

Conclusion for suitable: Findings from this evaluation reveal no substantial evidence of behaviors or psychological traits expected to interfere with the applicant's ability to safely and effectively perform the functional requirements of the position of Police Officer with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Conclusion for unsuitable: Findings from this evaluation reveal evidence of behaviors or psychological traits expected to interfere with the applicant's ability to safely and effectively perform the functional requirements of the position of Police Officer with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Conclusion for indeterminate: Findings from this evaluation were inconclusive in determining whether the applicant would or would not be able to safely and effectively perform the functional requirements of the position of Police Officer with the Department of Veterans Affairs. In the absence of collateral information, a conclusion of suitable or unsuitable cannot be made. This conclusion may be reconsidered if necessary collateral information becomes available.

Evaluator signature: _____