1. Purpose

1.1 The IACP Police Psychological Services Section (PPSS) developed these guidelines for use by public safety agencies, agency executives, and psychologists as well as other professionals who are charged with the responsibility of conducting, overseeing, and managing defensible Preemployment Psychological Evaluation (PPE) programs.

2. Limitations

2.1 These guidelines reflect the consensus-based professional practices of PPSS members and the agencies they serve when conducting preemployment psychological evaluations. As such, these guidelines are intended to balance agency and societal needs with the legal rights of candidates and the applicable professional standards of the examiner. These guidelines are not intended to establish a rigid standard of practice for preemployment psychological evaluations.

2.2 The decision as to what is or is not done in a particular instance is ultimately the responsibility of each hiring agency and examiner, provided it conforms to all pertinent local, state, and federal statutes, regulations, and case law and is consistent with the ethical standards of the examiner’s profession.

2.3 These guidelines are written to apply to agencies within the jurisdiction of the United States and, as such, may require modification for use by agencies in other countries.

3. Definitions

3.1 For the purposes of these guidelines, a preemployment psychological evaluation is a specialized examination to determine whether a public safety applicant meets the minimum requirements for psychological suitability mandated by jurisdictional statutes and regulations, as well as any other criteria established by the hiring agency.

3.2 In most jurisdictions, the minimum requirements for psychological suitability are that the applicant be free from any emotional or mental condition that might adversely affect the performance of safety-based duties and responsibilities and be capable of withstanding the psychological demands inherent in the prospective position.
3.3 Under the terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), medical examinations—which include the assessment of mental or emotional impairment—must be deferred until after a conditional offer is extended (i.e., post-offer). Therefore, the preemployment psychological evaluation must be conducted post-offer.

3.4 In accordance with the ADA, non-medical information should be obtained and analyzed at the pre-offer stage whenever possible. However, because the assessment of normal-range personality traits, behaviors and characteristics (such as judgment, stress resilience, anger management, integrity, conscientiousness, teamwork, and social competence) is an integral part of the assessment, it may be included in the psychological examination conducted at the post-offer stage.

3.5 Normal-range personality traits, behaviors and characteristics may also be assessed at the pre-offer stage, provided the assessment is neither designed for, nor capable of, detecting or diagnosing disabilities, nor required to be administered by a health care professional.

4. Examiner Qualifications

4.1 Preemployment evaluations should be conducted only by a licensed, doctoral-level psychologist or other mental health professional where permitted by law.

4.2 Examiners provide assessment services only within the boundaries of their competence based on their education, training, supervised experience, consultation, study, and professional experience. In all cases, the examiner should have expertise in clinical assessment as well as in the assessment of normal personality characteristics, skills, and abilities relevant to personnel selection.

4.3 Agencies should utilize examiners who are trained and experienced specifically in the provision of preemployment psychological evaluations for public safety positions, and who participate in regular, ongoing continuing education and training that is specific to preemployment screening in addition to that of a more general police psychology nature.

4.4 Examiners should base their work on established scientific and professional knowledge of the discipline. Examiners should be familiar with the research literature available on psychological testing for public safety positions.

4.5 Examiners should be familiar with employment law impacting the conduct of preemployment psychological evaluations, including but not limited to the ADA, ADAAA, GINA, and other federal and state laws applicable to the practitioner’s jurisdiction. Examiners should consult with legal counsel when appropriate.

4.6 Examiners must adhere to ethical principles and standards for practice in their profession and jurisdiction.
4.7 Examiners should decline to accept a PPE referral when personal, professional, legal, financial, or other competing interests or relationships could reasonably be expected to: (a) impair their objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing their functions; or (b) expose the person or agency with whom the professional relationship exists to harm or exploitation (e.g., conducting a PPE on an applicant who had previously been in counseling or therapy with the examiner, evaluating an individual with whom there has been a business or significant social relationship).

5. Job Analysis

5.1 Information about the required duties, responsibilities, working conditions, and other psychologically relevant job characteristics should be obtained from the hiring authority prior to beginning the psychological evaluation. This information should be directed toward identifying skills, behaviors, attributes and other personal characteristics associated with effective and counterproductive job performance.

5.2 The examiner should be familiar with the overall hiring/selection process of the hiring agency, agency assessment standards, and procedures required by law.

5.3 The examiner should consult with the hiring authority regarding agency-specific risk management concerns, and seek clarification as to whether the evaluation should go beyond the identification of unsuitable candidates to include information about other specific selection criteria and/or specialized characteristics not covered in the job-analytic data referenced in 5.1.

6. Disclosure

6.1 Prior to the administration of any psychological instruments and interview, the examiner and/or hiring agency should disclose information to the applicant that includes: (a) the nature and objectives of the evaluation; (b) the intended recipients; (c) a statement that the hiring agency is the client; (d) the probable uses of the evaluation and the information obtained; and (e) the limits of confidentiality.

6.2 The disclosure should be documented in writing and signed by the applicant.

7. Testing

7.1 A written psychological test battery relevant to the purpose of the evaluation should be administered to the applicant. The test instruments should have documented reliability, validity, and other empirical evidence supporting their use in the preemployment evaluation of public safety applicants.
7.2 Psychological test materials should be administered in a manner consistent with publishers’ guidelines and professional standards.

7.3 Test scales, profiles, and reports used for selection purposes should be produced using current software or scoring keys licensed by the test publisher.

7.4 The results of the written test battery should be verified and reviewed by the examiner before the interview is conducted. Psychological test results should be interpreted in accordance with guidelines provided in their professional manuals and as warranted by the findings reported in peer-reviewed literature. Specific cut-off scores should be used only when there is adequate statistical evidence that such scores are predictive of personality, mental health concerns and/or behavior relevant to job performance.

7.5 Psychological assessment instruments not yet validated for use in evaluating public safety applicants may be utilized to develop the requisite norms and validation evidence, but should not be used for decision making during the data gathering process. This research should be carried out in accordance with relevant ethical standards, including safeguards to protect participant confidentiality.

7.6 The examiner is responsible for ensuring that the security and confidentiality of all testing materials (e.g., test booklets/items), psychological reports and raw data are maintained in a manner consistent with pertinent law and standards of professional conduct. The examiner should reach an agreement with the hiring agency regarding the custody of testing material and the distribution, sharing, protection and retention of test results.

8. Interview

8.1 Individual face-to-face interviews with applicants should be conducted before a final determination of the applicant’s psychological suitability is made. The purpose of the interview is to provide relevant interpersonal and mental status information about the candidate, and to confirm and/or clarify test scores, personal history, and related information collected during the psychological evaluation.

8.2 Interviews should be conducted in a consistent, comprehensive manner and focused exclusively on the collection of information relevant to the purpose of the evaluation (Guideline 3.1) and agency-specific selection criteria (Guidelines 5.1 and 5.2).
9. Technology Considerations

9.1 Examiners who make use of electronic technology take steps to ensure: (a) their competence with the technologies used; (b) that relevant authorizations and safeguards are in place; and (c) adherence to professional and industry standards.

10. Background Information

10.1 Information regarding the applicant’s relevant history (e.g., school, work, interpersonal, family, legal, financial, substance use, mental health) should be collected and integrated with psychological test and interview data in a standardized manner.

10.2 When available, relevant information from the background investigation and methods used for the detection of deception should be shared with the examiner. If background investigation findings are not provided to the examiner in advance of the evaluation, it is desirable for the examiner to communicate with designated hiring agency staff prior to making a final suitability determination in order to compare and reconcile information obtained from the applicant. In all cases, substantive discrepancies between information obtained in the psychological evaluation and other stages of the hiring process should be reviewed thoroughly with the hiring agency before a final hiring decision is made.

10.3 If relevant to psychological suitability, health records should be obtained from treating healthcare professionals and reviewed before a final determination is made of the applicant’s suitability. When such records are unavailable, consideration should be given to deferring the suitability determination until the health record can be reviewed or the basis for the concern is otherwise resolved.

11. Reports

11.1 The hiring agency administrators directly involved in making employment decisions should be provided with a written report of the examiner’s evaluation. The report should contain, at a minimum, a clear determination of the applicant’s psychological suitability for employment based upon an analysis of all psychological assessment materials, including background information, test data, and interview results. Any agency-specific restrictions or other requirements relevant to the format or content of the written psychological report should be communicated to the examiner in advance of the evaluation.

11.2 Ratings and/or recommendations for employment based upon the results of the evaluation should be expressly linked to the job-analytic information referenced in paragraph 5.1.
11.3 Clinical diagnoses or psychiatric labeling of applicants should be avoided unless relevant to the examiner’s conclusion, necessary for the hiring agency to make an employment decision, and/or required by law. In all cases, the report should be focused on the individual applicant’s ability to safely and effectively perform the essential functions of the position under consideration.

11.4 Conclusions concerning an applicant’s qualifications should be based generally on consistencies across data sources rather than a single source; examiners should justify exceptions to this guideline.

11.5 Recommendations regarding an applicant’s suitability for employment should be valid for no longer than one year from completion of the evaluation unless another time period is established by policy or regulation. The report should clearly state the period of time for which the evaluation is considered valid.

11.6 The written report provided to the agency should be securely maintained in accordance with federal, state, and professional requirements.

12. Use of the Evaluation

12.1 Efforts should be made to inform the hiring agency’s administrators about the strengths and limitations of preemployment psychological evaluations.

12.2 Preemployment psychological evaluations should be used as one component of the overall hiring process.

12.3 The use of preemployment test results for purposes other than making preemployment decisions should be justified by consideration of relevance, reliability, and informed consent. The hiring agency should not use the preemployment evaluation for promotional evaluations.

13. Follow-Up

13.1 Collaborative efforts by the hiring agency and examiner should be made to continually assess the accuracy of final suitability determinations. Follow-up data should be collected in accordance with strict confidentiality provisions protecting individual applicant identities and in accordance with ethical research guidelines and the law.

13.2 The examiner and the hiring agency should evaluate whether final suitability ratings have an adverse impact on protected classes of candidates.

13.3 Examiners should base their findings on established scientific and professional knowledge sufficient to substantiate their procedures, conclusions, and recommendations and should be prepared to defend such procedures, conclusions,
and recommendations if a decision based on psychological evaluation findings is challenged.

14. Appeals and Second Opinions

14.1 Hiring agencies that permit second-opinion evaluations as part of an appeal process should require that these psychological evaluations be based upon the same criteria used for the initial psychological evaluation.
ENDNOTES

1.1


Standard 32.2.8 Emotional Stability/Psychological Fitness Examination in CALEA Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies stipulates, “An emotional stability and psychological fitness examination of each candidate for a sworn position is conducted and assessed by a qualified professional prior to appointment to probationary status.” http://www.calea.org/content/standards-titles.

Bonsignore v. City of New York, 521 F. Supp. 394, aff’d 683 F.2d 635 (2nd Cir. 1982). (Failure to adopt meaningful psychological testing results in $300,000 compensatory and $125,000 in punitive damages. Off-duty officer wounded wife, then killed self; officers required to carry weapons while off duty.)

Hild v. Bruner, 496 F. Supp. 93 (D.N.J. 1980). (Civil rights action brought against a town for injuries suffered by the victim of an assault by the town’s police officers; Court held that jury could reasonably have inferred that the town’s failure to conduct some kind of psychological testing of its officers constituted gross negligence.)

Lewis v. Goodie, 798 F. Supp. 382 (W.D.La. 1992) (Individuals arrested and assaulted by two officers; police chief held personally liable for general and punitive damages; chief found to have failed in his duty to properly supervise and train officers, one aspect of this was the fact that he had not required the two officers to undergo psychological screening.)

Woods v. Town of Danville, WV, #2:09-cv-0036, 2010 U.S. Dist. Lexis 47666 (S.D.W.Va.). (In an unlawful detention lawsuit, “a reasonable jury could find that [the town] did not adequately investigate [the officer’s] military service, conduct a psychological [preemployment] evaluation, or adequately follow up on [his] references. Given the information about [his] propensity toward anger, his spotty employment history, and the facts surrounding his other-than-honorable discharge from the Navy, the plaintiffs have sufficiently alleged genuine issues of material fact on their claims of negligent hiring and retention.”)

Miller v. City of Springfield, 146 F.3d 612, 1998 U.S. App. Lexis 13385, 8 AD Cases (BNA) 321. (8th Cir.). (Federal appeals court found that a rejected applicant was not disabled, nor was she perceived as disabled, simply because she scored 66T on the Depression scale of the MMPI-2. The court concluded, “Miller is not disabled under the Act. She therefore cannot base a claim of discrimination on this regulation because she was not screened out on the basis of any disability. In any event, we easily conclude that appropriate psychological screening is job-related and consistent with business necessity where the selection of individuals to train for the position of police officer is concerned.”)
Nilsson v. City of Mesa, #05-15627, 503 F.3d 947, 2007 U.S. App. Lexis 21912, 101 FEP Cases (BNA) 901, 19 AD Cases 1418 (9th Cir., 2007). (Ninth Circuit affirmed dismissal of a suit filed by a rejected police applicant that failed a psychological evaluation that cited her stubborn nature and impulsivity. The appellate panel enforced a preemployment waiver of legal rights “for any acts, or omissions in the course of the investigation into background, employment history, health, family, personal habits and suitability for employment ....”)

Matter of Murray v. Co. of Nassau Civ. Serv. Cmsn., #000132/07, 2007 N.Y. Misc. Lexis 2579 (Nassau Co. Sup.). (New York court rejected a judicial challenge brought by a police applicant. Although his personal doctor found no disabling conditions, two psychologists and a psychiatrist found that he lacked the skills necessary to carry out the functions of a police officer. The opinion of the applicant’s privately retained expert was not controlling.)

2.1


3.2

For example, see California Govt. Code 1031(f) and POST Commission Regulation 1955(a); Alaska Police Standards Counsel: 13 Alaska Administrative Code 85.010. Basic Standards for Police Officers; Kansas Law Enforcement Training Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training: Law Enforcement Training Act 74-5605-Qualifications of Applicant for Training Course, Requirements; Wisconsin Law Enforcement Standards Board: Administrative Code and Register – LES 2.01 Recruitment qualifications; New Hampshire Police Standards and Training Council: Revised Statutes 188-F:27: Education and Training Required; and Minnesota Rules, Chapter 6700.0700, Subpart 1.

3.3


Leonel v. American Airlines, Inc., 400 F.3d 702 (9th Cir. 2005).
http://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=12385648287772142702&hl=en&as_sdt=6&as_vis=1&oi=scholarr

“An employer need not limit the number of conditional offers to the number of vacant positions, but may take into account reasonably anticipated vacancies. Additionally, if an employer can demonstrate that a number of individuals will be disqualified based on information obtained post-offer, it may extend more offers than spaces available or anticipated vacancies. Accordingly, a police or fire department may extend more conditional offers of employment than spots vacant if it can demonstrate that it needs to give more offers to actually fill vacancies or reasonably anticipated openings (e.g., if it could be demonstrated that a certain number of offerees will be disqualified based on information learned post-offer or will voluntarily withdraw
from consideration).” *Disability-Related Inquiries and Medical Examinations*, EEOC Letter of February 14, 2002.  


### 3.4 and 3.5


### 4.1


### 4.2


### 4.3


### 4.4

EPPCC Standard 2.04.

SGFP Guideline 2.05.
4.5


4.6

EPPCC Introduction & Applicability.
4.7

EPPCC Standard 3.05.

SGFP Guidelines 1.03, 4.02.

5.1


California POST Psychological Screening Dimensions http://www.post.ca.gov/peace-officer-psychological-screening-dimensions.aspx The only terms used there are “attributes” and “behaviors.”

“Work Analysis” by Pearlman and Sanchez, in Handbook of Employee Selection, Farr, J.L. and Tippins, N.T., (eds.). 2010, Routledge, NYC.


5.3


6.1

EPPCC Standards 3.11, 9.03, 9.10.

SGFP Guidelines 6.01, 6.03.

6.2

EPPCC Standards 3.10, 9.03.

Schloendorff v. Society of New York Hospital, 211 N.Y. 125, 105 N.E. 92 (N.Y. 1914).
Various state laws and regulations mandate the use of written psychological tests in preemployment evaluations of peace officer applicants [cf. Iowa Law Enforcement Academy Council, Code 501-2, California POST Regulation 1955 (e)(2)]. The use of psychological testing as an adjunct to the clinical interview is also required by several state regulations [cf. New Hampshire Administrative Rules, Pol 301.07; California POST Regulation 1955 (e)(4)]. See California POST Regulation 1099 (e)(2); Delaware Administrative Code Section 1901; Kentucky Administrative Rules 503 KAR 1:140, Section 4.

See Oklahoma Statute, Title 70, Section 3311 et seq., Subsections E.1 and E.2.b; California POST Regulation 1955 (e)(2). See also EEOC ADA Enforcement Guidance: Preemployment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations (10/10/95).

8.2


9.1


EPPCC Standard 4.03.


10.1


11.1

EPPCC Standards 4.04, 8.06, 9.01, 9.02.

SGFP Guidelines 11.02, 11.04, 12.01, 12.02, 13.04.


11.02

EPPCC Standards 2.04, 9.01.


Principles for the Validation and the Use of Personnel Selection Procedures (SIOP, 2003).


California POST Standards.

11.3

EPPCC Standard 4.04.

SGFP Guidelines 10.01, 11.04.


EPPC Standards 9.01 and 9.02.


11.4


11.5

EPPCC Standard 6.02.

SGFP Guideline 10.02.


The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (P.L.104-191) Privacy Rule requires healthcare providers to “protect the privacy of personal health information (PHI) and sets limits and conditions on the uses and disclosures” of PHI.

12.1

EPPCC Standards 9.02, 9.10.

SGFP Guidelines 5.01, 6.01.
12.2

12.3
EPPCC Standard 9.02a.


13.1
EPPCC Standard 8.


13.2
Civil Rights Act 1964 (Title VII); 1978 Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (Section 1B, Section 4D).

13.3
EPPCC Standards 2.04, 9.01.
SGFP Guideline 2.05.