

Chapter 17

SELECTION

The standards in this chapter provide a framework for both the technical and philosophical details of an efficient, effective, and fair law enforcement selection function.

The selection process is generally acknowledged as a key activity in determining the operational effectiveness of a police department. Basic principles exist for the development of an efficient, effective, and fair selection process that results in the appointment of those individuals who best possess the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for an effective, respected police department.

The linked concepts of the validity (job relatedness), utility (usefulness), and minimum adverse impact (fairness) of the total selection process and its individual components not only are fundamental management principles of an effective and efficient personnel selection system but also have been incorporated into law through the courts and the regulatory process. The use of any selection procedure, test, or requirement is subject to statistical analysis and documentation and must satisfy professional and legal requirements for validity, utility, and minimum adverse impact.

17.1 Professional and Legal Requirements

17.1.1 A written directive vests the authority and responsibility for administering the department's role in the selection process in an identifiable position.

Comments: The position identified as the administrator of the selection process should have the authority to manage the operation.
(M M M)

17.1.2 The department describes all components of the selection process.

Comments: A comprehensive directive is essential for the proper administration, use, and defensibility of the selection process. The directive should describe the order of events in the selection process and should include, at the least, information about the purpose, development, validity, utility, fairness, adverse impact, administration, scoring, and interpretation of all elements used in the selection process. (M M M)

17.1.3 The selection process uses only those components that have been documented as having validity, utility and fairness.

Comments: The concept of validity requires proof that a given element of the selection process either will predict job performance or detect important aspects of candidates' work behaviour related

to the position for which they are applying. If a particular procedure, test, or requirement is not significantly related to an important part of the job, then it is not valid and cannot be used in the selection process. The primary question to be answered in validation is the degree to which the department makes appropriate assumptions about a candidate's job performance by using a particular procedure, test, or requirement in the selection process. (M M M)

17.1.4 A written directive requires that all elements of the selection process be administered, scored, evaluated, and interpreted in a uniform manner.

Comments: Operational elements of the selection process--time limits, oral instructions, practice problems, answer sheets, and scoring formulas--should be clearly set forth and carried out identically for all candidates. Failure to do so may prohibit validation of the process. (M M M)

17.2 Administrative Practices and Procedures

17.2.1 A written directive establishes selection criteria for positions where lateral entry is permitted.

Comments: Selection criteria for lateral entry should include both eligibility qualifications and formal procedures for carrying out the process. (M M M)

17.2.2 If the department allows reapplication, retesting, and reevaluation of candidates not appointed, a written directive specifies the conditions and procedures thereof.

Comments: A candidate who fails should not necessarily be excluded from further consideration since (1) no selection component is perfectly reliable; (2) the candidate may have acquired new knowledge, skills, and abilities; (3) adverse impact can be reduced through retesting; and (4) the threat of lawsuits or appeals can be minimized through retesting. (M M M)

17.2.3 At the time of their formal application, candidates are informed, in writing, of all elements of the selection process.

Comments: A listing of selection elements should include (but is not limited to) all written physical and psychological examinations, polygraph examinations, oral interviews, and background investigations. From the outset, candidates should be made aware that sensitive or confidential aspects of their personal life may be explored. (M M M)

17.2.4 Candidates not eligible for appointment are informed, in writing, within thirty calendar days of such a decision.

Comments: Prompt notification in writing is not only an essential element of an efficient administrative organization but also is fundamental to a fair and effective selection process. (M M M)

17.2.5 A written directive governs the disposition of the records of candidates not appointed.

Comments: It is necessary to maintain selection data to ensure continuing research, independent evaluation, and defense against law suits. (M M M)

Background Investigations

17.3.1 A background investigation of each candidate is conducted prior to appointment.

Comments: The background investigation, though costly and time consuming, is considered by many practitioners to be the most useful and relevant component of the selection process. (M M M)

17.3.2 A written directive requires that a background investigation include the verification of a candidate's qualifying credentials.

Comments: Qualifying credentials should include educational achievement, employment, age, residence, and citizenship. Personal references should include at least one employer (if the candidate has an employment history) and may include teachers, landlords, neighbours, friends, and co-workers. (M M M)

Polygraph Examinations and Other Instruments for the Detection of Deception

17.4.1 If polygraph examinations or other instruments for the detection of deception are used in the selection process, candidates are provided, at the time of their formal application, with a list of areas from which polygraph questions will be drawn.

Comments: For candidates to give their informed consent, it is reasonable for them to know the full nature and extent of the inquiry. Questions should be provided just prior to and at the location of the tests so that candidates can have sufficient time to review and understand what is going to be asked of them. (M M M)

- 17.4.2** If polygraph examinations or other instruments for the detection of deception are used in the selection process, the administration of examinations and the evaluation of results are conducted by personnel trained in these procedures.

Comments: The sensitive nature of these tests make it necessary to rely upon examiners who possess professional training and credentials in the use and interpretation of these investigative tools. (M M M)

Oral Interviews

- 17.5.1** An oral interview of each candidate is conducted, prior to appointment, using valid, useful, and nondiscriminatory procedures.

Comments: All elements of the oral interview process should be standardized in order to be effective and impartial. Rating scales or procedures should be standardized in order to permit valid and useful distinctions among candidates and their expected job performance. (M M M)

Occupational Qualifications

- 17.6.1** All physical and age qualifications for entry-level sworn positions meet the requirements of validity, utility, and fairness.

Comments: Physical qualifications include such things as height, weight, visual acuity, hearing, colour blindness, physical agility, and physical fitness. (M M M)

- 17.6.2** A medical examination of each candidate is conducted, prior to appointment by a licensed physician, using valid, useful, and nondiscriminatory procedures.

Comments: The department should check the health of candidates to identify any medical problems that might inhibit work performance, shorten a career, or contribute to work-related disabilities. (M M M)

- 17.6.3** A physical fitness examination of each candidate is conducted, prior to appointment, using valid, useful, and nondiscriminatory procedures.

Comments: Such an examination may help identify qualified candidates and reduce the probability of work-related disabilities. The use of valid, useful, and nondiscriminatory procedures helps ensure accuracy and legal defensibility. (M M M)

17.7 Probationary Periods

17.7.1 At least a six-month probationary period and completion of entry-level training are required before candidates are granted permanent status.

Comments: The department should include a probationary period among the final steps in the selection process. (M M M)

17.7.2 A written directive governs exceptions to the probationary period.

Comments: A department may use candidates eligible for probationary appointment in a variety of special assignments (e.g., undercover) before their entry-level training has been completed. (M M M)