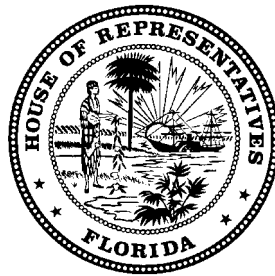


# **CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRAINING CENTERS 1999 INTERIM PROJECT REPORT**



**by:**

**Staff of the Law Enforcement and Crime Prevention Committee**

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## 1999 Interim Project

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement has been examining several issues pertaining to the basic recruit training for law enforcement and corrections officers. One area of interest has been the standards for entrance into the basic recruit training class. It has been suggested that the system for entrance may need to be revisited. As its interim project, the staff of the Law Enforcement and Crime Prevention Committee took a closer look at the way the system is set up presently and what changes might be made to improve the system.

### **Problems With The System:**

Under the current system, there are no statutory requirements for entrance into a law enforcement or corrections academy in the State of Florida. Each academy sets its own entrance standards. However, the statutes do set forth minimum standards for *employment* in law enforcement and corrections. Moreover, the employing agency may have additional requirements above and beyond these minimum standards. Thus, it is possible that a recruit could proceed through the entire training regimen, pass all of the tests given by the academy, sit for the statewide examination board given by FDLE, and still not qualify to hold a position as a law enforcement or correctional officer in Florida.

Section 943.13, Florida Statutes, sets forth Officers' minimum qualifications for employment or appointment. In order to qualify for employment as a law enforcement officer, a person must:

- Be at least 19 years of age
- Be a citizen of the United States
- Be a high school graduate or equivalent
- Not have been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor of domestic violence or involving perjury or false statement
- Have documentation of his or her fingerprints on file with the employing agency
- Have passed a physical examination by a licensed physician
- Have good moral character as determined by a background investigation
- Affidavit attesting to compliance in section 1-7 (above)
- Complete a basic recruit training program
- Achieve an acceptable score on the officer certification examination
- Comply with continuing training or education requirement of s. 943.135

Training academies are not statutorily required to conduct a background investigation on applicant candidates. Statewide, there are thirty nine training centers that offer a basic recruit training program for law enforcement and corrections. Many of these community colleges and vocational schools voluntarily conduct background checks on applicants. However, there are several training facilities that do not require any background investigation. Without a background investigation prior to the applicant entering the academy, there is no way to ensure that a person is going to be statutorily eligible, pursuant to Florida Statutes, to hold a position as a law enforcement or correctional officer after they graduate.

Law enforcement agencies and corrections facilities are concerned about this issue due to the number of applications received from graduates who are not qualified to be law enforcement or correctional officers. Recruits may be disqualified because of the statutory minimums for employment or as a result of agency standards for moral character. The issue of graduates not qualifying under statutory minimums is also important because the fees for students who attend the basic recruit training course are subsidized by the State of Florida. An average of 7,941 students per year attend basic law enforcement, corrections and correctional probation officer training. The state pays on average of \$3,100.52 for each student enrolled. Accordingly, the state expends approximately \$24,621,229 per year on basic recruit trainees.

It is important that state resources be devoted to those individuals who will actually qualify for employment in law enforcement or corrections. For example, if just 5% of the 7,941 recruits who attend the academy are statutorily ineligible to be law enforcement officers, that State of Florida has expended \$1,230,700 without gaining a single qualified officer. In addition, unqualified candidates might take up the already limited number of spaces for basic recruit trainees, which could be filled by candidates who would ultimately qualify for employment.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement has advised the committee that excluding a prospective recruit based on moral character is not an option. This is due to agencies having differing moral character requirements. An academy can only disqualify an applicant for statutory reasons. The determination of whether an applicant candidate has the moral character to be an officer should be the decision of the hiring agency, and the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission.

## **The Research:**

### **A. Florida Statutes**

Section 943.13, Florida Statutes, provides the requirements for a prospective employee in law enforcement or corrections. However, Florida Statutes do not provide minimum qualification for entrance into the law enforcement or corrections basic recruit training programs. Section 943.14, F.S., entitled “Criminal Justice Training Schools”; and s. 943.17, F.S., involving “Basic Recruit, Advanced, and Career Development Training Programs,” both deal with the basic recruit training program but neither provide any kind of a screening process for prospective recruits.

## B. Law Enforcement Agency Requirements for Employment

The chart below is based on the 1998 Criminal Justice Agency Profile from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. It shows some of the devices used by law enforcement agencies for pre-employment screening, and, how the use of these screening devices varies according to population. Generally, the larger the population of the service area, the greater the number of pre-employment requirements for employment as an officer.

Pre Employment Req.	Pop. 4,999 or less	25,000-99,999	250,000-499,999	500,000 +
Psychological Exam	47%	87%	100%	100%
Polygraph Exam	40%	67%	88%	75%
Voice Stress Analysis	4%	26%	13%	25%
Selection Exam	29%	69%	88%	100%
Physical Fitness Exam	21%	67%	88%	75%

## C. The Survey

A survey was developed to try to ascertain the entry requirements of the thirty nine various training facilities throughout the state. Currently, the schools are free to set any requirements for entry into their academy. The questions on the survey were as follows:

- Name of school
- Does your academy require a prospective recruit to take a standardized test such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)?
- Do you require a criminal background check on prospective recruits?
- What kinds of crimes would prohibit a recruit from entering your academy?
- On average, what percentage of your recruits have already been hired by an agency?
- Do you require that recruits must be at least 19 years of age at graduation?
- How many student were there in your academy's last graduating class?
- Does your academy offer any programs to help place graduates in a job after graduation?
- Does your academy allow recruits to enter the academy who would not qualify under Florida Statutes to hold a position as a law enforcement / correctional officer?
- Please provide any suggestions that you may have about what should be included in a statewide, standardized guideline for entry into the basic recruit training program?

The survey was sent out to all the thirty-nine training academies. Of the thirty-nine (39) that were sent out, twenty-seven (27) were returned. Most of the screening that facilities use for admission reflect the policies that the agencies use in their geographical area. Generally, as the population of an area increases, the requirements for pre-employment increases. In our research, we found that this, in turn, effects the way training facilities screen their recruits.

### D. Survey Results (population based)

ID #	SCHOOL NAME	BACKGROUND CHECK	AGENCY	POPULATION*
1	<u>Lake City CC</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>Lake City PD</u>	<u>10,304</u>
2	<u>SW Fl. Academy</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>Fort Myers PD</u>	<u>46,506</u>
3	Daytona Beach CC	YES	Daytona Beach PD	65,016
4	Santa Fe CC	YES	Gainesville PD	100,315
5	<u>Walton CC</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>Niceville PD</u>	<u>11,942</u>
6	<u>Washington Tech.</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>Chipley PD</u>	<u>4,096</u>
7	Miami-Dade CC	YES	Miami PD	364,765
8	City of Miami	YES	Miami PD	364,765
9	Withlacoochee Tech	YES	Inverness PD	6,925
10	Indian River CC	YES	Fort Pierce PD	38,071
11	Seminole CC	YES	Sanford PD	36,274
12	Gulf Coast CC	YES	Panama City PD	37,869
13	St. Pete JC	YES	St. Petersburg PD	241,625
14	Sarasota Tech	YES	Sarasota PD	51,650
15	Tallahassee CC	YES	Tallahassee PD	143,237
16	Valencia CC	YES	Orlando PD	180,462
17	Palm Beach CC	YES	West Palm Beach PD	80,901
18	Pasco CC	YES	New Port Richey PD	14,693
19	George Stone Acad.	YES	Pensacola PD	61,113
20	Highway Patrol	YES	Statewide Jurisdiction	N/A
21	Game & Fish	YES	Statewide Jurisdiction	N/A
22	St. Johns River CC	YES	Palatka PD	10,734
23	<u>Florida Keys CC</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>Key West PD</u>	<u>27,522</u>
24	Broward CC	YES	Fort Lauderdale PD	149,798
25	North Fl. CC	YES	Madison PD	3,436
26	Central Fl. CC	YES	Ocala PD	44,718
27	Dept. of Corrections	YES	Statewide Jurisdiction	N/A
N/A	Hillsborough CC**	YES	Tampa PD	293,390

\* Population= people that reside inside the jurisdiction of an agency

\*\* Hillsborough CC not included because of late entry

CC= Community College

Complete table of survey questions and answers available in the index

The survey revealed that training facilities in the metropolitan areas of Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando, and Miami, use regional selection centers to screen prospective recruits. This is a selection system where one center does all the testing / screening for the participating training facilities in the area. Regional selection centers are well suited to do this screening for the academies and tend to do a thorough job of finding the best candidates for recruit training. One problem, though, with the regional selection center model is that academies are not required to make use of these centers. Training academies can still choose to do their own selection of recruits. Candidates that do not go through a selection center are generally not screened as thoroughly, and training schools run the risk of graduating recruits that will not be qualified to hold a position as a law enforcement officer. A second problem with the regional selection centers is that while there are a number of the centers in south and central Florida, there are none in northern Florida. This puts the training academies in north Florida at

a distinct disadvantage to those in other areas of the state. Third, and most importantly, regional selection centers as well as individual training academies are not considered law enforcement agencies. They do not have direct access to criminal history records themselves. Therefore, those centers and agencies that do criminal background checks are only able to do so on a statewide basis utilizing the Florida Crime Information Computer or FCIC. The FBI will not allow them to run nationwide background checks using the National Crime Information Computer or NCIC system. This obviously leaves a gap for applicants that have lived out of the State of Florida or who may have committed a crime outside the State of Florida.

## **E. Training School Directors Concerns**

### **1. Physical Fitness**

An area of concern that was very prevalent in our survey was in response to a section on suggestions for a statewide standardized guideline for entry in the basic recruit training program. Many of the directors felt as though there should be a number of changes made to make the basic training program more successful. One of the most frequent suggestions was to implement a physical fitness test prior to entry into the basic recruit training program. Of the twenty seven (27) academies that responded, ten (10) academies stated that a physical fitness test needed to be implemented. The ten (10) academies that indicated a need for a physical fitness test were from differing areas throughout the state, with differing population demographics. These types of pre academy tests are being performed by some law enforcement academies. Many of the state agencies such as the Florida Highway Patrol, Florida Marine Patrol, and Capitol Police use a pre-academy physical abilities test for prospective recruits. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement has compiled a physical abilities test based upon a job task analysis of an entry level law enforcement officer. This test is available now through FDLE, but staff members of the Standards and Training Division at FDLE have indicated that the test is not being utilized by the training academies. The FDLE physical abilities test is comprised of eight (8) tasks, as follows:

Task 1: Exit Vehicle / Enter Trunk

Task 2: 220 Yard Run

Task 3: Obstacle Course

Task 4: Dummy Drag

Task 5: Obstacle Course

Task 6: 220 Yard Run

Task 7: Dry Fire Weapon

Task 8: Enter Trunk / Enter Vehicle

The test is very basic, and would probably eliminate very few prospective recruits based upon estimates given by the division standards and training at FDLE. Recruits are given six minutes and four seconds to complete the eight tasks. FDLE staff has determined that this is the most that can be legally required of a prospective recruit based upon the job they are applying for as a law enforcement or corrections officer. The current physical abilities test that FDLE uses is being re-evaluated and may change, although not significantly. Directors at the various training schools have said that the test is not challenging enough and that is the reason that it is not be utilized more.

## 2. Psychological / Polygraph Testing

Another area of concern noted from the training school directors on the survey was the need for a pre academy psychological and / or polygraph test for prospective recruits in law enforcement. Support among the training school directors for psychological and polygraph testing was highest in the more heavily populated areas of the state. Of the twenty seven (27) respondents to the survey, six (6) school directors indicated that they would like to see polygraph and or psychological testing in the recruit screening process. We attribute this to the hiring practices of the agencies in the high population areas. The schools that wanted to see polygraph testing mandated were:

School	Agency	Population
St. Pete Junior College	St. Petersburg PD	241,625
Sarasota Tech	Sarasota PD	51,650
Pasco CC	New Port Richey	14,693
George Stone Academy	Pensacola PD	61,113
Hillsborough CC	Tampa PD	293,390

In areas of the state where law enforcement agencies service less than 25,000 people, only 45% of agencies use polygraph testing. 88% of agencies that service 250,000 and up use the polygraph for pre-employment. The statistics are similar in the use of the psychological evaluation for pre-employment. Only 47% of agencies that service fewer than 4,999 utilize a psychological evaluation, whereas 100% of agencies servicing 250,000 people and up use the test. There was little or no concern from training school directors about the need for a polygraph test in the more rural areas of the state. The majority of directors that were interested in the polygraph and psychological test were servicing agencies in major metropolitan areas of the state.

## 3. Pre-recruit Drug Testing

Drug testing for applicants to the basic recruit training academies has been brought to the attention of the committee during our research. Again, the issue of drug testing appears to be more important to the academy directors in the more populated areas of the state. Six (6) academy directors indicated that they wanted to see drug testing become a mandatory portion of the admissions program statewide. The following schools expressed a desire for mandatory drug screening:



School	Agency	Population
Sante Fe CC	Gainesville PD	100,315
City of Miami Academy	Miami PD	364,765
Withlacoochee Tech.	Inverness PD	6,925
Valencia CC	Orlando PD	180,462
Highway Patrol	Highway Patrol	N/A
Hillsborough CC	Tampa PD	293,390

With the exception of Withlacoochee Technical Institute, all the above training schools service a department with over 100,000 people in the jurisdiction. All these agencies also require a drug test for pre-employment screening. Because the agencies in dense population areas require drug testing for pre-employment, the training centers also tend to require drug testing. Agencies in less populated areas do not require drug screening, therefore there is little or no interest in drug screening by the smaller training schools.

#### **F. Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Florida Statutes**

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement Standards and Training Division is responsible for issues dealing with both training and selection centers in the State of Florida. In discussing the data related to the survey at the standards and training quarterly meeting, some concerns were expressed pertaining to the LECP survey. While FDLE supports background checks for potential recruits in the basic law enforcement and corrections academies, there could be potential problems in other areas of the survey. Training school directors suggested areas such as testing for drug use, psychological testing and polygraph testing as possible additions to a statewide pre-recruit training program. FDLE has indicated that it would be problematic to require prospective candidates to meet standards for entry into the basic recruit training program, that they would not have to meet to become law enforcement officers pursuant to the Florida Statutes. However, many agencies have more rigorous standards than the Florida Statutes require. If a potential recruit meets all the requirement of Florida Statutes to be a law enforcement officer, then that person should be able to take the class regardless of the standards of the hiring agency.

#### **Possible Solutions:**

The following is proposed legislation recommended by the Standards and Training Commission, which could eliminate some of the problems related to training school recruits:

Section 943.17 F.S. Basic recruit, and career development training programs; participation; cost; evaluation.

(g)Assure that entrance into the basic recruit training program for law enforcement, correctional and correctional probation officers be limited to those who have passed a basic skills instrument, adopted by the Commission, and have passed a physical examination by a licensed physician, based on the specifications established by the Commission.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is currently working on a basic skills testing instrument that is based on the job task analysis of a law enforcement, corrections, or correctional probation officer. This test is being designed around the duties that are performed in the daily activities of each profession. The test would take the place of the Test of Adult Basic Education or (TABE) which only measures and applicants reading or arithmetic skills. The TABE does not measure ones ability to complete the duties of a law enforcement officer. Unlike the TABE test, which is used by most basic recruit academies, the basic skills instrument would be a mandatory test, required for entry into any training academy in the State of Florida. Academies are currently not required to administer any form of pre-academy test to prospective recruits.

The Standards and Training Commission has also suggested that the following proposed legislation would address the problems related to background checks of prospect recruits:

Section 943.256 Criminal justice selection centers; creation

(4) Each center that conducts background investigations on criminal justice applicants shall file a complete set of fingerprints taken by an authorized criminal justice agency or employee of the center who is trained to take fingerprints. The fingerprints shall be submitted to the department for state processing and to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for federal processing. Applicants found through the fingerprint processing to have pled to, or been convicted of a crime which would render the applicant unable to meet the minimum qualifications for employment as an officer specified at s. 943.13(4) F.S. shall be removed from the pool of qualified candidates by the center.

The proposed language pertaining to background checks does not, however, include training schools that do not use selection centers. This may need to be modified to include all training schools throughout the state that do not use selection centers. The goal is to have a uniform standard for all recruits that enter the academies, not just the ones that use the selection centers.

## **Conclusions:**

Many important issues were brought the attention of the committee. However, the scope of our interim project was limited. The most pressing need for training academies is the pre-academy background checks, and the implementation of the basic skills assessment test. The proper use of these two concepts will greatly reduce the number of prospective recruits who can not fulfill the statutory requirements for employment as a law enforcement officer.

Criminal background checks have been found to be the single best indicator of whether or not a potential recruit will be able to meet the statutory requirements for the position of law enforcement or correctional officer. Both the state and federal level background checks are essential in this respect. It is impossible to determine whether students are statutorily eligible to be hired unless background checks are preformed at both levels.

Basic entry level testing is also important because it gives the academy a way to compare potential recruits based upon tasks performed by a law enforcement officer, and properly judge the abilities of a potential recruit. This basic test would measure a persons cognitive abilities in relationship to law enforcement, and the duties that a law enforcement officer performs. The test would take the place of the Test of Adult Basic Education, (TABE) which only measures a persons ability to read, write and do arithmetic, not a persons ability to reason in a law enforcement setting.

Other issues that have come to light as a result of this project, such as polygraph testing, psychological exams, and physical agility test are all possibilities for future consideration of this committee. These subjects would need more in depth research and could require major statutory modification in order to make them viable.

SURVEY ON BASIC RECRUIT TRAINING SCHOOLS

<b>ID</b>	<b>Require Standardized Test</b>	<b>Which One?</b>	<b>What Grade Level Required?</b>	<b>What Score Required</b>	<b>Require Crim Background Check?</b>	<b>Population</b>
Lake City CC	YES	TABE	10	--	NO	10,304
SW FL. Academy	YES	TABE	12	--	NO	46,506
Daytona Beach CC	YES	7-8	10	--	YES, ALL	65,016
Santa Fe CC	YES	CPT		46M 74L/67R	YES, ALL	100,315
Walton CC	YES	TABE	10	--	NO**	11,942
Washington Tech.	YES	7A	12	12	NO	4,096
Miami-Dade CC	YES	TABE	10	--	YES, ALL	364,765
City of Miami	YES	TABE	-	--	YES, ALL	364,765
Withlacoochee Tech	YES	7A	10	--	YES, ALL	6,925
Indian River CC	YES	TABE	--	12-9	YES, ALL	38,071
Seminole CC	YES	TABE	11 BLE 10 Corr	11 BLE 10 Corr	YES, ALL	36,274
Gulf Coast CC	YES	TABE/CPT	9	83	YES, ALL	37,869
St. Pete JC	YES	Multi-juris. police exam	--	75%	YES, ALL	241,625
Sarasota Tech	YES	TABE	12.9	--	YES, ALL	51,650
Tallahassee CC	YES	TABE	10	--	YES, ALL	143,237
Valencia CC	YES	CPT	10	74E/67R/49A	YES, ALL	180,462
Palm Beach CC	YES	TABE	12.9	--	YES, ALL	80,901
Pasco CC	YES	TABE	8A	12.9	YES, ALL	14,693
George Stone Academy	YES	TABE	12	--	YES, ALL	61,113
Highway Patrol	YES	Agency spec.	--	76	YES, ALL	N/A
Game & Fish	YES	TABE	--	12	YES, ALL	N/A
St. Johns River CC	YES	TABE	10	--	YES, ALL	10,734
Florida Keys CC	YES	TABE	10	--	NO	27,522
Broward CC	YES	TABE	10	--	YES, ALL	149,798
North FL. CC	YES	TABE	11	--	YES, ALL	3,436
Central FL. CC	YES	TABE	10	--	YES, ALL	44,718
Dept. of Corrections	YES	TABE	--	--	YES, ALL	N/A
Hillsborough CC	YES	TABE/CPT	10	--	YES, ALL	293,390

SURVEY ON BASIC RECRUIT TRAINING SCHOOLS

<b>ID</b>	<b>What % are agency sponsored?</b>	<b>Do recruits have to be 19 at grad?</b>	<b>No. of students in last grad. Class</b>	<b>How many got jobs in law enf. Or corrections?</b>	<b>How many got jobs in another field?</b>	<b>Allow recruits who don't meet stat. req?</b>
Lake City CC	90%	YES	36	33	--	NO
SW FL. Academy	50% LE/99% Corr	YES	47	45	--	NO
Dayton Beach CC	0%	YES	24	--	--	NO
Santa Fe CC	20%	YES	38	30	--	NO
Walton CC	1%	YES	63	21	--	NO
Washington Tech.	1%	YES	23	--	--	NO
Miami-Dade CC	90%***	YES	26	26	0	NO
City of Miami	N/A	YES	24	--	--	NO
Withlacochee Tech	N/A	YES	54	43	--	NO
Indian River CC	10% LE/ 100%	YES	25	25	--	NO
Seminole CC	10-15% BLE 85-	YES	41	34	--	NO
Gulf Coast CC	10%	YES	58	45	--	NO
St. Pete JC	20%	YES	25	15	--	NO
Sarasota Tech	33%	YES	22	22	0	NO
Tallahassee CC	50%	YES	38	37	0	NO
Valencia CC	75%	YES	46	32	--	NO
Palm Beach CC	20-50%	YES	26	26	0	NO
Pasco CC	0%	YES	12	--	--	NO
George Stone Acad.	10%	NO	20	20	0	NO
Highway Patrol	100%	YES	78	78	0	NO
Game & Fish	100%	YES	24	24	0	NO
St. Johns River CC	New School	YES	New School	New School	New School	NO
Florida Keys CC	25%	YES	20	19	--	NO
Broward CC	90+%	YES	34	34	0	NO
North FL. CC	90%	NO	45	42	3	NO
Central FL. CC	1%	YES	9	6	--	NO
Dept. of Corrections	98%	YES	80	78	2	NO
Hillsborough CC	10% LE 95Corr	YES	23	N/A	N/A	NO