

# GENERAL ORDERS | SOUTH MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT



<b>G.O. Number:</b> 14.2	<b>Subject:</b> Administrative Practices and Procedures
<b>Chapter:</b> Selection	<b>Number of Pages:</b> 6
<b>CFA Standard(s):</b> 9.01, 9.02, 9.03, 9.04, 9.05M, 9.06,	<b>Effective:</b> 12-19-2024
<b>By Order of Chief of Police:</b> Reo B. Hatfield III 	<b>Revised:</b> 10-28-2024 <b>Status:</b> Amended

## SECTIONS:

- 14.2.1 Background Investigations
- 14.2.2 Investigator Training
- 14.2.3 Background Records Retention
- 14.2.4 Polygraph Examinations
- 14.2.5 Polygraph Operator Credentials
- 14.2.6 Use of Results
- 14.2.7 Medical Examinations
- 14.2.8 Emotional Stability/Psychological Fitness Examinations
- 14.2.9 Records Retention for Medical and Psychological Examination
- 14.2.10 Entry Level Evaluation Period

**RESCINDS:** All existing orders in conflict.

**PURPOSE:** To establish departmental policy and provide guidelines for the administration of background investigations in conjunction with the personnel selection process.

**SCOPE:** All departmental personnel.

**POLICY:** It is the policy of the South Miami Police Department to hire only the most qualified applicants who meet the department's standards. This applies to all departmental positions (at-will executive-level positions may be exempted from portions of this process at the discretion of the Chief of Police.) The department requires that all elements of the selection process be administered, scored, evaluated, and interpreted in a uniform manner.

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **14.2.1 Background Investigations**

Background investigations are performed primarily to ensure compliance with Florida State Statutes require that all applicants for certified law officer positions possess good moral character. Additionally, although not required by Florida State Statute, this department requires that all professional staff applicants be of good moral character. Therefore, the following steps will be taken.

- A. The South Miami Police Department will conduct a background investigation of each eligible applicant, professional staff, and sworn, to verify qualification credentials. While a background investigation may be costly and time-consuming, it is the most useful and relevant component of the selection process. A thorough background investigation yields relevant information concerning an individual's past behavior, experience, education, performance, and other critical factors important to the overall selection process.
- B. A review of any possible criminal record will be conducted to determine whether the applicant is suitable for consideration for employment in the law enforcement field. This applies to both professional staff and sworn personnel.
- C. A background investigation consists of information gathering and processing steps designed to provide the department with all relevant information concerning an applicant's fitness for the job. At least three (3) personal references and at a minimum one (1) professional reference will be verified. This applies to both professional staff and sworn.
- D. In addition, some minimum qualifications are mandated by Florida law for certified law enforcement applicants, and all components listed below apply to professional staff as well. Certain relevant facts must be checked in the background investigation. For the purpose of this directive, some of the components of the background investigation are, but not limited to, the following.
  - 1. Minimum compliance verification
  - 2. Social media checks
  - 3. Neighborhood checks
  - 4. Military service checks
  - 5. Employment history
  - 6. Criminal history, warrants, and National Decertification Index checks
  - 7. Fingerprints check
  - 8. Local records check
  - 9. Driving history
  - 10. A minimum of three (3) personal reference checks
  - 11. Credit history check

12. Polygraph and psychological examinations

13. Medical Exam (drug and alcohol screen)

#### **14.2.2 Investigator Training**

The background investigator selected by the Chief will be a person with specialized training to ensure proper collection of the requested information. This training will be assigned under the Chief's or their designee's direction.

#### **14.2.3 Background Records Retention (Sworn and Professional Staff)**

A. Background files of candidates who are hired and successfully complete their training period will be digitally stored in the Office of the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police, along with employee's personnel file. These background files will be stored on a permanent basis digitally. The non-public information, such as psychological results, medical history, and polygraph examination results will be secured digitally separate of employee personnel files within the police department within the Office of the Executive Assistant.

B. Background files of candidates who are not hired will be stored digitally in the Office of the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police. for at least four (4) years under Florida law.

#### **14.2.4 Polygraph Examinations/Truth Verification**

Polygraph examinations will be performed on both sworn and professional staff candidates, only after the candidate(s) passes the oral board and/or executive interviews.

#### **14.2.5 Polygraph Operator Credentials**

The polygraph operator contracted by the department to administer and evaluate a polygraph examination of a candidate will be a graduate of an accredited polygraph school.

#### **14.2.6 Use of Results**

Polygraph examinations are an investigative tool. Neither acceptance nor rejection of a candidate is based on these tests alone. However, oral admissions by the candidate during the pretest, test, or posttest interviews may be determined by the Chief to be sufficient justification for additional investigation or suspending further processing. This applies to both sworn and professional staff candidates. A more specific polygraph will be administered if the first polygraph is failed (and there are no other disqualifiers); if a candidate fails both, the candidate may be disqualified.

#### **14.2.7 Medical Examinations**

A medical examination will be conducted after the issuance offer of employment but prior to the completion of the selection process. The examination will use valid, useful and nondiscriminatory procedures to certify the general health of each candidate. The purpose of the examination is to reveal any medical problems that may affect work performance or contribute to work-related disabilities. This applies to both sworn and professional staff candidates.

- A. Only licensed physicians will be used to certify the general health of candidates.
- B. The comprehensive medical examination given to candidates recommended for hiring will include a statement from the physician(s) interpreting the results.
  - 1. For sworn candidates, a full medical exam, including a high-stress physical evaluation, will be conducted.
  - 2. For professional staff, the standard physical examination will be conducted.

#### **14.2.8 Emotional Stability/Psychological Fitness Examinations**

Psychological evaluations are needed to identify candidates who may not be able to carry out the sworn law enforcement officer responsibilities or endure the stress of the working conditions. The evaluations are conducted prior to appointment to a training facility and/or prior to the completion of the selection process. The evaluations are conducted and assessed by a qualified psychologist, using appropriate testing and interviewing procedures. The evaluation is directed toward determining the candidate's suitability for employment.

Each candidate for a law enforcement officer position and communications officer position will undergo an examination to assess their emotional stability and psychological fitness. A psychological examination will be conducted as part of the selection process for police officer, using valid, non-discriminatory procedures. The psychologist's final report will either recommend or not recommend the candidate. In some instances, it may be necessary for non-sworn applicant example being a dispatcher to undergo psychological evaluation. In such instances, the evaluation will be tailored to the specific position being sought by the qualified psychologist conducting the evaluation.

### **14.2.9 Records Retention for Medical and Psychological Examinations**

A record of the results of the medical examination is maintained on file in the Office of the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police if the candidate is hired. They are kept digitally, and access is restricted to persons legally entitled to review these records. The psychologist's recommendation will also be kept digitally secured with restricted access. These records will be kept permanently as long as the employee retains their position with the City. These digital files are not public record and therefore not shared with the employee's personnel file.

Upon separation from their employment with the City, these digital records will be kept for at least fifty (50) years and in accordance with guidelines set forth in applicable public records laws. This applies to both sworn and professional staff. If an applicant is not hired by the City, the applicable medical and /or psychological records will be kept in separate and secured digital files for at least four (4) years.

### **14.2.10 Entry Level Evaluation Period**

- A. All entry-level employees, both sworn and professional staff, will receive written performance evaluations conducted by their immediate supervisor at the end of their initial twelve (12) months of service. During this initial twelve (12) month evaluation period the employee will be evaluated based on their performance, attitude, and behavior on the job as accurately and as fairly as possible. This occurs after the employee begins the job assignment; the employee will receive a monthly evaluation, then after twelve months, an annual evaluation.
  
- B. Upon satisfactory completion of all pre-employment steps, noncertified candidates selected for entrance into the Police Academy are offered a position as a Police Cadet. Continued employment as a full-time, sworn position with the City is conditional on the employee's completion of the Police Academy training program and passing of the Florida Law Enforcement Certification Exam.
  
- C. All sworn employees hired as a police officer must complete the Police Department's Orientation and Field Training Program, which is fourteen (14) weeks. Exceptions to the length of the FTO period are rare, but in special situations, such as an on-duty injury, the Chief may approve an extension of the evaluation period. The orientation period will include:
  - 1. The City's role, purpose, goals, policies, and procedures (during orientation and field training) **(CFA 14.04 A)**
  
  - 2. Working conditions, rules, and regulations (Employee Policies and Procedures Manual) **(CFA 14.04 B)**

3. Rights and responsibilities of employees (during orientation and the field training period). **(CFA 1404 C)**

- D. All employees of the City and police department are hired for an indefinite period of time and the employment relationship may be terminated by either party at any time, within the constraints of the applicable collective bargaining agreement.
- E. Upon satisfactory completion of all pre-employment steps, noncertified candidates selected for entrance into the Police Academy are offered a position as a Police Cadet. Continued employment as a full-time, sworn police officer with the South Miami Police Department is conditional on the employee's completion of the Police Academy training program and passing of the Florida Law Enforcement Certification Exam.
- F. The probationary period for sworn officers is twelve (12) months; the probationary period for professional staff is twelve (12) months.