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Screening for Insider Threats in US Law Enforcement: A National Sample of Department Policies and Practices Self-Assessment Toolkit

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Self-Assessment Toolkit

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

For this project, we conducted multi-pronged formative research on insider threats in U.S. law enforcement. Our main objective was to better understand current policies and procedures to screen for and identify insider threats in the hiring process and among active officers.

TRANSPARENCY OF HIRING AND SELECTION CRITERIA ON WEBSITE

The purpose of this section is to review your agency's website and assess the information that is publicly posted there for potential applicants to gather information about the hiring and screening process.

Hiring information and eligibility requirements are categorized into six domains: background checks, mandatory requirements, disqualifying factors, assessments tests, character suitability tests, and hiring incentives.

To score your agency's website using this self-assessment toolkit:
- First, use this checklist and indicate whether each of the following items is publicly available on your agency's checklist.
- Second, sum the number of "yes" responses within each domain.
- Third, transfer the number of "yes" responses to the Overall Transparency and Rigor table.
- Finally, count the number of domains that have at least one "yes" in them. This number is your agency's *transparency and rigor* score.

Transparency and rigor scores range from 0 to 6. A higher score indicates that an agency's website provides more information about the hiring practices and selection criteria for potential candidates. Providing more information across domains on your agency's website can increase applicants from qualified candidates.

Additional detail on each domain and the items within them, including examples and national prevenance, can be found on the project's website here.

1. Background Investigation

Item	Yes	No
Criminal History		
Employment History		
Personal History Packet		
Drug Use		
Driving History		
Financial		
Military		
Release of Information		
Fingerprint		
Social Media		
Total Number of "Yes" Responses		

2. Mandatory Requirements

Item	Yes	No
Education		
Age Requirement		
Driver's License		
Citizen		
Physical fitness		
Health		
Experience		
Literacy		
Psychological fitness		
Total Number of "Yes" Responses		

3. Disqualifying Factors

Item	Yes	No
Criminal History		
Drug Use		
Tattoos/Piercings		
Physical and/or Mental Agility		
Falsified Information		
Total Number of "Yes" Responses		

4. Assessment Tests

Item	Yes	No
Police Officer Selection Test (POST) Exam		
Physical Exam		
Psychological Exam		
Drug Tests		
Medical Tests		
CPR Certification		
Total Number of "Yes" Responses		

5. Character Suitability Tests

Item	Yes	No
Polygraph		
Interview		
Behavioral Tests		
Total Number of "Yes" Responses		

6. Hiring Incentives

Item	Yes	No
Benefits		
Salary		
Bonus		
Total Number of "Yes" Responses		

Overall Transparency and Rigor Score

Domain	# of "Yes" Responses	Enter "1" if at least 1 "Yes"
Background Investigations		
Mandatory Requirements		
Disqualifying Factors		
Assessment Tests		
Character Suitability Tests		
Hiring Incentives		
Overall Transparency and Rigor Score		

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SCREENING FOR INSIDER THREATS DURING AND AFTER HIRING

Here we review various policies and practices to help identify potential insider threats both during the hiring and recruitment process and among active sworn personnel. You can compare your agency's policies and practices to those outlined below.

Recruitment and Hiring Processes

The purpose of this section is to review your agency's hiring and screening practices across various components of the recruitment process. This section is broken out into components of background investigations including prior employment experience, finances, criminal history, history of drug and substance use, weapons history, and history of involvement or association with and tattoos related to groups of concern.

Does your agency **require** each of the following as part of background investigations during the hiring process?

	Yes	No
A check of credit and debts		
Certify credentials such as past employment		
Verify record if coming from another agency		
Ask for prior performance evaluations		
Contact supervisors at previous agencies		
Check whether applicant has been decertified		
View public information on social media accounts		
Ask about prior military experience		
Undergo a polygraph examination		

The table below is broken out into different components of background investigations. Most agencies in the U.S. require these pieces of information from candidates. Under each component, items are arranged from most to least commonly deemed to be disqualifying. Confirm that your agency requires each of the following and indicate whether each is deemed to be disqualifying.

	Required to Report & Disqualifying	Required to Report, Not Disqualifying
Prior Law Enforcement Experience and Employment		
Dishonorable discharge from U.S. Armed Forces		
Disciplinary action taken due to sustained discrimination complaints		
Termination for cause from a previous employer		
Investigated for misconduct and unethical behavior		
Subject of investigation for discrimination complaint		
Security clearance revoked, suspended, or downgraded		

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	Required to Report & Disqualifying	Required to Report, Not Disqualifying
Denied a security clearance		
Received a written complaint		
Received an unsatisfactory performance review		
Incomes, Debts, and Expenses		
Spent money for illegal purposes		
Avoided paying a lawful debt or income tax		
Past due on child support payments		
Borrowed money to pay for a gambling debt		
Held excessive debt		
Past due on income or other tax payments		
Had wages garnished		
Filed for or declared bankruptcy		
Turned over to a collection agency		
History of Delinquent Behaviors and Criminal Acts		
Intentional falsification, deception, or omission of information during the application and background investigation process		
Hit or physically overpowered a spouse or romantic partner		
Detention, arrest, or conviction for any offense involving the illegal sale or manufacture of controlled substances		
Hit or physically overpowered another member of the household including parent, child, sibling, or roommate		
Detention, arrest, or conviction for a gross misdemeanor		
Suspension, revocation, or cancellation of a driver's license within 3 years of the date of application		
Ever had 2 or more suspensions, revocations, or cancellation of a driver's license		
History of Drug and Substance Use		
Sold, purchased, cultivated, manufactured, furnished, carried, or held an illegal substance for another person		
Used illegal drugs or drugs to which the user does not have a prescription		
Been charged with or convicted of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol		
Provided alcohol to another individual under the legal drinking age		
Has been treated for or self-identified as having a history of misuse of alcohol (e.g., alcoholism, substance use disorder – alcohol)		
Used marijuana (regardless of legal status in your state)		

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	Required to Report & Disqualifying	Required to Report, Not Disqualifying
History of Weapon Use		
Detention, arrest, or conviction for any offense involving the possession, use, or threatened use of a weapon		
Been refused a permit to carry a handgun		
Been involved in an anger-provoked physical fight, confrontation, or violent act		
Been involved in a road rage incident		
History of Involvement in or Association with Groups of Concern		
Group that advocates violence against individuals because of their gender, gender identity, sexual preference or disability		
Group that advocates violence against individuals because of their race, religion, ethnic origin or nationality		
Group that advocates for the overthrow of the State or the United States Government		
Group that advocates violence against individuals because of their political affiliation		
Criminal enterprise or street gang		
Tattoos Associated with Groups of Concern		
Group that advocates violence against individuals because of their race, religion, ethnic origin or nationality		
Group that advocates violence against individuals because of their gender, gender identity, sexual preference or disability		
Group that advocates violence against individuals because of their political affiliation		
Group that advocates for the overthrow of the State or the United States Government		
Criminal enterprise or street gang		

Protective Measures and Proactive Practices

The purpose of this section is to review the protective measures and proactive practices that your agency engages in to reduce the likelihood of insider threats. Below are some protective measures that agencies engage.

Does your agency do the following:	At Least Monthly
Implement strict practices for changing and reusing passwords for work emails & other accounts	

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Encourage users to report suspicious emails or phone calls to the information security team	
Monitor and control remote access, including mobile devices	
Conduct routine audits of car camera recordings, dashcam footage, or body camera footage	
Does your agency do the following:	**At Least Annually**
Check officers' public posts on their private social media accounts	
Conduct routine mental health and wellness checks	
Train supervisors to recognize and respond to employees' inappropriate or concerning behavior related to civilian interactions	
Train supervisors to recognize and respond to employees' inappropriate or concerning behavior related to driving behaviors	

It is important not only that agencies have clear, proactive policies to address potential issues that may arise but also that those policies are always followed. Below are some proactive policies that agencies have and should follow.

Does your agency:	Have a Policy	Always Follow Policy
A duty to intervene policy if an officer observes another officer using explicitly bigoted behavior (e.g., using derogatory language towards a protected class)		
A duty to report policy if an officer notices another officer violating policy (e.g., stopping someone because of a protected status)		
Available services that focus on stress management, officer mental health, behavioral health, and wellness		
A formal policy to assist members of the public in filing complaints against police officers		
A formal policy to assist employees in filing complaints against fellow police officers		
A formal department mission statement		
An early warning system or any other system that identifies officers that exhibit problematic behaviors		
Documented anti-discrimination regulations		
A social media policy that defines acceptable uses of personal social media and information that should not be discussed online		
A designated public relations officer or unit		

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	Have a Policy	Always Follow Policy
A community immersion (or community policing) program or unit		
A program to detect people who either join the department with the intent to do harm or are already a member of the department and decide to harm the department from the inside		
A comprehensive employee termination procedure		

Adherence to Policies for Sworn Personnel

The purpose of this section is to review adherence to policies for sworn personnel by asking whether your agency <u>always</u> enforces the following policies and procedures.

	Yes	No
Employees undergo thorough background investigation after hiring		
Employees are encouraged to report suspicious behavior to appropriate personnel for further investigation		
Suspicious or problematic behavior is investigated and documented		
Policies and procedures are enforced consistently for all employees		
There are stringent access controls and monitoring policies on those with privileges and access to data in the department		
There are consistent investigations of and responses to rule violations		

Grounds for Termination for Sworn Personnel

The purpose of this section is to review what your agency currently considers to be grounds for termination. The below listed offense are arranged from mostly to least commonly deemed grounds for termination.

	Yes	No
Conviction for a felony offense resulting in incarceration		
Conviction for any offense involving the illegal sale or manufacture of controlled substances		
Intentional falsification, deception, or omission of information during the application and background investigation process		
Being charged with a felony		
Conviction for a gross misdemeanor		
Being charged with a misdemeanor		

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Concern about Potential Insider Threats

The purpose of this section is to reflect on potential sources of threats that could harm your agency. Consider the level of concern that each pose to your agency and what can be done to help mitigate any potential threats that exist.

	High Concern	Medium Concern	Low Concern	No Concern
Criminal activity of any sort				
Street gangs				
Organized crime groups				
Gambling issues, bankruptcy, or other financial hardship				
Misconduct on-duty				
Misconduct off-duty				
Use or abuse of illegal drugs				
Abuse of alcohol				
Far-right extremist groups				
Far-left extremist groups				
Salafi-Jihadist extremist groups				
Minority identity extremist groups				

METHODOLOGY

The research team used a mixed-methods design with both archival data and survey data on hiring and screening policies and procedures from a stratified random sample of police departments and sheriff's offices around the United States. The self-assessment toolkit was developed from 730 agency websites and 532 surveys from agencies. More information on the project, including the methodology, findings, and related deliverables can be found here.

Disclaimer. Any opinions or conclusions contained herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Homeland Security, the DHS Science and Technology Directorate, or the University of Nebraska System.

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