

## Do I need a degree for a law enforcement career?

### MUNICIPAL / LOCAL POLICE

You CAN become a municipal (local) police officer in some departments in PA with only a high school diploma (Source 1 – see page 2)

Some local police departments DO require higher education (Source 2 and Source 3)

Some local police departments don't require higher education, but PREFER to those who have higher degrees (Source 4 and Source 5)

Some local police departments REQUIRE degrees for management positions (Source 6)

Almost 75% of police departments in the nation PAY MORE to officers with a degree (Source 7)

### STATE POLICE

Some state police agencies, including Pennsylvania, WILL HIRE applicants with only a high school diploma (Source 8)

PA removed the degree requirement (and also lowered fitness requirements) because of low applicant numbers, not simply because it was old-fashioned (Source 9)

Some state police departments REQUIRE higher education for hiring, or higher ed + military experience (Source 10 and Source 11)

Some state police departments will hire with only a HS diploma, but REQUIRE a 4-year degree for promotion (Source 12)

### FBI

The FBI REQUIRES a 4-year degree for all special agent positions (Source 13)

Thousands of people apply to the FBI each year, so an undergraduate degree in criminology or related field by itself won't impress them (Source 14)

Certain specialized knowledge (including certain law, foreign languages, computer science, and accounting) will give you an ADVANTAGE as an FBI applicant (Source 15)

A current (2024) SRU criminology student has an upcoming panel interview for an FBI job, and she has not even graduated yet. SRU also has other alumni working for the FBI.

### TAKE AWAY:

Technically, you don't need an undergraduate degree to get a policing job. However, having a degree can have multiple benefits. Just remember that a degree helps **COPS**: **C**areer **O**pportunities, **P**romotions, and **S**alary.

## SOURCES

The links below are functional at the time of this writing. Some of the links (such as job advertisements) are temporary, and so screenshots are provided.

### SOURCE 1

<https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/mpoetc/programs/certification/municipal-police-officer-certification.html>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/mpoetc/programs/certification/municipal-police-officer-certification.html>. The page title is "Employed by a Police Department". The main heading is "Information for Police Departments". The text states: "Individuals who have successfully completed the Certification Exam within the past 24 months are eligible to be certified when they are also employed by a municipal police department. The employing police department is responsible for all certification records in TACS." It then explains that Police Departments submit either a Basic Training Application or a Waiver of Training Application in TACS for each non-certified individual they employ. As part of the employment process, the Department must verify the person meets the qualifications established in [Title 37 § 203 Subchapter B](#), (Police Officer Certification Requirements) and submit the appropriate documents to MPOETC in TACS. Specific employment requirements include:

- At least 18 years old
- High School Diploma or GED
- US Citizen
- NO disqualifying criminal convictions (Misdemeanor 2 or higher)
- Minimum 9th grade reading level
- Physical examination
- Drug test
- [Vision test](#)
- [Hearing exam](#)
- Psychological examination (MMPI-2, MMPI-2RF, and MMPI-3 are all acceptable)
- [Physical Fitness Test](#)

MPOETC reviews and approves all applications for training as well as applications for certification (Basic/Waiver). Once officers are certified, MPOETC monitors the qualification and training status of the officers and provides notices to departments when an officer is going to expire on a particular training/qualification requirement. Police Departments are responsible for ensuring all officers are current and for keeping accurate records in TACS regarding employment, qualifications, and training.

### SOURCE 2

<https://www.safety.pitt.edu/police/about/training-qualifications/police-development-program>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.safety.pitt.edu/police/about/training-qualifications/police-development-program>. The page header includes the University of Pittsburgh logo and the text "Office of Public Safety & Emergency Management Pitt Police". There are navigation links for "ALERTS", "SUBSCRIBE", and "REPORT CRIME". The page content is partially visible, showing the heading "Titusville".

## Titusville

The University of Pittsburgh at Titusville is two-year, degree-granting regional campus offering an Associate of Sciences in Nursing and combines the advantages of a small college with the resources of an internationally respected institution.

## Additional Information

Candidates for all campuses must be U.S. residents and will be subject to a [background check](#) and other requirements. Police Officer candidates must also have a four-year degree.

Once you become an employee of the University of Pittsburgh, you will enjoy steep discounts if you decide to further your education. Dependent children of employees are also eligible for tuition remission.

<https://nrpolice.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/NRPD-Hiring-Test-UPDATED.pdf>

Successful applicants must also meet all the requirements of the department's hiring policy that includes written and physical agility examinations, a background investigation and completion of an oral interview. The physical agility test and written examination will be held on Saturday, October 5, 2024, at the Pine-Richland High School Stadium, 700 Warrendale Road, Gibsonia, PA 15044. The testing process will begin with the physical agility test followed immediately with the written exam. Applicants will be notified via email of their start times prior to the testing date.

<https://joinphillypd.com/index.php/recruit-lateral-hiring-process/preference-points>

- 1 point added to their final score if the highest degree received is an Associate's Degree or if the candidate has at least 60 college credits.
- 2 points added to their final score if the highest degree received is a Bachelor's Degree.
- 3 points added to their final score if the highest degree received is a Master's Degree.

## SOURCE 5

<https://www.alleghenycounty.us/files/assets/county/v/1/government/police-academy/documents/police-careers/full-time-job-posting.pdf>



204 S. Jackson St., #2, Evans City, PA 16033 • 724-538-8055  
2200 Garden Dr., Suite 200A, Seven Fields, PA 16046

**EVANS CITY • SEVEN FIELDS REGIONAL POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Evans City/Seven Fields Regional Police Department, Butler County, PA, located approximately 15 miles north of Pittsburgh, PA is conducting a search for a non-civil service **Full-Time police officer** to work for a police department with a Chief, 4 FT, and 8 PT officers serving Evans City Borough, with a population of 1,814, and the Borough of Seven Fields, with a population of 2,906. The patrols combine 30 miles of roads and security to 100 businesses.

**WEB SITE:** [www.sevenfields.org](http://www.sevenfields.org) or [www.evanscity.us](http://www.evanscity.us)

**COMMENTS:** Evans City/Seven Fields Regional Police Department is seeking a self-motivated and conscientious individual to serve as a **Full-time patrol officer**. Requirements are Associate Degree or two years toward a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice or related field, and/or 5 years' full time commensurate municipal police work, must be ACT 120 certified, and be at least 21 years of age. Preference will be given to applicants who have knowledge of Commonwealth criminal and traffic laws, rules and regulations; Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commission; experience with computer software; including Microsoft Word Office Suite; excellent communication skills; and possess an understanding of diverse populations. Must be physically fit and live within 20 air miles. This shift work position is responsible for providing police services to the residents of Evans City and Seven Fields and will perform a variety of activities as a patrol officer enforcing the traffic code, state statute, and borough ordinances. Starting pay is DOQ with excellent benefits.

The selection process will include but is not limited to: oral interviews, extensive background investigation, pre-employment medical, physical, and psychological examinations.

### **REQUIRED MINIMUM ENTRANCE QUALIFICATIONS AT THE TIME OF APPLICATION, AN APPLICANT MUST:**


1. Be a citizen of the United States.
2. Associates Degree and/or 5 years full time commensurate municipal police experience; Bachelor's Degree from an accredited university will receive preference.
3. Act 120 Certified.
4. Have at least 20/40 vision in each eye, correctable to 20/20 vision.
5. Have normal hearing in each ear.
6. Never have been convicted of :
  - A. a felony
  - B. operating under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs
  - C. two moving violations within the 24 months previous to application
  - D. reckless driving offense

## SOURCE 6

<https://www.pachiefs.org/employment-opportunities-listing#DeputyChiefBaldwinBorough>

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 **Pennsylvania**  
Chiefs of Police Association

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### Deputy Chief of Police - Baldwin Borough, Allegheny County, PA

The Borough of Baldwin, Allegheny County, PA, population 21,000 residents within approximately 6 square miles, borders the City of Pittsburgh on its southeastern corner. Baldwin Borough is largely a residential neighborhood that also includes a section of the Monongahela River and the Great Allegheny Passageway.

The Baldwin Borough Police Department is a full-service police department offering 24/7 coverage to Baldwin Borough. The department consists of the Chief of Police, 4 patrol sergeants, 2 detectives, 16 patrol officers, 1 office manager, 1 administrative assistant, and 1 social worker. The Baldwin Borough Police Department proudly maintains two accreditations, CALEA (Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies) and PLEAC (Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission).

The Deputy Chief of Police is a Non- Civil Service position. Applicants must possess strong leadership and administrative skills. Candidates must be PA Act 120 certified at the time of application and have a valid PA Driver's License. Educational requirements include at least a bachelor's degree in public administration, business management or related field, and have ten (10) years of law enforcement experience. Supervisory experience is preferred but not required. Successful completion of the FBI National Academy, Northwestern University Center for Public Safety, School of Police Staff & Command, or the Southern Police Institute is preferred but not required. The ideal candidate will have experience in budget development and administration, be well versed in labor laws impacting collective bargaining, have strong technology skills and be experienced

## SOURCE 7

[https://www.policinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PF-Report-Policing-Around-the-Nation\\_10-2017\\_Final.pdf](https://www.policinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PF-Report-Policing-Around-the-Nation_10-2017_Final.pdf)

- Almost three-quarters (73.5%) of agencies pay officers an extra 1%-7.49% for having a bachelor's degree. Most (37.2%) agencies pay officers 1%-2.49% more for a four-year degree than an AA or high school diploma (whichever is the agency's minimum).
- Of those agencies that offer tuition reimbursement, 35.0% offer it to officers upon hire, 10.8% require officers pass their training period, 39.2% require officers pass their probationary period, and 13.8% require officers to be employed for a certain period of time

## SOURCE 8

<https://patrooper.com/requirements.html#:~:text=EDUCATIONAL%20REQUIREMENT,Certificate.>

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patrooper.com/requirements.html#:~:text=EDUCATIONAL%20REQUIREMENT,Certificate.

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### AGE REQUIREMENT

Applicants must be at least 20 years of age on or before the date the application is completed. Applicants must be at least 21 years of age and cannot have reached their 40th birthday prior to or on the date of appointment as a State Police Cadet.

### RESIDENCY AND CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

- ✓ Applicants must possess a valid driver's license from any state upon appointment as a Pennsylvania State Police Cadet.
- ✓ Applicants must be a resident of Pennsylvania and possess a valid Pennsylvania driver's license at the time of graduation.
- ✓ Applicants must be a United States citizen at the time of initial application.



### EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENT

Applicants must possess a high school diploma or a G.E.D. Certificate.



## SOURCE 9

<https://penncapital-star.com/criminal-justice/in-an-effort-to-boost-recruiting-lawmakers-pass-bill-to-lower-police-academy-fitness-requirement/>

House Bill 863 would reduce the minimum fitness level for police academy recruits from the 30th percentile to the 15th percentile of performance on the standard physical fitness assessment, which includes a 1½ mile run, a 300-meter sprint, push-ups and pull-ups.

In order to graduate from the police academy, a cadet would have to improve their physical fitness to reach the 30th percentile of performance. It would also alter the reading comprehension standard to allow local police departments to submit their own reading tests to the state for consideration.

Rep. Barry Jozwiak (R-Berks) was among those who voted in opposition to the bill, all of whom were Republicans. As the House's representative to the Municipal Police Officers Training and Education Commission (MPOTEC), Jozwiak said changing the fitness and reading standards is a bad idea. MPOTEC issues the state's police academy and firearms training curricula.

"Society expects police officers to be the best of the best, at least better than the average citizen," Jozwiak said. "To accomplish that, we set high standards in our police academies, expecting to have the very best cadets graduating and to give applicants the best chance to succeed."

Jozwiak noted that the fitness standards were already lowered from the 50th percentile to the 30th percentile several years ago.

And when a police department makes the decision to sponsor a recruit in training, he said, it has already invested significant resources in vetting candidates by way of background checks.

MPOTEC's police academy curriculum requires that cadets maintain the 30th percentile through the five months of the academy, with the first assessment after one month, Jozwiak said. He said fitness training instructors say it would be impossible for a person to improve from the 15th to 30th percentile in a month.

"Entrance requirements are meant to keep people from wasting your time and money trying to do something that they are not prepared to do or would not be eligible to do," Jozwiak said.

The Shapiro Administration and Pennsylvania State Police, which oversees MPOTEC, support finding solutions to ease the shortage of municipal police officers, the state police said in a statement issued by its press office.

"The Administration supports easing the physical fitness requirements to allow more, qualified applicants to enter municipal police academies, where they can receive training to meet the fitness standards required to become police officers," the statement reads.

Shapiro has taken other measures to improve recruiting for the state police and local police departments. In one of his first actions as governor, Shapiro removed the college degree requirement for thousands of state jobs, including the state police.

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## SOURCE 10

<https://njsp.njoag.gov/recruiting/minimum-qualifications-and-disqualifiers/>



Recruiting Information ▼

Selection Process ▼

Outreach Events



# Minimum Qualifications & Disqualifiers

## Education

### Applicant must have one of the following:

- An applicant must have a bachelor's degree, signifying completion of the undergraduate curriculum and graduation from an accredited college or university. To meet the bachelor degree requirement, an applicant must have completed all academic, financial, and administrative obligations to be conferred a bachelor's degree by August 31, 2024.


OR

- An applicant must have an associate degree or 60 college credits from an accredited college or university PLUS at least 24 months of satisfactory employment and/or military experience by August 31, 2024. **Work experience must equate to 104 weeks of employment, including military experience, with a minimum of 20 hours of work per week. The 104 weeks are**



## SOURCE 11

<https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/msp/dashboard/Pages/new-trooper-training.aspx>

**Minnesota State Patrol**  
A Division of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety

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## NEW TROOPER TRAINING



The State Patrol is proud to host a variety of training programs to prepare troopers for a successful career in law enforcement.

### Traditional Hiring Process (applicants who are eligible for POST licensure)

These applicants have a college degree and have completed a law enforcement skills program from a regionally accredited university or community college. They have taken their Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) exam and are eligible for licensure. Applicants are also required to be certified medical first responders.

### Law Enforcement Training Opportunity Program (LETO)


These applicants have either an associates or bachelor's degree in any discipline. The Minnesota State Patrol will then provide LETO candidates with the educational requirements necessary to meet the POST licensure requirements. POST licensure training consists of 23 weeks of classroom and practical training conducted in partnership with Hennepin Technical College. Applicants must then pass the POST exam to be eligible for employment.


## SOURCE 12

<https://dsp.delaware.gov/recruiting-qualifications/>

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## Education

Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED, and must have attained a minimum of 60 semester credits, or 90 quarter credits, from an accredited college or university OR one that is recognized by the U. S. Department of Higher Education OR 30 college credits along with two years of active duty military service.


An applicant with 30 college credits and any of the below-listed experience will be eligible for an accelerated Academy curriculum:

- two years (post-training) as a full-time, Delaware-certified police officer.
- or two years of full-time (post-training) experience as a state trooper from another state, having completed a paramilitary live-in state training academy.

(To compete for the rank of Sergeant, 60 college credits are required. A Bachelor's Degree is required to compete for the ranks of Lieutenant and above.)

## SOURCE 13

<https://fbijobs.gov/special-agents#special-agent-eligibility>

SPECIAL AGENTCAREERSLIFE AT THE FBISIGN INQ SEARCH

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Salary and Benefits

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Special Agent Eligibility

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## Special Agent Eligibility

Special agents must meet the specified requirements listed below in addition to all FBI eligibility requirements.

- Have a bachelor's degree and at least two years of full-time professional work experience, or have an advanced degree and at least one year of full-time professional work experience.

## Source 14

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/fbi-agent-applications-sharply-along-job-satisfaction-n1042981>

FBI agent applications up sharply, along with job satisfactionSHARE

With more than a month remaining in the current fiscal year, the FBI told NBC News it had received 32,000 applications, nearly three times more than the 11,500 it received all of the previous year. This year's figure was also well beyond the bureau's recruiting goal of 16,000 applicants – to be winnowed down to 900 special agents.

## **SOURCE 15**

[https://fbijobs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/Special\\_Agent\\_FAQ.pdf](https://fbijobs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/Special_Agent_FAQ.pdf)

### **Do I need to have a law enforcement or military background to apply to become an FBI special agent? Are certain degrees more desired by the FBI?**

A law enforcement or military background is not required. Because of the breadth and scope of the FBI's mission, it looks for candidates with a wide variety of backgrounds, not just law enforcement or military experience. The FBI seeks special agents with any occupation that requires a college degree. Specifically, we look for expertise in physical science, computer science, engineering, architecture, law, accounting, and other disciplines that require logical analysis and critical thinking.

We're also actively seeking special agents who are fluent in critical foreign languages, as well as those with experience in intelligence and counterterrorism work. Study a field you enjoy and, after that, obtain experiences that will demonstrate your ability to master the special agent core competencies, specifically:

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Initiative
- Interpersonal ability
- Leadership
- Organizing and planning
- Problem solving and judgment