Applying the Young and Vigorous Standard

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Overview

When asked how USCP applies the young and vigorous standard, officials described:

- Applicants' maximum entry age,
- Applicants' and new recruits' physical testing requirements, and
- Specialty assignments' additional physical testing requirements.

USCP does not generally require any further physical testing of officers on an ongoing basis after hire, and instead uses on-the-job observation is used to monitor officer performance.

Requirements for Applicants

USCP Suitability Standards: Maximum Entry Age

USCP employment suitability standards are similar to LEO requirements and set a maximum age requirement at entry.

- USCP requires all applicants to be at least 21 years of age at the time of appointment, but not have reached their 37th birthday at the date of appointment (up to their 40th birthday under the waiver currently in effect through September 2020).
- The USCP Chief of Police may waive the maximum entry age based on prior, qualifying federal law enforcement experience.

USCP Suitability Standards: Physical Readiness Test

- USCP employment suitability standards require all applicants to pass the Physical Readiness Test (PRT) before hire.
- USCP's 2019 report to Congress noted that the PRT was designed to ensure recruit applicants could successfully complete post-employment physical training.

The PRT consists of the following:

1) Illinois Agility Test: To measure the applicant's ability to get up from the ground and sprint while changing directions. The maximum allowable time is based on the applicant's gender, age, and weight on the day of testing.
2) One Repetition Bench Press: To measure the applicant's upper body strength for one repetition using a free weight bench lying down and lifting the weight straight up until the arms are locked. The weight lifted is determined by the applicant's gender, age, and weight on the day of testing.
3) 1.5 Mile Run: To measure the cardio/respiratory fitness of the applicant. The maximum allowable time is based on the applicant's gender and age on the day of testing.

USCP Suitability Standards: Other Requirements

USCP employment suitability standards also require applicants to be evaluated on passing and completing six examinations, among other things:[38]

[38]Other requirements for USCP applicants include having U.S. citizenship, a valid motor vehicle license, a competent financial history over the last 10 years, and a diploma or

- the Police Officer Selection Test,
- medical examination,
- psychological examination,
- polygraph examination,
- personal history/background investigation, and
- oral board interview.

Requirements for New Recruits

USCP generally requires new recruits to complete three trainings in the following order before becoming officers:

Source: GAO. | GA0-20-137R

- 2 weeks of initial training at the USCP Training Academy.
- 12 weeks of training in the Uniformed Police Training Program at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers, the same training generally attended by all entry-level LEOs.
- 12 weeks of specialized training based on USCP needs and the most frequent officer assignments at the USCP Training Academy.

USCP then requires all new recruits to pass the post-employment Recruit Officers Physical Ability Test (ROPAT). ROPAT occurs one time before graduation from officer training. According to USCP Academy Training Rules, ROPAT is intended to ensure recruit officers are prepared for the rigors of the position requirements.

ROPAT is a physical test during which officers have to complete an obstacle course consisting of 5 exercises in 3 minutes and 52 seconds. Briefly described, these are:

1) Starting Position: Recruit begins in the kneeling position in a simulated weapon fire stance. On command, the stopwatch is started, and the recruit must rise into standing position without touching the ground with their hands.
2) Shuttle Run: Recruit jogs to agility poles and completes five runs weaving between agility poles to reach the stair climb.
3) Stair Climb: Recruit completes four ascent and descent round-trips on the stairway to reach the rescue dummy.
4) Victim Rescue: Recruit must move the rescue dummy a total of 40 feet across the finish line.
5) Trigger Pull: Recruit runs to the trigger pull where they are handed an inert pistol and must complete a round of 15 trigger pulls in each hand. The stopwatch is stopped on the 30th trigger pull.

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general equivalency diploma (GED), as well as at least one of the following: a) minimum of 60 semester hours of college credits from an accredited college or university; b) 2 years of active duty military service with a general discharge (under honorable conditions) or honorable discharge; or c) 5 years of prior creditable law enforcement experience as determined by the USCP Chief of Police.

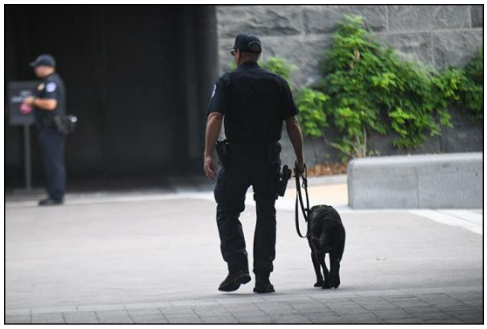
Specialty Assignment Requirements

USCP requires specialty assignment candidates to pass additional physical requirements before assuming their assignments. As of March 2019, USCP had 293 officers in sworn specialty assignments with additional physical requirements.

According to USCP physical requirements:

- Tests vary by assignment and can include physical fitness and physical health requirements.
- Some specialty assignments require regular reevaluations.

Examples of specialty assignments with physical agility test requirements:



Source: GAO. | GA0-20-137R

- Canine Unit: Includes a variety of exercises with a simulated dog weighing 65lbs. Required annually.
- Dignitary Protection Division: Includes ascending and descending 4 flights of stairs, hurdling a 3-foot parade barricade and dragging a dummy 6 feet. No annual or ongoing physical fitness requirement.
- Training Services Bureau (Firearms Instructor): Includes lifting and carrying at least 80lbs of weight over distances of 50+ yards, demonstrating tactical courses of fire, and accurately firing all department weapons from various positions. No annual or ongoing physical fitness requirement.

Practices Regarding Physical Testing and Services after Hire

USCP does not generally require any further physical testing of officers on an ongoing basis after hire.

- USCP's 2019 report to Congress stated, "The Department has not implemented a mandatory ongoing fitness requirement for incumbent officers due to the legal and contractual challenges that are presented by changing the working conditions for onboard personnel."
- USCP noted two key exceptions: (1) testing for specialty assignments and (2) testing prompted by a supervisor's observation of behaviors or circumstances that reasonably lead the supervisor to question an employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the position.

- USCP said that they monitor officers' fitness and may reevaluate low performers' vigor based on supervisors' observations, and they support officer fitness by offering wellness services to those who voluntarily wish to improve their physical fitness.

Supervisor Observation

USCP officials said the agency relies on supervisors' observations for notable issues and evaluations of officer suitability. For example, reevaluations may be prompted by:

- Excessive tardiness, absenteeism, a medical issue requiring a lot of sick leave, or an officer's inability to perform the essential functions of the position.
- Physical fitness issues observed during a retraining, such as active shooter training.

Voluntary Health and Wellness Services

- USCP officials said the agency aims to prevent issues that may compromise an officer's ability to serve by offering voluntary services to help the officer maintain his or her health and psychological fitness.
- USCP's 2019 report to Congress, dated January 18, 2019, noted that the agency
    - had one fitness coordinator who divided his time between supporting physical fitness training for recruit officers and supporting voluntary services for incumbent officers;
    - did not have nutritional guidance available to employees, which USCP believed was necessary to support a full integration of wellness; and
    - believed that a wellness program would be a holistic approach for supporting officer health and wellness.
- USCP officials said the agency has partnered with the U.S. House of Representative's Wellness Center to provide USCP officers access to a variety of web-based wellness, physical fitness, nutritional and mindfulness programs, as well as trainings, webinars and fitness fairs.
- USCP officials also said they have continued efforts to provide access to onsite facilities and work toward formally adopting a wellness and resiliency program, hiring a wellness coordinator, expanding contracted physical fitness trainers, and implementing limited contractual nutritional guidance for employees.
- In addition, USCP officials noted that effective October 20, 2019, a new Employee Wellness and Resiliency Division was established to coordinate health and wellness activities and programs for USCP.