



PRINCE WILLIAM

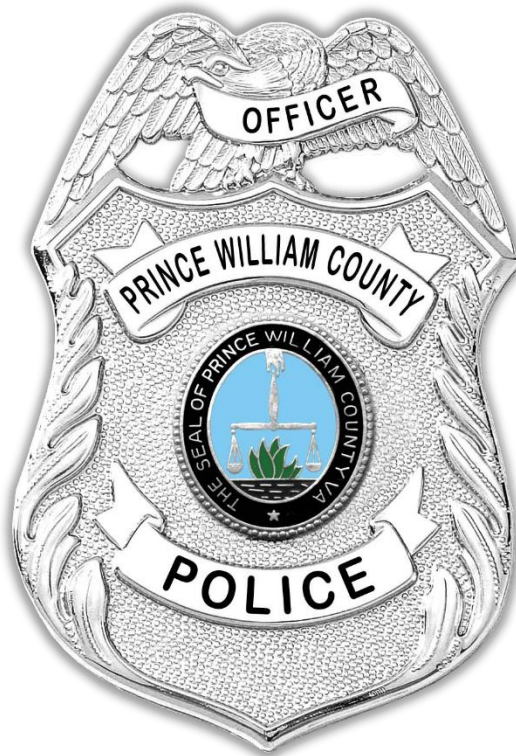
Police Department

In January 2020, the Prince William County Police Department asked the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to conduct a review of our recruitment and hiring practices to identify areas where we could improve, particularly regarding improving diversity to better represent the community we serve. Throughout this review process the Police Department regularly discussed recommendations with PERF and adjusted policies, practices, and procedures, as necessary. What follows are the final recommendations from PERF, along with actions taken by the Police Department throughout the course of this review.

RECRUITMENT STUDY



| pwcva.gov/police



[VIEW THE FULL PERF REPORT](#)



A NATIONALLY ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Police Department has been aware of the need to diversify our ranks to ensure they are reflective of the community we serve but has had difficulty in identifying outdated hiring practices and associated data needed to improve our process. The review conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) identified three major intercepts in our efforts to recruit and hire minority applicants. This executive summary discusses the overarching themes of these intercepts. A full listing of all recommendations and actions follows the executive summary.

INTERCEPT 1. ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

The PERF review identified two main areas within our eligibility guidelines which contributed to our difficulty in recruiting and hiring. The first area considered an applicant's financial history related to unsatisfied debt. Research has shown that there are income disparities within racial/ethnic and gender groups which may contribute to an overwhelming amount of debt compared to other groups. This disparity may contribute to financial challenges and past Department practices focused heavily on an applicant's financial history. Taking this into consideration, the Department removed all financial questions from both the application and additional background questioning and instead now relies on an applicant's credit report and efforts to repay an outstanding debt.

The second area identified the general ambiguity of some of our hiring guidelines. This practice could allow for varied interpretation of the standards. In some instances, this ambiguity resulted in subjective disqualification of applicants. In other instances, it discouraged applicants from continuing in the hiring process. The Police Department has made significant, clear updates to our eligibility guidelines and posted them online for prospective applicants to preview so they have a better understanding of our expectations and standards. Applicants now understand the eligibility standards and can assess whether they meet the standards for hire instead of trying to predict what may be acceptable to the Department.

INTERCEPT 2. APPLICATION PROCESS

The Department's initial application process consists of two steps for the applicant. The first step requires the applicant to complete an online application through Prince William County's NeoGov application. The next step requires an applicant to complete a Personal History Statement (PHS). Many interested applicants fail to return the PHS and are removed from the hiring process.

PERF reviewed the 31-page PHS and was able to analyze hundreds of pages of data and to survey potential applicants pertaining reasons they did not continue in the application process. PERF identified many areas to be streamlined or removed for lack of relevance. As a result, the PHS has been consolidated to 9 pages and the Department relies on official credit reports, Department of Motor Vehicles transcripts, and Criminal History checks in lieu of requiring an applicant to list the information, which at times resulted in missed information and contributed to removal from the process. The Department has also purchased a software program, eSOPH, which allows applicants to complete an online form in lieu of the previous paper form. In addition to providing efficiencies for the applicant, eSOPH also allows the Police Department to analyze and collect data for all applicants to help identify deficiencies in our process.

INTERCEPT 3. PHYSICAL TESTING

PERF's review of our required applicant physical testing

As part of the hiring process, the Police Department requires a measure of an applicant's physical abilities. PERF reviewed the Department's pass/fail physical testing and identified significant problems with the standards, given that the Commonwealth of Virginia has no current physical standard for certification as a police officer. The Police Department's past practice only permitted an applicant to attempt the physical test two times prior to removal from the process.

The Police Department has reviewed this analysis and decided to use the physical test as a benchmark of overall fitness from an injury prevention standpoint, rather than a pass/fail portion of the application process. This change has had an immediate impact on the success of hiring otherwise qualified applicants.

There are many recommendations in the final PERF report but most fall into one of these three intercepts. By making these adjustments, the Police Department has already seen much more diversity in our hiring process. With the acquisition of eSOPH, we will be capable of collecting, reviewing, consolidating, and analyzing all hiring data and demographics. This capability will allow us to readily and more adequately review all data associated with our hiring process and to make any adjustments at future intercepts.

FULL REPORT OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

SECTION I. REVIEW OF PERSONNEL BUREAU DOCUMENTS

PERSONNEL BUREAU MANUAL

Recommendation: Expand language about how personnel should reflect the agency's values. *In the "purpose" section of the manual, PWCPD should expand upon the agency's mission and organizational values by describing the goal of the personnel bureau to hire qualified candidates who are reflective of the community it serves.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has added verbiage into the Selection and Recruiting Manual to expand language that reflects the agency's mission and organizational values and our commitment to hiring qualified candidates who are reflective of the community.*



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA GUIDELINES

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Recommendation: Define eligibility requirements more clearly. PWCPD should ensure that eligibility requirements are clearly defined and do not allow for a wide range of interpretations by PWCPD hiring personnel. It is important that eligibility criteria are objective, in order to prevent opportunities for potential bias. PWCPD should clarify this statement, perhaps by providing examples of crimes that “indicate a tendency to disregard the law,” so that all personnel bureau staff are in agreement about the meaning and intent of this criterion.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants. These updated eligibility guidelines can be found on our [recruiting website](#) along with the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705. Examples of crimes that indicate a tendency to disregard the law are any patterns of offenses to include theft, physical or domestic abuse, or undetected crimes. A singular instance of a criminal or traffic offense may be acceptable, and applicants are encouraged to continue in the hiring process. Multiple factors are taken into consideration, such as, the severity, recency, frequency, and specific circumstances related to the offense(s), as situations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendation: PWCPD should provide examples of the types of arrests that could “degrade public confidence in the department” in order to make this criterion more objective and clearly defined. This will ensure that this requirement is interpreted consistently by personnel bureau staff and across applicants. Examples might include assault and battery charges, or charges connected to excessive alcohol use by a candidate. These might be an indication that an individual is not suitable to be a police officer.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants. This includes clarifying the types of arrests that could degrade public confidence, such as domestic assault and battery, driving under the influence, and sex offenses.

APPLICANT PROCESS ELIMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation: Examine criteria on “concealing or omitting information”. PWCPD should examine the types of reasons applicants are disqualified for “concealing or omitting information” during the application process. In general, if the omitted information does not in itself violate one of the eligibility requirements, PWCPD should not disqualify an applicant on that basis alone.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department does not disqualify an applicant for omitting information during the application process, as long as the information itself does not violate one of the primary eligibility requirements, and was not omitted with the intent to mislead the background investigator.

Recommendation: Ensure requirements are objective. PWCPD should examine its applicant process elimination requirements to ensure they are clearly defined, and do not inadvertently screen out applicants who would potentially make valuable additions to the department. PWCPD should provide examples of what it means to be “cooperative” with the applicant investigator, and include these examples in the eligibility requirements to ensure that all hiring personnel are aware of the meaning of this requirement. This will ensure that criteria are understood and applied objectively and consistently by all hiring personnel and background investigators.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants to include clarifying the meaning of being cooperative with the background investigator. Examples of being cooperative include furnishing requested information and documents, returning emails and phone calls in a timely manner, and ensuring the applicant honors any reasonable appointment arranged by the background investigator.

TRAFFIC OFFENSES

Recommendation: PWCPD should ensure it has an equivalent eligibility criterion to the six negative points for applicants applying from outside the state of Virginia.

Police Department Action Taken: While there is no direct equivalent for driving points from state-to-state, the Police Department reviews out-of-state driving transcripts for indicators that reflect a history and pattern of irresponsible driving behavior. This includes receiving multiple moving violations in a short period of time, multiple instances of aggressive or reckless driving, racing on a highway, or driving at excessive speeds.

FINANCIAL HISTORY

Recommendation: Clarify requirements on financial history. PWCPD should consider the types of financial issues that are serious enough to disqualify a candidate, and ensure that these criteria are clearly defined. An example of a financial issue that may be serious enough to warrant disqualification would be a history of debt linked to gambling, as this demonstrates poor decision-making and could indicate a vulnerability to extortion. Criteria should be objective and not subject to interpretation on the part of hiring personnel.

Police Department Action Taken: Part of applicant processing includes obtaining a written consumer report (credit check) in accordance with Subsection 604 (b) (2) of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). The Police Department does not disqualify applicants for previous financial issues or current debts and recognizes that some of these issues may be outside of the applicants’ control. If an applicant current financial issues, they are encouraged to provide proof of payment or a payment schedule for any collections, judgements, or liens they have incurred.



Recommendation: Avoid disqualifications of applicants for financial difficulties. *When considering applicants' financial history, PWCPD should consider the reasons and implications of any unsatisfied debt before deciding to disqualify a candidate. In today's economy, it is common for young people to have credit card debt, student loan debt, or any number of financial issues. However, this may not necessarily impact an applicant's ability to be an effective police officer. In addition, since research has shown racial/ethnic and gender disparities in income, wealth, and financial challenges, focusing heavily on financial history may disadvantage these groups in the hiring process. Applicants growing up in economically distressed neighborhoods or in families struggling with poverty may experience more financial challenges.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department does not disqualify applicants for previous financial issues or current debts and recognizes that some of these issues may be outside of the applicant's control. If an applicant has current financial issues, they are encouraged to provide proof of payment or a payment schedule for any collections, judgements, or liens they have incurred.*

CHARACTER/LITIGATION

Recommendation: Clarify criteria related to character traits. *PWCPD should examine the intent of these "character traits" to determine the types of relevant factors to look for during the hiring process. For example, if there are specific qualities that PWCPD feels demonstrate maturity and loyalty, PWCPD should provide examples in the eligibility requirements of these types of factors. This will help to ensure that requirements are objective and applied consistently across applicants. Importantly, these subjective criteria should be discussed with multiple members of the Personnel Bureau before a decision is made to disqualify an applicant based on character.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants. This includes clarifying what character traits are relevant to the hiring process and amending the criteria related to litigation. Character traits deemed relevant to the hiring process include indicators of loyalty, responsibility, ability to function under stress, control of anger, maturity, and honesty. Examples of these traits include maintaining high standards of personal conduct, such as not using one's position for personal gain, not sharing or releasing confidential information, not being unnecessarily confrontational in interactions with others, and being truthful and honest in dealings with others. The only criteria related to litigation is that an applicant must not be party to a current lawsuit as a defendant. Rarely is one fact a sufficient basis for disqualifying an applicant; rather, the background investigator investigates the circumstances surrounding each fact to gauge an applicants' suitability to continue in the process. A review of all the circumstances includes numerous members of the personnel bureau to reach a consensus on decisions to disqualify an applicant.*

FEDERAL, STATE, AND COUNTY REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation: Do not automatically disqualify applicants who lack U.S. citizenship. *A lack of U.S. citizenship should not be an automatic disqualifier for applicants. PWCPD should allow applicants who can legally work in the U.S. and are otherwise qualified to progress through the hiring process, regardless of U.S. citizenship. When candidates successfully complete the hiring process, PWCPD can then seek the exception from the state to waive the citizenship requirement. After these individuals are hired, they can then work toward obtaining citizenship. This may encourage more diverse candidates to apply who would otherwise be disqualified. As most agencies do require U.S. citizenship, this would be a progressive policy change by PWCPD to demonstrate its commitment to diversity.*

Police Department Action Taken: *Under the minimum qualifications listed in VA Code 15.2-1705 it requires that all law enforcement officers be a citizen of the United States. However, the Police Department is currently researching the ability to seek exceptions from the state for the citizenship requirement.*

Recommendation: Review and streamline all eligibility criteria. *In addition to implementing the recommendations above, PWCPD Personnel Bureau staff should review all eligibility requirements to ensure they are as clear and objective as possible, and should identify any criteria that automatically result in disqualification. Once the eligibility criteria have been reviewed and updated, they should be included in the Personnel Bureau Manual, and all Personnel Bureau staff should receive training on the criteria. Going forward, the eligibility criteria should be reviewed and discussed with the chief of police on an annual basis.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has reviewed the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants to ensure they are as clear and objective as possible and made significant updates. All Personnel Bureau staff have been trained on these updates to ensure they are consistency applied. These updated eligibility guidelines can be found on our [recruiting website](#) along with the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705. These eligibility criteria are reviewed annually to ensure they are still in-line with best practices.*

Recommendation: Post eligibility requirements online. *PWCPD should make its eligibility requirements, especially those that will result in automatic disqualification, publicly available by posting them on the agency's website or including them in the job description for police officers. This will promote transparency and ensure that potential applicants are able to see whether they meet the eligibility requirements prior to submitting an application. This will also save time for PWCPD in reviewing applications that will ultimately be rejected.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants. These updated eligibility guidelines can be found on our [recruiting website](#) along with the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705.*



SECTION II. REVIEW OF HIRING PROCESS

Recommendation: Expand BQ Review to later steps in the process. *After the polygraph and background investigation, multiple members of the personnel bureau should review any decisions to disqualify candidates, especially in cases where the reason is subjective. Applicants who are at risk of being disqualified after these phases could be part of the BQ Review process described above, **in which all members of the personnel bureau weigh in to ensure consensus and reduce potential bias.***

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has expanded the BQ (Better Qualified) Review process to incorporate all steps in the hiring process, including submission of the Personal History Statement (PHS), polygraph examination, and background investigation. This review panel includes numerous members of the personnel bureau who reach a consensus on whether an applicant should advance to the next stage of the hiring process.*

APPLICATION FORM

Recommendation: Issues that require explanation should be explored at a point in the process when applicants can provide the explanation. *Questions that require further detail and follow-up such as whether the applicant has been terminated from a previous job, should be included at a later stage of the process, such as when the applicant is asked to complete the Personal History Statement, not in the initial application. In the PHS, applicants should be asked to fully explain the circumstances of the termination, and this information should be considered by Personnel Bureau staff during the "Better Qualified" review process.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has moved questions related to previous work history from the initial application to the Personal History Statement (PHS). Applicants are provided the opportunity to fully explain work history circumstances in the PHS as well as during the background investigation phase of the hiring process. Issues related to previous work history, to include terminations, are not automatic disqualifiers and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine an applicants' eligibility.*

Recommendation: PWCPD should continually review the responses to the question about how applicants learned about the job, and use this information to inform future outreach efforts.

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department continually reviews recruitment data sheets indicating where applicants learned about the job to measure the effectiveness of our outreach efforts. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will provide real-time recruitment data to better guide our outreach efforts.*

Recommendation: Move question about selling drugs to the Personal History Statement. *In accordance with the recommendation above, PWCPD should relocate the question “Have you ever sold, grown, manufactured or cultivated any illicit substances?” to the Personal History Statement. Further information about distribution or cultivation of illicit substances can be asked in later sections of the hiring process, and this information can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has moved questions related to selling drugs from the initial application to the Personal History Statement (PHS). With the legalization of marijuana becoming effective in Virginia on July 1, 2021, any questions related to the usage of marijuana have been removed from the PHS. Eligibility guidelines related to drug usage can be found on our [recruiting website](#).*

APPLICANTS GIVEN PERSONAL HISTORY STATEMENT (PHS)

Recommendation: Ask applicants who do not return the PHS why they dropped out of the process. *In the future, PWCPD should follow up with applicants who did not submit the PHS about the reasons they failed to return it. This could include a survey or phone call to applicants who did not submit the PHS to identify the reasons they may not have submitted it. Through this process, PWCPD should pay special attention to whether the PHS poses a barrier to black applicants, especially black females.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department currently has recruiters follow up with applicants via email and phone calls to assist them in completing the PHS or determine the reasons they failed to return it. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will provide the ability to send reminders to the applicant as well as inquire as to the reasons they did complete the PHS.*

Recommendation: Remind applicants that PHS information will not necessarily disqualify them. *PWCPD should include a disclaimer on the PHS informing applicants that the information requested in the form will not necessarily be grounds for disqualification, and should direct applicants to review the eligibility criteria listed on the website for specific disqualifying factors. For example, applicants should be encouraged to apply even if they have credit issues or minor criminal history, as these are not automatic grounds for disqualification.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer and applicants are advised to review them for disqualifying factors. These updated eligibility guidelines can be found on our [recruiting website](#) along with the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705. The Personal History Statement (PHS) contains a disclaimer that informs applicants that the information requested is not an automatic disqualifier and applicants are encouraged to apply.*



Recommendation: Provide more time for filing a Personal History Statement. *More than one-fourth of PERF's survey respondents reported that they simply forgot to complete the PHS within the allotted timeframe. Currently, applicants have two weeks to complete the PHS form after they submit the initial application. **PWCPD should consider increasing the timeline to a month, to encourage more applicants to submit the form.***

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has increased the timeline for an applicant to return the Personal History Statement (PHS) from two weeks to four weeks. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software, which will provide applicants the ability to complete the PHS electronically, as well as be informed of their status during each stage of the process.*

Recommendation: Use emails and/or phone calls to encourage applicants and show interest in them. *PWCPD should send reminder emails to applicants who have not yet submitted the PHS after two weeks to remind them to complete this phase of the process, and to encourage them by saying that the department looks forward to receiving their application. In addition, PWCPD recruiters should telephone applicants who have not yet submitted the PHS to follow up with them and answer any questions they may have about the hiring process. This will ensure applicants have personal contact with recruiters, which sends an important signal that PWCPD is an open, welcoming organization. Importantly, PWCPD should continue to track data on the number of applicants who fail to submit the PHS, in order to determine whether these reminders have a positive impact.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department currently has recruiters follow up with applicants via email and phone calls to assist them in completing the PHS or determine the reasons they failed to return it. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will provide the ability to send reminders to the applicant as well as inquire as to the reasons they did not complete the PHS.*

Recommendation: Review and streamline PHS to reduce burden. *A number of survey respondents reported that they did not complete the PHS because it was too long or burdensome. PWCPD should review the information requested on the PHS to determine whether all the information requested is relevant and necessary, or if any of the questions can be removed or streamlined. Any questions that do not objectively correspond to PWCPD's eligibility requirements should be reconsidered,*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Personal History Statement (PHS) and made significant changes to shorten and streamline the forms to ensure the information requested is relevant and necessary to the hiring process. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will further streamline the process by providing applicants the ability to complete the PHS online.*

Recommendation: Work to ensure that misperceptions about eligibility do not cause applicants to drop out. *A number of respondents indicated that they did not think they met the eligibility requirements, and several of their perceptions about the eligibility requirements appeared to be incorrect. As recommended on page 31, PWCPD should post its eligibility criteria online to ensure transparency, and to ensure that applicants are not deterred from proceeding with the hiring process due to misperceptions about the requirements.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants. These updated eligibility guidelines can be found on our [recruiting website](#) along with the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705.*

Recommendation: Maintain detailed records of applicant submission information. *A few survey respondents reported that they did submit the PHS but did not receive confirmation of their submission. PWCPD should maintain detailed records of applicant information throughout the hiring process to ensure that no application materials are missed. In addition, adopting applicant management software would allow for more comprehensive and accurate tracking of application materials, and could notify applicants automatically that their materials have been received.*

Police Department Action Taken: *Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will allow for comprehensive real-time data tracking. This software will also automatically notify an applicant when their online submission has been received.*

APPLICANTS WHO RETURNED THE PHS

Recommendation: Review information requested in PHS for relevance. *PWCPD should review the information requested in the PHS to determine whether all of the information requested is relevant and reflective of an applicant's ability to become an effective police officer. Information solicited in the PHS should be objective and should not allow for a wide range of interpretation by hiring personnel in determining which applicants should be disqualified.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Personal History Statement (PHS) and made significant changes to shorten and streamline the forms to ensure the information requested is relevant and necessary to the hiring process. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will further streamline the process by providing applicants the ability to complete the PHS online.*

Recommendation: Applicants' personal information should be removed when reviewing Personal History Statements. *The individual responsible for reviewing the PHS forms should not be aware of an applicant's personal information, such as race or gender, when reviewing their PHS, to reduce the possibility of bias.*

Police Department Action Taken: *Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software and will be researching the feasibility of removing personal information related to race and gender during the PHS review process to reduce the possibility of bias during this step of the hiring process.*

Recommendation: Collect data on the reasons applicants are disqualified at the PHS phase. *PWCPD should collect data on the reasons applicants are disqualified at the PHS phase by race and gender to determine whether any PHS questions have an adverse impact on specific groups. If certain questions are identified that are more likely to result in the disqualification of Hispanic or Black applicants, for example, PWCPD should reconsider these questions.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department tracks data related to those disqualified during the Personal History Statement (PHS) phase of the hiring process and looks for any trends that indicate potential barriers to applicants. Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software, which will provide the ability to track this data in real-time and reconsider any questions that have an adverse impact on specific groups.*

PERF REVIEW OF THE CONTENT OF THE PHS

Recommendation: PWCPD should provide applicants with the option to submit the PHS online or via email. *Having to mail or deliver all of the required documentation to PWCPD may be challenging to some applicants and may deter them from wanting to proceed with the process. PWCPD should also consider allowing applicants to scan their documentation and send it via email to the Personnel Bureau. Further, adopting comprehensive applicant tracking software would allow for the PHS to be submitted online in a single system.*

Police Department Action Taken: *Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will further streamline the process by providing applicants the ability to complete the PHS online. It will also allow them to scan all applicable supporting documents and submit them electronically.*

Recommendation: Remove questions on financial history. *Because most of this financial information will be available in an applicant's credit history, PWCPD should remove these questions from the PHS and simply review this information during the background investigation. If any areas of concern emerge from an applicant's credit history, PWCPD can inquire about those issues during the background investigation.*

Police Department Action Taken: *Part of applicant processing includes obtaining a written consumer report (credit check) in accordance with Subsection 604 (b) (2) of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). The Police Department does not disqualify applicants for previous financial issues or current debts and recognizes that some of these issues may be outside of the applicant's control. If an applicant has current financial issues, they are encouraged to provide proof of payment or a payment schedule for any collections, judgements, or liens they have incurred.*

Recommendation: Eliminate repetitive questioning. *PWCPD can streamline the application process by only asking for employment information in the PHS. This will reduce the burden both for applicants and hiring personnel reviewing the application information. PWCPD also should ensure that questions on the PHS reflect specific eligibility criteria. Questions that are not reflective of any criterion for eligibility should be reconsidered.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Personal History Statement (PHS) and made significant changes to shorten and streamline the forms to ensure the information requested is relevant and necessary to the hiring process. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will further streamline the process by providing applicants the ability to complete the PHS online.*

Recommendation: Remove the question about traffic violations. *PWCPD should remove this question from the PHS. Information on driving violations or citations should be obtained during the background investigation.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Personal History Statement (PHS) and removed questions pertaining to traffic violations. During the background investigation, the Police Department reviews both Virginia and out-of-state driving transcripts for indicators that reflect a history of irresponsible driving behavior.*



Recommendation: Revise question about “any” law enforcement contact. *PWCPD should revise this question to ask only about incidents in which applicants were notified that they were the suspect or target of an investigation. Reporting a crime or being a witness or bystander should not be relevant to hiring decisions. PWCPD should ensure that information solicited on the PHS is relevant and necessary for hiring decisions, and consistent with eligibility criteria.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has removed the general question asking about “any” law enforcement contact from the Personal History Statement (PHS), and only asks about previous arrests, convictions, or being detained by law enforcement as the suspect or target of an investigation. These remaining questions are relevant to the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705, and the eligibility guidelines found on our [recruiting website](#).*

Recommendation: Revise the section about substance use history. *PWCPD should revise this section of the PHS to be consistent with eligibility requirements on drug use. Specifically, the PHS should only ask whether applicants have used various drugs within the established timeframes outlined in the eligibility criteria.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has revised the substance abuse history section of the Personal History Statement (PHS) and only asks applicants, “Have you ever sold, grown, manufactured or cultivated any illicit substances?”. The eligibility guidelines related to drug usage can be found on our [recruiting website](#).*

Recommendation: Revise question requesting contact information for previous neighbors. *PWCPD should revise this question to ask for contact information of two neighbors, roommates, or associates for the last five years “if available.” Questions that are overly burdensome may deter applicants from wanting to proceed with the process.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has revised the questions asking for contact information for previous neighbors. The revised Personal History Statement (PHS) now asks, “List six people: three family members or current/former roommates and three others who know you well, such as family friends, co-workers, military acquaintances, etc.”*

APPLICANTS ASSIGNED TO THE PHYSICAL FITNESS TEST

Recommendation: Revise the physical fitness test to reflect the real-world tasks in policing.

PWCPD should revise its physical fitness standards to ensure that they do not disproportionately disadvantage female applicants. This should include revising the department's physical requirements to make them more reflective of the duties that police officers perform on the job, specifically those listed in the eligibility criteria. This could include wearing a duty vest while completing an obstacle course, including running, walking, crawling, dragging, and climbing, among other tasks.

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has begun researching the use of a physical agility test that simulates real-world tasks and is reflective of the physical requirements listed in the eligibility criteria. Until the new physical agility test is established the Police Department will continue to use the existing standards, but they will not be a pass/fail portion of the hiring process. It will solely be used to gauge an applicant's fitness level compared with established benchmarks, in order to better prepare the applicant for the Academy.*

Recommendation: Allow candidates to retake the physical fitness test. *PWCPD should allow applicants to retake the PT test as many times as needed in order to pass the test.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has begun researching the use of a physical agility test that simulates real-world tasks and is reflective of the physical requirements listed in the eligibility criteria. Until the new physical agility test is established, the Police Department will continue to use the existing standards, but they will not be a pass/fail portion of the hiring process. It will solely be used to gauge an applicant's fitness level compared with established benchmarks, in order to better prepare the applicant for the Academy. As it is no longer a pass/fail test, the applicant is only required to complete the PT test in order to move on in the hiring process. Once the new physical agility test is established, the Police Department will allow applicants to take the test as many times as needed in order to pass.*

APPLICANTS ASSIGNED TO THE POLYGRAPH PHASE

Recommendation: Continually review data on the number of applicants who are disqualified during the polygraph phase, broken down by race/ethnicity and gender. *This data should be tracked over time to identify any trends in the proportions of various groups who are disqualified after this phase. In addition, PWCPD should collect data on the specific reasons applicants are disqualified during the polygraph phase, and should examine this data to identify any potential barriers to applicants based on race/ethnicity and gender that may be occurring during this phase of the process.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department tracks data related to polygraph exams and looks for any trends that indicate potential barriers to applicants. Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software, which will provide the ability to track this data in real-time and evaluate any questions that appear to have an adverse impact on specific groups.*

Recommendation: Review and consider polygraph pre-interview questions. *PWCPD should examine any specific questions in the polygraph pre-interview that may pose barriers to applicants, especially minority applicants, and should consider changes that may prevent possible bias in this process. Information asked in the polygraph pre-interview should be objective and consistent across applicants to limit any potential opportunities for bias on the part of the polygraph examiner. In general, if the information asked in the polygraph pre-interview does not directly correspond to PWCPD's stated eligibility criteria, then PWCPD should consider removing or revising these questions.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions to ensure all questions correspond directly to the minimum guidelines set forth in VA Code 15.2-1705, and our established eligibility criteria found on our [recruiting website](#). All questions that were deemed not relevant have been removed.*

Recommendation: Carefully consider disqualifications for "integrity" issues. *During interviews, PWCPD staff explained that applicants often are disqualified during the polygraph phase because they provide information during the pre-interview that is inconsistent with information previously provided, thus indicating an issue with "integrity." In reviewing the reasons applicants are disqualified during this phase of the process, PWCPD should pay close attention to these integrity related issues to ensure they are objective and are not disproportionately affecting some applicants over others. In assessing these types of issues, PWCPD should consider whether these inconsistencies are severe enough to compromise an individual's ability to be an effective police officer, or if there may be a reasonable explanation for the inconsistent information provided.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has reviewed and made changes to the integrity-related criteria to ensure they are objective and do not disproportionately affect one group of applicants. The Police Department does not disqualify an applicant during the polygraph phase for providing information during the pre-interview that was not previously provided, if the information itself does not violate one of the eligibility requirements and was not omitted with the intent to mislead the background investigator.*

POLYGRAPH PRETEST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Recommendation: Ensure that pre-test interview questions are connected to eligibility requirements. *PWCPD should ensure that questions asked on the pre-test interview are consistent with established eligibility requirements. Any questions that are not reflective of the eligibility requirements or would not result in disqualification of an applicant should be reconsidered for inclusion on the pre-test interview. Importantly, PWCPD should not include questions in the pre-interview that seem designed to intimidate applicants.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions to ensure all questions correspond directly to the minimum guidelines set forth in VA Code 15.2-1705, and our established eligibility criteria found on our [recruiting website](#). All questions that were deemed not relevant have been removed.*



Recommendation: Remove redundant questions. *Information that will be obtained through driving record checks and credit checks can be removed from the polygraph pre-test interview. If any issues emerge in these areas, they can be followed up on during the background investigation.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions and has made changes to questions related to driving and financial history to ensure they are not redundant and are relevant to the polygraph exam phase of the hiring process.*

Recommendation: Revise question about being questioned by the police. *As recommended for the Personal History Statement, PWCPD should revise this question to only ask whether applicants have been notified that they were a target of an investigation. It is unreasonable to expect applicants to report any type of contact with the police.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has removed the general question asking about "any" law enforcement contact from the Polygraph pre-interview questions and only asks about previous arrests, convictions, or being detained by law enforcement as the suspect or target of an investigation. These remaining questions are relevant to the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705 and the department eligibility guidelines found on our [recruiting website](#).*

Recommendation: Remove these questions from the pre-interview. *These low-level criminal behaviors should not in themselves be grounds for disqualification from the hiring process. PWCPD should therefore remove these questions from the polygraph pre-interview, and should follow up on this information during the background investigation.*

- *Have you ever purchased a false identification card?*
- *Have you ever committed any act of shoplifting?*
- *Have you ever provided/purchased alcohol to subjects underage?*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions and removed these specific questions related to alcohol and shoplifting. The question related to false identification has been deemed still relevant but is not an automatic disqualifier. If an applicant discloses this activity, the specific circumstances will be evaluated to determine an applicant's continued eligibility.*



Recommendation: Do not disqualify applicants for actions of friends and family members. *The drug use of friends and family members should not necessarily disqualify an applicant, as the behavior of an individual's friends and family should not reflect poorly on that individual. In addition, asking if a member of someone's family has been charged with a crime may send the wrong message, and PWCPD may lose valuable applicants if this information is used as grounds for disqualification. PWCPD should therefore remove these questions from the polygraph pre-interview.*

- *How many friends do you have that currently use illegal drugs? If so when is the last time you observed them using illegal drugs?*
- *Do you have any family members that use illegal drugs?*
- *When was the last time you were exposed to any illegal drug use?*
- *Has any member of your immediate family been charged with a crime?*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions to ensure all questions correspond directly to the minimum guidelines set forth in VA Code 15.2-1705, and our established eligibility criteria found on our [recruiting website](#). These specific questions related to the actions of friends and family members have been removed.*

Recommendation: Clarify meaning of "obscene". *PWCPD should clarify the meaning of "obscene" in the first question. Sexual photographs exchanged by consenting adults should not be of any concern to PWCPD. If this is what is meant by "obscene photographs," this question should be removed from the polygraph pre-test interview.*

- *Have you ever sent, or exchanged an obscene photograph by cell phone or email? Internet?*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions to ensure all questions correspond directly to the minimum guidelines set forth in VA Code 15.2-1705, and our established eligibility criteria found on our [recruiting website](#). The specific question has been removed.*

Recommendation: Clarify question on personal relationships. *PWCPD should clarify what is meant by "a personal relationship which could affect your employment or cause embarrassment to the department" and provide examples, as the intent of this question is unclear.*

- *Are you currently involved in a personal relationship which could affect your employment or cause embarrassment to this department?*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions to ensure all questions correspond directly to the minimum guidelines set forth in VA Code 15.2-1705, and our established eligibility criteria found on our [recruiting website](#). This specific question has been removed.*

Recommendation: Eliminate repetitive questioning on drug use. *Instead of asking applicants for an exhaustive list of prior drug use on the polygraph pre-interview, PWCPD can instead simply ask applicants whether the information they provided on the PHS with regard to drug use is accurate.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions to ensure all questions correspond directly to the minimum guidelines set forth in VA Code 15.2-1705, and our established eligibility criteria found on our [recruiting website](#). Any repetitive drug use questions have been removed. The Police Department instead verifies that the drug use information provided in the applicant's Personal Statement History (PHS) is accurate and complies with the established guidelines.*

Recommendation: PWCPD polygraphers should review each question in the polygraph pre-test interview to assess relevance and consistency with the eligibility criteria. *Polygraphers should provide justification to personnel bureau leaders as to why certain questions are necessary and how they are relevant to established eligibility criteria. Any questions that are determined not to be relevant should be revised or removed.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions to ensure all questions correspond directly to the minimum guidelines set forth in VA Code 15.2-1705, and our established eligibility criteria found on our [recruiting website](#). All questions deemed not relevant have been removed.*

Recommendation: The polygraph process should be subjected to an ongoing review, including a review of the questions being asked and the factors or decision points that result in applicants being rejected or dropping out of the recruitment process. A decision to reject a candidate should not be made by a single person, but rather by a diverse panel of PWCPD Personnel Bureau leaders such as those currently involved in the BQ process.

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the Polygraph pre-interview questions to ensure all questions correspond directly to the minimum guidelines set forth in VA Code 15.2-1705, and our established eligibility criteria found on our [recruiting website](#). All questions deemed not relevant have been removed. The Police Department has also expanded the BQ (Better Qualified) Review process to incorporate all steps in the hiring process. This review includes numerous members of the personnel bureau to reach a consensus on decisions to disqualify an applicant after the polygraph examination.*

APPLICANTS WHO COMPLETE THE BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

Recommendation: Continue to monitor data on disqualifications in the background investigation phase. *PWCPD should continue to collect and analyze data on the specific reasons applicants are disqualified during the background phase to determine whether any part of the process has an adverse effect on particular racial/ethnic groups. Adopting eSOPH software will assist with tracking of applicant data and reasons for disqualification by race/ethnicity and gender. If such disparities are discovered, PWCPD should consider whether areas of the background investigation phase should be revised.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department tracks data related to those disqualified during the Background Investigation phase of the hiring process and looks for any trends that indicate potential barriers to applicants. Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software, which will provide the ability to track this data in real-time and evaluate any questions that appear to have an adverse impact on specific groups.*

APPLICATION TRACKING AND DATA CHALLENGES

Recommendation: Adopt application tracking software. *PWCPD should adopt formal applicant tracking software that will allow for the tracking of applicants from the time they submit an initial application through each subsequent phase of the hiring process. This will allow PWCPD to accurately identify at which phases applicants are being disqualified, as well as any trends in race, ethnicity, gender, or other variables that may suggest opportunities for improvement. In addition, this software will allow for all applicant information, including the initial application and Personal History Statement, to be submitted via a single system. One example of such a software system, eSOPH, is being used by departments such as the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, DC, where it has dramatically reduced the agencies' data processing time.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department tracks data related to those disqualified during each phase of the hiring process and looks for any trends that indicate potential barriers to applicants. Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will provide the ability to track this data in real-time via a single system allowing the department to identify any trends that appear to have an adverse impact on specific groups.*



LYING, OMITTING, OR PROVIDING MISLEADING INFORMATION

Recommendation: Tighten rules and guidance for disqualifying candidates for omitting or providing misleading information. *As recommended on Page 27, PWCPD should consider the specific reasons candidates are disqualified for omitting or providing misleading information to determine whether these reasons are serious enough to warrant disqualification. Applicants may genuinely misremember information provided in earlier phases of the process, so providing inconsistent information does not necessarily indicate that the applicant is being dishonest. In general, if the information omitted is not in itself a disqualifying factor, it should not be grounds for disqualification.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department does not disqualify an applicant for omitting information during the application process as long as the information does not itself violate one of the primary eligibility requirements and was not omitted with the intent to mislead the background investigator.*

Recommendation: Look for racial/ethnic disparities in the data. *In collecting data on the reasons applicants are disqualified for lying, omitting, or providing misleading information, PWCPD should pay special attention to the types of reasons why individuals in various racial/ethnic groups are disqualified. For example, if disparities are found between racial/ethnic groups in the types of “integrity” issues identified, it could potentially be an indication of bias. PWCPD should also collect data on the specific phases of the process where applicants are disqualified for these reasons, to further isolate sources of the disparity.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department tracks data related to those disqualified for lying, omitting, or providing misleading information and looks for any trends that indicate potential barriers to applicants. Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software, which will provide the ability to track this data in real-time via a single system allowing the department to identify any trends that appear to have an adverse impact on specific groups.*

CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Recommendation: Consider whether being a suspect in a crime warrants disqualification. *PWCPD should consider whether being a suspect in a crime is sufficient to warrant disqualification, because applicants who are not convicted or even arrested may not meet the criteria stated in the eligibility requirements.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants. These updated eligibility guidelines can be found on our recruiting website at [recruiting website](#) along with the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705. While being a suspect in a crime is not an automatic disqualifier, specific circumstances related to criminal activity will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine an applicant’s eligibility.*

Recommendation: Tighten rules and guidance for very minor criminal histories. *PWCPD should consider the severity of various crimes in its decisions to disqualify a candidate. If an applicant's only criminal history is something minor such as "possession of a fake ID," for example, PWCPD should consider whether that is appropriate grounds for disqualification. Although it would be problematic if individuals have displayed a pattern of these behaviors, some behaviors that individuals engage in when they are young may not be reflective of their overall character. PWCPD should ensure eligibility requirements for criminal activity are clearly defined, so that decisions are consistent and not subject to variation due to personal preferences of PWCPD hiring personnel.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants. These updated eligibility guidelines can be found on our [recruiting website](#) along with the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705. An applicant's criminal history and specific circumstances related to criminal activity will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine an applicants' eligibility.*

WORK/EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Recommendation: Establish objective criteria for disqualification related to work/employment issues. *PWCPD should establish objective criteria for disqualification related to work/employment issues, and should ensure these are clearly laid out in the eligibility criteria. Any employment-related issues that are subject to interpretation should be reviewed by a diverse group of personnel bureau staff before a decision is made to disqualify an applicant. PWCPD should also review the specific reasons applicants have been disqualified for employment-related issues across various racial/ethnic groups. If disparities are observed in the reasons applicants are disqualified between various racial/ethnic groups, this may be an indication of potential bias. Ensuring that disqualification criteria are objective and consistent across reviewers and applicants will prevent against potential bias.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants. These updated eligibility guidelines can be found on our [recruiting website](#) along with the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705. An applicant's work history and specific circumstances related to employment issues will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine an applicant's eligibility. A review is conducted by numerous members of the personnel bureau to reach a consensus on decisions to disqualify an applicant for criteria related to work history.*



WITHDRAWALS AND NO CONTACT / NO SHOW

Recommendation: Avoid disqualifying applicants for missed appointments. *If applicants do not show up for the physical fitness test or other scheduled appointments, PWCPD should follow up with the applicant to determine what happened and attempt to reschedule the appointment. If multiple attempts are made to contact the applicant with no response, PWCPD will have no choice but to disqualify the applicant. But applicants should not be automatically disqualified after one missed appointment or contact.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department follows up with applicants who fail to show up to scheduled appointments by having recruiters or background investigators attempt to contact them via email and phone calls to determine the reason they missed the appointment and attempt to reschedule them. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software, which will provide the ability to send reminders to the applicant, as well as inquire as to the reasons they did not make scheduled appointments. Applicants are not automatically disqualified for missed appointments unless they do not respond to the department's attempts to reschedule.*

Recommendation: When applicants withdraw, try to find out why. *When applicants withdraw from the hiring process, PWCPD should follow up with these individuals to identify the reasons why they are withdrawing. This will help to identify any potential barriers to applicants throughout the hiring process.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department tracks data related to those who withdraw during each phase of the hiring process and looks for any trends that indicate potential barriers to applicants. Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software, which will provide the ability to track this data in real-time via a single system, allowing the department to identify any trends that appear to have an adverse impact on specific groups.*

FINANCES

Recommendation: Reconsider disqualification for financial issues. *Going forward, financial issues should not be the sole reason for disqualifying an applicant, especially given that members of minority groups are more likely to be adversely affected by financial issues.* PWCPD should review and consider the types of financial issues that are serious enough to result in disqualification. Any financial criteria should be objective and clearly defined. It is noteworthy that the Philadelphia City Council recently made it unlawful for law enforcement agencies to use applicants' credit scores or other credit-related information in hiring decisions.

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department does not disqualify applicants for previous financial issues or current debts and recognizes that some of these issues may be outside of the applicant's control. If an applicant has current financial issues, they are encouraged to provide proof of payment or a payment schedule for any collections, judgements, or liens they have incurred.*

CHARACTER

Recommendation: Require discussion before disqualifying an applicant for subjective character traits. Any concerns about an applicant's "maturity," "command presence," or other subjective character traits that are matters of interpretation **should be discussed with the entire personnel bureau staff before the decision is made to disqualify an applicant.** This could be done during the "Better Qualified Review" process described above. Further, PWCPD should provide clear documentation of the specific reasons and justification for disqualifying an applicant due to a lack of "maturity" or "command presence."

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department has made significant updates to the eligibility criteria for police officer applicants. This includes clarifying what character traits are relevant to the hiring process. Character traits deemed relevant to the hiring process include indicators of loyalty, responsibility, ability to function under stress, control of anger, maturity, and honesty. Examples of these traits include maintaining high standards of personal conduct such as not using one's position for personal gain, not sharing or releasing confidential information, not being unnecessarily confrontational in interactions with others, and being truthful and honest in dealings with others. Rarely is one fact a sufficient basis for disqualifying an applicant; rather, the background investigator investigates the circumstances surrounding each fact to gauge an applicants' suitability to continue in the process. A review of all the circumstances includes numerous members of the personnel bureau to reach a consensus on whether an applicant should advance to the next stage of the hiring process.

Recommendation: Do not disqualify candidates for actions of friends or family members or minor offenses. Minor offenses such as marijuana use, friends and/or family members' behavior, and "exposure to" marijuana should not be grounds for disqualification of a candidate. Candidates may not be able to control their exposure to drug use, especially by friends and family, and this should therefore not reflect poorly on the applicant.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department has conducted an extensive review of the hiring process to ensure all questions correspond directly to the minimum guidelines set forth in VA Code 15.2-1705, and our established eligibility criteria found on [recruiting website](#). The specific questions related to the actions of friends and family members have been removed.



CONTACT WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Recommendation: Do not consider broad “law enforcement contact” in hiring decisions. *PWCPD should not consider any contact with law enforcement in hiring decisions other than being a suspect or person of interest in a crime. Any other contact with law enforcement is not relevant and should not be grounds for disqualification. In addition, any law enforcement contact that results in disqualification of an applicant should be clearly documented as PWCPD is collecting data on applicants’ reasons for disqualification.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department has removed the general question asking about “any” law enforcement contact from the hiring process and only asks about previous arrests, convictions, or being detained by law enforcement as the suspect or target of an investigation. These remaining questions are relevant to the minimum guidelines set forth by VA Code 15.2-1705 and the department eligibility guidelines found on our [recruiting website](#). Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will provide the ability to better document reasons for applicant disqualifications.*

“OTHER”

Recommendation: Clearly specify reasons for disqualifications. *PWCPD should make sure to clearly document reasons applicants are disqualified, as opposed to making notes such as “see file.” This will allow for comprehensive data collection and analysis on reasons for disqualification. Adopting tracking software as recommended above will assist with improved documentation.*

Police Department Action Taken: *Effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software, which will provide the ability to better document reasons for applicant disqualifications and will provide the ability for comprehensive data collection via a single system, allowing the department to identify in real-time any trends that appear to have an adverse impact on specific groups.*

Recommendation: Missing information/documentation and rescheduling of appointments should not result in automatic disqualification of an applicant. *PWCPD should try to encourage applicants to move forward with the hiring process by following up with applicants about missing information and appointments.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department currently has background investigators follow up with applicants via email and phone calls to assist them in obtaining any missing information/documents or reschedule appointments if necessary. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software, which will provide the ability to send reminders to the applicant as well as allow them to submit documents online.*



SECTION III. REVIEW OF RECRUITING EFFORTS

Recommendation: Review data about how applicants learned about the job opportunity, to inform future recruiting efforts. *As discussed on page 37, PWCPD asks a question on the initial application form about how applicants learned about the job opportunity. This information is valuable and should be reviewed periodically to inform future recruiting efforts. Going forward, this information could be collected in applicant tracking software (discussed on pages 58-59), which would allow for easier collection and analysis of this data.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department continually reviews recruitment data sheets indicating where applicants learned about the job to measure the effectiveness of our outreach efforts. Additionally, effective July 1, 2021, the Police Department will be using eSOPH (Electronic Statement of Personal History) applicant tracking software which will provide real-time recruitment data to better guide our outreach efforts.*

SOCIAL MEDIA

Recommendation: Create social media accounts specifically for recruiting. *PWCPD should create social media accounts specifically for recruiting, distinct from the agency's main social media accounts. Doing so will help the department focus its messaging and engage with its target audience for recruiting, as opposed to the general public. For example, the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department maintains specific social media platforms for the recruiting and application process, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube accounts. These platforms are separate from the agency's traditional social media sites.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department is currently researching the ability to create recruiting-specific social media accounts separate from the Police Departments main accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The Police Department recently created a **recruiting-specific social media account on LinkedIn**.*

Recommendation: Consider targeted ads on social media. *Given that a large proportion of PWCPD's target recruiting audience (i.e., 18-29 year-olds) use Instagram PWCPD should consider using targeted ads on Instagram in its recruiting efforts. Many businesses and employers around the country use targeted ads to attract applicants. Targeted ads appear on the social media feeds of users who meet certain criteria selected by the advertiser. The criteria vary by platform, but can include age, geography, gender, job title, education, and interests. Ads and costs are fluid and customizable. PWCPD's Personnel Bureau should work with the Public Information Office to explore this possibility.*

Police Department Action Taken: *The Police Department is currently researching the ability to create targeted social media ads on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.*



Recommendation: Create short videos featuring officer's experience. PWCPD should consider having officers create short videos about what they like about being a PWCPD officer. These videos can be featured on social media or on the agency's YouTube page.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department is in the process of updating our recruiting videos in order to highlight officer's experiences, which will be posted on the department's YouTube page. Examples of previous videos that were posted to the department's YouTube page are:

- [What's Your Story Recruitment Video](#)
- [2018 PWCPD Recruitment Video](#)
- [2018 PWCPD Recruitment Video - Spanish](#)

Recommendation: Consider working with a marketing firm or local business college. PWCPD should identify local or regional marketing firms that can assist in the development of recruiting campaigns. Alternatively, PWCPD can seek out advice from organizations that have experience marketing to young adults. These include the military, local universities, and businesses. By creating an internship or student project with a local university, PWCPD can likely obtain marketing advice for little or no cost. For example, the Northern Virginia Community College Mathematics, Sciences, Technologies and Business Division, with campuses in Prince William County, has a program of study in marketing. The PWCPD could seek opportunities to partner with the college, seeking student and instructor input to continually improve the agency's promotion strategies.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department is currently researching working with a marketing firm to assist in expanding our recruiting campaigns.

YOUTUBE PAGE

Recommendation: Modify content as appropriate for different platforms. PWCPD should ensure that recruiting content is posted and easily accessible on a variety of platforms. However, PWCPD should keep in mind that content may need to be modified for use on different platforms. For example, the instructional videos are appropriate for YouTube and the recruiting website. However, they would not be as suitable for Facebook, where short, visually interesting, captioned videos are most effective.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department is currently researching the ability to create recruiting-specific social media accounts separate from the Police Departments main accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube and will ensure posted content is modified to fit the specific platform.

RECRUITING WEBSITE

Recommendation: Ensure website is easy to follow. PWCPD should ensure that the text content on their recruiting website is succinct and visually appealing. Potential applicants should be able to quickly understand the process holistically and its stages. For example, the Baltimore Police Department's recruiting website uses bold colors, images, videos, and interactivity to convey information in sections that the user can navigate via scrolling or with a pop-in table of contents. The "apply now" button is prominently displayed in the top-right corner, and is always visible regardless of how far the user has scrolled on the page.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department is continually evaluating the effectiveness of our [recruitment website](#) to ensure it is easy to navigate and provides all necessary information to applicants.

ENGAGING YOUTH

Recommendation: Offer incentives for recruiting applicants. PWCPD should consider offering cash incentives to officers for recruiting successful applicants. This strategy has been used successfully by Tucson, AZ Police Department. Officers receive \$1,000 if the applicant makes it through the hiring process to the academy, another \$1,000 when the applicant graduates from the academy, and another \$1,000 when they pass probation. This encourages a mentorship approach where officers are encouraged to mentor recruits throughout the training and onboarding process.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department is currently researching the ability to offer recruiting incentives to officers who refer applicants to the department.

RECRUITING FEMALE OFFICERS

Recommendation: Develop strategies for advancing women in policing. This should include changes in physical fitness standards to align the requirements more closely to tasks that officers often perform in the field. Information about these changes should be made available on the department's website and other channels.

PWCPD also should consider organizing a working group composed of former and current female law enforcement officers to help develop recruitment strategies targeted at women. For example, the National Institute for Women in Trades, Technology, and Science (IWITTS) has suggested efforts such as holding women-in-policing career fairs, and developing media platforms that promote and feature female officers. The Tucson, AZ and Albuquerque Police Departments have increased their number of female recruits using these strategies.

Police Department Action Taken: The Police Department is developing new strategies for outreach to female applicants. This includes "Women in Law Enforcement" community/hiring events and career fairs at all-women colleges.