

Much like the U.S. Marine Corps, the Weld County Sheriff's Office is looking for a few good men and women. Have you ever wondered what it takes for a career in law enforcement?

While our servicemen and women go overseas to protect our freedoms, sheriff's deputies fight to preserve your rights and freedoms at home. We fight the war on drugs. We battle to keep violent criminals who commit heinous crimes, such as assaults, murders and rapes, off the streets and in prison. It takes the best of the best to do this job, and just like the Marine Corps, not everyone is cut out for this type of work. Due to the rigorous testing process, only 8.8 percent of all candidates who start the hiring process end up working for the Weld County Sheriff's Office.

The extensive process begins when a person registers for the test. In these technologically advanced times, that's usually done through the sheriff's office Web site. The applicant must pass each level of the testing process before moving to the next phase.

Phase One is the written exam that measures an applicant's reading, writing and observation skills. If an applicant passes Phase One, an oral interview comes next. Candidates are asked "what if" type questions and given real-life scenarios. This helps us judge the reasoning and cognitive skills of the individual.

A common fallacy is that an individual can make bad choices today and still be eligible to work in law enforcement tomorrow. Those bad choices affect the next two phases of the testing process. The polygraph exam and the background investigation are where we lose many of our applicants. The sheriff's office holds integrity as its highest value -- the polygraph helps us determine if the applicant has that same value. The background check is comprehensive. Prior work history is examined and personal references and family members are interviewed. Criminal history records checks are completed as well as a look at the applicant's financial history. With the enormous popularity of Internet networking sites, we have added Google, MySpace and Facebook searches as part of the background investigation.

With all of that, the process still is not complete.

The next two steps are the physical and psychological examination. The physical examinations include a non-intrusive medical examination. Following a clean bill of health, a licensed psychologist measures the applicant's psychological well-being and general aptitude.

The last step before the person is sworn in as a deputy is a review of the entire process. The Internal Affairs Commander, one of our two Bureau Chiefs, and I evaluate each applicant's file. It's not surprising that out of 500 who begin the process, the sheriff's office may hire as few as 10 to 12.

Despite the rigorous screening, we know the system is not foolproof. So we continue to test and evaluate each applicant. Every jail or patrol deputy that's newly hired must go

through a five-week, in-house academy and a 14-week, on-the-job training program. At any time, if the person is not responding to the training, then he or she is terminated. We go through this exhaustive process for one simple reason: When people see deputies doing their duty, they can have confidence knowing only the best were chosen to serve the residents of Weld County.

For those who do make it through the screening process, the rewards of a career in law enforcement are great. The average length of service in our patrol division is 11 years. I've been in law enforcement for 29 years, 24 of which have been at the Weld County Sheriff's Office. In my opinion, there is no greater organization.

I am proud of the people who work for the sheriff's office. If you want to be a member of our family and believe you have the strength of character necessary to be a Weld County sheriff's deputy, we challenge you to begin the screening process. Visit our Web site at www.weldsheriff.com for more information.

(Published in Greeley Tribune Wednesday, April 9, 2008)