

# **20 Jobs You Can Get With A Criminal Justice Degree:**

- 1. Probation/Parole Officer**
- 2. Forensic Science Technician**
- 3. Police Officer**
- 4. Correctional Officer**
- 5. Private Detective**
- 6. Fish and Game Warden**
- 7. Security Guard**
- 8. State Trooper**
- 9. Crime Scene Investigator**
- 10. Computer Forensics Specialists**
- 11. Fraud Investigator**
- 12. FBI Agent**
- 13. CIA Agent**
- 14. US Postal Inspector**
- 15. Immigration and Customs**
- 16. DEA Agent**
- 17. Secret Service Agent**
- 18. US Marshal**
- 19. Victims Advocate**
- 20. Police Dispatcher**



# Probation/Parole Officer:

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics the 2010 median wage for probation officers is \$47,200 per year, with 18% job growth expected through 2020. Probation officers monitor parolees released from the corrections system to ensure that they abide by the terms of their probation while assisting parolees with adjusting to life after release using specialized treatment techniques. A probation officer is typically assigned a case load of parolees, with whom they interact at the parolees' homes and places of work as well as at the office.<sup>1</sup> This gives probation officers the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Those interested in the criminal justice system or social work may find a career as a probation officer to be very rewarding.



## Parole Officer Career Guide

Parole officers work with people who have been convicted of crimes and who have been in prison. They supervise the offenders on parole by establishing personal contact with the offenders and their families. Some parole officers may visit offenders in their homes. They may also work with community organizations, such as churches or other religious organizations, groups within the neighborhood, and other residents to help check on the offender's behavior.

### Parole Officer Career Description, Duties, and Common Tasks

Parole officers can help offenders enter substance abuse programs and can assist them with vocational retraining so they can obtain employment. They attend parole hearings and make suggestions to the parole board based on their supervision of and interaction with the offender. Individual parole officers commonly have heavy workloads of between 70 to 130 active cases at a time. Parole officers may encounter dangerous situations in their employment, as they work with convicted criminals on a daily basis.

### How to Become a Parole Officer: Requirements and Qualifications

Most state and federal parole agencies require that the applicant hold a bachelor's degree. Typically, the bachelor's degree will be in the areas of criminal justice, psychology, social work, correction, sociology, counseling, and business administration. Federal parole officers usually have an additional requirement of one year of graduate work in social work, counseling, or psychology. Most parole officers must be at least 20 years old. They must have a valid driver's license and must attend required training sessions and certification courses. Parole officers must also have a license to carry a firearm in the state for which they work, must undergo a background investigation and drug screening, and must pass a psychological exam. Some states also require two years work experience in corrections or in a counseling setting. Applicants must have knowledge of computers and laws and regulations regarding corrections.

# Parole Officer Training

New parole officers typically go through state or federal government-run training upon being hired. After successfully completing training, the rookie parole officer generally must train with a supervisor, for as long as a year, before being able to work independently. Additional training is often necessary for those officers who specialize in a particular population, such as sex offenders or juveniles.

## Other Helpful Skills and Experience

Parole officers will work with a variety of people – offenders, law enforcement, and the community – and must be able to effectively communicate, to actively listen, to teach others, and to effectively manage their time.

## Examples of Possible Job Titles for this Career

- Community supervision officer
- Parole officer
- Probation officer

## Career Opportunities and Employers

Parole officers typically work for local, state or the federal government. Promotions to higher positions are generally based on an officer's professional experience and often require a master's degree.

## Parole Officer Salary and Outlook

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the median pay for probation officers and correctional treatment specialists to be \$48,190 per year in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The top 10% earn more than \$83,410.<sup>1</sup> The current BLS employment projection for probation officers and correctional treatment specialists is a decrease of 1% from 2012 to 2022.<sup>1</sup> However, the BLS predicts open positions should be “plentiful” as some officers retire and others leave the field every year.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What type of work schedule is typical for a parole officer?**

Parole officers typically work a 40 hour work week but they must be prepared to be on call and to work overtime as necessary.

### **Is certification necessary to work as a parole officer?**

Generally, you do not need special certification to work as a parole officer.

### **What is the difference between a probation officer and a parole officer?**

Probation officers work with those offenders who have been sentenced to probation rather than prison. Parole officers work with offenders who have served time in prison. In some states, officers work with those on probation and on parole.

# Forensic Science Technician

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the annual salary of forensic science technicians at \$55,660, though the average salary is higher in states with high demand for these specialists like California, Virginia, and Illinois, where the average is between \$61,040 and \$74,050. Aspiring forensic science technicians can get a head start on the training required for this career as early as high school with a focus on science and math curriculums,<sup>2</sup> but by obtaining a forensic science degree, individuals can enter this exciting field at any age. Forensic science technicians work in labs, government agencies, hospitals, courtrooms, and other places where the ability to reconstruct events based on clues such as hair samples, broken material, and fingerprints is needed.<sup>2</sup> This is an exciting career for analytical minds with an interest in science.



## Forensic Science Technician Career Guide

A forensic science technician handles evidence from crime scenes for police departments. These technicians are essential in helping to catch, convict, or acquit suspects in criminal matters. Forensic science technicians collect evidence and analyze the evidence in a laboratory and summarize their findings in written reports. They often testify in court, particularly if they have specialized areas of expertise, such as fingerprinting, biochemistry, DNA analysis, blood spatter patterns, chromatography analysis, or handwriting analysis.

## Forensic Science Technician Description, Duties, and Common Tasks

When forensic science technicians enter a crime scene, they must meticulously collect and safeguard the evidence. They may also assist law enforcement officers in recreating the crime by contemplating the association between the evidence collected. They use the laboratory to decipher the evidence collected at the crime scene and often have to classify unknown substances and objects to determine if these substances and objects are connected to the victim and the suspect. They may run chemical tests and other analyses in order to determine the origin or condition of objects. Forensic science technicians can use DNA typing on blood or bodily fluids for identification purposes. They may also use their knowledge of ballistics to determine the type of gun that fired a particular bullet at a crime. Once they have made their findings, forensic science technicians will detail their findings in written reports.

**Did you know?** The FBI Crime Lab is one of the largest forensic labs in the world and has carried out more than one million forensic examinations. It is also a leader in innovation and develops new techniques that are applied in the forensic field.

*Source: HowStuffWorks*

## How to Become a Forensic Science Technician: Requirements and Qualifications

To become a forensic science tech, there are several education and other key requirements. Forensic science techs typically have a bachelor's degree, and applicants who have graduated from applied sciences technology programs and who have been extensively trained on using laboratory equipment will have an edge. According

to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the vast majority of aspiring forensic science technicians will earn a “bachelor’s degree in the natural sciences and a master’s degree in forensic science.” Techs must also possess the ability to think analytically. They must be able to handle stress while working individually and as a member of a team. They must also be able to effectively communicate the results of their findings both orally and in their written work. Additionally, they need to know how to collect evidence, without contaminating it, at a crime scene. They must also have knowledge of computers for data entry and analysis programs and have a working knowledge of the scientific method. Finally, forensic science technicians must be familiar with the legal process and court proceedings as they regularly testify in criminal cases.

## **Forensic Science Technician Job Training**

Many forensic science techs first become police officers, according to the BLS, and will have completed mandatory police academy training. New forensic science technicians will typically assist seasoned technicians during on the job training, providing them with hands-on experience.

## **Other Helpful Skills and Experience**

Forensic science technicians should have the ability to use mathematics to solve problems, to communicate effectively both written and orally, and to be able to find solutions to complex problems. Completing an internship in forensic science and possessing a basic knowledge of laboratory equipment and safety procedures are also helpful.

## **Examples of Possible Job Titles For This Career**

- Crime Scene Analyst
- Crime Scene Investigator
- Criminalist
- Forensic Scientist

## **Career Opportunities and Employers**

Forensic science technicians may work for local, state, or federal law enforcement agencies, crime labs, morgues, the coroner’s office, and hospitals. Techs may also offer their expertise as an independent forensic science consultant. A forensic science technician may work in the field, in the laboratory, and in a legal setting.

## **Forensic Science Technician Salary and Outlook**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median salary for a forensic science technician is \$52,840 per year.<sup>1</sup> The top ten percent of forensic science technicians earn more than \$85,210.<sup>1</sup> Forensic science technicians who are employed by federal agencies usually receive higher pay. The BLS predicts modest employment growth of 6% for forensic science technicians between 2012 and 2022. How many positions that open or are created will depend largely upon local, state, and federal budgets. Those entering the workforce will find strong competition for open forensic science technician positions.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About This Career**

**Since forensic science is so competitive, how can I increase my chances of finding a job?**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics asserts that those individuals with a master’s degree in forensic science will have an easier time finding a position as a technician than those individuals with only a bachelor’s degree.

**What type of work schedule does a forensic science tech have?**

Those techs who opt for a position in a laboratory generally work Monday through Friday and may be called to the lab outside of business hours if a case needs immediate attention. Forensic science techs who work in the field can expect to work during the day, at night, or on weekends. They must be on call and must go to the crime scene whenever called.

**Is there room for advancement as a forensic science technician?**

Yes. According to the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, a forensic science tech may move up to the position of laboratory director or go on to teach at community colleges and four-year universities, with the right experience and education.



# Police Officer:

Demand for police officers is expected to grow by 7%, with an average annual salary of \$55,010 reported by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Police officers are on the front line of the US criminal justice system, working not just to apprehend criminals but to prevent crime through community outreach and visible presence efforts. Every city and municipality from rural communities to metropolises like New York needs a police force, which offers job security for those accepting a position as a police officer. Successful police forces invest in a great deal of training for their officers beyond the initial degree and certification; such training includes cultural diversity awareness, legal ethics, and law enforcement technologies.<sup>3</sup> This is a demanding and fast paced career with personal and professional growth opportunities.



## Police Officer Career Guide

Police officers play an important role in their communities throughout the United States. They go through rigorous training at the police academy to prepare for their responsibility of protecting the lives and the property in their community. Working in law enforcement requires physical and mental strength as officers deal with stress and dangerous situations on a regular basis. In fact, injuries and illness is more common in law enforcement than in any other field, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### Police Officer Career Description: Common Description, Duties, and Tasks

The job of a law enforcement officer is to enforce the local, state and federal laws within the officer's jurisdiction. The law enforcement officer is the front line defense against criminal activity in counties, towns and cities across the country. They are charged with the task of protecting the public, preventing criminal activity, investigating crimes and assisting in the apprehension and conviction of violators. Responsibilities of the law enforcement officer include public safety, first response for motor vehicle accidents and medical emergencies, public relations, enforcement of criminal statutes, service of court processes, and court case preparation and presentation. They provide public service and safety through routine patrols, school education programs, citizen police academies and other programs designed to help the communities become more involved in the prevention of crime in their neighborhoods. Law enforcement officers also enforce traffic laws and conduct safety inspections on roads and highways and alert the proper agencies when there are conditions that present a hazard. They are also a key element in the prosecution of offenders through the proper collection of evidence, presentation of case in court and locating and preparing witnesses.

Once police cadets finish their training period and start working for a department, they generally specialize in a particular area, such as fingerprint identification or chemical training. Some officers work with emergency response teams or SWAT teams, and others may work in the court system and in jails. One recent movement in policing is the idea of "community policing," in which police officers fight crime by building trust within their patrol neighborhood.

Criminal Justice Degree Schools has more information on becoming a police officer available at our law enforcement degree resource, a law enforcement leader interview series and officer requirements for police departments by metro area.

**Did You Know?:** Prior to 1960, less than 5% of law enforcement officers in the United States had any college experience. Today, it is estimated that more than half have a college degree.<sup>1</sup>

## **How to Become a Police Officer: Requirements and Recruitment:**

The educational requirements for becoming a police officer vary by state and, in most cases, by city department. The minimal level of education often accepted by most police departments is a high school diploma or a G.E.D certification. However, many departments around the country require at least a couple of years of college coursework, such as an associate's degree in criminal justice.

Even if it's not a specific requirement in the hiring process, having some college experience or a bachelor's degree works strongly in an aspiring police officer's favor when applying for a position and throughout their career. There is a lot of competition within the law enforcement sector and those with college experience generally stand out during the hiring process. Additionally, a college degree is usually a requirement for many promotional opportunities once a candidate is accepted into the force.

There are additional requirements an individual must meet to become a police officer. A candidate must be a US citizen, be 21 years old, and must meet rigorous physical criteria. Physical criteria includes having stamina, agility, adequate vision and hearing, and physical and mental strength. In many cases, candidates who speak a second language are preferred. Further, those with military police experience are often placed at the front of the line in the hiring process.

Working as a police officer means protecting a community, but it also means having a certain level of respect for working with the public. Future police officers must have a personable demeanor and should enjoy working with people. Applicants must be honest, responsible, and demonstrate integrity. Backgrounds are investigated during the interview process and most applicants are asked to undergo polygraph exams and to submit to drug testing.

## **Police Officer Job Training**

Newly hired police officers go through an extensive training period. Recruits are usually trained at a police academy for approximately three months. Police academy training includes classroom instruction on topics such as state and city laws, legal processes, and accident or crime investigation. Police officer recruits also receive hands-on training in traffic control, weapons use, first aid, and emergency response.

Aspiring police officers must pass a written exam before being eligible to serve as a police officer. The training program is physically intensive, and the written exam is comprehensive, designed to test how well the candidates have understood the curriculum. Final scores are a major factor in the hiring process. In fact, according to Norman Hall's Police Exam Preparation Book, in the extremely competitive law enforcement field, "Civil Service personnel have the luxury of screening only top-ranking applicants and can afford to pass up other qualified applicants." Although passing the exam might be acceptable, scoring above the rest of the cadets is what may make or break your future career as a police officer.

After police training academy, officers are generally assigned to a senior officer for an on-the-job training period where they will learn how to apply their training in real life scenarios.

## **Other Helpful Skills and Experience**



A desire to learn, a willingness to listen and to ask questions, and respect for authority are all important to a successful career as a police officer. In addition, officers must be able to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing, must have empathy toward others, and must possess sound judgement. Candidates with previous military or law enforcement experience and those who are bilingual or multilingual often have an advantage when it comes to hiring.

## Examples of Possible Job Titles for This Career

- Deputy sheriff
- Law enforcement officer
- Law officer
- Patrolman
- Patrol officer
- Peace officer
- Police officer

## Career Opportunities and Employers

Police officers often work for the local, state, or federal government. Some may also work as officers on college and university campuses. Rookie police officers typically have to work their way up the ranks from patrol officer to such coveted positions as homicide detective.

## Police Officer Salary and Outlook

Salaries range significantly, depending on whether a police officer works in a rural area, an urban setting, or in a large city. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median annual salary of \$56,980 a year for police officers and detectives.<sup>2</sup> The top 10% of police officers earn more than \$93,450.<sup>2</sup> Earnings may increase significantly with overtime. Police officers typically enjoy benefits such as paid vacation, sick leave, medical and life insurance, and uniform allowances.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects job growth of 5% nationally for police officers from 2012-2022.<sup>2</sup> This projected growth is on the low side for such a typically stable occupation. However, this outlook depends heavily on city and state budgets, which have recently been fluctuating. The low rate of projected growth will create a more competitive demand for police officer applicants who hold a bachelor's degree. Additionally, prior experience in law enforcement or military experience is also heavily valued, as well as those aspiring police officers who speak more than one language.

## Top Paying States for Police and Sheriff Patrol Officers:

State	Employment	Average Annual Salary
New Jersey	21,130	\$88,220
California	68,340	\$86,040
Alaska	1,100	\$73,990
New York	50,390	\$70,670
Washington	8,160	\$70,640

*\*Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics as of May 2013.*

# Correctional Officer:

Correctional officers, who work primarily within jails and prisons to supervise and assist those convicted of crimes, average a salary of \$39,020 per year according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Correctional officers are needed at the local, state, and federal levels as each judicial body maintains separate incarceration systems. Less pre-career training is needed for correctional officers than for other careers within the justice system because correctional officers receive qualification and on the

job training on a regular basis to ensure their safety and that of a prison population. The focus for correctional officers in recent years has shifted from one of “guarding” prisoners to one of rehabilitating prisoners by enhancing their treatment programs while incarcerated.<sup>4</sup> Degrees, certifications, and/or past experience in social work or criminal justice will help those interested in starting a career as a correctional officer.



## Corrections Officer Job Description & Career Outlook

Corrections officers, also known as correctional officers and detention deputies, are responsible for supervising people who either have been arrested and are being held for trial or have been convicted of a crime and are serving a sentence in a jail, reformatory, or penitentiary. Corrections officers are responsible first and foremost for maintaining security of the facility and to guard against escapes by the prisoners, assaults between prisoners and assaults on other corrections officers by prisoners, and general disturbances in the corrections setting.

Occasionally, corrections officers conduct searches of inmates and their cells. They typically inspect all areas of the institution for safety and security; they may also inspect inmates' incoming and outgoing mail. They only have these law enforcement responsibilities inside the location where they work; they do not have any law enforcement responsibilities out in the community, as do police officers. Corrections officers document the happenings inside the institution consistently; it is important that they communicate information about the behavior of inmates and anything unusual that happens during their shift. Corrections officers may work either armed or unarmed, depending on the institution's security level. A corrections degree from an accredited school will help set you up for success as a corrections officer.

## Corrections Officer Job Requirements

For people who want to become a corrections officer, a high school diploma or GED is required although most employers favor an associate's or bachelor's degree. For a federal corrections job, corrections officers must have at least a bachelor's degree and three years of work experience in a related field such as supervision or counseling. Law enforcement or military experience might also meet the requirements for this job. Applicants for a position as a corrections officer must be at least 18-21 years old (depending on location), be a U.S. citizen, and have no felony convictions. Once hired, corrections officers participate in a training academy and then have a period of on-the-job training. This training includes communication skills, interpersonal relations, firearms training, procedures for custody and security, self-defense, and guidelines and restrictions that are placed on them by law.

Working in a correctional facility can be a challenge. Corrections officers must be in good health and have sound judgment and the ability to make quick, appropriate decisions. They may be required to pass a written exam, go through a background check, and submit to periodic drug screenings. Corrections officers work in potentially dangerous situations; this occupation has a high rate of injuries that occur on the job.

## **Corrections Officer Salary and Benefits**

As of 2012, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a median annual salary of \$38,970 for correctional officers.<sup>1</sup> In addition to salary, typical benefits for corrections officers include health insurance, retirement benefits, and a uniform allowance.

## **Corrections Officer Career Outlook**

Job opportunities in corrections in upcoming years appear fair. The demand is expected to increase slightly over the next decade, taking into account population growth, rising incarceration rates, longer sentences for criminals, and the retirement and transfer into other occupations of existing corrections officers. The BLS projects job growth for correctional officers to be about 5% from 2012-2022, slower than the average occupation.<sup>1</sup>

## **Youth Correctional Officers**

Youth correctional officers work with minors incarcerated in a variety of federal, state, county and local juvenile detention centers, including overnight holding or short-term facilities, various treatment centers, specialized work camps and prison facilities. Ensuring the safety and security of the incarcerated minors is one of the main functions of juvenile correctional officers. Officers must deal with any emergencies, while upholding the facility's rules, guidelines, offender rehabilitation and treatment programs. The young offenders under incarceration are not all violent, convicted criminals; juvenile correction officers must show strong communication and interpersonal skills when dealing with their young charges.

The job requirements for youth correctional officers can vary greatly, based on state and local hiring guidelines. At the very least, correctional officers in youth facilities will need a high school diploma, and possibly one to two years of community college courses. Many facilities require that a candidate have an undergraduate degree in a related field, such as law enforcement or criminal justice, psychology or social work. Often, facilities will provide additional, specialized training for newly hired officers.

The tasks performed by juvenile correctional officers include overseeing the youth housed inside the facility, and during any necessary transportation. They provide assistance, as needed, with therapy or counseling sessions, and the dispensing of medications or other treatments. Completion of various reports, and the periodic updating of offender records are other common duties. Correctional officers will also be involved in routine checks of the facility for illegal drugs or contraband items. Incarcerated juvenile offenders may be violent or disturbed, and the correctional officers overseeing them must calmly handle a variety of situations as they arise, including escape or suicide attempts, fires, fights among inmates, or population riots.

# Private Detective:

While they may assist public detectives and local police forces, private detectives and investigators also take on cases in the private realm that do not involve a criminal aspect, adding variety to daily work while earning an average salary of \$48,610 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Private detectives are often hired to do background checks and uncover information related to divorce cases, worker's compensation claims, and other work similar to that of a public detective. Knowledge of

forensics and the law as it applies to collecting evidence and surveillance is a must in this field,<sup>5</sup> which is why most private detectives have a degree in criminal justice as well as some experience working as a detective or officer in the public sector.



## Private Investigator or PI Job Description & Career Outlook

The role of private investigator has been romanticized in many television shows and movies, and although the job contains many fascinating aspects, the work is serious and important. Private investigators are often hired to locate people who have gone missing, obtain information that is confidential or hidden in some way, and participate in solving crimes.

There are many activities that the job description of a private investigator encompasses. A Private Investigator or PI may conduct surveillance and background investigations on individuals. They may study crime scenes to search for clues. They may report information to the authorities and testify in court. Some Private Investigators are actually employed by companies to do undercover work, to conduct background checks and pre-employment verification, to escort valuable property from place to place, or to guard certain important people. These investigators uncover facts about the legal, financial, and personal matters of people of interest.

The work purposes of private investigators are varied, as are the methods that they use in their fact-finding endeavors. As technology has advanced, much of the work done by PI's has turned to electronic sources. You may find a PI recovering deleted e-mails and files or conducting searches of databases for information about an individual. PI's may also conduct surveillance and interview people related to a case.

## Become a Private Investigator: Education & Other Requirements

Becoming a Private Investigator is a less structured path. In terms of education and training, there is not a formal educational process. However, a degree in criminal justice is a very fitting choice as the might be interested in becoming a PI due to the coursework. Often, people who have worked as law enforcement officers previously become PI's, and their experience in policing is valuable. So, many private investigators learn "on the job", through experience. However, some PI's do enter the profession after earning a college degree. Although there are no formal educational requirements, most states require private investigators to obtain a license. The licensing requirements vary significantly from state to state. But those planning to build their own business as Private Investigator will likely find more traction with credentials to show potential clients.

As important as education for private investigators is the professional disposition that they have. A PI must be assertive, unafraid of confrontation, and possess effective communication skills (including the ability to interrogate well). A PI must pay close attention to detail, in the event that he or she is required to document the steps of a properly conducted investigation in court. They must be willing to work an irregular schedule, including nights, weekends, and holidays.

## **Private Investigator Salaries**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the annual median salary for private detectives and investigators is \$45,740 per year as of 2012.<sup>1</sup> The top 10% earn more than \$79,790.<sup>1</sup> The salaries of private investigators vary greatly according to the employer, the PI's specialty and the geographic area in which they work.

## **Private Investigator Career Outlook**

The occupational outlook for private investigators is expected to grow about average compared to the average occupation. The BLS projects job growth of 11% for private detectives and investigators between 2012-2022.<sup>1</sup> This is a result of the increased demand for security, the need to protect confidential information, and increased litigation.

# Fish and Game Warden:

For those who enjoy the outdoors and an active lifestyle, the average annual salary of a fish and game warden, estimated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics at \$55,670, is a generous reward for enjoying what comes naturally. Fish and game wardens work in forest preserves, public waterways, national parks, and other protected recreational and conservational areas to ensure that the wildlife and habitat are protected and visitors are kept safe. Demand is highest for fish and game wardens in states with many busy parks and natural areas, such as Texas and Florida.



This position uniquely combines the knowledge areas of biology and law enforcement in a challenging career,<sup>6</sup> where certifications in criminal justice with classes in forensics or biology will be helpful.

## How to Become a Fish and Game Warden

Fish and game wardens or conservation officers are peace officers that are commissioned in the state in which they perform their job duties. They ensure that the Fish and Wildlife Code in their state is enforced, and they also implement the fishing, boating and hunting laws of the state and any federal laws that pertain to these activities. Duties include seizing items that are related to infringements of the Fish and Wildlife Code, including fish, game, or illegal equipment. They also assist other law enforcement groups when wildlife, such as cougars, bears, or coyotes, inadvertently wander into residential areas. They also assist in search and rescue operations. Fish and game wardens are uniformed officers who carry firearms.

## Fish and Game Warden Requirements

The age requirement for fish and game wardens is 21 years of age in most states; however, the minimum age in some states is 18 years of age. They must have a bachelor's degree, but some states will waive this education requirement if the applicant has a two-year associate's degree program in addition to law enforcement experience or full-time fish and/or wildlife experience. As there are usually more applicants for fish and game warden positions than there are job openings, a four-year degree can give an applicant an edge over other applicants. Once a person is selected to become a fish and game warden, he or she undergoes further study at a training academy for approximately 3 to 12 months.

In addition to a degree, fish and game wardens must also be in good physical shape, familiarize themselves with the outdoors and the laws contained in the Fish and Wildlife Code, and study law enforcement policy and procedures. As this is a law enforcement position, expect a background check and polygraph in most states.

## How to Become a Fish and Game Warden

1. To become a Game Warden, you must have or get the right education level for your state.
2. Understand if you qualify for other dimensions outlined (e.g., minimum age by state requirements).
3. Contact your state's Department of Fish and Game, e.g., <http://wdfw.wa.gov/enforcement/careers/howtoapply.html>.
4. Request free info from a school below if you need to attain the minimum education requirement. Featured schools have online programs for best flexibility of working while getting your degree.



# Fish and Game Warden Salary

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that fish and game wardens earn an average annual wage of \$50,470.<sup>1</sup>  
The top 90 percentile earn an annual wage of \$71,510.<sup>1</sup>

# Security Guard:

Security guards are in demand wherever there are people or property to protect, which is why the Bureau of Labor Statistics is projecting 18% job growth in this industry over the next eight years. Private security guards patrol the areas where they are assigned for unusual or suspicious activity and make sure that all safety guidelines enacted by their employers are enforced. Security guards work in concert with law enforcement and the armed forces to deter crime and ensure the safety of the communities in which they work.<sup>7</sup> Many private employers in need of security guards offer training and flexible scheduling as part of this rewarding career.



## Security Guard Career Guide

The main job of a security guard is, as the title suggests, to ensure the safety of both people or property. A security guard patrols and monitors for any incidents of theft or violence in the building or area in which he or she has been assigned duty, answers alarms, and apprehends individuals that are a security threat.

Many large organizations hire not only security guards, but a security director, whose job it is to manage all of the guards and the security system at large. In short, a security guard provides safety for the employer by guarding against any law violations and disturbances that could result in a loss to the client.

## Security Guard Career Description, Duties, and Common Tasks

Depending on the setting, a security guard's duties may vary significantly. In some instances, a security guard is static, meaning that he or she stays in the same location for a number of hours, monitoring closed-circuit monitors of security cameras. A security guard might be asked to monitor employees as they enter and exit, so they may be in a static position at the entrance to the building. In mobile security positions, the guard may patrol and monitor on foot or in cars. Security guards may be armed or unarmed officers. They patrol and inspect property to protect it from fire, theft, vandalism or other criminal activities. They communicate closely with area law enforcement, fire departments, or emergency medical personnel. Security officers may also interview witnesses and testify in court.

Besides monitoring for security purposes, a security guard also has to document – usually daily – the activities that occurred, including any disturbances. These reports are a way for the client to determine any damages that resulted from the disturbance. Security guards notify other authorities in the case of emergency (like the police or fire department), and they check lights, alarm systems, windows, and doors to ensure that all are secure and in working order.

## How to Become a Security Guard

Most security guard jobs are entry-level, and typically require a high school diploma. A candidate must possess the ability to make sound judgments and work independently and in cooperation others. Excellent security

guards are also able to think quickly and critically, and exercise good judgment in potentially explosive situations. Once hired, a prospective security guard usually has to participate in training. In some states, security guards are required to obtain a certificate that shows they have received training. Individuals who are seeking an edge in hiring can pursue additional education such as an associate's degree in criminal justice. In addition to the training, a security guard must have knowledge of public safety and security, be mindful of customer and public service, be able to communicate well orally and in writing (knowledge of a second language is a plus), and have knowledge of laws and regulations that govern the security field.

## **Career Opportunities and Potential Employers**

Most security officers work for the private sector. Depending on the company's specific needs, the job of a security officer can vary greatly. Many businesses employ security guards, including banks, museums, hospitals, companies and industries, office buildings, nightclubs, and stores. The types of security guard includes retail loss prevention, armored car guards (who protect money and valuables transported from one location to another), gaming surveillance officers, and bouncers. Some security guards go on to become police or law enforcement officers and study while working full time by pursuing an online associate's or bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

## **Security Guard Salary**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that security guards earn a median annual wage of \$24,020 per year.<sup>1</sup> As a security guard becomes more experienced, he or she may earn a higher position, such as security director. Those seeking such advancement often have a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

## **Security Guard Career Outlook**

The BLS projects jobs for security guards to grow 12% from 2012-2022, about as fast as average for all occupations.<sup>1</sup>

# State Trooper:

State troopers work on state highways, ensuring that all state and federal vehicle laws are met. This includes well known laws such as speeding and seatbelt use, but state troopers are also responsible for enforcing lesser known laws, such as those regulating the use, size, and equipment of commercial vehicles such as semi-trucks. State troopers also assist local and federal law enforcement in searching for and apprehending wanted criminals, detecting signs of illegal activity, and preventing terrorism.<sup>8</sup> These professionals earn roughly the same salary as other police officers, with a median wage of \$55,010 reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. However, highly trained or experienced state troopers may command a higher salary, especially in higher risk metropolitan areas.



## State Trooper Career Outlook & Description

Each state has a force that is dedicated to traffic safety and the enforcement of motor vehicle laws. The officers who perform these tasks are known as state troopers. State troopers, state patrol or highway patrol have jurisdiction and authority to affect an arrest of anyone in violation of the laws of the particular state in which they work. Their actual working title is dependent upon the state in which they work. Some state troopers are referred to as State Highway Patrol, some as Highway Patrol and others as State Patrol.

The primary task of the state trooper is to enforce vehicle safety laws on the areas highways and interstates. They are first responders at accident scenes and conduct accident investigations. State troopers prepare court reports and testify in courts. State troopers have the authority to enforce any of the laws of the state in which they are employed. Other tasks include public education, heavy motor vehicle law enforcement (such as 18-wheelers and other shipping or large capacity vehicles on state highways and interstates), and public safety. In rural areas or areas with small police forces, state troopers are often the back-up for local and county officers.

## How to Become a State Trooper

State troopers are uniformed, sworn law enforcement officers. The minimum requirement for a position with the state police includes a high school diploma or GED, successful completion of specialized training for state officers, a clean criminal record and ability to work well with the public. State troopers must also be self-motivated, have good communication skills, and have the ability to work in all weather conditions. They must also be in good physical condition and have the ability to work alone or with others. Many states are now recommending candidates for trooper school have an associate's degree or higher. State trooper squads are set up in a para-military manner. Promotions through the ranks are possible; however, most troopers are career officers, so higher ranking positions usually do not open until individuals reach retirement age.

## State Trooper Salary

State trooper salaries vary depending on state of employment. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average annual salary nationally is \$58,720 for police and sheriff's patrol officers.<sup>1</sup>

## State Trooper Career Outlook

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects job growth for police and detectives to be about 5% from 2012-2022.<sup>2</sup>

# Crime Scene Investigator:

The field of forensic science is growing as technology and new techniques put forensic science in the reach of more police departments than ever before. The demand in this field is expected to grow by 19% through 2020 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, making this a great field in which to pursue a degree. Crime scene investigators work on the field collecting evidence and in the lab analyzing that evidence to reconstruct past events, work that can support or contradict eyewitnesses – or even fill in when no eyewitnesses are available. This can identify suspects as well as prove the innocence of people wrongly accused of a crime,<sup>9</sup> making the work of crime scene investigators indispensable to the due process of law.



## Crime Scene Investigator Career Guide

The primary responsibility of crime scene investigators is to investigate crimes by carefully collecting and analyzing physical evidence. They may collect hair, tissue, and body fluids from a crime victim, or perform tests on items found at a crime scene. In short, they analyze all of the evidence in the interest of providing accurate information that may help to acquit or to convict a person of a crime.

A crime scene investigator career requires CSIs to be meticulous about details; they must properly collect and store the evidence they collect. They must be able to prepare forms, reports, and other written documentation about their findings. CSIs are often asked to testify at criminal trials, giving testimony about the physical evidence collected and offering their general expertise about forensic evidence.

## Crime Scene Investigator Career Description, Duties, and Common Tasks

Crime scene investigators work at crime scenes, collecting and processing evidence then analyzing it and sharing the results in a written report. CSIs complete a variety of tasks, including deciding what evidence should be collected, gathering physical evidence, and securing the evidence for the crime laboratory. In addition, a CSI may photograph evidence, create a drawing of the crime scene, and write down detailed information about the crime scene itself.

## How to Become a Crime Scene Investigator: Requirements and Qualifications

Candidates interested in becoming a CSI must typically possess a bachelor's degree in an area of science, such as biology or chemistry. Those seeking crime scene investigation jobs should be aware that they will be responsible for overseeing disturbing crime scenes, including homicides and sexual assaults. They should have the professional disposition required to adequately deal with such scenes. CSIs must be in good health and physically fit, as they often must kneel, reach, climb, stretch, and carry heavy objects to process a crime scene. Occasionally, they carry a firearm.

# Crime Scene Investigator Job Training

CSIs generally go through on the job training once they have been hired. A rookie CSI will typically work with an experienced CSI. As an assistant, the newly hired CSI will learn how to properly process a crime scene. Training may include photography, death scene processing, fingerprint processing, and blood spatter analysis. Because of the constant evolution in forensic science, CSIs should be prepared to engage in continuing education to remain apprised of the latest news and techniques in the industry.

## Other Helpful Skills and Experience

Crime scene investigators generally first work for law enforcement then, after gaining experience as a police officer, apply for a position as a CSI. CSIs must have strong computer skills and communication skills, and they must work well with others.

## Examples of Possible Job Titles for This Career

- Crime Scene Analyst (CSA)
- Crime Scene Technician (CST)
- Evidence Technician (ET)
- Forensic Investigator (FI)
- Scenes of Crime Officer (SOCO)

## Career Opportunities and Employers

The many real life crime and fictionalized crime shows on television have led to an increased interest in forensic science, which will lead to a more competitive job market for crime scene investigators. A range of organizations typically hire crime scene investigators, including coroner's offices, crime laboratories, police departments, and morgues.

## Crime Scene Investigator Salary and Outlook

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that detectives and criminal investigators earn a average annual salary of \$79,030.<sup>1</sup> Salary can vary depending on factors such as education, experience, and geographic location.

Employment for crime scene investigators is expected to grow 6% during the decade from 2012-2022.<sup>2</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics cautions that the slower than average growth combined with an increased interest in forensic science will result in greater competition for open positions.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What type of hours do CSIs typically work?

CSIs, who work in the field, generally work longer than a 40 hour work week and should be prepared to work whenever necessary, including nights and weekends. CSIs, who are assigned to a specific jurisdiction, should be prepared to travel to crime scenes when called.

### What are the most important qualities of a CSI?

CSIs have the crucial task of collecting evidence at a crime scene and will often be called to testify in court on their findings. As a result, a successful CSI will have strong communication skills, will be detailed oriented, and



will possess the ability to work with others. A CSI must be able to remain professional, despite the gruesome scenes they may see.

**With whom do CSIs work?**

CSIs work with a range of people, including attorneys and law enforcement. CSIs should be team players as most work is done within groups.

# Computer Forensics Specialist:

Computer forensics specialists combine the specialties of forensic science, computer science, and criminal investigation. Computer forensics specialists reconstruct data and activities on electronic media rather than on crime scenes, because as technology moves forward crime is being committed more frequently with computers and electronic devices. Criminals may try to destroy electronic evidence by deleting it, hiding it, or even physically destroying it,<sup>10</sup> which is where computer forensics specialists come in. These highly trained individuals use advanced data extraction techniques to piece together information that criminals hoped was lost, and may be called on in court to present their findings.



## Computer Forensics Career Guide

Computer forensics, or digital forensics, is a fairly new field. Generally, computer forensics specialists, also known as computer forensics investigators or computer forensics examiners, are charged with uncovering and describing the state or the existence of a digital artifact, including computer systems, hard drives, CDs, and other storage devices, and electronic documents and files (like e-mails and JPEG images). The fast-growing field of computer forensics includes several smaller branches related to firewalls, networks, databases, and mobile devices.

### Computer Forensics Specialist Career Description, Duties, and Common Tasks

Computer forensics examiners may provide many services, from investigating computer systems and data in order to present information for legal cases to determining how an unauthorized user hacked into a system to gathering digital information that will assist in the termination of an employee. The digital forensics examiner does many things in the course of these tasks – protects the computer system, recovers all files (including those that were deleted or password-protected), analyzes all data found on various disks, and provides reports, feedback, and even testimony, when required. A computer forensics degree will help you develop the skills necessary for a successful career.

### How to Become a Computer Forensics Specialist: Qualifications and Requirements

A bachelor's degree, in computer forensics or a similar area, is generally required to earn a position as a computer forensics specialist. Some community colleges offer two-year associate degrees in computer forensics, which allow aspiring digital forensics specialists to then transfer to a four-year college or university to earn a bachelor's degree.

While certification in computer forensics may not be mandatory to finding a position, experts recommend taking the time to get certified. Some organizations require it while others look more favorably upon those applicants who have earned certification.

# Computer Forensics Specialist Training

Computer forensics examiners can enhance their degrees and their experience by completing training courses and programs with such organizations as the National Institute of Justice and the National Computer Forensics Institute.

## Other Helpful Skills and Experience

An interest in technology, the desire to constantly learn to stay abreast of the latest technological advances, and the ability to effectively communicate both verbally and in written form are all common traits of successful digital forensics specialists. Analytical and problem solving skills are also key. Work experience in a computer-related position or in law enforcement could also prove beneficial.

## Examples of Possible Job Titles for this Career

- Computer Forensics Investigator
- Computer Forensics Technician
- Digital Forensics Specialist
- Forensic Computer Examiner

## Career Opportunities and Employers

Digital forensics specialists can find work with many types of organizations: government (local, state, and federal), accounting firms, law firms, banks, and software development companies. Essentially, any organization that has a computer system may have a need for a digital forensics specialist. Some digital forensics specialists opt to start their own businesses, giving them an opportunity to work with a variety of clients.

## Computer Forensics Specialists Salary and Outlook

The salary range for computer forensics specialists and investigators varies widely, depending on whether the job is in the private sector or in the public sector. The Bureau of Labor Statistics doesn't provide salary data for computer forensic specialists but does provide data for the related occupation of information security analysts who earn a median salary of \$86,170 per year.<sup>1</sup> The employment outlook for digital forensics examiners and investigators is favorable due to the rapid growth of crimes involving computers (cybercrime). According to the BLS, the related occupation of information security analysts is expected to grow by 37% for the decade from 2012-2022.<sup>1</sup>

## Frequently Asked Questions About This Career

### **What kind of schedule does a digital forensics specialist work?**

Computer forensics examiners generally work a typical full time work week. However, the employer may require the specialist to be on call at times in the event of an emergency.

### **What is the best way to keep up with the newest developments in computer forensics?**

Technology is constantly evolving, making it essential for digital forensics specialists to have a desire to continuously learn. Continuing education courses and networking with others in the field, both in person and online, are both effective ways to keep up with industry developments and news.

**What are some of the topics generally covered in certification exams?**

While certification exams vary, digital forensics specialists must have a firm grasp of ethical and legal issues in digital forensics, must know and understand the tools a digital forensics examiner uses, and must know how to recover evidence from a computer's hard drive.

# Fraud Investigator:

Fraud investigators earn an average salary of \$58,460 a year according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, thanks to their in-demand specialized skills and experience. Fraud investigators are often needed to determine whether or not a claim is true, usually after an insurance company or other party has paid for a claim. This could involve claims of property damage, personal injury, or other types of fraud such as corporate financial crimes.<sup>11</sup> Fraud investigators gather evidence, interview the parties involved, and present their findings to the client that hired them. The Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that health insurance fraud investigators will be in particularly high demand in coming years due to the recent federal health care legislation, making fraud investigation a strong career choice for future growth.



## How to Become a Fraud Investigator

With the never-ending growth of technology and electronic communication, the possibilities for fraudulent activity increase as well. Due to this circumstance, many people have acquired positions in the profession of fraud investigator.

A fraud investigator plays a part in the criminal justice system by performing a variety of tasks for both civil and criminal investigations. They can investigate cases of fraud involving the use of credit cards that have been reported as lost or stolen, including interviewing and working with postal officials when the offenses have occurred through the mail. They interview various people who are touched by fraudulent activity, including complainants, employers, and witnesses. They research records and transactions, particularly those that are electronic. They may even serve and execute search warrants and conduct surveillance to collect evidence of fraudulent activity. Finally, they work with members of the criminal justice system, including prosecutors or attorney generals, presenting investigation results and testifying in court.

## How to Become a Fraud Investigator: Education & Other Requirements

To become a fraud examiner, formal education is important. Those who earn degrees in economic crime, fraud management, accounting, criminal justice, law, or business administration are the most highly qualified to become a fraud examiner. Some states require that fraud examiners are licensed, and some require that they participate in seminars, workshops, and other forms of continuing education.

In addition to formal training, those applicants who have experience with criminal investigation or with investigating the background of individuals, suspect business practice, or insurance casualty claims are most likely to be the first hired as a fraud investigator. Skills that a potential fraud investigator must possess include the ability to interview and take statements, the ability to write reports, and knowledge of how to collect and preserve evidence. In addition, fraud investigators must be ethical and excellent communicators.

## **Fraud Investigator Salary**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that private detectives and investigators earn a median salary of \$45,740 per year.<sup>1</sup> The BLS reports that detectives and criminal investigators (which excludes private detectives and investigators) earn an average annual salary of \$79,030.<sup>2</sup> Individual salary can depend on factors like education, experience, geographic location, and specific employment situation (e.g. government job or private sector job).

## **Fraud Investigator Career Outlook**

The BLS reports a projected employment growth of 11% for private detectives and investigators from 2012-2022, which is about as fast as the average occupation.<sup>1</sup>



# FBI Agent:

FBI agents have a multitude of responsibilities, as their primary task is to enforce federal law as agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. For this reason, many FBI agents specialize in one area of law enforcement after graduating from new agent training. The new agent training is extremely rigorous, including nearly 1,000 hours of training in academics, case exercises, firearms training, and operations. After training, FBI agents may work against terrorism, cyber crime, civil rights violations, public corruption, organized crime, violent crime, or major thefts, following each step of an investigation through to the sentencing of a criminal. In order to become an FBI agent, applicants must have a four year degree by an accredited institution. There are five career paths that special agents can enter to start their career:

Accounting, Computer Science/Information Technology, Language, Law, and Diversified. The degree obtained should match the entry path, though the FBI also maintains a list of critical skills that could help applicants obtain a position as a special agent.



## FBI Agent Career Guide

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is the principal investigative arm of the Department of Justice, that is charged with defending the United States from terrorism and enforcing federal laws. It employs over 32,000 individuals with diverse backgrounds and skills who may investigate crimes related to over 200 categories of federal law. This guide covers how to become an FBI agent, common tasks and activities, and salary.

### FBI Agent Career Description, Duties, and Common Tasks

The main job activities of an FBI Special Agent involve investigating crimes and enforcing federal laws. This can include interviewing sources and conducting surveillance activities, such as monitoring court authorized wire-tapping or working undercover. FBI Special Agents must be willing to participate in arrests, raids, search warrants, and other dangerous activities. They may be involved in the investigation of large-scale criminal activities such as organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, and cybercrime. Additionally, the FBI is involved in investigating incidents such as airplane hijackings and terrorist threats.

The job of an FBI agent can be stressful and cause hardships. Although the scheduled workweek might be 50 hours, many work more than that. A Special Agent is considered on duty 24 hours a day and seven days a week and may work holidays. Further, agents may be often placed in atypical situations, including dealing with people in traumatic situations and crime scenes that are grisly and involve death. Agents may be transferred to any of the 56 field offices in the US or overseas for a temporary or extended period.

### How to Become an FBI Agent: Requirements and Qualifications

To become an FBI agent, a candidate must possess the right education, background, mental and physical traits. The minimum education requirement for someone interested in becoming an FBI agent is a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher. Many agents have studied criminal justice, political science, engineering, computer science, or accounting, and some of them have completed a law degree. Prospective FBI agents must have a bachelor's degree and three years of related work experience, or an advanced degree (master's degree or higher) and two years of related work experience. The

FBI considers applicants' fluency in a foreign language as a particular strength and often seek applicants who speak certain languages such as Arabic, Farsi, Chinese, Korean, and Russian. In addition to education and work experience, people who are interested in becoming an FBI agent should be physically fit, have a strong mental attitude, be willing to be placed in dangerous situations, and be committed to the enforcement of laws and protecting people. FBI Special Agent recruits must be a US citizen and be at least 23 years old and under 37 years old (unless you receive a waiver).

The application process is very extensive and includes interviews, written tests, polygraph tests, a background check, and drug tests. Applicants must sign a release to allow the FBI to review their medical records, employment records, military records, law enforcement records, credit records and other records. FBI Special Agents must acquire and maintain a top-secret security clearance.

**Did you know?** In the 2014 Fiscal Year, the FBI's top priority was Special Agent applicants with cyber backgrounds including degrees in computer science, computer forensics, cyber security, computer engineering, and information technology.

## Other Helpful Skills and Experience

Veterans who are disabled or have served on active duty are given preference over non-veterans. Knowing a foreign language or having expertise in specific areas such as accounting, piloting a helicopter, law enforcement, engineering, physical science, or IT networking, may put you ahead of other applicants. The FBI looks for college graduates who have developed research and analytical skills.

## Examples of Possible Job Titles for this Career

- Cyber Special Agent
- FBI Investigator
- FBI Special Agent

## Career Opportunities and Employers

The Federal Bureau of Investigation employed over 13,000 Special Agents as of 2012 and are frequently recruiting for new Special Agents throughout the country. Individuals with FBI experience may also find opportunities in the private sector including employment by government contractors and corporations.

## FBI Agent Salary and Outlook

The pay range for FBI agents is based on the federal government's General Schedule (GS) pay scale. According to FBIJobs.gov, FBI Special Agent trainees are paid as GS-10, step 1 and can advance to the GS-13 level in non-supervisory positions and higher in supervisory positions. You can view the current GS pay scale at the US Office of Personnel Management website. FBI agents may also receive a locality adjustment depending on location of employment and availability pay of 25% of their base salary for unscheduled duty. In addition to their salary, FBI agents receive several benefits including health insurance, retirement benefits after 20 years of service, and paid vacations and holidays.

The outlook for FBI agent employment may be influenced by factors such as congressional funding, the growth in cyber crimes, and the rate of retirement of current FBI agents. The Bureau of Labor statistics projects employment growth of 2% for all detectives and criminal investigators in the decade from 2012-2022.<sup>1</sup>

**Did you know?** The largest division in the FBI is the Criminal Justice Information Services Division (CJIS) which manages the largest fingerprint database in the world with data on over 47 million people.

*Source: HowStuffWorks*

## **Expert Advice for Becoming an FBI Agent**

Jason R. Collins Discusses the Role of the FBI Intelligence Analysts Association and Provides Intelligence Analyst Career Insights

Jason R. Collins, the National Spokesperson for the FBI Intelligence Analysts Association, shares what the FBI is looking for in employees.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About This Career**

### **What is a typical day for an FBI agent?**

According to FBI.gov, days are varied and can include a wide range of activities such as testifying in court, executing a search warrant, gathering evidence, completing paperwork, and meeting with sources. FBI agents may work irregular hours and can spend a lot of time outside the office.

### **What is the training for an FBI Special Agent?**

Once you are accepted as a new agent, you attend a 21-week training course at the FBI Academy in Virginia. The intensive course provides training in firearms, defensive tactics, investigative techniques, driving techniques, and survival. There is also a mock town known as Hogan's Alley that was built with the help of Hollywood set designers to provide a realistic training environment.

### **How much do FBI Special Agents make?**

FBI Special Agent trainees start at the GS-10, step 1 level of the federal government's General Schedule pay scale and can receive additional pay based on location and working extra hours. You can view the current General Schedule pay table at the US Office of Personnel Management website.

### **How many hours do FBI Special Agents work per week?**

FBI Special Agents work a minimum of 50 hours per week and often 70-90 hours per week.

# CIA Agent:

Special agents for the Central Intelligence Agency help the federal government investigate violations of the law all over the world. Like domestic agents and police officers, CIA agents put their lives at risk in service to their department and community, but are more often called upon to do so covertly. This element of risk contributes to the high salary of CIA special agents, between \$74,872 and \$155,500 for agents based in Washington, DC, where CIA headquarters are located. However, CIA agents may be based in satellite offices in the US or abroad, as a CIA agent can be called upon for foreign travel. CIA agents collaborate with other law enforcement agencies on a regular basis by bringing a special mix of skills acquired in CIA training to the table. Those interested in becoming a CIA agent are encouraged to obtain a bachelor's degree in a field related to law, forensics, language, or criminal justice, and acquire at least five years of experience in investigation.



## CIA Officer Job Description & Career Outlook

The main job of the CIA and its agents is to collect intelligence information in an effort to maintain the security of the United States and its citizens. Agents, also referred to as CIA Officers, collect information through human and other sources, evaluate intelligence in regards to national security, and coordinates with other agencies or departments to collect national intelligence outside the U.S. The CIA conducts research, development, and implementation of high-level technology in an effort to collect accurate intelligence, so that they may inform policymakers and military leaders. There are five career paths within the CIA. These include science technical and engineering, national clandestine service, language opportunities, analytical opportunities, and support services.

### How to Become a CIA Officer

The educational requirements for prospective CIA officers begin with a bachelor's degree. The most common degree options that prospective CIA officers pursue are in the areas of criminal justice and Homeland Security. The CIA requires a bachelor's degree for nearly every entry-level position and an advanced degree for non-clerical jobs. It is important that prospective CIA officers show that they are smart and willing to work hard, and a strong GPA (above a 3.0) is a primary indicator of those characteristics.

Besides the educational requirements, there are other criteria that applicants must meet. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen, and no older than 35. If an applicant is married, his/her spouse must also be a U.S. citizen. Additionally, the CIA holds officers' ability to speak another language – particularly middle-eastern languages – as a highly desirable trait. In fact, applicants who do speak a middle eastern language fluently may be hired very quickly.

If the CIA contacts an applicant about a position, he/she should be ready to undergo a complete background investigation. This thorough search examines everything – the applicant's character, trustworthiness, integrity, willingness to protect sensitive information, and appropriateness of judgment. Applicants undergo polygraph exams and a rigorous mental and physical exam. Upon meeting these standards and accepting a conditional offer of employment, CIA officers are issued a security clearance. Officers are expected to maintain high standards of personal and professional behavior. Therefore, the CIA conducts periodic reinvestigations, including polygraph examinations, throughout a person's tenure with the organization.

# CIA Officer Salary

Salaries for CIA officers depends on experience and education level. The Central Intelligence Agency provides salary ranges for some positions at their website.

Like many federal jobs, positions in the CIA are very competitive, and the application process is lengthy, from the initial application through security clearance. Further, although the careers of CIA officers are romanticized on television and in movies, applicants should remember that this job is dangerous, and agents have lost their lives in the line of duty.

# US Postal Inspector:

As members of the United States Postal Inspection Service, postal inspectors investigate and solve crimes related to the US mail. Such crimes include theft, vandalism, fraud, and even identity theft. Any time a crime is committed that involves the postal service, postal inspectors are likely to be involved. Postal inspectors use forensic techniques, question witnesses, and research leads in order to solve these crimes. In order to become a postal inspector, applicants must have a four year degree from an accredited college or university and a clean criminal record. Applicants who are selected receive 12 weeks of intense training at the US Postal Inspection Service Strategic Learning Services facility in Maryland.



## US Postal Inspector Job Description & Career Outlook

### US Postal Inspector Job Description

US Postal Inspectors generally are involved in examining cases or allegations of criminal wrongdoing that involve the sending or receiving of mail using the United States Postal Service programs. They may interview potential perpetrators, perform analysis of strings of deliveries or receipts to create patterns of wrongdoing, or work with other federal, state and local agencies to develop more evidence for a given case. Unlike other federal law enforcement positions, the training for United States postal inspectors is a separate program in Maryland, and testing is different from other federal agencies as well.

### US Postal Inspector Requirements and Common Tasks

US Postal Inspector job requirements are similar to those of police detectives and inspectors at all levels of government. That includes surveillance of prospective perpetrators, evidence gathering and analysis and interviewing witnesses and attempting to obtain confessions. Unlike some state or local detectives, postal inspectors are also involved in homeland security issues, and may be involved in tasks related to counter-terrorism such as pattern analysis and identifying potential examples of terrorist activity. And like Secret Service agencies, inspectors in the United States Postal Service also may be asked to investigate and spearhead anti-fraud efforts that involve the use of mail services.

### US Postal Inspector Salary, Job Outlook and Employers

Unlike some other federal jobs, US postal inspector jobs are only with the United States Postal Service, and while they are trained in similar fashion in Potomac, Maryland, they also receive specialized training. All entry-level postal inspector candidates must have a bachelor's degree, be at least 21, and either have previous USPS experience, military or law enforcement experience, or mastery of a foreign language. A US postal inspector's salary is based on the General Schedule pay scale which can be found at the US Office of Personnel Management. Postal inspectors have the opportunity to move through the ranks in the USPS, and may also take positions in law enforcement.



# Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agent:



Immigration and customs enforcement agents are responsible for investigating, arresting, and deporting individuals who do not have permission to be in the US. To do this they must keep abreast of current policies and regulations, make recommendations or presentations to courts hearing immigration cases, and participate in special assignments, which may be covert.<sup>12</sup>

The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement division is a component of the Department of Homeland Security, which entitles enforcement agents to a range of competitive benefits including life and long term care insurance, generous vacation time, flexible work schedules, and tuition reimbursement, just to name a few. Salary is based in part on experience, but applicants with a degree in criminal justice have an advantage in entering this exciting career.

## ICE Agent Career Guide

ICE agents are responsible for preventing illegal immigration activities and preventing the unlawful traffic of goods into the US. With an increased emphasis on securing the nation's borders, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement is expanding like other federal law enforcement agencies.

### ICE Agent Career Description, Duties, and Common Tasks

ICE agents may either be involved with customs issues or immigration issues and may be assigned a variety of tasks in such areas as border patrol, human trafficking and child exploitation, cyber crimes, deportation, and intelligence gathering. Common tasks performed by ICE agents encompass the deportation process, such as apprehending and deporting illegal immigrants or criminal immigrants, and agents may also be asked to inspect documents and other cargo at customs checkpoints.

ICE agents may work at border patrol to examine the credentials of individuals entering the United States, perform surveillance on persons of interest for either customs or immigration violations, or act as a liaison with other agencies. ICE agents frequently work with the FBI, Border Patrol, and other elements in the Department of Homeland Security in the pursuit of potential threats to US citizens.

**CJDS FACT:** Immigration and Customs Enforcement employs more than 20,000 people in over 400 offices in the United States and 47 foreign countries. (Source ICE.gov)

### How to Become an ICE Agent: Requirements and Qualifications

Entry-level ICE agents must possess a bachelor's degree. A master's degree or evidence of at least one year of graduate study is also required. However, US veterans and those with significant experience in law enforcement or the military may have the educational requirement waived.

ICE agents must be United States citizens who are at least 21 years of age and under 37 years of age. The maximum age limit may be waived for US veterans and those applicants who have served in certain federal law

enforcement positions. ICE agent candidates cannot possess a felony conviction or a misdemeanor conviction of domestic violence or their application will automatically be denied.

All ICE agents must hold a valid driver's license and must carry a gun. Additionally, ICE agents are required to pass a background check, a written exam, and physical agility training. There are two separate academies that take roughly six months to complete.

## **ICE Agent Training**

All newly hired ICE agents must complete two training courses: a five week Spanish language training program and the Basic Law Enforcement Training Program, which will encompass gaining a basic understanding of Spanish, physical fitness components, first aid, firearms, and driver training. Agents must pass a total of seven written examinations and the Physical Abilities Assessment (PAA).

## **Other Helpful Skills and Experience**

Highly qualified candidates generally have law enforcement experience, are US military veterans or currently in the military, or have previously held a position of leadership in academia or in a public or professional setting. Candidates who are proficient in a second language also enjoy highly qualified status. However, candidates who do not possess one or several of those skills or experience may also still be eligible to work as an ICE agent.

## **Examples of Possible Job Titles for This Career**

- Deportation Officer
- Detention and Deportation Officer
- HIS Agent
- Immigration Investigator

## **Career Opportunities and Employers**

ICE agents may find employment opportunities with such federal government organizations as The Department of Homeland Security, US Customs and Border Control, US Secret Service, the Federal Protective Service, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, the US Coast Guard, and the Transportation Security Administration. Current job openings in Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and related organizations who require ICE agents, are posted online at USAJOBS.gov.

## **ICE Agent Salary and Outlook**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not provide salary data for immigration enforcement agents but does report an average salary of \$79,030 for the similar occupation of criminal investigator.<sup>1</sup>

## **Frequently Asked Questions About This Career**

### **How long is the application process for ICE agents?**

Candidates with Immigration and Customs Enforcement must go through a competitive interview process, including an extensive background investigation. Because security is so important for ICE agents, background checks and the rest of the hiring process can last four months or longer. The minimum time the hiring process will take is two months.

**What kind of time commitment is required of ICE agents?**

ICE agents must be prepared to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Agents often work nights, weekends, holidays, and log long hours away from home. In addition, agents will be assigned to a specific location but may spend considerable time away from their home post.

**I am not qualified for employment as an ICE agent. What other jobs are available with ICE?**

ICE agents rely on the support of technical, administrative, and other professionals to do their jobs effectively and to keep the United States secure. Immigration and Customs Enforcement also employs attorneys, administrative officers, program analysts, and staff assistants.

# DEA Agent:

Drug Enforcement Administration agents, known as DEA agents for short, work for the US Justice Department to enforce the drug laws of the United States. Salaries for DEA agents depend on education and experience, but a starting salary of \$49,746 is average, which can increase to \$92,592 or more after four years of working in the field. DEA agents investigate, track, arrest, and dismantle drug traffickers and their organizations through overt and covert operations. To excel in the competitive application process, the DEA recommends that applicants have a bachelor's degree with a focus in criminal justice, police science, or foreign languages, although other bachelor's degrees can help applicants succeed. Successful applicants receive 18 weeks of Basic Agent Training at the DEA Training Academy, and may receive other ongoing training opportunities. DEA agents must also be in excellent physical condition.



## DEA Agent Career Guide

DEA Agents, or Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agents, play an important role at the world's leading drug enforcement agency. They investigate violations of federal law that involved controlled substances, illegal drugs, and drug abuse. The agents are particularly focused on organizations and individuals who grow, manufacture, and distribute drugs within the United States, or those who attempt to send drugs and illegal substances into the country. DEA agents attempt to interrupt drug trafficking operations and destroy the organizations' financial structures related to drug trafficking. The primary goal of DEA agents is to interrupt the flow of drug traffic before it reaches potential users. As part of their job, DEA agents often do surveillance and undercover work, and some of their job duties involve dangerous situations.

### DEA Agent Career Description, Duties, and Common Tasks

The job description of a DEA Special Agent centers on investigating major drug crimes in the United States and in other countries. Common tasks may include collecting and preparing evidence, conducting surveillance, writing investigation reports, interviewing witnesses, arresting suspects, and seizing assets of drug traffickers. DEA Special Agents also work with local, state, federal, and foreign agencies on drug intelligence programs.

### How to Become a DEA Special Agent: Requirements and Qualifications

As a federal agency, the DEA has stringent requirements for potential agents and the hiring process is very lengthy (it can take 12 months or longer). To become a DEA agent, an applicant must be a US citizen, pass a drug test, complete a drug questionnaire to show that they comply with DEA drug policy, and pass a background check. In addition, applicants must be in excellent physical shape, and be between the ages of 21 and 36. Applicants must have a bachelor's degree or specific law enforcement experience to be eligible to become a DEA Special Agent. The DEA often looks for graduates in specific areas of study such as accounting, engineering, and information systems.

### DEA Special Agent Job Training

Once an applicant is hired to be an agent, he or she undergoes an intense 18-week training period at the DEA Training Academy at Quantico, Virginia. During training, the new agents learn about writing reports, federal

and international law, how to recognize drugs, weapons use and safety, ethics, leadership, and decision-making in critical situations that require the use of deadly force. There is a 84-hour physical training course and 122 hours of firearm training.

## Other Helpful Skills and Experience

About 60% of DEA Special Agent trainees have previous law enforcement experience. The DEA looks for individuals with drug-related law enforcement experience or special skills such as piloting, accounting, engineering, or fluency in a foreign language.

## Examples of Possible Job Titles for this Career

- DEA Special Agent
- Diversion Investigator
- Intelligence Research Specialists

**Did you know?** The United States spends many billions of dollars each year on drug enforcement. In 2007, the Bush Administration called for \$12.9 billion to fund the battle against drugs.<sup>1</sup>

## DEA Special Agent Salary and Outlook

DEA agent salary is based on the government's General Schedule pay scale and the starting level can depend on education and experience. Additionally, agents receive locality pay and may receive availability pay if they work a specified amount of unscheduled duty. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the average annual salary is \$79,030 for detectives and criminal investigators which includes special agents.<sup>1</sup> There are many benefits that come with a position as a DEA agent. These include health insurance plans (with dental/vision, long term care insurance, and flex spending plans included), life insurance, a retirement program, and liberal time off benefits (sick leave, annual leave, and federal holidays). Supervisory positions, especially those that require the agent to relocate, pay higher salaries. There are currently over 5,000 DEA Special Agents and vacant positions are announced for limited times (watch for vacancy announcements at the DEA website). The number of employed DEA Special Agents is based on the agency needs and the budget.

## Frequently Asked Questions about this Career

### Can I choose where I live as a DEA Special Agent?

As a DEA agent you are required to move to the duty station where you are needed.

# Secret Service Agent:

Although the US Secret Service is typically thought of as the service that protects the President and other high level officials, Secret Service agents actually do much more. The Secret Service is tasked with protecting the integrity of the United States' financial systems by thwarting cyber attacks on banking systems, identifying and removing counterfeit currency from circulation, and investigating, arresting, and prosecuting criminals who break the laws intended to protect our nation's financial security. The Secret Service is also involved with crimes such as computer and telecommunications fraud and document forgery. Due to the nature of the work, the Secret Service expects agents to be willing to travel frequently, have a bachelor's degree preferably with a focus related to the work of the Secret Service, and be in excellent physical condition. In return, agents receive comprehensive government benefits with a starting salary around \$49,746 (GL-7), though this may be higher depending on an individual's qualifications.



## Secret Service Agent Career Outlook & Description

The purpose of a secret service agent is twofold. First it protects the current and former presidents, vice-presidents, and their families as well as leading candidates for those offices. This protection extends to visiting heads of state in addition to current government officials who are well-known around the world. In addition to this huge responsibility, secret service agents also investigate crimes that affect the federal government, such as financial and technological fraud, money laundering, and technological attacks that hack into government systems.

## How to Become a Secret Service Agent

To become a secret service agent, candidates must possess a bachelor's degree, and at least one year of graduate education in a related field. Candidates should have been in the top third of their graduating class, have a GPA of at least 3.0, and have been a member of a national honor society for academics. Potential secret service agent applicants are favored if they have studied in the fields of law enforcement, political science, or a related field. In addition to a strong academic background, candidates have to pass an extensive interview process, a strenuous physical fitness exam, pass a Treasury Enforcement Agent exam, and pass a written skills exam.

In addition to these stringent requirements, people hired as secret service agents must have the disposition appropriate for the job. They have to understand how the government works, have genuine concern for the well-being of government figures and their families, and a professional attitude in general.

Note there are also additional positions in the Secret Service Uniformed Officer programs. Openings can be at the Secret Service Employment site.

## Secret Service Training

If a candidate masters all of those requirements and is hired to train as a secret service agent, they then complete a 10-week training program and a 17-week special agent basic training. Candidates must pass both of these training programs of their first attempt, or they will not be able to continue into work in the secret service. Due

to the nature of the job, most agents do not work a standard, 8-to-5, 40-hour work week. They typically work 24 hours at a time and rotate their shifts with other agents.

## **Secret Service Agent Salary**

According to [SecretService.gov](https://www.secretservice.gov), secret service special agents are generally hired at the GL-7 or GL-9 pay grade level based on education and qualifications.<sup>1</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports an average annual salary of \$79,030 for detectives and criminal investigators.<sup>2</sup> New agents can receive a one-time bonus if they pass a foreign language proficiency test. Work on special, high-level federal investigations may also result in financial bonuses. Because this is a federal government job, it includes an excellent benefit package that carries with it health insurance, vacation time, and sick leave.

## **Secret Service Career Outlook**

The secret service agent jobs are highly competitive and openings can be viewed online at [USAJOBS.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov).



# US Marshal:

US Marshals transport, manage, and protect prisoners and federal witnesses; arrest wanted criminals; and administer the Department of Justice Asset Forfeiture Program, which seizes and sells assets purchased with illegally obtained money to compensate victims and fund law enforcement programs. As members of the nation's oldest law enforcement agency, US Marshals also provide protection to judges, attorneys, and jurors in high profile or potentially dangerous court cases. What they are best known for, however, is apprehending fugitives from the law; in 2010, the US Marshals arrested over 36,000 fugitive felons – that's almost 100 a day. To become a part of this fast paced career, individuals should have a bachelor's degree or a combination of education and experience to meet the government's GL-07 level classification. Education in police work, criminal justice, foreign languages, or law will help applicants gain an edge.



## US Marshal Career Guide

The US Marshals Service was founded in 1789 to serve the federal court. US marshals have the widest range of authority of all federal law enforcement agencies, and work in every federal law enforcement situation.

### US Marshal Career Description, Duties, and Common Tasks

US marshals provide many services. They safeguard federal witnesses and transport federal prisoners to and from court and prison. They also protect federal judges and oversee the assets that are seized in criminal enterprises. In fact, US marshals have historically been responsible for arresting more than half of all federal fugitives.

US marshals may also be assigned to complete tactical missions within the US and are charged with asset forfeiture, which means all property and monies seized from criminals managed and gotten rid of by the US Marshals Service.

Note a Federal Air Marshal is a different career with lower requirements.

### How to Become a US Marshal: Requirements and Qualifications

To become a federal marshal, most candidates must possess a bachelor's degree in a field such as criminal justice, criminology, or law enforcement. Occasionally, an exceptional candidate will emerge that holds only a high school diploma; they may be considered if they have at least three years of related law enforcement experience.

There are other requirements an applicant must meet to become a US marshal. A strong applicant would have at least four years of command-level law enforcement management experience. He or she should have experience coordinating law enforcement agencies, and experience with protecting court officers, jurors, and witnesses. A candidate must have excellent physical fitness. The applicant's character and reputation are carefully considered – expect a background check and polygraph.

All applicants must also meet medical qualifications, including possessing at least 20/200 uncorrected vision in both eyes, 20/40 near vision (either corrected or not corrected). A hearing test will also be administered. Candidates could face disqualification if they have such medical conditions as hypertension, heart disease, or diabetes mellitus.

US Marshal candidates must be US citizens and be at least 21 years of age and no more than 36 years old. However, the upper age limit may be waived if the candidate is a US veteran or is currently employed in law enforcement.

If a candidate meets all the requirements, he or she enters the nomination process. Because this is a federal position, attaining it involves a process within the federal government. Candidates are recommended by the senior member of Congress from the state in which there is a vacancy. The President then nominates the candidate to the Senate, who consents (or does not consent) to a four-year term of service.

## **US Marshal Job Training**

Newly accepted candidates must successfully complete physical exam within a maximum of six months of commencing training. Training runs for 17½ weeks and candidates are advised to arrive for training in top physical condition.

Training consists of both physical and educational components. Candidates will be expected to run up to 10 miles at a time through challenging terrain and obstacle courses. Upon completion of training, all candidates must pass a physical fitness exam to graduate.

Training will also cover a wide range of topics, including court security, defense tactics, driver training, firearms training, high threat trials, legal training, protective service training, and surveillance.

All candidates must pass seven total exams – scoring a minimum of 70 percent on each test – to graduate.

## **Other Helpful Skills and Experience**

The US Marshal Service values those candidates who have current or former law enforcement or military experience.

## **Examples of Possible Job Titles for This Career**

- Fugitive investigator
- Judicial security
- Witness security

## **Career Opportunities and Employers**

Career opportunities within the US Marshal Service depend largely upon such factors as the departures and retirement of current marshals and funding. The US Marshal Service posts current employment opportunities at US Marshall Service Careers. Interested candidates are encouraged to check the organization's career's page regularly for newly posted openings.

## **US Marshal Salary and Outlook**

According to the US Marshal Service webpage, positions are filled at the GL-0082-07 entry level for pay. You can find the current GL pay tables at the US Office of Personnel Management website. Salary also varies according to where in the US the marshal works.

Additional benefits include paid leave, pension, and a thrift savings plan. US marshals may retire at the 50 after having been in their position for a minimum of 20 years. Marshals have a mandatory retiring age of 57.

Current openings depend upon funding from the federal government and the number of current marshals who either leave or retire from the US Marshal Service.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About This Career**

### **How long does the hiring process take?**

The US Marshal Service employs marshals when there are openings. The hiring process, which encompasses an extensive interview and background investigation, may take anywhere from nine months to a year.

### **Where will I work if I am hired as a US marshal?**

Newly hired US marshals are assigned to a post based on the needs of the US Marshal Service and could serve in any one of 94 districts throughout the United States. All marshals must stay at their initial post for at least three years.

### **How long and where is training located?**

Training lasts for 17½ weeks. All candidates report to the US Marshals Service Training Academy in Georgia, where they must wear uniforms during the day.

# Victims Advocate Job Description and Career Outlook

Careers for victim advocates (or victims' advocate) are growing as more professional and non-profit organizations embrace the importance of having someone on staff to work with the victims of crime or abuse. These positions are available in a wide array of fields including the areas of criminal justice, social services and community outreach.



## Victim Advocate Job Description and Common Tasks

A victim advocate is trained to help victims cope with the stress and trauma that follows a situation involving crime or abuse. The situation can be brief and immediate, or have been sustained over time such as that experienced during spousal abuse.

Victims often have to manage a field of issues that may involve psychological, physical, financial and/or emotional stress. They often require expert care that involves listening to their questions and concerns, and then explaining what kind of options they have and the types of support systems that are in place in their community.

## Victim Advocate Requirements and Training

A career as a victim advocate often begins with coursework in the social sciences. Most professional victim advocates have an associate's, bachelor's or master's degree in psychology, criminal justice or social work.

This coursework is frequently coupled with a great deal of practical training in the arena of social work, as victim advocates must hone their skills in listening and using teamwork-oriented methods of problem-solving to work with their clients.

## Victim Advocate Salary, Job Outlook, and Employers

Victim advocates are fast becoming a part of the traditional community landscape and so opportunities to pursue this career field are growing. They have been common in larger cities and suburban areas for some time, but now even smaller communities are seeing the benefits of supporting programs for victims of crime and abuse. These professionals are often employed by non-profit organizations, state or federal legal offices, shelters and community centers, or act as independent consultants. The Bureau of Labor Statistics doesn't provide data on salary for victim advocate.

# Police Dispatcher:

We've all been in traffic somewhere when we've seen a police car go speeding by with full lights and sirens. If you're like most, you've no doubt wondered where they were going. Have you ever considered, though, who sent them or how they got the call to begin with? Often overlooked, but no less important to the field of law enforcement and criminology, is job of the police dispatcher.



## Job Functions and Work Environment

A career as a dispatcher or call taker can be quite stressful. In many agencies, dispatchers are responsible for taking calls for service, doing double duty as 911 operators. Often, they are the first point of contact for people who are in desperate need of help. No matter how bad the situation sounds on the other end of the phone, dispatchers have to remain calm and maintain their wits in order to make sure people get the emergency services they need.

The job of a police dispatcher often includes:

- Monitoring and recording the location of on-duty police officers
- Taking 911 and non-emergency calls for service
- Performing driver license and wanted persons queries
- Assigning case numbers and recording case notes
- Using computers and computer-aided dispatch
- Monitoring police radio traffic
- Operating police radios
- Dispatching patrol officers to calls for service
- Providing assistance to officers by contacting other services as needed

Police dispatchers must be able to multitask and deal with all different kinds of personality types. They must also be able to remain in control of their emotions in order to help those who are in need of help to remain calm.

There are plenty of stories of dispatchers walking people through CPR over the phone, talking calmly to people who have reported gruesome tragedies and even talking people out of committing suicide. In many circumstances, dispatchers may find themselves as long-distance life savers.

## Education And Skill Requirements

Usually, a high school diploma is the only formal education required to become a dispatcher. Experience working with other people, especially in customer service-related industries, is very helpful. Strong communications skills are a must, as well as the ability to speak clearly and coherently.

As technology is used more and more in law enforcement, dispatchers need to have the ability to use a computer and learn complicated programs. Police dispatchers and 911 operators use computer-aided dispatch programs to help keep track of calls and assign case numbers.

## **Job Growth and Salary Outlook**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects jobs for police dispatchers to grow by 18% through 2018, which is faster than the national average for all jobs. The vast majority of the growth is expected as result of the aging population and anticipation that there will be a greater need for emergency services over the next several years.

In 2009, there were 97,740 dispatchers employed in the United States, most of whom worked for county and municipal departments. Some local agencies, however, are moving to consolidate their dispatch centers, which may reduce the overall job growth. There is also expected to be a high level of turn over as dispatchers move on to other careers, so there will likely be ample job opportunities for those who can pass the background check.

The average salary for dispatchers is around \$36,000 annually. Depending on geographic location and agency the range can be from \$22,000 to \$54,000 per year, or \$10 to \$26 per hour.

## **Is a Career as a Police Dispatcher Right for You?**

Police dispatchers deal with a great deal of stress and rarely receive the recognition and appreciation they deserve. Anyone looking to become a dispatcher needs to have a strong desire to help others and a thick skin. They must also be able to handle several tasks at once and deal with people who are in their greatest moments of need and distress.

Landing a job as a police dispatcher can be a great entry point for other work in criminology, or you can spend a full career in dispatch. In any case, as with every other career in criminal justice, working as a dispatcher is a great way to serve your community and help other people.