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# Program Statement

**OPI:** HRM  
**NUMBER:** 3906.19  
**DATE:** 9/25/2003  
**SUBJECT:** Physical and Medical  
Standards for Newly  
Hired Correctional  
Employees

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1. **PURPOSE AND SCOPE.** To establish requirements and procedures for ensuring that individuals hired for correctional law enforcement positions are physically able and medically qualified to perform correctional work safely and successfully.

Since all positions in correctional institutions are hazardous duty law enforcement officer positions, all employees are responsible for maintaining security in the event of an emergency. To ensure that staff are hired who are able to accomplish this objective, the Bureau has developed a validated and job-related Physical Ability Testing Program. Industrial psychologists, who are subject matter experts in this area, developed this program. It was also field-tested for over 18 months and cross-validated to ensure job-relatedness.

The physical ability test replaces the Physical Efficiency Battery formerly in place at the Staff Training Academy (STA) located at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), Glynco, Georgia. This is the third pass/fail component of the Introduction to Correctional Techniques program (ICT).

This program meets the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

2. **SUMMARY OF CHANGES.** The Directives and Standards Referenced sections have been updated. Formatting changes were also made.

3. **PROGRAM OBJECTIVE.** The expected result of this program is:

Staff recently employed in Bureau **law enforcement** positions will be retained by demonstrating the physical ability to perform essential job functions.

**4. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED**

**a. Directive Rescinded**

PS 3906.17      Physical and Medical Standards for Newly  
Hired Correctional Employees (3/5/99)

**b. Directives Referenced**

PS 3000.02      Human Resource Management Manual (11/1/93)  
PS 3906.16      Employee Development Manual (3/21/97)  
PS 6000.05      Health Services Manual (9/15/96)

**5. STANDARDS REFERENCED**

a. American Correctional Association 2nd Edition Standards for Administration of Correctional Agencies: 2-CO-1E-19.

b. American Correctional Association 4th Edition Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions: 4-4062.

c. American Correctional Association 3rd Edition Standards for Adult Local Detention Facilities: 3-ALDF-1C-13

**6. EMPLOYEES REQUIRED TO PASS THE PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST.** The physical ability test is administered to all individuals hired to fill positions in an institution.

- ◆ This includes applicants who have received a conditional offer of employment, as well as Central Office, Regional Office, and Staff Training Center employees who have never attended a Staff Training Academy but intend to be assigned to a field position.
- ◆ If a non-law enforcement employee in the Central Office, a Regional Office, or a Staff Training Center has not attended and passed the ICT within three years prior to the entrance on duty date to a field position, he or she is required to complete the ICT.
- ◆ Before an applicant is extended a conditional offer of employment, the Human Resource representative will provide the applicant a detailed written description of the physical ability test, as well as a video, to preview. This video will be shown either immediately before or after the writing sample video during pre-employment screening.

- ◆ Before a status employee from the Central or Regional Offices, or Training Center travels to Glynco, he or she will be given a detailed written description of the physical ability test and an opportunity to view a video of the test.

7. **SITE OF TEST.** The physical ability test is administered to employees within the first 48 hours after their arrival in Glynco as part of the ICT.

8. **MEDICAL SCREENING.** The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, prohibits the solicitation of medical information prior to a conditional offer of employment that may reveal or lead to disclosure of a disability.

- ◆ An individual's medical screening and physical ability testing may be administered only after a conditional offer of employment has been extended.

Through medical screening, a Bureau medical officer will assess whether the individual is physically able to travel to Glynco and perform the physical components (self defense, firearms, and physical ability test) safely.

- ◆ If it is medically determined the applicant cannot fulfill the physical requirements for the position successfully, employment consideration ceases and the applicant is notified.
- ◆ If a medical condition is deemed temporary, the applicant may request reconsideration for employment at a later date.
- ◆ Pregnant applicants may not be denied employment solely on the basis of their pregnancies.

Ordinarily, applicants who pass the initial medical screening at the hiring site, will be sent to Glynco to participate in the ICT within 60 days after entrance-on-duty. However, a cursory screening by a medical professional, immediately before departure to Glynco, will be required for final clearance to ensure there are no acute conditions present which would preclude participation in the physical components.

- ◆ If the FLETC physician at Glynco excludes the employee from any or all of the physical components based on a pre-existing condition, the employee must be returned to his or her institution and his or her employment terminated.

- ◆ Individuals for whom the FLETC physician excludes from any or all of the physical components based on a condition sustained **after** employment with the Bureau will be returned to the institution, but retained until the condition no longer precludes their participation in the physical components.

Normally, employees will be required to return to Glynco and complete the ICT successfully prior to concluding his or her probationary/trial period.

- ◆ In the rare event an employee's medical condition prevents his or her return to Glynco prior to the conclusion of the probationary/trial period, the Assistant Director, Human Resource Management Division, must be notified.
- ◆ The notification will be from the Warden through the Regional Director and provide a prognosis for the employee's return to Glynco to complete the ICT successfully.
- ◆ Successful completion of the physical components is a condition of employment even if the employee exceeds his or her probationary/trial period.
- ◆ Pregnant employees must be waived from traveling to Glynco to participate in ICT until after they have been medically cleared to participate in self defense, firearms, and the physical ability test programs at Glynco.

a. **Medical Requirements.** The applicant must have at least 20/30 vision with or without correction. If only one eye is present or functional, the examining health care practitioner will determine if an applicant can perform the physical ability test, the firearms component, and the self-defense component at the training center safely.

(1) **Eye Color Acuity.** Eye color acuity is not required for primary correctional positions. For those positions requiring eye color acuity (e.g., electricians) the applicant must pass an approved eye color acuity test.

- ◆ All applicants will be tested for eye color acuity.

(2) **Hearing.** The applicant must be capable of hearing conversational voice, with or without a hearing aid, in at least one ear, as measured by normal findings in the decibel ranges of 500, 1000, and 2000. This determination is made via a hearing booth test.

(3) **Mental/Emotional Stability.** The applicant must display mental and emotional stability. The examining health care practitioner will evaluate mental and emotional stability based upon a thorough medical/psychiatric history as well as a current medical/psychiatric examination.

- ◆ Any history of psychiatric hospitalizations and outpatient psychiatric treatments will be considered when evaluating an applicant's mental health.

(4) **Active Diseases.** Active diseases that are infectious and may be spread by routine means, such as handshakes, skin contact, and breathing, preclude an applicant from employment.

- ◆ Once this disease is cured or the examining health care practitioner considers it to be no longer infectious, the applicant may be considered for employment.

Active disease processes or conditions cannot, solely on the basis of the existence of such process, disease, condition, impairment or disability, exclude an otherwise qualified applicant from consideration for employment (i.e., HIV positive, AIDS, cancer, epilepsy, diabetes, heart disease, and loss or injury of one or more limbs).

(5) **Disability.** History of a disease, medical condition, or impairment, particularly if deemed a permanent "disability," cannot, solely on the basis of the existence of such disease, condition, or impairment, exclude an otherwise qualified applicant from consideration for employment.

- ◆ If the applicant is otherwise qualified and can, with or without reasonable accommodation, perform the essential functions of the position, the physical ability test, the firearms component, and the self-defense component at Glynco safely, then the individual may be considered for employment.

b. **Situational Examples.** The following situational examples provide guidance to health care providers when conducting physical examinations. If an otherwise qualified applicant:

- (1) Is HIV positive or has AIDS, and is able to perform the physical ability test, the firearms component, and the self-defense component at the Bureau-designated training center safely, the applicant may be considered for employment.

- (2) Has active epilepsy that is medically controlled (with or without medication), and is able to perform the physical ability test, the firearms component, and the self-defense component at the Bureau-designated training center safely, the applicant may be considered for employment.
- (3) Has active cancer, that is medically controlled by treatment or medication, and is able to perform the physical ability test, the firearms component, and the self-defense component at the Bureau-designated training center safely, the applicant may be considered for employment.
- (4) Has active diabetes, that is medically controlled by treatment or medication, and is able to perform the physical ability test, the firearms component, and the self-defense component at the Bureau-designated training center safely, the applicant may be considered for employment.
- (5) Has active heart disease, that is medically controlled by treatment or medication, and is able to perform the physical ability test, the firearms component, and the self-defense component at the Bureau-designated training center safely, then the applicant may be considered for employment.
- (6) Has a missing limb(s), and has a prosthesis or does not have a prosthesis, and is able to perform the physical ability test, the firearms component, and the self-defense component at the Bureau-designated training center safely, the applicant may be considered for employment.
- (7) Has **active** tuberculosis, chicken pox, measles, open weeping sores, or other active infectious disease process where routine contact could spread the disease to others, the applicant **may not** be considered for employment until the condition is no longer reasonably believed to be infectious.

9. **PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST.** Based on a review of physical tasks required for a variety of Bureau job activities, the five most important physical abilities to correctional work are:

- ◆ dynamic strength,
- ◆ gross body equilibrium,
- ◆ gross body coordination,

- ◆ stamina, and
- ◆ explosive strength.

These abilities will be assessed by administering the following five components:

a. The **Dummy Drag** is a test of an employee's dynamic strength. The ideal requirement for this test is to drag the 75-pound dummy continuously for three minutes and at least 694 feet. This test replicates an emergency in which the victim is carried or dragged to safety from a dangerous situation.

Starting from a standing position behind a pre-determined line, the participant drags a 75-pound dummy continuously for three minutes for at least 694 feet at a steady pace, using the attached strap and positioning the dummy on its back or belly down.

- ◆ **The participant may not stop during the drag.**

If the participant accidentally trips or falls, the instructor advises the participant to get up as quickly as possible and continue, but the participant does not need to start over. The instructor keeps track of both the amount of time and laps accumulated and, at the end of the three minutes, records the total footage.

b. The **Ladder Climb** is a test of an employee's gross body equilibrium. The ideal requirement for this test is for the participant to complete the climb in seven seconds, and retrieve the correct object. This test demonstrates the ability to search for contraband concealed in high places using the assistance of equipment such as a ladder.

The participant starts at the base of the ladder with both feet flat on the ground. At the signal, the participant climbs the ladder and grasps a specified contraband item from a group of several items on a shelf within seven seconds. The ladder is eight feet 10 inches high.

The participant may not skip rungs on the way up or down. Timing stops when the participant has completed the descent and is standing with both feet flat on the ground.

c. The **Obstacle Course** is a test of an employee's gross body coordination. This test replicates an emergency situation and requires the ability to move to the scene of an incident and maneuver through a number of obstacles within a confined area.

The participant starts at an open doorway and runs to a locked door with a deadbolt-type lock. He or she must unlock the door, proceed through the doorway, and relock the door. Then the participant goes over a desk, under a table, and around two chairs and slaps the top of a locker with his or her hand at the end of that portion of the course.

Next the participant proceeds to a cell door, opens it with the appropriate key, enters the cell area, slaps the top of a locker with his or her hand, and leaves through the cell door. The participant then slides the cell door closed (locks automatically) and proceeds back under the table and over the desk. At the door, the participant unlocks the door, proceeds through the doorway, relocks the door, and returns to the starting point.

- ◆ The ideal requirement for this test is for the participant to complete the course in 58 seconds.

**Note:** The automatic lock on the sliding cell door should engage, but the participant must check it before proceeding back under the table and over the desk. If the door does not lock, the participant fails the obstacle course.

d. The **1/4 Mile Run and Cuff** is a test of an employee's stamina. The ideal requirement for this test is for the participant to complete the run and handcuff portion in two minutes and 35 seconds.

The participant **runs** a measured distance of 1/4 of a mile holding a set of handcuffs, approaches a non-combative individual, and verbally directs him or her to "Turn around and cuff up." The participant applies the handcuffs to the individual's wrists (behind the back). Timing starts when the participant begins running and ends when the cuffs are secured.

**Note:** It is emphasized that the participant must run, not walk, as this test is a replication of an emergency situation and requires the ability to run a measured distance to the scene of an emergency. If the participant walks during this test, he or she receives a failing score.

e. The **Stair Climb** is a test of an employee's explosive strength. This test replicates an emergency situation which requires running up and down flights of stairs to arrive at the scene of an incident.



The participant wears a 20-pound adjustable weight belt throughout the test. The participant starts with both feet flat on the ground, runs up a first flight of stairs to a landing then continues up a second flight of stairs to the next landing. Once both feet have reached the second landing, he or she turns around and runs down the same two flights of stairs. This completes one tour.

Each participant is required to complete three tours, a total of 108 steps, without skipping any steps on the way up or down. A participant who skips any steps must begin the test again. The participant may hold the railing for balance if necessary.

- ◆ The ideal requirement for this test is that the participant complete the stair climb in 45 seconds.

10. **CRITERIA TO PASS THE PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST.** Employment is contingent upon an individual receiving an overall passing composite score which is calculated from the five scores obtained from completing each of the five test components. Therefore, although individual scores are specified for each test component, if an employee scores below average on one or more components, he or she may be able to compensate for that score by scoring above average on another component.

- ◆ **The applicant must complete all five test components.**

a. **Retesting.** If an individual fails to receive a passing composite score based on his or her performance on the five test components on the first attempt, he or she will have one more opportunity to pass. An individual will be retested on all five components. Retesting will normally take place within 24 hours.

b. **Retest Failure.** Since this test is a pass/fail component of ICT, if an individual fails the retest, he or she must be sent back to the institution and terminated.

11. **TRAINING OF STAFF TRAINING ACADEMY (STA) INSTRUCTORS.** Each instructor at the STA will be trained to administer and score the program before they can administer the test to students. The Supervisory Instructor at the STA must conduct the training. Instructors will receive certification and training credit.

12. **DATA ANALYSIS.** The STA will be responsible for keying score data and determining first-attempt and retest failures. This data will be stored at the STA and is to be accessible to the Human Resources Research and Development Office for future analysis.

13. **INJURIES.** Since the test is administered to employees, any injury suffered during official business is covered under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act.

- ◆ Students injured during or prior to participating in the physical ability test which precludes them from completing the program, must be returned to the respective duty station and scheduled for return to Glynco when they are medically cleared to perform the physical ability test and within the qualifying time period.

/s/

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Director