


Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual		Standard Operating Procedure
Effective Date December 8, 2021		APD.SOP.2070 Recruitment and Hiring Process
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Signature: Signed by RB		Date Signed: 12/8/2021

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1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes the procedure for investigating the background of applicants for employment with the Atlanta Police Department.

2. POLICY

2.1 The Background and Recruitment Unit shall investigate the background of applicants for sworn or civilian employment with the Atlanta Police Department.

2.2 The Atlanta Police Department is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or physical disability (except where physical requirements constitute a bona fide occupational qualification).  
City of Atlanta Ordinance section 114-77

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Background and Recruitment Unit commander shall implement this directive throughout the Background and Recruitment Unit. The Background and Recruitment Unit commander shall terminate background investigations for applicants who have violated departmental decision rules. The Background and Recruitment Unit commander shall advise the Chief of Police on individual applicants and on the overall selection process. He or she shall also ensure that all elements of the selection process are administered, scored, evaluated, and interpreted in a uniform manner.



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- 3.2 When an applicant or recruit reapplies for employment with the Atlanta Police Department, after separating from the department while assigned to the Training Section, the Recruitment Unit commander is responsible for reviewing the recruit's file.
- 3.3 Background and Recruitment Unit supervisors shall monitor their employees' compliance with this directive.
- 3.4 Background and Recruitment Unit employees shall follow the procedures in this directive. Employees assigned to recruit or investigate the backgrounds of applicants are referred to as Background Investigators.
- 3.5 The Chief of Police, as the appointing authority, retains the power to make the final decision on all offers of employment.
4. ACTION
- 4.1 General Guidelines
- 4.1.1 Each element of the selection process for employment shall be administered, scored, evaluated, and interpreted in a uniform manner. (State Law Enforcement Certification Program 5th ed. 3.3(c) and (e))
- 4.1.2 The background investigation process consists of the following:
1. Pre-application screening;
  2. Oral interview process using City of Atlanta Police Department Long Questionnaire (Form APD 291) and Atlanta Police Department Wavier Package (Form APD 292);
  3. Application for employment with the Atlanta Police Department;
  4. Verification of essential information. An Applicant Checklist Form (Form APD 296) will be filled filled out and placed inside the background investigation file;
  5. Testing: cognitive, psychometric, and Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) examination;
  6. Criminal history check based on fingerprints;
  7. Contacting law enforcement agencies where the applicant previously lived to determine if there is a pattern of involvement or any prior contact with the criminal justice system;
  8. Seven-year driving record history from all states in which the applicant has held a driver's license. This report shall be provided by the applicant as a requirement of the background process;
  9. Financial background check;
  10. Employment history check;
  11. Military history checks (if applicable);



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12. Character and social references assessment;
  13. Background interview;
  14. Computer Voice Stress Analyzer (CVSA) examination; and
  15. If a conditional offer of employment is made:
    - a. Psychological interview;
    - b. Medical and drug screening; and
    - c. Georgia POST screening.
- 4.1.3 The Background and Recruitment Unit commander, or his or her designee, shall attempt to schedule elements of the process in order to minimize travel to Atlanta for out-of-state applicants.
- 4.1.4 The Background Investigator shall maintain periodic contact with the applicant, by telephone or in person, in addition to any written contact throughout the application process. He or she shall log each contact on the Applicant's Weekly Call Log Form (Form APD 295) and place it inside the background investigation file. The Background Investigator shall also use the opportunity to request any additional information that is needed, inform the applicant periodically of the status of his or her application, and about upcoming events in the selection process. He or she may answer any questions the applicant may have. (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 31.3.3)
- 4.1.5 The Background Investigator shall interview the applicant at least twice to confirm and explore items in the application.
- 4.1.6 The Background Investigator shall verify the information received from the applicant in the background investigation process. An applicant must meet the minimum requirements in the job announcement.
- 4.1.7 The Background Investigator shall not disqualify or reject an application because of minor omissions or deficiencies that can be corrected prior to the testing or interview process. A minor omission or deficiency is one that shall not have a significant impact on the evaluation of the applicant.
- 4.1.8 When a Background Investigator finds information in the background investigation process that disqualifies the applicant or suspends the background investigation process, the Background Investigator shall draft a notification letter for signature by the Background and Recruitment Unit commander within seven business days. This letter shall state the grounds for disqualification or suspension, and the process for reapplication at a later date, if applicable.
- 4.2 Requests for Reemployment
- 4.2.1 The Chief of Police shall review written requests for reemployment and forward approved requests for reemployment to the Background and Recruitment Unit.



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- 4.2.2 Any sworn or civilian employee separated from the Atlanta Police Department must re-submit an application for employment and complete all elements of the selection process in a satisfactory manner. In addition, the following shall apply:
1. A Background and Recruitment Unit supervisor shall review all original personnel files, in addition to contacting the applicant's former supervisors for input into the performance of the applicant. The Background and Recruitment Unit supervisors shall make a recommendation to the Background and Recruitment Unit commander who shall then forward the application through the chain of command to the Chief of Police for approval. If approved, the file shall be assigned to a Background Investigator for testing and further investigation.
  2. The Background Investigator must determine whether the individual resigned from employment with the Atlanta Police Department in "Good Standing." Terminations, resignations under administrative investigation, charges, job abandonment, and resignations without proper notice are causes for disqualification. When an individual resigns or is terminated in bad standing, the Background and Recruitment Unit shall suspend the investigation and forward the file to the Chief of Police with a rejection letter for his or her signature. No further consideration shall be given to the request for reinstatement. Employees who separated while in recruit training due to academic or other non-disciplinary reasons can reapply after 12 months of separation and shall be evaluated by the Training Section commander.
  3. The Background Investigator must examine Office of Professional Standards (OPS) files for the applicant's disciplinary history. If an applicant separated or resigned while under investigation or with an open OPS File, the Background and Recruitment Unit shall suspend the investigation and forward the file to the Chief of Police with a rejection letter for his or her signature. No further consideration shall be given to the request for reinstatement.
  4. The Background Investigator must contact the applicant's last three department supervisors and have them submit a completed Employment Verification Form (Form APD 272). The Human Resources Unit shall provide to the Background Investigator copies of the last three years' performance evaluations and the employee separation form. Applicants requesting sworn reinstatement who separated while on probation shall also be evaluated by the Training Section commander regarding performance while assigned to the Training Academy.
  5. The Background Investigator must notify Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (P.O.S.T) that the individual is seeking reemployment. If the individual's P.O.S.T certification has been suspended or revoked, he or she is ineligible for reemployment.
- 4.2.3 The Training Section shall test individuals who are rehired in sworn positions and shall require them to complete any refresher, remedial, or make-up training based on the result of their re-entry examination at the discretion of the Training commander. This training must be completed prior to the rehired officer being issued a badge, service weapon, and a sworn employee's identification card.
- 4.3 Lateral Employment Police Applicant (LEPA)
- 4.3.1 The Training Section shall test lateral employment applicants requiring them to complete any refresher, remedial, or make-up training based on the result of their entry examination at the



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discretion of the Training commander. This training must be completed prior to the lateral officer being issued a badge, service weapon, and a sworn employee's identification card.

1. Candidates must have a current Georgia POST certification or the equivalent certification from another state at the time of application.
2. Candidates must have two years of full time sworn law enforcement experience, including at least one year of experience as a patrol officer or operating in a patrol officer capacity.
3. Candidate must be employed as a full-time law enforcement officer currently or within the previous twelve months.
4. Candidates shall provide two police incident reports they have completed for their respective departments and two vehicle accident reports they have completed for their respective departments.
5. Candidates shall provide official transcripts of their Georgia POST or their state equivalent training records.

4.3.2 Existence of any of the following conditions will result in ineligibility for the LEPA:

2. Candidates whose law enforces certification has been suspended, revoked or is currently under investigation by POST.
3. Candidates who have any illegal drug use or illegally used a controlled substance during their employment as a law enforcement officer.
4. Candidates who have only limited law enforcement experience, which may include but is not limited to: reserve police officers, part time police officers and corrections officers.
5. Candidates who have less than two years of full time sworn law enforcement experience with full law enforcement duties and powers of arrest.
6. Candidates previously employed by the Atlanta Police Department as police recruits who separated from the Department prior to completing recruit training will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
7. Candidates who separated from another law enforcement agency while under internal investigation or are currently employed as a law enforcement officer pending the disposition of an internal investigation.
8. Atlanta Police Officers who separate from the Department and then return to the Atlanta Police Department will not be eligible for lateral pay.

4.3.3 LEPA candidates are eligible for educational incentive pay.

4.4 Receiving Applications

4.4.1 Applicants may initiate the pre-employment background investigation by visiting the [joinatlantapd.org](http://joinatlantapd.org) website and clicking "APPLY NOW". The applicant will then be directed to the online application landing page. If the online application contains disqualifying information submitted by the applicant, the applicant will receive an automated message informing the



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applicant of their disqualification. If there is no disqualifying information in the online application, the applicant shall be provided a next steps email where they will receive links to both a Pre-Application Form (Form APD 292) and an application package.

4.4.2 The employment application package shall include a list of the elements for the selection process, the average duration time for the process, and the policy for reapplication.

4.5 Testing for Sworn or Category I Positions

4.5.1 Cognitive Skills and Psychological Examination

An applicant for a sworn or other Category I position is required to take the Cognitive Skills and Psychological Examination by a Clinical Psychologist retained by APD at the City of Atlanta's expense. The applicant must obtain a minimum passing score of 75. If an applicant does not obtain the minimum passing score, he or she may retest with a Clinical Psychologist of their choosing at their own expense. If the first and second assessments result in findings that conflict or at the discretion of a Clinical Psychologist, the applicant may have a third assessment taken by an independent provider at the City of Atlanta's expense.

4.5.2 Essay (For Clinical Evaluation)

An applicant for a sworn or other Category I position with the Department must write an essay consisting of at least three paragraphs, which outlines the applicant's career goals and aspirations. The essay shall be used during the clinical evaluation by the psychological staff to assist in determining the applicant's academic cognitive fitness. The essay must be completed within 20 minutes.

4.5.3 Peace Officer Standard and Training (POST) Council Examination.

The applicant shall undergo POST testing and an initial personality test. A psychologist will review the candidate's application file, including the Essay and the results of the personality test and make a determination about their suitability to continue to the background investigation process.

An applicant for a sworn position must score "acceptable" on the required POST assessment examinations. If the applicant has taken the Georgia POST exam previously and passed, he or she is exempt upon receipt of authentic documentation. An applicant currently possessing POST certification is exempt from the POST test portion of the examination upon presentation of proof of certification. [O.C.G.A 35-8-8(a)]

4.6 The Background and Recruitment Unit shall have the applicant fingerprinted and submit the fingerprints to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) and National Crime Information Center (NCIC) for a criminal records check. [O.C.G.A 35-8-8(a)]

4.7 Financial Background

4.7.1 The Background Investigator shall investigate any civil actions (liens, garnishments, pending civil suits, etc.) involving the applicant within the preceding three years. The civil action must be listed in the public records section of the credit report civil or federal court records. All outstanding civil actions shall be evaluated and investigated. The applicant shall furnish the Background Investigator with documentation that shows productive efforts are being made for the settlement of all civil actions.



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- 4.7.2 All outstanding civil actions should show progress towards being paid, as an indicator of the applicant's sense of responsibility and personal management of their financial affairs. This can be accomplished by signing and complying with Background Financial Management Plan Form (Form APD 287).
- 4.8 Employment History
- 4.8.1 The Background Investigator shall send an Employment Verification Form (Form APD 272) to each of the applicant's prior employers and include a copy of the applicant's "Atlanta Police Department's Consent Form, which is included in the Atlanta Police Department Wavier Package (Form APD 292).
- 4.8.2 The Background Investigator shall verify all prior employment and document any negative patterns of work history in the following areas:
1. Absenteeism/tardiness;
  2. Sick leave;
  3. Interaction with other employees;
  4. Inappropriate sexual behavior at the workplace;
  5. Gross negligence and incompetence;
  6. Attitude towards supervision;
  7. Insubordination;
  8. Dishonesty or theft from a former employer;
  9. Use of alcohol or drugs at work;
  10. Job abandonment;
  11. Performance evaluations;
  12. Terminations;
  13. Employment stability;
  14. Resignations under pressure;
  15. Disciplinary history; and
  16. Pending disciplinary investigations.
- 4.8.3 For periods of self-employment, the applicant shall show documentation such as business licenses and tax records as required by the Background and Recruitment Unit commander.



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#### 4.9 Military Service

4.9.1 The Background Investigator shall review Form DD214 (member 4 copy) and contact military authorities for any disciplinary action or criminal investigations.

4.9.2 General Discharges under Honorable Conditions will be determined acceptable on a case by case basis.

4.9.3 Uncharacterized and entry-level discharges will be determined acceptable on a case by case basis.

4.9.4 Any discharge that is less than honorable will not be accepted.

#### 4.10 Character References

An applicant for a position with the Department shall be investigated to determine overall reputation. This includes a visit to the applicant's neighborhood if the applicant resides in the metropolitan area and interviews with references, neighbors, and other acquaintances. Each applicant must have at least three-character references. The focus of the investigation is job-related behavior, as well as the applicant's image and reputation in the community.

#### 4.11 Computer Voice Stress Analyzer (CVSA) Examination

4.11.1 Refer to APD.SOP.3120, "Computer Voice Stress Analyzer," for further guidance on the CVSA examination.

4.11.2 The CVSA examination shall be used as an investigative tool to verify information provided by the applicant.

4.11.3 Applicants shall be provided with a list of areas from which questions shall be drawn prior to the CVSA examination.

4.11.4 An applicant who fails the CVSA shall not be retested. Failure of the CVSA examination shall not be used as the sole determining factor to disqualify or suspend an applicant.

#### 4.12 Approval Process

4.12.1 The Background Investigator shall summarize the results of the investigation and forward it to their supervisor.

4.12.2 The supervisor shall review the file for completeness and determine if there is a need for further investigation. The supervisor shall write their synopsis, document any concerns, and forward the file to the Background and Recruitment Unit commander. The supervisor shall make a hiring recommendation in the cover letter memorandum to the Chief of Police. The memorandum shall advise if the applicant is:

1. Recommended for hire,
2. Not recommended for hire, or
3. If the applicant's file requires a command review.





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- 4.12.3 The Background and Recruitment Unit commander shall review the file and sign the supervisor's cover letter memorandum as recommended for hire, not recommended for hire, or flagged for command review. They shall then forward the file with a cover letter memorandum through the chain of command to the Office of the Chief of Police.
- 4.12.4 Conditional Offer of Employment
1. The Chief of Police shall determine whether the applicant shall be given an offer of employment conditional on the successful completion of a psychological evaluation, medical evaluation, and drug screening. As the appointing authority, the Chief of Police makes the final decision on all offers of employment.
  2. After making the final decision on an offer of employment, the Chief of Police shall return the applicant's file to the Background and Recruitment Unit.
  3. The Background and Recruitment Unit commander shall notify the applicant in writing of the employment decision.
- 4.13 Special Pay Incentives
1. Sworn employees shall receive a pay increase for his or her education upon completion of the training academy. Once an employee has achieved sworn status, a one-step pay increase shall be received for 60 college credits, 90 quarters semesters, or an associate degree. Employees shall receive an additional step increase for a bachelor's degree if applicable, for a total of two steps regarding their education (City of Atlanta Ordinance section 114-87). No steps are awarded for postgraduate credits or achievements.
  2. Employees must have the college or university send a sealed transcript to the Atlanta Police Department Human Resources Unit in order to receive the educational step increase pay incentives. It shall be each employee's responsibility to ensure that all transcripts and verifying educational documentation has been received by Atlanta Police Department Human Resources Unit and recorded on file (City of Atlanta Ordinance section 114-87).
  3. Special incentive pay shall become effective upon completion of the training academy and sworn status has been achieved. The educational pay step increases shall be considered valid and effective for sworn employees on the date the official transcripts are received in the Human Resources Unit from an accredited college or university (City of Atlanta Ordinance section 114-87 and section 114-184).
- 4.14 Psychological Screening
- 4.14.1 To be employed by the Atlanta Police Department, an applicant must meet the minimum following standards:
1. Must have the cognitive effectiveness, as measured by test and interview data, to both learn the procedures required of them and to exercise judgment in carrying out their job;
  2. Must be free from:
    - a. Serious disorders of thought,



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- b. Mood disorders,
  - c. Personality disorders, and
  - d. Impulse control disorders;
3. Must be neither seriously:
- a. Exploitative,
  - b. Manipulative,
  - c. Hostile, and
  - d. Be able to adequately relate to citizens and peers;
4. Must not be predisposed to psychosomatic or substance abuse disorders; and
5. Be able to both accept authority and to exhibit an authoritative posture when necessary.

4.14.2 Psychological Interview

1. An applicant applying for sworn and Category I positions shall undergo a pre-employment psychological interview conducted by a licensed psychologist. The psychological interview shall be conducted in accordance with an established standardized format and will not include, but will not be limited to, the following:
  - a. Mental status examination;
  - b. Family position, roles, responsibilities, and relationships;
  - c. Self-conception and confidence;
  - d. Educational strengths and weaknesses;
  - e. School history and relationships with peers and teachers;
  - f. Recreational activities and hobbies;
  - g. Past work history and relationships with supervisors;
  - h. Past record of interaction with law enforcement officers;
  - i. Substance use and abuse;
  - j. Anger management and sensitivity to insults;
  - k. Psychosocial and emotional development history;
  - l. Achievements and disappointments;
  - m. Desire for the position and other occupational interests;



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- n. Future goals and plans;
  - o. Prior relationships and attitudes towards members of ethnic groups other than the applicant's ethnicity; and
  - p. Attitudes toward supervisors and colleagues.
2. The Recruitment Unit shall schedule the interviews.

#### 4.14.3 Psychological Reports

1. The psychological report shall typically summarize the testing results and any relevant background findings to support the conclusions of the evaluation. The report should include a detailed explanation of any areas of concern that might make the applicant unsuitable or create elevated risk to the department if they were to be hired into the position.;
2. The psychological report shall summarize the material and make a hiring recommendation using the following ratings:
  - a. Recommended;
  - b. Recommended with reservation; and
  - c. Not recommended.

#### 4.15 Medical Evaluation

1. The applicant must pass the prescribed medical examination per Georgia Code 35-8-8(a) and as set forth by the City of Atlanta Ordinance Section 98-38 and 114-185.
2. Following the conditional offer of employment, the Background and Recruitment Unit shall obtain medical examination appointment times and shall contact the applicant with the date and time of the medical examination appointment.

#### 4.16 Drug Screening

4.16.1 An applicant must successfully pass the required drug screening before being processed as an employee of the Atlanta Police Department.

4.16.2 If the test results from the required drug screening are positive for an illegal drug or drugs, the applicant shall be disqualified from the background investigation process.

#### 4.17 Applying the Results of the Psychological Interview, Medical Exam, and Drug Screening.

If the applicant passed the psychological examination, medical examination, and drug screening, the Recruitment Unit commander shall document the data. The Background Investigator shall then:

1. Notify the Human Resources Unit to schedule the applicant for employment processing; and



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2. Send copies of the needed documents from the background investigation file to the Human Resources Unit.

If the applicant failed the psychological evaluation, medical examination, and drug screening and the reason for failing is correctable, the Background Investigator shall allow the applicant a reasonable amount of time to correct it. If it is not correctable, the Background and Recruitment Unit commander shall notify the applicant in writing and by telephone stating that the applicant is rejected for failure to pass the psychological evaluation, medical examination, or drug screening examination.

#### 4.18 Records

4.18.1 All records and files relating to the selection process shall be kept secure and confidential at all times. Recruitment Unit employees who receive records or files to be used in the selection process shall keep them confidential and secured at all times. Background and Recruitment Unit employees who have a file in their custody shall keep it in their immediate possession, locked in a secure area, or return it to the Recruitment Unit file system.

4.18.2 The applicant's psychological and medical reports shall be filed separately from the rest of the background investigation file. The reports shall be kept secure and confidential in Background and Recruitment Unit file system at all times.

4.18.3 The background investigation file on an employee shall be kept in the Background and Recruitment Unit for the duration of his or her employment with the Department. When the employee separates from the Department, the file shall be kept indefinitely in a "separated" category in the Unit.

4.18.4 The background investigation file on an applicant who was not hired shall be kept in the Recruitment Unit for seven years, then archived at the City's Records Management Office for eight years, and then shredded.

#### 4.19 Recruitment Plan and Evaluation

4.19.1 The Background and Recruitment Unit commander or his or her designee shall create and monitor a recruitment plan for the unit. The plan should outline the Department's steps to achieve the goal of an ethnic, racial, and gender workforce composition in the sworn law enforcement ranks. The recruitment plan shall include but is not limited to the following:

1. Statement of objectives;
2. Plan of action designed to achieve the objectives identified; and
3. Identification of personnel inside or outside the Department responsible for the plan administration. (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 31.2.1)

4.19.2 The Background and Recruitment Unit commander or his or her designee shall conduct an annual evaluation and analysis of the effectiveness of the recruitment plan. An analysis report regarding progress toward the stated objectives or revisions to the plan (if needed), shall be submitted to the section commander for review. Copies of the report shall be distributed to the Chief of Police, Assistant Chief, Division Chief, and the Planning and Research/Accreditation Unit. (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 31.2.2)



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#### 5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 Approved drug screen: The Atlantic Health Group is designated as the site for the collection of test specimens. The Smith Kline Bio-Science Laboratories are designated as the official laboratories for the drug screen analysis. Any approved drug screen requires the application of the standard acceptable procedures utilized by the above establishments. These designations are subject to change through the contract process.
- 5.2 Category I: Police officers, police recruits, property management clerks, personal assistants, analysts, legal assistants, administrative assistants, identification technicians, radio dispatchers, computer services personnel, license and permit inspectors, all personnel assigned to the Chief of Police, Assistant Chief of Police, Recruitment Unit, Special Enforcement Section, and Office of Professional Standards, or any other sensitive position identified as such by the Chief of Police, or his or her designee.
- 5.3 Category II: Any employee not in Category I.
- 5.4 Illegal Drugs: A chemical substance not lawfully prescribed by a doctor who is controlled by the "Georgia Controlled Substance Act" (Article 2, Chapter 13, and Title 16, of the Official Code of Georgia: Annotated)
- 5.5 Special Pay Incentive: \*Special pay rule means a salary adjustment applied to designated classifications as compensation for shift differential (D), education (E), pilot on a flight crew (F), flight observer on a flight crew (O) and other qualifying factors.

#### 6. CANCELLATIONS

APD.SOP.2070 "Recruitment and Hiring Process", effective May 31, 2018.

APD Form 218 "Pre-Application"

#### 7. REFERENCES

Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) 6th ed. Standards; 31.2.1, 31.2.2, and 31.3.3.

State Law Enforcement Certification Program 5th ed. 3.3(c) and (e)

Official Code of Georgia: Annotated "Controlled Substance Act" (OCGA), chapter 13 of Title 16 and (OCGA) 35-8-8(a), and (c)

APD.SOP.3120: "Polygraph and Computer Voice Stress Analyzer"  
The Cooper Institute for Aerobic Research

City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances, Sections: 98-38, 114-76, 114-87, 114-184, 114-185 and 114- 77

APD.SOP.2090 "Performance Evaluation"

APD Decision Rules for Hiring (Confidential Appendix)



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8. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

The has been significant revisions to the entire policy.