

correctional officer training requirements louisiana

Navigating Your Path: A Comprehensive Guide to Correctional Officer Training Requirements Louisiana

correctional officer training requirements louisiana are the bedrock upon which a career in law enforcement within the state's correctional facilities is built. Aspiring officers must meticulously understand and fulfill these prerequisites to embark on a fulfilling and impactful journey. This guide delves deep into the multifaceted landscape of becoming a correctional officer in Louisiana, covering everything from initial eligibility and educational benchmarks to the rigorous academy training and ongoing professional development. We will explore the critical physical and psychological evaluations, the importance of a clean background, and the specific curriculum designed to equip individuals with the essential skills and knowledge needed to maintain safety, security, and rehabilitation within the correctional environment. Understanding these requirements is the vital first step toward a rewarding career dedicated to public service and community safety.

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Understanding the Core Eligibility Criteria

Embarking on a career as a correctional officer in Louisiana necessitates meeting a foundational set of eligibility criteria that are designed to ensure candidates possess the integrity, resilience, and commitment required for this demanding profession. These initial hurdles are not merely bureaucratic formalities; they are essential filters to identify individuals who can effectively and ethically perform the duties of safeguarding correctional facilities and the individuals within them. Prospective officers should be aware that these requirements are strictly enforced across all correctional institutions within the state, whether operated by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections or by private entities under contract.

One of the most fundamental requirements is age. Applicants typically must be at least 18 years old to be considered for entry-level positions. This age stipulation reflects the maturity and responsibility expected of individuals who will be entrusted with the custody and supervision of inmates. Beyond chronological age, candidates must also possess the legal right to work in the United States. This involves providing proper documentation that validates their citizenship or legal authorization to be employed within the country. Furthermore, a valid Louisiana driver's license or state-issued identification is usually a mandatory prerequisite, as officers may be required to operate official vehicles or be easily identifiable within the community.

Age and Citizenship Requirements

The age and citizenship stipulations form the initial gatekeeping for any aspiring correctional officer in Louisiana. These are not arbitrary numbers but rather reflect the legal and ethical considerations inherent in law enforcement roles. Being at least 18 years old signifies that an individual has reached the legal age of majority, a threshold often associated with the capacity for making responsible decisions and understanding the gravity of the duties involved. This is crucial in a field where judgment calls can have significant consequences. Similarly, confirming the right to work in the United States is a non-negotiable aspect of employment within any governmental or contracted agency. This ensures that all personnel are legally authorized to hold their positions and contribute to the operational integrity of the correctional system.

Residency and Documentation

While not always a strict requirement for initial application, maintaining residency within Louisiana can be advantageous and is often preferred by hiring agencies. This can indicate a commitment to the state and its communities. More critically, however, is the need for impeccable documentation. Applicants will be required to present a range of official documents to verify their identity, age, and legal status. This can include birth certificates, social security cards, passports, and potentially other forms of identification. Having these documents readily available and in good order will streamline the application process and demonstrate an applicant's preparedness and attention to detail, qualities that are highly valued in correctional work.

Educational and Experience Prerequisites

Beyond the basic eligibility, the correctional officer role in Louisiana demands a certain level of academic achievement and, in some cases, prior professional experience. These requirements are in place to ensure that

officers possess the foundational knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the complex environment of a correctional facility. The educational benchmarks can vary slightly depending on the specific hiring agency or the level of the position, but a high school diploma or GED is almost universally the minimum educational attainment required.

For many entry-level positions, a high school diploma or a GED is the baseline educational requirement. This signifies that the applicant has completed a standard course of study and possesses basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, many departments are increasingly seeking candidates with some college coursework or even an associate's or bachelor's degree, particularly in fields like criminal justice, psychology, sociology, or related areas. These degrees often provide a more in-depth understanding of human behavior, the penal system, and de-escalation techniques, which are invaluable assets in correctional settings. Possessing a higher level of education can sometimes lead to faster advancement opportunities within the ranks.

High School Diploma or GED

The attainment of a high school diploma or its equivalent, the GED, is the fundamental educational prerequisite for virtually all correctional officer positions in Louisiana. This is not an overly burdensome requirement, but it is a critical one. It signifies that you have completed a foundational level of education, demonstrating your ability to learn, follow instructions, and possess basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Without this fundamental qualification, your application will likely not proceed to the next stages of the hiring process. It's the first step in proving you have the capacity for the training and the job itself.

College Education and Preferred Degrees

While not always mandatory, pursuing further education beyond high school can significantly enhance your candidacy for a correctional officer position in Louisiana. Many correctional agencies express a strong preference for candidates who hold an associate's or bachelor's degree. Degrees in fields such as criminal justice, psychology, sociology, social work, or counseling are particularly beneficial. These academic disciplines equip individuals with a deeper understanding of inmate behavior, correctional theories, conflict resolution, and the psychological aspects of incarceration. This theoretical knowledge, coupled with practical training, forms a robust foundation for effective and humane correctional work. Consider it an investment in your future career progression.

Relevant Work Experience

In addition to academic qualifications, prior work experience can also play a

crucial role in your application for a correctional officer role in Louisiana. While not always a strict requirement for entry-level roles, experience in fields that involve dealing with people, handling difficult situations, or maintaining order can be highly advantageous. This could include experience in security, law enforcement, customer service, social work, or any role where you've had to demonstrate patience, assertiveness, and strong interpersonal skills. Some agencies may even offer slight advantages or faster promotion tracks for candidates who have relevant experience. Highlighting transferable skills from previous employment can make your application stand out.

The Application and Selection Process

The journey to becoming a correctional officer in Louisiana is a structured and often competitive process, designed to identify candidates who are not only qualified but also possess the essential character traits for the role. This process typically involves multiple stages, each designed to evaluate different aspects of an applicant's suitability. Understanding each step is crucial for navigating the application successfully and demonstrating your commitment to a career in corrections. Patience and persistence are key throughout this multi-faceted selection journey.

The initial application is typically submitted online through the official career portal of the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections or the specific private correctional facility. This application will require detailed personal information, educational history, employment background, and potentially references. It is imperative to complete this application thoroughly and accurately, as any omissions or inaccuracies can lead to disqualification. Following the submission of the application, candidates will usually undergo a series of assessments designed to gauge their aptitude and suitability for the demanding environment of a correctional institution. These assessments can include written examinations, physical fitness tests, and interviews.

Online Application Submission

The very first tangible step in pursuing a career as a correctional officer in Louisiana is the online application. This is where you'll formally express your interest and provide the foundational information about yourself. Think of this as your first impression. It's critical to be meticulous, honest, and thorough. Missing information, typos, or inconsistencies can raise red flags early on. Many agencies use applicant tracking systems, so using keywords from the job description in your application can also be beneficial. Don't rush this stage; take your time to ensure every detail is accurate and presents you in the best possible light.

Written Examinations and Aptitude Tests

After your initial application is reviewed, you'll likely be invited to participate in written examinations. These tests are designed to assess your basic skills in reading comprehension, written communication, and critical thinking. They may also include situational judgment tests, which present hypothetical scenarios common in a correctional setting and ask you to choose the most appropriate course of action. These assessments are crucial because correctional officers must be able to understand and follow complex procedures, communicate effectively both verbally and in writing, and make sound decisions under pressure. Performing well on these tests demonstrates your foundational cognitive abilities.

Interviews and Panel Reviews

Should you pass the written assessments, the next stage typically involves one or more interviews. These can range from a one-on-one interview with a hiring manager to a panel interview involving several individuals. The purpose of these interviews is to assess your communication skills, problem-solving abilities, motivation, and overall suitability for the correctional environment. Expect questions about your background, why you want to be a correctional officer, how you handle stress, and your understanding of the responsibilities involved. Honesty, professionalism, and a genuine desire to serve are paramount. Be prepared to articulate your strengths and how they align with the demands of the job.

Physical and Psychological Fitness Standards

The role of a correctional officer in Louisiana is physically and mentally demanding. Therefore, rigorous physical and psychological fitness standards are integral to the selection process. These assessments ensure that candidates possess the stamina, strength, and emotional resilience required to perform their duties effectively and safely, both for themselves and for others within the correctional facility. Failing to meet these standards can be a disqualifier, highlighting their critical importance.

Candidates will be required to undergo a comprehensive medical examination conducted by a licensed physician. This examination assesses overall health, vision, hearing, and cardiovascular fitness. In addition to the medical exam, a physical fitness test (PFT) is a standard component. The PFT typically evaluates strength, agility, and endurance through exercises such as push-ups, sit-ups, a timed run, and sometimes a pull-up or flexibility test. These are designed to mimic the physical demands of the job, which can include restraining individuals, prolonged periods of standing and walking, and responding to emergencies.

Medical Examination Requirements

A thorough medical examination is a non-negotiable step in the correctional officer training requirements Louisiana process. This is to ensure you are physically capable of performing the duties. You'll be checked for any underlying health conditions that could be exacerbated by the job's stresses or that could impair your ability to function effectively. This includes assessing your vision, hearing, blood pressure, and overall physical health. Agencies need to confirm you don't have any conditions that would put yourself or others at risk. It's about ensuring you're fit for duty, now and in the future.

Physical Fitness Test (PFT) Components

The physical fitness test is designed to evaluate your readiness for the physically demanding aspects of being a correctional officer. While specific components can vary slightly between agencies, common exercises include a timed run (often covering a mile or more), a set number of push-ups and sit-ups to assess upper body and core strength, and sometimes tests for flexibility or agility. The goal is to ensure you have the stamina to be on your feet for long shifts, the strength to handle potential physical altercations, and the agility to respond quickly to incidents. This isn't about being an elite athlete, but about demonstrating a baseline level of physical capability.

Psychological Evaluations and Screening

Equally important as physical fitness is psychological stability. Correctional officers work in high-stress environments and must be able to handle emotional challenges, maintain composure, and make rational decisions. As such, psychological evaluations are a critical part of the selection process. These typically involve standardized psychological testing and an interview with a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist. The evaluation aims to assess your mental health, emotional maturity, stress management techniques, and suitability for working with diverse and sometimes challenging populations. It's designed to identify any potential issues that could compromise your performance or the safety of the facility.

Background Checks and Legal Disqualifications

A cornerstone of the correctional officer training requirements Louisiana is the thorough background investigation. This process is extensive and aims to ensure that individuals entering this sensitive public service role have a clean record and exhibit a high degree of trustworthiness and integrity. The standards are stringent, as correctional officers hold positions of significant authority and responsibility. Any issues identified during this

phase can lead to immediate disqualification, underscoring the importance of honesty and transparency throughout the application process.

The background check typically scrutinizes an applicant's criminal history, including arrests, convictions, and any involvement with the justice system. A history of felony convictions is an automatic disqualifier. Misdemeanor convictions, especially those involving violence, theft, or drug offenses, can also lead to disqualification, depending on the specifics of the offense and the time elapsed since its commission. Beyond criminal records, the investigation will also delve into employment history, reviewing past performance, reasons for leaving previous jobs, and any disciplinary actions. Financial responsibility is also often assessed, as officers are entrusted with managing certain aspects of inmates' lives and facility resources.

Criminal History Review

A fundamental aspect of the correctional officer training requirements Louisiana is a comprehensive review of your criminal history. This is a critical step to ensure the integrity and safety of correctional facilities. Agencies will meticulously examine any arrests, charges, and convictions. A felony conviction is almost always an automatic disqualifier. However, certain misdemeanor convictions, particularly those involving violence, theft, drug-related offenses, or crimes of moral turpitude, can also lead to disqualification, depending on the nature of the offense, the circumstances surrounding it, and how long ago it occurred. Honesty here is paramount; attempting to conceal any part of your past will almost certainly result in disqualification.

Employment and Financial History Verification

The background check extends beyond just criminal records; it also involves a thorough verification of your employment and financial history. Agencies want to ensure you have a stable work history and have been a responsible employee in the past. They will contact former employers to confirm your dates of employment, your job duties, and the reasons for your departure. Any pattern of job hopping or disciplinary issues at previous workplaces can be a concern. Similarly, your financial history will be reviewed to assess your fiscal responsibility. Significant debt, bankruptcy, or a history of financial mismanagement can be red flags, as correctional officers are entrusted with significant responsibilities.

Driving Record and Substance Abuse History

Your driving record will also be scrutinized as part of the background check. A history of serious traffic violations, multiple DUIs, or reckless driving can raise concerns about your judgment and adherence to rules. Furthermore, a history of substance abuse is a significant concern for correctional

agencies. Applicants will be asked about past drug and alcohol use, and may be subject to drug testing. Dishonesty about substance abuse or a recent, unaddressed history of abuse can be grounds for disqualification. Agencies are looking for individuals who demonstrate responsible decision-making and a commitment to a drug-free lifestyle.

The Louisiana Correctional Officer Training Academy

Upon successful completion of the application and selection process, aspiring correctional officers in Louisiana must then embark on a comprehensive training program at the state's official correctional officer academy. This academy is where the theoretical knowledge gained from educational prerequisites is transformed into practical skills, under the guidance of experienced instructors. The academy curriculum is designed to be rigorous, challenging, and immersive, preparing recruits for the multifaceted realities of correctional work. It's where you truly begin to earn your badge.

The academy program typically spans several weeks, during which recruits undergo intensive instruction in a wide array of subjects. These include correctional law, inmate rights and responsibilities, report writing, emergency procedures, crisis intervention, de-escalation techniques, physical restraint methods, and security protocols. Recruits also receive crucial training in firearm proficiency, self-defense, and first aid. The environment within the academy often mirrors the discipline and structure of a correctional facility, fostering a sense of teamwork and accountability among the recruits. It's a demanding period, but essential for building a strong foundation.

Academy Curriculum and Core Subjects

The Louisiana Correctional Officer Training Academy curriculum is meticulously crafted to cover all essential aspects of the job. You will dive deep into subjects like correctional law and policy, ensuring you understand the legal framework within which you'll operate. Inmate rights and responsibilities will be thoroughly explored, emphasizing fair and lawful treatment. Report writing is a critical skill, and you'll learn to document incidents accurately and objectively. Emergency procedures, from lockdowns to medical emergencies, will be practiced extensively. Crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques are paramount for managing potentially volatile situations. This comprehensive academic instruction forms the intellectual backbone of your training.

Physical Training and Self-Defense

Beyond the classroom, a significant portion of the academy experience is dedicated to physical training. This goes beyond the initial PFT and focuses on developing the physical capabilities needed for the job. You'll participate in rigorous drills designed to improve stamina, strength, and agility. Crucially, you will receive comprehensive training in self-defense and physical restraint techniques. These are not about aggression, but about safely controlling and subduing individuals when necessary, minimizing risk to yourself and others. Mastering these techniques requires discipline, repetition, and a commitment to learning proper form.

Firearm Proficiency and Tactical Training

For many correctional officer roles, proficiency with firearms is a required skill. The academy provides extensive training in the safe and effective use of department-issued firearms. This includes range qualification, proper handling, and understanding firearm safety protocols. Tactical training will also cover how to use your weapon effectively in specific scenarios, emphasizing judgment and restraint. This aspect of training is taken very seriously, as the responsible use of force is a critical component of maintaining security within a correctional facility. You'll learn when and how to use your firearm, prioritizing de-escalation whenever possible.

Legal Aspects and Inmate Rights

A vital component of correctional officer training in Louisiana involves a deep understanding of the legal framework governing correctional facilities and inmate rights. This ensures that officers operate within the bounds of the law and uphold constitutional protections for individuals in their custody. You will learn about relevant statutes, case law, and departmental policies that dictate how inmates are to be treated, their rights to healthcare, legal representation, and due process. Understanding these legal intricacies is crucial for preventing lawsuits, ensuring ethical conduct, and maintaining a just correctional system. Ignorance of the law is not a defense, so this training is paramount.

Post-Academy Training and Career Advancement

Graduating from the Louisiana Correctional Officer Training Academy is a significant achievement, but it marks the beginning, not the end, of your professional development. The correctional field is constantly evolving, and continuous learning is essential for maintaining proficiency and ensuring the highest standards of safety and security. Post-academy training and opportunities for career advancement are integral to a long and successful career in corrections.

Upon assignment to a correctional facility, new officers will typically undergo a probationary period, during which they receive on-the-job training and mentorship from experienced officers. This practical experience is invaluable, allowing recruits to apply the skills learned in the academy in real-world situations. Furthermore, correctional agencies regularly offer specialized training courses in areas such as hostage negotiation, tactical response, contraband interdiction, gang awareness, and offender rehabilitation programs. These advanced training opportunities not only enhance an officer's skills but also open doors to specialized units and leadership roles within the department.

On-the-Job Training and Mentorship

After you've successfully completed the academy, the real-world application begins. You'll be assigned to a correctional facility and enter a period of on-the-job training. This is where you'll work alongside seasoned correctional officers who will guide you through the daily routines, protocols, and unexpected challenges of the job. This hands-on experience is invaluable, allowing you to solidify the skills you learned in the academy under real-time conditions. Mentorship during this phase is crucial; experienced officers will share their wisdom, practical tips, and insights, helping you navigate the complexities of the correctional environment. Embrace this learning opportunity; it's your chance to truly hone your craft.

Specialized Training Opportunities

The correctional landscape is dynamic, and staying current with best practices and emerging threats is essential. Louisiana correctional agencies offer a variety of specialized training opportunities to enhance your expertise. These can include advanced courses in areas like tactical operations, hostage negotiation, gang intelligence, contraband detection, and crisis management. There are also specialized certifications available in areas like K-9 handling or specialized unit operations. Pursuing these specialized training programs not only broadens your skillset but also makes you a more valuable asset to your agency and can pave the way for career advancement.

Promotional Tracks and Leadership Roles

A career as a correctional officer in Louisiana offers clear pathways for promotion and leadership. After gaining experience and demonstrating competence in an entry-level role, officers can become eligible for promotion to supervisory positions such as Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and eventually Warden. Promotional opportunities are typically based on a combination of factors, including performance reviews, years of service, additional training, and often, passing promotional examinations. Taking advantage of training opportunities and consistently performing at a high

level will position you favorably for advancement into leadership roles where you can influence policy, mentor junior officers, and contribute to the broader correctional mission.

Key Skills Developed During Training

The correctional officer training requirements Louisiana are designed to cultivate a comprehensive set of skills essential for success in a challenging and often unpredictable environment. These skills go far beyond the basic execution of duties; they encompass critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and a commitment to ethical conduct. By the time an officer completes their training, they are equipped with a robust toolkit to manage a correctional facility safely and effectively.

Key among these skills is effective communication. Correctional officers must be able to communicate clearly and concisely with inmates, colleagues, supervisors, and external agencies. This includes verbal communication, active listening, and precise written reporting. De-escalation techniques are also a paramount skill, allowing officers to manage tense situations and prevent conflicts from escalating into violence. Problem-solving and critical thinking are vital for assessing situations, making sound judgments under pressure, and devising appropriate solutions. Furthermore, officers develop strong observational skills, enabling them to detect potential threats, contraband, or unusual behavior.

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Effective communication is the lifeblood of a correctional officer's success in Louisiana. Your training will heavily emphasize how to communicate clearly, both verbally and in writing, with a diverse population, including inmates, colleagues, and supervisors. This isn't just about issuing orders; it's about active listening, understanding non-verbal cues, and conveying information accurately. Developing strong interpersonal skills means building rapport when appropriate, maintaining professional boundaries, and projecting an image of calm authority. These skills are critical for de-escalation and fostering a more controlled environment.

De-escalation and Conflict Resolution

One of the most critical skills honed during correctional officer training is de-escalation. The ability to diffuse tense situations before they erupt into violence is a hallmark of a skilled officer. You will learn various techniques for calming agitated individuals, using strategic language, and creating a less confrontational atmosphere. Conflict resolution strategies are also taught, providing you with methods to address disputes between

inmates or between inmates and staff in a fair and orderly manner. This training focuses on minimizing the need for physical intervention by addressing the root causes of conflict.

Observational Skills and Situational Awareness

In the inherently high-risk environment of a correctional facility, sharp observational skills and constant situational awareness are non-negotiable. Your training will train you to be keenly aware of your surroundings, noticing subtle changes in behavior, potential security breaches, or hidden contraband. You'll learn to scan areas, identify anomalies, and assess potential threats before they materialize. This heightened awareness allows you to proactively manage risks and respond effectively to developing situations, ensuring the safety of yourself and everyone within the facility.

Report Writing and Documentation

Accurate and thorough report writing is an indispensable skill for every correctional officer. Your training will dedicate significant time to learning how to document incidents, observations, and inmate activities precisely and objectively. This includes understanding legal requirements for documentation, using correct terminology, and ensuring reports are clear, concise, and factually correct. These reports serve as vital records for disciplinary actions, legal proceedings, and the overall management of the correctional system. Your ability to document effectively directly impacts the integrity of the justice process.

Teamwork and Collaboration

Correctional facilities are complex ecosystems that rely heavily on the coordinated efforts of many individuals. Your training will instill a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration. You'll learn to work effectively with your fellow officers, supervisors, and other facility staff. Understanding the importance of mutual support, clear communication within the team, and relying on each other's strengths is crucial for navigating the daily challenges and responding to emergencies. A cohesive and well-functioning team is the backbone of a secure and well-managed correctional environment.

Ethical Conduct and Professionalism

Underpinning all aspects of correctional officer training requirements Louisiana is the unwavering emphasis on ethical conduct and professionalism. Officers are entrusted with significant power and authority, and it is imperative that this power is exercised responsibly, justly, and with integrity. Training will cover codes of conduct, ethical decision-making, the importance of impartiality, and maintaining professional boundaries at all

times. Upholding these standards is not only a legal and moral obligation but also essential for maintaining public trust and the credibility of the correctional system. Your actions reflect on the entire department.

Correctional Officer Training Requirements Louisiana FAQ

Q: What is the minimum age requirement to become a correctional officer in Louisiana?

A: The minimum age requirement to become a correctional officer in Louisiana is typically 18 years old. This ensures that applicants have reached the legal age of majority and are deemed mature enough for the responsibilities of the role.

Q: Do I need a college degree to be a correctional officer in Louisiana?

A: While a high school diploma or GED is the minimum educational requirement, many correctional agencies in Louisiana prefer or require candidates to have some college coursework or an associate's or bachelor's degree, particularly in fields like criminal justice or psychology.

Q: What type of physical fitness test will I have to pass for correctional officer training in Louisiana?

A: The physical fitness test typically includes components like a timed run, push-ups, and sit-ups. These exercises are designed to assess your strength, endurance, and agility, reflecting the physical demands of the job.

Q: Are psychological evaluations a mandatory part of the correctional officer hiring process in Louisiana?

A: Yes, psychological evaluations, which usually involve testing and an interview with a mental health professional, are a mandatory and crucial part of the hiring process to ensure candidates possess the emotional resilience and mental stability required for the role.

Q: Will my criminal history be reviewed during the application process for a correctional officer position in Louisiana?

A: Absolutely. A thorough background investigation, including a comprehensive review of your criminal history, is a standard and essential part of the hiring process. Felony convictions are typically automatic disqualifiers, and certain misdemeanors may also lead to disqualification.

Q: How long does the correctional officer training academy typically last in Louisiana?

A: The Louisiana Correctional Officer Training Academy program generally spans several weeks, involving intensive instruction in a variety of subjects and practical skills.

Q: What kind of specialized training can correctional officers pursue after completing the academy in Louisiana?

A: Post-academy training can include specialized courses in areas such as hostage negotiation, tactical response, gang awareness, contraband interdiction, and offender rehabilitation programs, which can lead to career advancement.

Q: Is there an opportunity for career advancement within the Louisiana correctional system?

A: Yes, Louisiana correctional officers have clear promotional tracks that can lead to supervisory roles such as Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and Warden, based on experience, performance, and further training.

Q: What is the importance of report writing in correctional officer training?

A: Report writing is a critical skill emphasized in training because accurate and thorough documentation of incidents and observations is essential for legal proceedings, disciplinary actions, and the overall management and security of the correctional facility.

Q: Can I work as a correctional officer in Louisiana

if I have a past conviction for a misdemeanor offense?

A: Whether a misdemeanor conviction disqualifies you depends on the specific offense, the circumstances, and the time elapsed since its commission. Each case is reviewed individually, but certain types of misdemeanors, especially those involving violence or dishonesty, can be disqualifying.

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