

WISCONSIN LAW ENFORCEMENT HIRING AND TRAINING FACTSHEET

How does someone become certified as a Wisconsin law enforcement officer?

To be eligible for certification as a Wisconsin law enforcement officer, you must complete a 720-hour law enforcement academy program at an academy certified by the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Standards Board (LESB). You also must meet the following criteria to enroll in an academy:

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent;
- Possess a valid driver's license;
- Have no unpardoned convictions for a felony, or any offense that could be punished as a felony in Wisconsin;
- Have no convictions of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence as defined in 18 USC 921(a)(33), convictions of domestic abuse as defined in § 968.075(1)(a), Wis. Stats., or convictions of a crime subject to the imposition of the domestic abuse surcharge under § 973.055(4), Wis. Stats.;
- Per § 66.0501(2), no person may be appointed deputy sheriff of any county or police officer of any city, village, or town unless that person is a citizen of the United States;
- Be of good character; and
- Be free from any physical, emotional, or mental condition that might adversely affect the performance of the duties of a law enforcement officer.

Law enforcement academy students may self-sponsor or be sponsored by a law enforcement agency. To enroll in a law enforcement academy, a self-sponsored applicant must have completed 60 college credits (associate degree level or higher from a private or state college or university with current membership in good standing in a predominant, national or regional accrediting organization for private or state colleges or universities recognized by the United States Department of Education). Applicants sponsored by a law enforcement agency must complete the 60-credit requirement within the first 5 years of employment.

Academies are located at Wisconsin technical colleges. In addition, some law enforcement agencies have their own academies that are not connected with the technical college system. These agencies are:

- Dane County Sheriff
- Department of Natural Resources
- Madison Police Department
- Milwaukee County Sheriff
- Milwaukee Police Department
- Wisconsin State Patrol

All Wisconsin law enforcement academies use the same 720-hour curriculum approved by the LESB. The agency-run academies may have additional agency-specific curriculum.

Law enforcement officers who hold or have held employment as a certified or licensed law enforcement or tribal law enforcement officer in another state, or hold or have held military veteran status in a

Military Occupational Specialty as a law enforcement officer (Military Police/Security Forces/Master of Arms), full-time for a minimum of one year beyond completion of academy training, fully empowered and paid for all hours worked, who continue to hold or voluntarily left employment within less than three years, may qualify to complete a reciprocity examination administered by the Bureau of Training and Standards of the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

Certification is granted by the LESB following employment with a Wisconsin law enforcement agency and successful completion of the 720-hour law enforcement academy or reciprocity exam. Staff of the Bureau of Training and Standards recommend certification of officers who have met the minimum requirements for certification at quarterly meetings of the LESB held in March, June, September, and December.

What are the requirements for continuing as a Wisconsin law enforcement officer?

A certified law enforcement officer must retain employment with a law enforcement agency and complete at least 24 hours of recertification training each state fiscal year (July 1st – June 30th). Handgun qualification and vehicle pursuit training are the only required subjects. The state's handgun qualification must be completed annually, and the state's vehicle pursuit training requirement must be completed biennially. Agencies may require officers to complete training in additional subjects or more hours than the 24 required by statute.

Certified law enforcement officers also must maintain employment with a law enforcement agency in a sworn law enforcement position. A law enforcement officer who has been employed full-time in a sworn capacity for at least 1 consecutive year has 3 years from termination of employment to regain employment in a sworn capacity. A law enforcement officer who holds law enforcement employment for less than one (1) consecutive year full-time prior to termination of employment, has three (3) years from the date they successfully completed preparatory law enforcement officer training, or three (3) years from the date they last held law enforcement employment for at least one (1) consecutive year full-time, to regain employment as a sworn law enforcement officer. Failure to gain or regain employment within the time frames specified will require re-completion of the entire preparatory law enforcement officer training program to regain eligibility for certification as a law enforcement officer.

Who is responsible for the amount and content of training for Wisconsin law enforcement officers?

There are five types of training for Wisconsin law enforcement officers

- Academy training.
- Instructor/master instructor training.
- Field training.
- Recertification training.
- Specialized training.

Academy training. The LESB requires all recruits to complete 720 hours of academy training. The LESB sets the requirements for the subjects to be covered and the amount of time to be spent on each subject. The LESB also approves the academy curriculum, which is developed by staff of the Bureau of Training and Standards

Instructor/master instructor training. Only certified instructors may teach as a primary instructor at law enforcement academies. To be certified as an instructor by the LESB, an instructor must have a recommendation from the head of his or her employing agency, meet minimum requirements set forth by the LESB, complete training developed by the Bureau of Training and Standards, request instructor certification via an application form available from the Bureau of Training and Standards, and be approved for instructor certification by the LESB. Similar to officer certification, applicants who have met the requirements for instructor certification are recommended for certification by Bureau of Training and Standards staff at the quarterly LESB meetings held in March, June, September, and December.

Field training. When academy graduates are employed by a law enforcement agency, the agency may require them to undergo additional field training. There is no certified curriculum or state-level requirement for field training programs; each agency may develop and implement its own.

Recertification training. Certified law enforcement officers are required to complete 24 hours of training annually. Two specific areas of training are required by statute: annual handgun qualification and biennial training in vehicle pursuit. Except for statutorily-mandated vehicle pursuit training and handgun qualification, individual law enforcement agencies develop their own training programs. Agencies and academies submit officer training records via the Acadis Portal maintained by the Bureau of Training and Standards.

Specialized training. Wisconsin does not certify specialized law enforcement officers such as school resource officers, SWAT team members, or financial crimes investigators, and no specialized training is required at the state level for an officer to fill a specialized role. The Department of Justice may fund specialized training for law enforcement officers, either through grants to law enforcement agencies from the Division of Law Enforcement's Specialized Training Grant program or subject-specific schools sponsored by the Division of Criminal Investigation.

When can a law enforcement officer be decertified?

The LESB has the power to decertify a Wisconsin law enforcement officer only in the following circumstances:

- Failing to maintain employment as a sworn law enforcement officer.
- Not satisfying the LESB's training requirements.
- Falsifying information to become or remain certified.
- Being convicted of a felony or any crime of domestic abuse.
- Failing to pay court-ordered child or spousal support.
- Failing to achieve an associate degree or 60 college credits within the first 5 years of employment.

Where can I find more information?

The Law Enforcement Standards Board's powers and duties are outlined in Wis. Stat. § 165.85. More information can be found in the Law Enforcement Standards chapters of the Wisconsin Administrative code.

The Law Enforcement Standards Board Policy and Procedures Manual provides detailed information about employment standards and training.

You can find Information about the individual law enforcement academy programs on the websites of the technical colleges and the agencies that sponsor their own academies.