

HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS

Frequently Asked Questions

Criminal Investigator Entry-Level Hiring



HONOR | SERVICE | INTEGRITY

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1. Eligibility

1.1 Who is eligible to apply to HSI Criminal Investigator announcements?

Anyone may apply, however, each announcement is advertised using a specific area of consideration (AOC). The AOC describes the individuals from whom the agency will accept applications to compete for the position. The AOC may also be referred to as “Who May Apply” within the vacancy announcement. It may be a broad or a limited group of individuals (e.g. Public, DHS only, etc.). The AOC will be shared with HSI offices and recruiters in advance of each posting. In most cases, entry-level Criminal Investigator announcements are typically open to the public.

1.2 An applicant did not earn a passing score on one of the three phases of assessments. When can they re-test?

Applicants may re-test when two years have elapsed from the date the test was taken for which they received a non-passing result. The two-year waiting period applies to non-passing results from Phase I, II, or III assessments/structured interview.

1.3 An applicant did not pass the pre-employment Physical Fitness Test (PFT-P). When will they be eligible for consideration again?

Applicants are eligible for consideration when 12 months have elapsed from the closing date of the announcement in which they did not pass the PFT-P. For example, if they did not pass the PFT-P from an announcement that closed in May 2021, they are not eligible for consideration until May 2022.

1.4 An applicant did not pass the polygraph. Can they reapply?

Although anyone is entitled to apply to any job announcement, if they previously had an unsuccessful ICE administered polygraph examination within the last 365 days, ICE will use those results which would eliminate the applicant from continuing in the hiring process.

1.5 An applicant was previously withdrawn from the hiring process for declining a job offer, self-withdrawing, or failing to respond to requests for information by the required deadline. Are they eligible for consideration again?

Yes, none of those situations would preclude someone from being eligible for consideration again.

1.6 An applicant received Notice of Results indicating that they were ineligible for the position. Why?

Due to Merit System Principles and prohibited practices, HROC cannot provide details as to why an applicant was found ineligible to anyone except the applicant. Please refer applicants with these questions to the point of contact listed in the job announcement (DSC-EntryLevel@ice.dhs.gov). HROC actively monitors this mailbox and will respond to the applicant as soon as possible.

1.7 What is the age requirement for Criminal Investigator applicants?

The date immediately preceding an individual's 37th birthday is the last day to be appointed (Enter on Duty) for selection (PL 93-950 and 100-238). However, the age restriction may not apply to individuals who are qualified

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preference-eligible veterans or who are currently or have previously served in a federal civilian (not military) law enforcement position covered by 5 U.S.C. 8336(c) or 5 U.S.C. § 8412(d).

1.8 How can an applicant submit a “waiver” for the 37 age requirement?

Not necessarily considered a “waiver”, but if an applicant has prior or current Federal law enforcement service, they must submit a copy of their SF-50 reflecting the beginning and end dates of creditable law enforcement civilian (not military) service under 5 U.S.C. 8336(c) or 5 U.S.C. §8412(d) as well as the Retirement Codes (Block 30). If claiming veterans’ preference, applicants must provide acceptable documentation of their preference or appointment eligibility. The member 4 copy of their DD-214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, is preferable. Applicants claiming 10-point preference will need to submit Form SF-15, or other acceptable documentation. See the “Required Documents” section on the job announcement

1.9 Can an applicant apply to and/or be in the hiring process under multiple HSI Criminal Investigator announcements?

Individuals can apply to any announcement they wish to be considered for. However, once a new hire enters on duty under one HSI Criminal Investigator announcement, they will be removed from and be ineligible for all other current and future external HSI Criminal Investigator announcements.

2. Minimum Qualifications

2.1 Do applicants need a college degree related to law enforcement to be considered?

If qualifying based on education, a college degree in any field of study is acceptable for the GL-07 grade level. For the GL-09 grade level, the graduate level education must demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to do the work of the position.

2.2 Is law enforcement experience required to be considered?

If qualifying based on specialized experience or a combination of experience and education, then law enforcement experience would be required. Please refer to the qualifications section on the job announcement for further details.

2.3 Do all qualification requirements (specialized experience and/or education) need to be met at the time of the announcement?

Each job announcement will specify if qualifications must be met by the close of the announcement or if there will be a specified timeframe that qualifications must be met by.

2.4 Can HROC qualify a current law enforcement officer based on their position title or SF-50 alone?

No. Applicants must submit a detailed résumé demonstrating how their experience relates to the experience defined in the announcement and the position they’re applying for. HROC will only be able to rely on the information submitted in their online application to assess their qualifications for the position. If qualifying based on specialized experience, detailed 3-5-page résumés are recommended by HROC. Applicants should be encouraged to read the announcement in its entirety and upload any applicable supporting documents as outlined in the Required Documents section of the announcement. Information on how to prepare a résumé is available at the link below: <https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/faq/application/documents/resume/what-to-include/>.

3. Pay Questions

3.1 What grade levels are entry-level announcements posted at?

7 and/or 9.

3.2 If an applicant is a current federal employee and higher than a grade 9, can they retain their pay?

No, re-promotion or pay retention do not apply to entry-level announcements. All employees will be required to complete 52 weeks at each grade level before eligible for promotion or re-promotion. Applicants are required to sign a Change to Lower Grade Statement of Understanding during the tentative offer stage for further consideration.

3.3 How is the step determined?

During the final job offer stage, HROC will request recent paystubs or recent SF-50 and will use pay setting guidelines to determine salary. Pay setting should only be discussed between the applicant and HROC.

4. Duty Locations

4.1 Will applicants be able to choose their duty location?

The ability to select Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Area of Responsibility (AOR) preferences may depend on current agency needs and hiring priorities. Traditionally, applicants have been able to select SAC AOR preferences on applications. However, it's important to know that preferences are not guaranteed. The assigned duty location will be determined upon the final job offer and will be based on the needs of the agency, availability of positions, and funding. Applicants may be offered any geographic location that falls within the AORs listed in the job announcement. For example, if an applicant selects SAC San Antonio, they may be offered the McAllen, TX office **or** they may be offered an office within a SAC AOR that wasn't chosen as a preference (if deemed necessary based on needs of the service and availability of positions). Each announcement may differ in the number of location preferences applicants may select.

4.2 When will applicants find out their duty location?

Duty locations are confirmed upon final job offer. Depending on the vacancy announcement, applicants may already have an idea of the geographic location assignment prior to the final offer. Tentative selection letters will not list a duty location.

5. Common Mistakes

5.1 What are some common mistakes made on USAJOBS applications?

- Inadvertently getting screened out on self-certifying questions (e.g. selecting "Yes" to "Have you ever been convicted of a felony") Applicants are strongly encouraged not to rush the application and to review their answers thoroughly to ensure accuracy before submission.
- Not uploading all required documentation such as submitting a diploma instead of transcripts or not submitting an SF-50. A diploma is not an acceptable form of documentation.
- Applicant names or names of institutions cut off on scanned copies of transcripts.
- Insufficient résumé details, especially if qualifying based on specialized experience (see section 2.4).

Note: applicants should check their spam/junk folders regularly during the hiring process to ensure important messages with time sensitive due dates are not missed. Exceptions will not be made if emails were missed due to being delivered to spam/junk folders. It's also important to ensure USAJOBS profiles are updated with accurate and working email addresses throughout the entire hiring process.

6. Entry-Level Assessments

6.1 What is the process for Entry-Level Criminal Investigator assessments?

The hiring process for entry-level Criminal Investigators requires applicants to complete and pass three phases of assessments, detailed below, which are designed to identify the applicants best suited for the role.

After each phase, applicants will be provided assessment results (passing/not passing) via email; passing applicants are automatically advanced to the next phase. Applicants earning passing scores on all Phase I and II assessments and the Phase III structured interview will be placed into a pool for further review/consideration for the Criminal Investigator position and notified regarding next steps.

Note: depending on timelines, minimum qualification reviews (verifying specialized experience and/or education) may not be conducted until after Phase II is complete; therefore, it's possible to be found ineligible after the successful completion of Phases I and II. Due to this, it's important to ensure résumés are detailed and all required documents are uploaded with the application. For example, if applicant names or names of institutions are cut off from scanned copies of transcripts, they cannot be used for qualification purposes and the applicant would be found ineligible (see section 5.1).

6.2 Phase I Assessments

Assessments in Phase I can be taken at any time during the specified testing window and may be completed from any computer with Internet access.

- Situational Judgement Test (SJT)
- Automated Writing Assessment (AWA)

6.3 Phase II Assessments

Assessments in Phase II are taken together and completed under the supervision of a proctor at an ICE-designated testing center. This proctored testing is by appointment only; applicants who are advanced to Phase II will be emailed detailed information about the scheduling process. ***CHECK SPAM/JUNK FOLDER*** This email is sent from a third party and has been reported to go to spam/junk folders by some applicants.

- Writing Skills Test (WST)
- Logical Reasoning Assessment (LRA)
- Candidate Experience Record (CER)

6.4 Phase III Structured Interview

Applicants must pass a structured interview for this role, and will be contacted by an interview coordinator for scheduling. Due to the high volume of applicants, interviews will be assigned randomly to SAC AORs; the duty location of the interview panel does not reflect the potential duty location assignment of the applicant.

6.5 How will applicants be notified to complete assessments?

All communications associated with the Criminal Investigator application process will be sent to the email address the applicant has listed in their USAJOBS profile. It is critical for applicants to check (and if necessary, update) their USAJOBS profile prior to applying to ensure their email address is correct and up-to-date. It is the applicant's responsibility to proactively search for communications about testing, including in spam or junk mail folders.

Each USAJOBS posting contains specifications for a time frame during which applicants must complete any required assessments. **Failure to complete testing within this defined time frame will result in removal of the applicant from consideration for the current Criminal Investigator job announcement.**

If an applicant has not received an expected invitation to complete or schedule the assessments, they should contact the Strategic Initiatives Unit (SIU) at SAentry@ice.dhs.gov *before the testing window closes*. Any requests received after the test window has closed will not be considered.

6.6 Can previous passing scores be re-used?

Previous passing scores can be re-used until an existing assessment or the overall assessment process is substantially updated. If an assessment is updated, applicants must re-test regardless of previous passing scores.

As mentioned under section 1.2, the waiting period to re-test for non-passing scores is two years from the date the assessment was originally taken. The waiting period applies to any of the three phases of assessments.

6.7 Is there a preparation manual for the assessments?

A Preparation Guide with more detailed information regarding the assessments and assessment process may be found on the ICE.gov website here: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/careers/pdf/ciPrepGuide.pdf>

7. Pre-Employment Requirements

7.1 What are the pre-employment requirements for the Criminal Investigator position?

Applicants are subject to rigorous pre-employment screening procedures. Below are the pre-employment requirements that must be successfully met:

- Background investigation which may include a polygraph examination
- Medical examination
- Drug screening
- Physical Fitness Test (PFT)

7.2 What is the overall pre-employment processing time?

The pre-employment process can be lengthy due to the thorough screening procedures outlined above. Assuming no issues arise during the process from the point of selection to final employment offer, pre-employment screening takes approximately 3 months. However, because of stringent pre-employment requirements for this position, it is not uncommon for medical or suitability issues to arise during the pre-appointment process. Although most issues are favorably resolved, no applicant can be authorized to enter on duty until all potentially disqualifying issues are addressed and resolved.

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In cases where issues do arise, the issue resolution process will take longer, generally an additional 4 to 8 months and longer in severe cases. If disqualifying issues are found, applicants are provided with a full and fair opportunity to respond to the potentially disqualifying information prior to a final decision on suitability or medical qualifications.

7.3 Are all applicants required to complete a polygraph examination?

ICE has designated the Criminal Investigator position for polygraph testing, which applicants may be required to submit to as a pre-employment requirement. Polygraphs are conducted on a risk-based approach, and not administered to all applicants.

7.4 Do applicants have to travel for the polygraph at their own expense?

If referred for polygraph testing, yes, applicants will be required to travel to a testing location at their own expense. If regional testing is unavailable, the main polygraph testing location is in Dallas, TX.

7.5 What are the ICE medical standards (vision, hearing, etc.) for the Criminal Investigator position?

The medical standards for law enforcement personnel can be found here:
<https://www.ice.gov/doclib/careers/pdf/medicalStandardsLePersonnel.pdf>

Information on the medical review process can be found here:
<https://www.ice.gov/careers/what-should-i-provide-during-medical-examination>

7.6 What does HSI's Physical Fitness Test consist of?

The PFT consists of four individual timed events, performed correctly, in the order listed below, with no more than 5 minutes between exercises, and requires a minimum score for each:

1. 32 sit-ups in 1 minute or less.
2. 220-yard sprint in 47.73 seconds or less.
3. 22 push-ups in 1 minute or less.
4. 1.5-mile run in 14 minutes 25 seconds or less.

7.7 When are applicants scheduled for the pre-employment PFT?

Pre-employment PFTs (PFT-P) can be initiated once applicants are medically cleared during the medical review process. Some applicants may be scheduled for PFTs while still pending clearance from the Personnel Security Unit (PSU).

Applicants will be contacted by a certified HSI PFT administrator to schedule and complete the test within a specified timeframe.

If an applicant is referred for a PFT and reports an injury or moderate to severe illness that prevents them from completing the test, the test must be cancelled, and they will be referred to the medical unit for re-clearance.

All costs associated with travel to and from the PFT location are the responsibility of the applicant.

7.8 What happens if an applicant fails the PFT-P?

Applicants will have a total of two opportunities to pass the PFT-P. Second attempts must be completed with 45 calendar days from the date of the first failed attempt. If the applicant does not pass the second attempt, they will be removed from the process and ineligible for consideration for 12 months from the closing date of the announcement. Any applicant who fails the PFT-P for three consecutive years will be considered ineligible for future consideration.

8. Final Job Offer

8.1 When will an applicant receive a final job offer?

Applicants may receive a final job offer when they've successfully cleared all pre-employment requirements; background investigation, polygraph (if applicable), medical exam, drug screen, and PFT-P. Once all requirements are met, HROC will contact the applicant to extend the final job offer with a duty location and establish an EOD date.

8.2 Can an applicant temporarily report to a different office until they attend FLETC?

Both offices (permanent and temporary) would have to concur with the request. Temporary duty locations are not guaranteed, and either office has the discretion to approve or not approve based on office needs, availability of resources, length of wait time until training, and other factors. The applicant may request temporary reporting during the final job offer stage.

8.3 Who is responsible for sending reporting instructions to applicants?

The HSI field office is responsible for sending reporting instructions to incoming new hires after EOD letters are issued unless a temporary duty location is approved. Only temporary reporting instructions are provided by HROC.

9. LEAP (Law Enforcement Availability Pay)

9.1 When do new hires receive LEAP?

LEAP is effective the pay period that Special Agent (SA) trainees arrive at FLETC for Basic Training. If a training waiver is approved, LEAP is effective upon EOD.

9.2 If an applicant has already completed CITP, how can they submit a CITP waiver request?

During the final job offer stage, the applicant should request a CITP waiver and provide their HR Specialist with a copy of their CITP transcript and/or certificate of completion. The waiver process will be initiated and routed for approval by Workforce Management. If the CITP waiver is approved, the applicant will be placed on the HSISAT waitlist for the next available class. Because LEAP is effective upon EOD for new hires with approved CITP waivers, EOD dates should not be established until waivers are approved first.

10. HSI Academy / FLETC

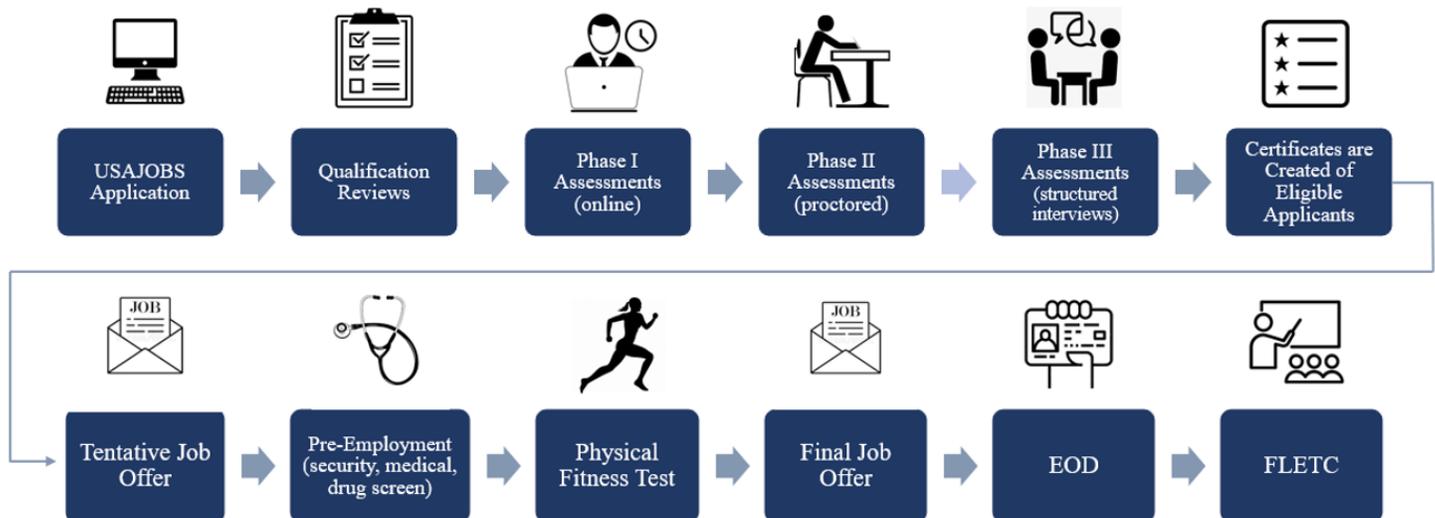
10.1 When will applicants be notified of their academy training date?

This will depend on how long the waitlist is which can fluctuate. It's possible applicants can be informed of their tentative class date during the final job offer call. If the waitlist is extensive, it may be difficult to provide a class date at that time, but an estimated timeframe may be provided. Applicants are placed on the waitlist in the order of their EOD date. Final class rosters are due to FLETC 30 days prior to the class start date.

10.2 How long is Basic Training?

Basic Training (CITP and HSISAT) is approximately 6 months in total.

11. Entry-Level Criminal Investigator Hiring Process



The order in which some hiring steps are taken is subject to change. For example, qualification reviews (step 2) may not be conducted until after Phase II (step 4) for some announcements. Additionally, applicants may be scheduled for PFTs after being medically cleared, while pending PSU clearance.

12. Point of Contacts

General Application Inquiries
Human Resources Operations Center, Entry-Level Staffing
DSC-EntryLevel@ice.dhs.gov

Assessment Inquiries
Office of Human Capital, Strategic Initiatives Unit
SAEntry@ice.dhs.gov

**Emails sent to this mailbox should be limited to testing concerns not related to scores. SIU cannot provide applicants with assessment scores, detailed information about test responses, or guidance on how to achieve a better score. Only a status rating (pass/fail) can be confirmed as it relates to scoring.*

HSI Field Offices
[ICE Field Offices | ICE](#)

For more information regarding the HSI Criminal Investigator position, please visit the Careers page on the ICE.gov website: <https://www.ice.gov/careers/criminal-investigator>

These FAQs can be shared with interested applicants as a guide. Information in this document is subject to change.

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ACRONYMS

AOC	Area of Consideration
AOR	Area of Responsibility
CITP	Criminal Investigator Training Program
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EOD	Enter on Duty
FLETC	Federal Law Enforcement Training Center
HROC	Human Resources Operations Center
HSI	Homeland Security Investigations
HSISAT	Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent Training
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
LEAP	Law Enforcement Availability Pay
OHC	Office of Human Capital
PFT	Physical Fitness Test
PFT-P	Pre-Employment Physical Fitness Test
PSU	Personnel Security Unit
SA	Special Agent
SAC	Special Agent in Charge
SIU	Strategic Initiatives Unit
WFM	Workforce Management Division