

Candidate Preparation Manual

City of Sacramento Police Department

2017 Dispatcher III Assessment Process

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Your Path to Performance

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Introduction

This manual has been developed to help you prepare for the 2017 Dispatcher III assessment process. Review the material carefully. The more time you spend studying and preparing, the better you should do throughout the process. Do not wait until the last minute to begin studying or preparing.

This is your preparation manual. Mark it up and use it any way you wish. We suggest that you read through the manual once to get a feel for the material. The next time you read through it, underline or mark the points that you feel are important. Try to understand the basic principles involved and continually read, review, study, and prepare right up until the assessment date. Study and prepare harder the last few days before the assessment and then get a good night's sleep before the assessment process.

The Assessment Process

Overview

This summary has been prepared to provide candidates with general information about the assessment process and the nature of this specific assessment process. It is targeted primarily for the candidate who has never participated in an assessment process, but we hope that candidates who have been involved in assessment processes in previous promotional procedures will also benefit. We cannot, in the space allotted here, cover every aspect concerning assessment processes. It is our aim to cover the basics of this assessment process so that you can have a general understanding of how the process works – how well you do is up to you.

What is an Assessment Process?

The assessment process provides a means of gathering relevant information under standardized conditions about a person's capabilities to perform in a specific position. It is designed to allow you (the candidate) to demonstrate the skills found to be necessary for success as a Dispatcher III in this Department. It is designed to take a snapshot of the job for which you are competing. Every effort will be made to ensure that the picture is the same for all candidates and that it is as true to life as an assessment situation will allow. The picture is completed by placing you, the candidate, in it.

The assessment exercises should be viewed from the perspective of real life. You should focus on how you would realistically behave if confronted by the situation in real life. Each of the responses you make in handling the situations – the things you say and do – will be recorded or documented by trained assessors as behaviors. The assessors will rate only those behaviors displayed by you. If you do not say or do it, the assessors will not know how you would have handled the situation.

After the assessors have recorded your behavior on the assessment exercises, they will evaluate the behavior as to how well the assessment dimensions were displayed. (Contained in this manual, you will find a list of the assessment dimensions which are the focus of this assessment process.) Each dimension lists a number of different elements which define the specific dimension. Each exercise provides the opportunity for raters to evaluate key components of a variety of the dimensions given in this document. The assessors will independently assign each of your behaviors to the appropriate dimension and then

score your performance on each dimension being assessed in each particular exercise. The assessment process scores will be based on a five-point rating scale, with a low of one and a high of five.

Who are the Assessors?

It is expected that there will be multiple assessors who are experienced supervisors/managers with a thorough understanding of the requirements and demands of the Dispatcher III position.

Before participating in this assessment process, the assessors will go through a rigorous training session designed to familiarize themselves with the assessment exercises and the Department. During the assessment process, the assessors' role will be to observe and score your performance during the assessment exercises so that they may evaluate your competency relative to the skills necessary for success as a Dispatcher III.

During the assessor training, the assessors will receive instructions as to what actions should be expected of candidates in the different exercises. These expected responses form the basis for the scoring guidelines utilized by the assessors to make their evaluations. However, since all of the possible responses to a particular situation cannot be anticipated, the assessors will still need to exercise judgment in making their evaluation decisions. After each candidate has completed the exercise and has been evaluated independently by the assessors, the assessor team will meet to derive a consensus score for each candidate (on each dimension). During the consensus session, the assessors will have an opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate and the quality of the responses.

How will it Work?

During the assessment center, you will participate in a variety of assessment exercises. Candidates will be scheduled to participate in the various exercises where assessors will observe, interview, and evaluate you. All exercises have been designed in a manner that will allow you to demonstrate behaviors necessary and important for the position of Dispatcher III. The specific exercises in which you will participate are as follows:

- Role Play
 - Written Component (using the computer supplied onsite utilizing Microsoft Word software)
- Structured Oral Interview
- Presentation

How Can You Perform Your Best?

The following tips are provided to help you perform to your best ability.

- **Your ability to display behaviors relevant to the assessment dimensions that will be scored by the assessors is critical.** It is suggested that you carefully read and understand the dimension definitions. Some candidates do not spend enough time digesting the dimension definitions and mistakenly assume that certain behaviors will be included in one dimension and not another or use their own personal definitions of the dimensions.
- **The exercises will be as true to life as we can make them given this is an assessment situation.** Some candidates refuse to treat the exercises as if they are real and do not get into the flow of things. It is important to assume that you have been promoted and that you are functioning in the Dispatcher III position. To some degree, this may seem like play acting, but remember, we are placing you in these situations for the purpose of assessing how you would perform at your new position. The more that you can project yourself into the assumed role, the more at ease you should feel with it. Some candidates limit expressing themselves, however, and subsequently limit their scores. Avoid rambling and remain focused to provide an effective presentation of your ideas.
- **If you do not say it or do it, the assessors will not be able to evaluate it.** The assessors can only credit you with the responses you give and/or the behaviors that you display. They cannot give you credit for the ideas you have, but never display.
- **Reading the exercise materials carefully and following the directions explicitly are important for success in the assessment process.** Failing to do either can be the downfall of a promising candidate. In the assessment exercises, instructions will be given and they should be followed without deviation, since they will cover ground rules that the assessors assume you are following. If you have any questions at any time, be sure to ask at that time. We do not want you to do poorly just because you did not understand something.
- **Be yourself.** Do not try to play a role for which you think the assessors are looking. Many personal and professional styles are effective. Put yourself into the assessment exercises and do what you think would be best relative to the assessment dimensions being measured, not how you think the assessors want you to act. Artificial behavior stands out and, typically, people who try to out-guess the exercises or the assessors do worse than if they just acted naturally. Remember to speak up, too!

Logistics

What is the Schedule for the Assessment Process?

The assessment center will take place the first week in February 2017. Each candidate will have a slightly different assessment center schedule, but you should plan on being at the assessment center site for approximately three to four hours on your scheduled assessment day. Additional scheduling information will be provided at a later date.

It is imperative that you report to the test site at the check-in station no later than the time indicated on your invitation letter. Late arrivals will be disqualified from the process.

What Should You Wear to the Assessment Process?

For the assessment center, business casual attire is appropriate.

What Should You Bring to the Assessment Process?

All materials necessary for participation in the assessment process, including paper, pencils, and other office supplies, will be provided for you. Do not bring any printed materials, including this Candidate Preparation Manual.

Electronic devices such as cell phones, PDAs, radios, video cameras, any picture-taking equipment, tape recorders, internet-capable/smart watches, etc., are not allowed into the assessment process. Should any of these devices go off during the process or if you are caught with any of these devices, **you will not be permitted to continue in the process.** The obligation is on you to leave these items in your vehicle or at home – it is not the responsibility of the administrator to remind you.

To keep up with the time allotted for each individual assessment exercise, it is recommended that you wear an analog watch (cell phones and smart watches are not acceptable as time-keeping devices).

Assessment Dimensions

NOTE: Some or all of these dimensions will be measured in each assessment center exercise.

1. Supervision

Able to direct individuals toward the accomplishment of a task. Accepts responsibility for providing direction and ensuring that procedures are followed. Is self-confident, assertive and a self-starter. Demonstrates initiative in perceiving and dealing with problems.

2. Problem Solving/Decision Making

Recognizes when to take action and what type of action is appropriate; willingness to make decisions. Ability to make judgments and choose appropriate solutions from a number of alternative choices. Ability to realize ramifications of possible impact of decisions. Is open-minded, and will seek the input and participation of others in making decisions and solving problems.

3. Interpersonal Relations

Able to deal with people in a tactful, diplomatic and polite manner. Interacts with others in a way that demonstrates sensitivity to their needs and motives. Does not arouse unnecessary antagonism or negative feelings. Is cooperative in dealing with others and functions as part of the team; able to accept constructive criticism. Ability to effectively deal with people in confrontational situations.

4. Planning/Organization

Develops goals and establishes an appropriate and efficient course of action for self and/or others to accomplish them. Delegates authority and responsibility appropriately. Anticipates problems and is proactive rather than reactive in handling them. Plans for potential situations and utilizes resources effectively. Differentiates between short- and long-term consequences.

5. Professional Demeanor

Maintains a professional manner and demeanor and sets an example for subordinates. Presents a positive outlook and is willing to spend whatever time is necessary to get the job done. Able to remain calm and function in pressure. Ability and willingness to accept responsibility for own actions, and those of his/her subordinates.

6. Oral Communication

Ability to speak in a clear, effective manner so that the listener grasps the message. Is persuasive and effective in getting point of view across and explaining actions. Listens to what individuals have to say and can elicit information from others. Ability to follow oral instructions.

7. Written Communication

Ability to express ideas, facts and reasoning clearly and effectively in writing. Can effectively organize and prepare written material on a variety of issues. Expresses ideas in a concise, factual and sequential manner; uses appropriate grammar, phraseology and sentence structure. Can read and comprehend lengthy and complicated reports.