

**MEDICAL SCREENING GUIDELINES FOR PROBATION OFFICERS  
STANDARDS AND TRAINING FOR CORRECTIONS (STC) PROGRAM**

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Board of Corrections**

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FOR  
PROBATION OFFICERS**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

These guidelines are issued by the California Board of Corrections, Standards and Training for Corrections (STC) Program, to assist physicians who perform medical examinations of candidates for the position of Probation Officer.

The material contained in these guidelines is based on the extensive job task analysis conducted on over 1100 Probation Officers and 250 Supervisors from every probation department in the state. The following pages describe the “core” tasks performed by the majority of Probation Officers statewide during the first years (1-5 of employment as a Probation Officer). The core tasks described reflect the minimum core tasks common to most probation departments. Each agency should tailor the following descriptions to address the needs of their local jurisdiction. Agency specific data have been provided to participating departments.

The Board of Corrections has not recommended specific tests for the physician to conduct. Rather, these guidelines present descriptive information about the tasks so that the physician has the flexibility to conduct tests she/he deems appropriate.

Not all of the tasks described have implications for medical screening. Some tasks can be measured more appropriately during the candidate’s entry-level training curriculum. Other core tasks, such as the ability to drive a car, can be determined more efficiently by simpler means, such as proof of a driver’s license.

There are numerous laws that relate to medical screening for employees. This document does not describe these laws in depth. However, it is assumed that the physician and hiring agency are well acquainted with the legal requirements imposed on them for examinations.

Any questions concerning these guidelines may be directed to the Standards Manager at the Board of Corrections, (916) 445-5073.

## II. MEDICAL SCREENING REQUIREMENT

For those agencies participating in the Standards and Training for Corrections (STC) Program, regulations set forth in Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations, require entry-level employees to have "...possession of the skills and abilities for the position as demonstrated by meeting the Board's current guidelines for Vision, Hearing and Medical Screening," (Section 131). Further, California law requires that all individuals empowered as peace officers be evaluated by a licensed physician and surgeon to ensure that they are free from any physical condition which might adversely affect their exercise of these powers (2 Cal Government Code 1031 (f)).

Medical screening is an essential prerequisite to physical performance testing and/or physical skills training programs. The testing process and training programs present physical demands which may create a risk of physical harm to participants and a liability risk to participating agencies.

The purpose of medical screening is to identify candidates on a case-by-case basis who may have physical conditions that contraindicate their ability to safely perform specific activities on the job. This, in turn, enables the employing agency to make reasonable accommodations to the needs of such candidates (or exclude the candidate when reasonable accommodation is infeasible) and, hence, to keep all risk of physical harm and associated liability to a minimum.

Note that diagnosis of conditions\* contraindicating participation in specific activities does not necessarily provide a sound or legal reason for complete exclusion of a candidate: the employing agency must, if feasible, make reasonable accommodations to enable the candidate's participation.

The Board of Corrections recommends that the job requirements checklist provided in these guidelines be tailored to cover both the Probation Officer physical skills training program and/or testing programs (if any) being used in the particular agency using these guidelines to reflect the on-the-job physical demands of their specific Probation Officer positions.

It is expected that the examining physician identify and use professionally appropriate diagnostic procedures to evaluate a candidate's fitness to engage in each of the listed activities. Further, the examining physician should record, for each activity, whether or not any probable contraindicating conditions were revealed by the examination.

*\* "Probable contraindicating conditions" will not, in itself, disqualify a candidate. Rather, it will mean only that the candidate and employing agency must now reach a case-by-case decision about how to handle the situation. The alternatives to disqualification include:*

- *Pursuing further medical examination to clarify the degree of risk;*
- *Accepting the indicated risk (placing the candidate in the testing and training program and/or job with no modification of required activities);*
- *Making a change in the required activities of the testing and training program and/or job (accommodating the candidate's specific situation by eliminating or modifying the particular contraindicated activities).*

**The employing agency retains full responsibility for making the final choice among these options.**

### **III. JOB DEFINITION OF PROBATION OFFICER**

At the direction of the Chief Probation Officer, this local corrections employee investigates cases of adult law violators, juvenile delinquency and/or other court matters; conducts interviews of victims and others regarding these cases; makes recommendations to the courts on the disposition of these cases; assists and monitors adults and/or juveniles on court-ordered and/or informal probation to ensure compliance with the conditions of probation; conducts searches of persons and places; seizes contraband and property; and effects arrests of persons under their jurisdiction.

This category of corrections employee is a peace officer with limited powers of arrest per Penal Code Section 830.5.\* Typical titles include: Probation Officer, Probation Officer I or II, Deputy Probation Officer, Deputy Probation Officer I or II, etc.

Note: The designation of *peace officer* does not imply that the Medical Screening Guidelines published by the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission apply to the job of Probation Officer. The POST guidelines are based on the uniformed patrol officer functions, not those of Probation Officer.

### **DUTIES**

While the following pages describe tasks requiring physical skills, other tasks include interviewing/counseling; working at computer terminals; writing reports, memos and case notes; reading printed material; speaking on the telephone; conducting drug testing with drug testing kits in the office or in the field; traveling to and from court, detention facilities, probationer's home, school or treatment facility; testifying in court.

#### **IV. CORE TASKS REQUIRING PHYSICAL ABILITIES**

1. In the office or field, physically defend themselves (using hands, arms or feet) against an attacking probationer or other individual.
2. In the office or field, physically subdue *with* the help of others, a resisting or fleeing probationer.
3. Handcuff a non-resisting person.
4. Handcuff a resisting person. (Assistance is typically present when this task is performed.)
5. Run (such as to assist others in an emergency or to get to cover). Note: Running is for a short distance, typically 35-50 yards.
6. Bend, extend and twist their body such as when searching probationers, vehicles and/or placing leg-cuffs or other restraints on a probationer.
7. Put an actively resisting person in the seat of a car. (Assistance is typically present when performing this task.)
8. Use their hands and fingers to search.
9. Using a lifting motion, assist someone from a prone position on the ground to his/her feet (such as handcuffed or moderately incapacitated person).
10. Perform CPR. (This is typically two person CPR.)
11. Walk up a flight of stairs.
12. Run quickly up or down a flight of stairs.
13. Carry objects weighing up to 25 pounds such as boxes of evidence, files, equipment, etc.
14. Drive a car as part of their probation officer duties (not commuting).

V.

**SAMPLE MEDICAL SCREENING FORM  
FOR USE IN THE SELECTION OF PROBATION OFFICERS**

Employing Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Employing Agency Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Agency Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's signature authorizing release of medical records and findings to the employing agency:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Physicians' Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

PHYSICIAN'S STATEMENT (to be completed following the examination):

I hereby certify that I have examined the above candidate's fitness for the Probation Officer position. The information in this form accurately represents my evaluation of any contraindications to this candidate's fitness for the position of Probation Officer in my local jurisdiction. I have recorded the diagnostic procedures that I used in making this assessment at the end of this form. I understand that the presence of contraindications does not automatically disqualify this candidate, nor does their absence constitute a guarantee that the candidate can meet the physical requirements of the Probation Officer position in my local jurisdiction.

Physician's Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **VI. DESCRIPTION OF CORE TASKS REQUIRING PHYSICAL ABILITIES**

**Task #1:** In the office or field, physically defend themselves (using hands, arms or feet) against an attacking probationer or other individual.

### **Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

30 seconds

### **Average Frequency:**

Once or twice a year or less

### **Additional Information:**

Performance of this task may also include the Probation Officer making evasive body movements for defense.

Assistance from other staff is often, but not always, available immediately or shortly thereafter. Attacks could occur in the office, during a home visit, in an institutional setting or in the community.

This task may also involve the Probation Officer being attacked "out of the blue" by the probationer and not in the course of a planned attempt by the Probation Officer to take the probationer into custody. In this scenario, the attacker is attempting to hurt the Probation Officer, not to flee or resist being handcuffed. The expectation is that the Probation Officer will protect him/herself and retreat from the situation.

Typical training curriculum for Probation Officer self defense includes movements that incorporate balance, response to subject's movements and physical self-control. Techniques taught in training include not backing up in the line of attack, but rather, moving laterally or diagonally out of the line of attack and using pivoting techniques. Techniques may also include simply using hands and arms to protect the head.

Any contraindicating factors?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #2:** In the office or field, physically subdue with the help of others a resisting or fleeing probationer.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

10-60 seconds

**Average Frequency:**

Once or twice a year or less

**Additional Information:**

80% of the time this task occurs in the office, 20% in the community.

Physical Movements may include moving up close to the probationer, grabbing the fingers and/or wrist of the probationer and twisting fingers or wrist to control the probationer. Actions also include grasping, twisting, shifting the Probation Officer's body weight for balance or against a struggling probationer. The Probation Officer must exert force against resistance to accomplish this task. This task may escalate to a wrestling situation.

During the performance of this task, it is estimated that there is a 50/50 chance of receiving a blow from the probationer. The Probation Officer is then engaged in block, absorbing or deflecting the blow. The Probation Officer may run a short distance to control the probationer. However, typically this distance is short and the Probation Officer is not required to pursue the probationer for long distances.

Any contraindicating factors?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #3:** Handcuff a non-resisting person.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

30 seconds

**Average Frequency:**

Several times a year but less than once a month

**Additional Information:**

This task is performed from a standing or kneeling position. Physical movements include: grasping, bending, pivoting one's body, shifting/maintaining balance. It also entails stooping, kneeling, or bracing the Probation Officer's weight against that of the subject. The Probation Officer extends and stretches the Probation Officer's arms to handcuff the subject. The Probation Officer must also manipulate handcuffs and keys.

Training in the use of handcuffs includes instruction on handcuff retrieval, gripping the handcuffs by the chain, ensuring swing arm of handcuff is facing toward subject's wrist, ensuring that handcuffs are not double locked before attempting to place them on the subject's wrist, checking for excessive tightness, etc. Double locking requires some degree of finger dexterity and steady use of the hands on the part of the Probation Officer.

Any contraindicating factors? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #4:** Handcuff a resisting person.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

1-2 minutes

**Average Frequency:**

Once or twice a year or less

**Additional Information:**

Assistance is typically present when this task is performed.

This task is performed upon a person from either a standing, kneeling or prone position. If the Probation Officer is standing, he or she is in a balanced, defensive posture, and bladed (side to the subject) for maximum leverage. The Probation Officer could also be kneeling over the prone subject to apply the handcuffs. The actions include grasping, bending, pivoting one's body, shifting/maintaining balance, overcoming resistance, pushing/pulling and possibly blocking blows. It may also involve taking the subject down to the ground and restraining him/her there. It also entails stooping, kneeling, and bracing the Probation Officer's weight against the subject. Typically, the person being handcuffed is pulling away, trying to counter moves, twisting, pulling his or her body, kicking, punching, biting, spitting, shouting or trying to run away.

The Probation Officer is required to extend and stretch the Probation Officer's arms to handcuff. The Probation Officer must also manipulate handcuffs and keys. Double locking of the handcuffs requires some degree of finger dexterity and steadiness of the Probation Officer's hands.

Speed, agility and quick reflexes are important. This task is performed as quickly as possible for officer safety.

Any contraindicating factors? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #5:** Run (such as to assist others in an emergency or to get to cover).

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

Less than one minute

**Average Frequency:**

Once or twice a year or less

**Additional Information:**

Running is for a short distance, typically 35-50 yards.

A Probation Officer may run when responding to a call for help from other staff such as an office setting, to the juvenile hall (if the juvenile hall is located in the same building as the probation office), or to the office parking lot. This may involve running around corners, desks, chairs, etc., in confined areas.

Another incident during which a Probation Officer may run involves getting out of a dangerous situation such as during a visit to the probationer's home. In this situation, the probationer, a member of his/her family or friends becomes hostile to the Probation Officer. This type of running is also of short duration and may include running around or over objects in unfamiliar territory.

Any contraindicating factors?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #6:** Bend, extend and twist your body such as when searching probationers, vehicles and/or placing leg-cuffs or other restraints on a probationer.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

3-30 minutes

**Average Frequency:**

About once a month

**Additional Information:**

The physical motions involved in this task occur most frequently when searching a probationer or a probationer's room.

Actions include bending one's trunk, bending over, kneeling, stretching, reaching, looking under furniture, feeling with hands, pulling, getting down on hands and knees, crawling, climbing and squatting. If specific objects must be moved, such as lifting mattresses, moving furniture, etc., assistance is typically available.

Any contraindicating factors?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #7:** Put an actively resisting person in the seat of a car.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

1 minute

**Average Frequency:**

Once or twice a year or less

**Additional Information:**

Assistance is typically present when performing this task. It is assumed the resisting probationer is handcuffed prior to being put into a car.

Note: Usually a Probation Officer does not attempt to put a very actively resisting person in a car but, rather, puts the probationer on the ground until the person is more compliant.

Physical actions include: grasping, using control holds such as grasping and bending the wrists of the subject for control, (controlled application of pressure on the subject's wrists or fingers). This task might also include applying leg cuffs as well as handcuffs. If the subject assumes a rigid body posture and is uncooperative, the Probation Officer maintains physical control by supporting partial body weight, pushing, protecting the probationer's head from hitting the top of the car entry by shielding the head with the Probation Officer's arm.

Once the subject is in the car, the Probation Officer must reach over and secure the seat belt.

Under usual circumstances, speed is not important.

The person being put in the car is either twisting, pulling away or going limp, dead weight.

Any contraindicating factors? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #8:** Use their hands and fingers to search.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

30 seconds to 10 minutes

**Average Frequency:**

About once a month

**Additional Information:**

Searches are of persons, rooms, and vehicles. Physical actions for searching rely primarily on balance, agility, finger dexterity and normal ability to detect some objects such as razor blades, syringes, knives, etc. Physical actions include grasping and feeling (sensitivity).

Any contraindicating factors?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #9:** Using a lifting motion, assist someone from a prone position on the ground to his/her feet (such as a handcuffed or moderately incapacitated person).

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

10-15 seconds

**Average Frequency:**

Once or twice a year or less

**Additional Information:**

Physical actions typically include bending, squatting, kneeling, grabbing the subject's arm, lifting or rolling the subject into a sitting position, then pulling the subject from a sitting to a standing position. Usually, if a person is incapacitated, medical attention is obtained before attempting to move them.

Execution of this task depends primarily on balance and agility.

Any contraindicating factors?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #10:** Perform CPR.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

1-5 minutes

**Average Frequency:**

Rarely, if ever, performed but expected as part of the job and required training

**Additional Information:**

If the need for CPR occurred, it would typically be two person CPR.

Conditions under which a Probation Officer might perform CPR usually involve the Probation Officer assisting a juvenile detention facility worker when a juvenile attempts suicide in the juvenile hall. Actions performed immediately prior to administering CPR might include running a short distance to scene, assisting a juvenile worker in moving the juvenile, then assisting with CPR.

It is possible a Probation Officer might have to perform CPR on his/her co-worker during the course of a field visit.

Any contraindicating factors?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #11:** Walk up a flight of stairs.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

45 seconds

**Average Frequency:**

Several times a week

**Additional Information:**

This task is most often performed in an office or courthouse setting. When performed in the field this task is often performed in an apartment complex. The Probation Officer may be carrying a notebook or case files.

Any contraindicating factors?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #12:** Run quickly up or down a flight of stairs.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

30 seconds

**Average Frequency:**

Several times a year but less than once a month

**Additional Information:**

This task may occur in an office setting or in the field, usually in the probationer's home or apartment complex.

Any contraindicating factors?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #13:** Carry objects weighing up to 25 pounds such as boxes of evidence, files, equipment, etc.

**Duration of Time Required to Perform This Task:**

1-5 minutes

**Average Frequency:**

About once a month

**Additional Information:**

Assistance is usually available.

Examples of this task include carrying case files, boxes of evidence from a subject's home, and equipment such as field urine tests, cameras and electronic monitoring devices. Distance to carry these items does not usually exceed 200 yards. Sometimes carrying is interrupted by the need to open and shut doors. This may necessitate putting down the load and then picking it up again. It may also include lowering or raising the load in and out of a car trunk.

There are different situations that determine how this task is performed.

Scenario #1: Probation Officer carries 20-40 case files in carrying cases, which weigh approximately 25 pounds. The Probation Officer might have to walk up or down stairs with these files. A dolly or rolling file tray may be available.

Scenario #2: Probation Officer confiscates evidence at a subject's home. Examples include: alcohol, suitcases of gang paraphernalia, shoeboxes of evidence. This lifting entails moving boxes from the waist level or from shelf level and then carrying to the trunk of a car and bending over to place materials in the trunk.

Scenario #3 Probation Officer carries "field book" which is 4-5 inches thick containing notes on cases.

Scenario #4 Probation Officer carries equipment such as urine tests, cameras, handcuffs.

Terrain is typically flat although it may be up hill in some instances.

Any contraindicating factors? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

**Task #14:** Drive a car as part of their Probation Officer duties (not commuting).

*This task can be screened for by the candidate showing proof of a driver's license.*

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