



Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Section - 2012

121 **Crafting Forensic Psychology Response Reports for Attorneys to Use in Appellant Hearings**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain information relating to the forensic practice standards pertaining to psychological reports conducted in law enforcement settings. The presentation also covers an assessment of the validity of the methods and reasoning used to evaluate the opinions, logic and linkages articulated in the Outside Evaluation (OE) report.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing how a reduction in the information gap that results in the selection of personnel who are less likely to be vulnerable to the high stress associated with being a police officer.

Forensic pre-employment psychological evaluations must take place with considerable guidance from recognized professional sources (e.g., International Association of Chiefs of Police, APA, and the Police Officer Standards of Training better known as POST). The forensic examiner is responsible for rendering an opinion (e.g., meets, does not meet, suitable, or not suitable) that is submitted to the hiring authority or their representative. Most large departments, jurisdictions, cities, or states have some type of an articulated appeal process. Typically, the process includes the rejected applicant or appellant to secure an outside evaluation (i.e., OE report) that either may corroborate or offer a dissenting opinion from the original forensic psychological findings or recommendations. In the cases where there is a dissenting OE report, the examiner writing the initial disqualifying report may be called upon to write a forensic response (FR) report that addresses issues identified in the OE report.

There are three primary learning objectives associated with this presentation. First, attendees are briefed on the forensic practice standards related to psychological reports conducted in law enforcement settings. Second, the presentation covers an assessment of the validity of the methods and reasoning used to evaluate the opinions reached in the OE report. Third, the presentation examines the logic of the linkages articulated in the OE report. In this case, the clear and convincing evidence in the OE report that demonstrates a reasonable connection between job-relevant psychopathology, psychological test results, or any functional or judgment impairments that would preclude this appellant from carry out the full scope of the duties of an armed police officer.

The forensic response report is usually written for the attorney representing the hiring authority. The overall purpose of crafting this report is to assist with the cross-examination of the opposing expert as well as allow the initial examiner to have a better idea of the justification used in the original disqualification report. An approach to report writing for practitioners is presented, with practical strategies and examples provided to illustrate the use of the model in a forensically-based setting by outlining five concepts that, if utilized, hold promise to improve the quality and efficacy of response psychological reports.

It is hypothesized that attendees will leave the presentation with a better appreciation for the intricacies of the forensic process as it takes place in the circumscribed arena of police psychology. This process includes discussion of the session with the department's attorney that may allow a refinement of the cross-examination or highlighting other issues associated with the findings or methods in the OE report. For example, some OE reports are plagued by misinterpretation of test reports, ignoring relevant laws, and glossing over or ignoring problematic behavior contained in the appellant's problematic history. After attending this presentation, attendees will understand some of the principles of crafting FR reports within the context of pre-employment psychological evaluations. Although, the guidance offered here may have broader implications for forensic psychology in general.

Forensic Psychology Reports, Appellant Hearings, OE Reports