

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

TO: 2017 SPPD Background Investigators

FROM: Deputy Chief Mary Nash

SUBJECT: **SPPD & 21st Century Hiring and Expectations**

DATE: March 16, 2017

Welcome to the Background Investigations Unit. We are excited to have all of you assigned to this unit. I trust you have read the PERF report on *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer*. This is required reading for you. Please understand that no candidate is “perfect” and it is their vast life experiences – good and bad – that shape them as a person and potential police officer candidate.

As you read *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer*, you may have thought to yourself – the department is lowering its standards. This is not the case. Understand that we are not changing our hiring practices or lowering our standards but we do need to recognize areas in our process where we can make improvements. You need to recognize how the culture of the department and your implicit bias plays into how you will judge candidates. As we know from our training, we all have biases. This is not shameful; it is a fact of life that we all have biases. It is *recognizing and understanding those biases* that will assist you in the background process.

Consider your own background investigation – not when you were hired but as if you were a current candidate with the police experiences you have accumulated. None of us can boast a perfect and mistake-free career. Are there some events or decisions that you would change, if given the chance? How have you learned from your mistakes? Did you “survive and thrive” when you encountered adversity or did you “crash and burn?”

I expect you will be deliberate in identifying the qualities in candidates that embrace Chief Todd Axtell’s philosophy of “Trusted Service with Respect.”

What does “Trusted Service with Respect” look like for you as a background investigator?

- You will identify candidates who share the key values of our community and the values we expect in our officers:
 - Integrity
 - Commitment to service and commitment to community engagement
 - Empathy
 - Communication and human relations skills
 - Self-control
 - Problem-solving skills
- We as a department and you as an investigator will work to advance diversity and inclusiveness in the hiring process.
 - Consider what your implicit bias brings to this process.
 - Are you looking for candidates who look like you?
 - Are you looking for candidates will fit the culture of SPPD?
 - Are you judging that candidates have not led perfect lives?

- Consider what they may have learned from their experiences.
 - Remember that no one is perfect. We all make mistakes. It is what we learn from those mistakes that matters.
- You will search to find those candidates of good character and those who view community engagement as authentic police work and understand it is just as important as enforcing the law.
 - Does the candidate seem to have a good heart?
 - How have they grown from the adversity they have faced?
 - How will their experiences help them understand the challenges our community faces every day?
 - You need to identify those who possess the guardian mentality and can be taught the enforcement aspects of the job. These are the candidates we seek.

Expectations:

- Be an advocate for your candidate. You need to be involved in getting to know them well and helping them navigate the background process.
 - This will require time management to make sure you are out in the field talking to as many people as you can to understand the core of your candidate.
 - Candidates of different cultures may be overwhelmed by the process – your job is to help them understand it. This isn't a “stump the chump” process where your answer to missing information is – “they never got back to me.”
 - You need to be proactive.
 - Candidates for whom English is their second language may not always understand our slang or be able to understand what we mean. This goes both ways. Seek clarity and give clarity in return.
- You need to be proactive in connecting with your candidate. Their lives are just as busy as yours. You need to be proactive in following up and not sitting and waiting by the phone.
- Interact with your candidate without judgement. This will help them be more open and help you understand their experiences.
- Your job is to be the fact finder without judgement or bias.
- Your job is to keep the confidentiality of each person's private information.
 - This is someone's life you are reviewing. Do not share information with anyone else. This is damaging to the candidate and damaging to the integrity of our process.

There is no position more important or more rewarding than being a background investigator. You get to find the candidates that will become the future of our department. You will get to watch your candidates develop and be promoted in the years to come. Together we play a part in a candidate's success or failure. I am confident that you are up to the challenge of this process and will do your best each day.

I know how demanding and rewarding this process is – I sat in your seat in 1998 and 1999 and I recall the many challenges of serving as a background investigator. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer* report or the SPPD background process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for taking on this challenge!

Cc: Chief Todd Axtell
Assistant Chief Kathy Wuorinen