

The following is information taken from the About.com Criminology Careers Website ([http://criminologycareers.about.com/od/Job\\_Market/a/Background-Check-Disqualifiers.htm](http://criminologycareers.about.com/od/Job_Market/a/Background-Check-Disqualifiers.htm)).

Please review this list before selecting an education program that is designed for a future in law enforcement. Although these disqualifiers MAY not prevent you from pursuing law enforcement academy training, it is HIGHLY unlikely that you will be able to obtain certification and employment upon graduation.

### List of Background Disqualifiers

To help you determine whether or not you have a shot at [working as a police officer](#), [probation officer](#) or other related career, or to help keep you on the right track when you're finally ready to fill out the [law enforcement job application](#), here's a look at some common background check [disqualifiers](#). Generally, job candidates are most commonly dropped from consideration for one or more of the following:

- Felony convictions
- Serious misdemeanors
- Past or current drug use
- Credit issues
- Dishonorable discharge from military service
- Falsification or untruthfulness on the application
- Poor [work history](#)
- Past or current gang affiliations
- Undetected crimes
- Problematic driving history
- Domestic violence

Keep in mind that this is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list, but rather the more common issues that will cause a potential employer to decide to hire someone. Here's a closer look at each of these background blemishes:

### Felony convictions

There's not a lot of ambiguity here; if you've been convicted of or plead guilty or [nolo contendere](#) to a crime that constitutes a [felony](#) or that would have been a felony in the

jurisdiction you're applying in, the chances are extremely high that you won't be able to continue in the [hiring process](#).

### **Serious misdemeanors**

While felonies are pretty clear cut, what constitutes a serious misdemeanor gets a little cloudy. The exact definition may change from agency to agency. Even though misdemeanors are not as serious as felonies, there are certain crimes that departments simply cannot abide. These include recent (within 10 years or so) DUI convictions, crimes of violence such as assault or battery, and crimes that speak to a person's honesty and integrity, such as perjury and some types of theft.

### **Past or current drug use**

It should come as no surprise that employers expect their employees and job applicants to be drug free. Past drug use, though, is a different story. Call it a sign of the times, but many departments have become more forgiving of some past minor drug use, provided it was on an experimental basis as opposed to sustained and recreational use. Experimental use typically means just a few times in very short period of time.

This newfound tolerance is also limited to marijuana and other "lesser" drugs. Any use of cocaine, hallucinogens or designer drugs such as ecstasy will usually be automatic disqualifiers.

### **<pCredit issues**

**No, most agencies don't care what your [credit score](#) is. What they are concerned about is whether or not you've been meeting your obligations, and whether or not you'll be able to continue to do so on the salary they're going to pay. The whole issue here is to make sure employees will be in a position to succeed in their careers and will be less tempted toward bribery and graft.**

### **Dishonorable discharge from military service**

**Prior military service is highly valued in nearly every employment sector, and this is certainly no less true in law enforcement and criminal justice. An honorable discharge from the military will carry you a long way. However, a [dishonorable discharge](#) is almost always an automatic disqualifier.**

### **Falsification or untruthfulness on the application**

**It's a simple concept: if you're caught lying on your application, you're not going to get hired. Necessarily, careers in criminology place a premium on truthfulness, and it starts with the job application. In order to keep candidates honest, many agencies employ a polygraph exam as part of their process.**

### **Poor work history**

**Certainly, one bad recommendation can be explained away as a personality conflict with the boss or just a bad fit for you. A pattern of poor work history and less-than-favorable recommendations for past employers, especially a history that suggests laziness, a bad attitude or poor relations with customers and fellow workers, will likely keep you from getting hired.**

### **Past or current gang affiliations**

**Gangs are synonymous with serious criminal activity. Naturally, agencies cannot take the risk of hiring gang members. Some of the tells of gang involvement are strategically placed tattoos, wearing of certain colors and symbols, personal affiliations and past criminal history.**

### **Undetected crimes**

**Convictions are one thing, commissions are another. It's no secret that law enforcement officers don't detect or make arrests for every crime that's ever been committed. However, if during the background investigation you're found to have committed a crime that you were never arrested for or convicted of, you may very well be disqualified from the process.**

### **Problematic driving history**

**Everyone makes mistakes, and there have been plenty of people who have had less than stellar driving records and gone to work long and successful careers. However, serious and sustained periods of driving infractions or crimes demonstrate character flaws and either a complete disregard for, or at least an inability to follow, the laws of the land.**

**Some of the issues on your driving record that can keep you from getting hired include prior driver license suspensions, multiple moving violations, reckless driving convictions and excessive speeding citations.**

### **Domestic violence**

**Domestic violence runs completely contrary to the purpose of law enforcement. It can also be a source of liability for a department who hires someone who has a past history of violence at home. Any incident of domestic violence in your past will be an automatic disqualifier.**

### **Keeping Your Record Clean to Compete**

**Using the above list as a guide, you can better determine whether or not you should pursue a [career in law enforcement or criminal justice](#). You can also get a better picture of the type of activity you should avoid if you hope to land a job as a police officer or other criminology professional in the**