

DELTA COLLEGE  
COUNSELING/ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES  
**LAW ENFORCEMENT/ POLICE OFFICER**

Salary Range: \$27,310 - \$72,450 annually

Personal Interests: persuading/negotiating, protecting, and keeping records

Work Environment: indoors and outdoors

**Description**

People depend on police officers to protect their lives and property. Law enforcement officers, some of whom are State or Federal special agents or inspectors, perform these duties in a variety of ways, depending on the size and type of their organization.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, about 65 percent of State and local law enforcement officers are uniformed personnel, who regularly patrol and respond to calls for service. Police officers who work in small communities and rural areas have general law enforcement duties. They may direct traffic at the scene of a fire, investigate a burglary, or give first aid to an accident victim. In large police departments, officers usually are assigned to a specific type of duty. Many urban police agencies are becoming more involved in community policing, a practice in which an officer builds relationships with the citizens of local neighborhoods and mobilizes the public to help fight crime.

Police agencies are usually organized into geographic districts, with uniformed officers assigned to patrol a specific area, such as part of the business district or outlying residential neighborhoods. Officers may work alone, but in large agencies they often patrol with a partner. While on patrol, officers attempt to become thoroughly familiar with their patrol area and remain alert for anything unusual. Suspicious circumstances and hazards to public safety are investigated or noted, and officers are dispatched to

individual calls for assistance within their district. During their shift, they may identify, pursue, and arrest suspected criminals, resolve problems within the community, and enforce traffic laws.

Some police officers specialize in such diverse fields as chemical and microscopic analysis, training and firearms instruction, or handwriting and fingerprint identification. Others work with special units such as horseback, bicycle, motorcycle, harbor patrol, canine corps, special weapons and tactics (SWAT), or emergency response teams. Some officers perform jail-related duties and some work in courts. Regardless of job duties or location, police officers and detectives at all levels must write reports and maintain meticulous records that will be needed if they testify in court.

**Working Conditions**

Police work can be very dangerous and stressful. In addition to the obvious dangers of confrontations with criminals, officers need to be constantly alert and ready to deal appropriately with a number of other threatening situations. Many law enforcement officers witness death and suffering resulting from accidents and criminal behavior.

Police officers and detectives work in highly structured organizations. A person of higher rank supervises each officer. Depending on their assignment, police officers may work alone or in groups. Officers may have to work outside for long periods in all kinds of

weather. The work of police officers and detectives is dangerous because they may deal with violent people such as armed robbers and murder suspects. In addition to the stress these conditions create, police officers and detectives are under pressure to abide by court rulings on arrest procedures, search and seizure, and the civil rights of citizens being arrested.

### **Training, Other Qualifications**

Law enforcement agencies are encouraging applicants to take postsecondary school training in law enforcement-related subjects. Many entry-level applicants for police jobs have completed some formal postsecondary education and a significant number are college graduates. Many junior colleges, colleges, and universities offer programs in law enforcement or administration of justice. A college degree will be an asset for possibilities of advancement within any law enforcement agency.

The Delta College Criminal Justice program is designed to offer specialized knowledge of law enforcement combined with a broad general educational background. Depending on the option chosen, a graduate (an Associate in Applied Science Degree) of this program would be prepared to seek employment as a police officer, or in many non-officer jobs such as patrol and security guards, investigator for government affiliated agencies, private investigation, or in corrections.

### **Job Outlook**

The employment of Police Officers and Detectives in Michigan is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2014. Most openings will occur due to replacement

of workers who retire, die or transfer to other occupations.

### **Earnings**

Wages of police officers vary widely based on years of service, rank, and location and size of the community in which they work. Nationally, the median annual income of Police and sheriff's patrol officers was \$48,410 in May 2006. Wages for selected areas of Michigan in May 2006 were:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Range</b>
Michigan	\$48,590	\$33,450-\$62,770
Battle Creek	\$48,790	\$38,120-\$57,920
Bay City	\$45,330	\$34,550-\$58,450
Detroit	\$50,960	\$39,730-\$61,950
Flint	\$49,560	\$38,870-\$58,480
Grand Rapids	\$47,680	\$28,450-\$60,770
Jackson	\$40,160	\$24,710-\$56,260
Lansing	\$45,360	\$21,710-\$62,480
Muskegon	\$46,610	\$34,540-\$56,610
Saginaw	\$41,690	\$23,760-\$58,850

### **Related Occupations**

Fire fighter, compliance/enforcement inspector, F.B.I. agent, private investigator, fire inspector, guard, sheriff and bailiff, polygraph examiner, and corrections officer.

Lawenforcementpolice.doc updated 10/07  
Sources: MOIS, Occupational Outlook Handbook, System of Interactive Guidance Plus, Michigan Occupational Information System and Delta College Catalog

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<http://www.delta.edu/careercenter>

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