

Essex County Sheriff's Department

Training & Staff Development

Correctional Officer Interview Tips

The following are tips that will help you prepare for your law enforcement oral board interview.

1. **GET PROPER REST.** Get a good night's sleep and arrive early. (At least fifteen minutes prior to your appointment) This will allow you time to reduce your stress and allow for traffic delays.
2. **DRESS PROFESSIONALLY.** Your oral interview is a professional job interview and you should treat it as such. Dress in a conservative manner. Business suit. If females opt to wear a skirt, the hemlines should not be above the knee. Hairstyles should be neat and conservative. Do not over style your hair. Shine your shoes. Minimal jewelry should be worn. Do not wear cologne or perfume. Good personal hygiene is a must. Pay attention to detail. Your interviewers are trained observers and they will notice certain things, even if you don't.
3. **DO YOUR HOMEWORK.** Research Essex County regarding pertinent information useful for the interview. A great research tool is the Internet, especially the department's web site (ex: Who is the Sheriff? What are the current issues/operations/press releases involving the department and the public?) Talk to current correctional officers.
4. **BE HONEST.** Honesty and integrity are the cornerstones to becoming a correctional officer. If you do not already possess these qualities, do not even bother applying.
5. **SELL YOURSELF.** Remember that the interviewers are correctional officers and staff members in the department. They are listening intently to your responses. You are potentially going to be their co-worker and they are looking for the best candidate. They are listening to what you have to offer the department.
6. **BE ENTHUSIASTIC, BUT BE SINCERE.** Be confident in your capabilities and show that you are interested in joining their department.
7. **YOUR EXPERIENCES ARE IMPORTANT.** Don't sell short your previous achievements. Tell them (when applicable) of your experiences with volunteer work, military service, playing on a team (sports or other function that shows teamwork), or anything you have done to contribute to the community.
8. **ACT PROFESSIONALLY.** Do not smoke prior to the interview or chew gum during the interview. Look your interviewer in the eyes, but don't overly stare at one another.
9. **BE ASSERTIVE AND CONFIDENT.** When you first meet your interviewers, shake their hand and refer to them by rank and name.
10. **FOCUS ON THE INTERVIEW.** Listen to the questions. It is acceptable to ask clarifying questions if you are unsure of what is being asked, or ask that the question be repeated. There will be scenario questions that will ask how you will react in certain situations. There are no trick questions. The interviewers are looking for common sense answers. It would be advantageous if you understand the basic duties of your desired position.
11. **FINISH STRONG.** Have a closing statement to finish the interview. This would be a time to reiterate what makes you a desirable employee to the department. Stress the positive aspects of what you can bring to the department. There are many applicants, you want them to hire you.
12. **LEAVE A GOOD IMPRESSION.** Before you leave the interview, be sure you thank the interviewers by name and leave with a handshake.
13. **DON'T WORRY EXCESSIVELY.** It is normal to feel nervous, especially if this is your first oral board. Preparing your closing statement, knowing the specifics of the job, and researching the department will decrease your nervousness.