



Promotional Exam Study Guide

Assistant Chief Probation Officer

Massachusetts Trial Court
Probation Department

Industrial/Organizational Solutions, Inc. 2017

Public Safety Selection Experts

Welcome!.....	3
Purpose of the Study Guide	3
Who We Are.....	4
Our Approach.....	4
Contents of This Guide.....	4
How the Process Works	6
Section 1: Job-Knowledge Assessment.....	8
Format of the Job-Knowledge Questions	8
Exam Source Materials	9
Section 2: Skills and Abilities Assessment.....	12
General Study Guidelines	14
Importance of Reading the Study Material	14
Note Taking or Other Documentation Techniques.....	14
Study with a partner/group	15
Answer practice questions.....	15
Study the material	16
Keeping Organized	16
Scheduling.....	17
Individual Study	17
Developing a Basic Study Plan	17
Goal Setting.....	19
SQ3R Study Method.....	19
Memorization.....	20
One-On-One Studying.....	20
Study Techniques	20
Things to Keep In Mind	20
Group Study	21
Preparing for Test Day	22
Preparation for the exam.....	22
Your physical well-being	22
Arrive early.....	22
Confidence	22
Attitude	22
Controlling Anxiety	23
General Test-taking Strategies.....	23
Using the Test Answer Sheet	25
Helpful Hints about the Exam	27
Basic Rules Governing the Testing Process.....	27
Preliminary Examination Plan.....	29

Welcome!

This study guide is intended to provide you with information regarding how to study, what to study, and when to study, as well as other tips for taking your upcoming promotional examination. We also encourage you to view the orientation video. The video is available on the [iosolutions.com](http://mtcacpoWE.iosolutions.com/) website. You may visit the following website to view the orientation video for your promotional exam.

<http://mtcacpoWE.iosolutions.com/>

Please note, the video will be available starting on October 13, 2017. This video will provide you with more general information about the entire process and the components of the examination you will take.

Purpose of the Study Guide

The purpose of this guide is to help prepare you for the written examination. This type of promotional exam is likely new to many of the candidates. This guide will be an excellent resource for your preparation for the upcoming examination. We highly recommend you follow the guidelines and use the preparation tips.

The goal of the testing process is to select individuals who are highly qualified to perform the duties and meet the responsibilities of Assistant Chief Probation Officers (ACPOs) in the Massachusetts Trial Court.

This study guide provides tips and suggestions for preparing for the testing process. We hope that you find this document helpful in your preparation. That said, there is no substitute for hard work and reading as you prepare for this testing process.

Please note that this guide was created to assist you in preparing for the examination. This document does not “define” the specifics of the examination from a contractual perspective.

Good Luck!

Introduction

Who We Are

I/O Solutions has been retained to develop the promotional processes for the Massachusetts Trial Court. I/O Solutions is a public safety consulting firm located in the suburban Chicago area. The firm works exclusively with police, fire, sheriff's departments, correctional facilities, and other public agencies to develop, validate and implement promotional and entry-level selection processes.

I/O Solutions has several goals in developing a promotional examination for the Massachusetts Trial Court. First, the selection procedures will be valid, fair and legally defensible. A valid examination is **relevant** to the department and position in question, measures the critical knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for promotion, and aids the department in selecting highly qualified individuals for promotion. Also, the process will conform to appropriate legal guidelines regarding the selection and testing of candidates. Finally, the process will treat all candidates with dignity and respect, and rules should be fairly and equitably applied.

We wish for each candidate in the promotional process to have a fair and equal opportunity to demonstrate his or her capabilities. While you will likely seek out other opportunities to prepare for this testing process, we wish for this information to provide a starting point and foundation in your preparation efforts.

Our Approach

I/O Solutions is a new vendor for the Massachusetts Trial Court, with this being our second promotional process for the Trial Court. That said, we have developed well over 1,000 custom public safety promotional processes in the last 17 years of operations. We develop promotional processes for some of the largest police and fire agencies in the U.S. While each process differs based on the needs of our particular client, there are elements of our specific approach in nearly every single process we develop and implement, and thus there are aspects of this process that will differ from previous processes. When relevant, our approach will be specified within this guide.

Contents of This Guide

This study guide has been prepared to introduce you to the written job knowledge and skills and ability sections of the examination. The first thing you can do to prepare for the examination is to read this study guide. This guide will familiarize you with the

testing process and provide you with general information about subsequent selection hurdles. Following are the sections that this guide will cover:

- Components of the promotional process
- Advice on the importance of reading specified study materials
- The development of a study plan
- Advice on how to study for the job knowledge section of the examination
- Information on the format and structure of the exam
- A list of source materials
- General preparation guidelines
- Test-taking principles
- Use of the answer sheet
- Helpful hints about the test
- Rules for the test
- A Preliminary Examination Plan for the job knowledge section

How the Process Works

Please note—this section is included to assist in your understanding of the process. The specific components may change and the timeframes may change to some degree. This document is prepared by I/O Solutions, not by the Massachusetts Trial Court.

I/O Solutions is working with Massachusetts Trial Court Subject Matter Experts (SMEs, herein) to develop testing components for the ACPO position in the Massachusetts Trial Court. The promotional examination will consist of a section assessing job-knowledge and a section assessing skills and abilities. At the time of the examination announcement, this study guide is being made available to candidates to aid in preparing for the qualifying examination. It is highly recommended that you begin your preparation (if you have not already done so) once you receive this information.

Exam Format

The test will contain two sections: Section 1- job-knowledge assessment and Section 2 - skills/abilities assessment. The job-knowledge questions will test your knowledge of relevant source materials that ACPOs utilize during the completion of important job tasks. A full list of the sources is provided later in this document. The skills/abilities questions will require you to apply your job-knowledge and also use job relevant skills and abilities, such as critical thinking, to identify the most effective way to handle a situation. You can expect the skill/ability section of the exam to contain scenario-based questions that require you to choose from a list a response to the scenario. The skill/ability section intends to measure the application of knowledge, and the skills and abilities necessary for performance in the position in question. A separate orientation video has been provided to you on the IOS website to help you prepare for this component (see the link on the Welcome page of this guide). The remainder of this study guide will provide more details about the exam and how to prepare for the exam.

Exam Development Process

I/O Solutions has worked with Trial Court SMEs to conduct the job analysis and identify the most critical knowledge, skills, and abilities that will be assessed in the promotional exam. In addition, we met to identify the relevant and appropriate reading materials for this promotional process based on the job analysis results obtained. An examination plan was developed to identify the source materials needed to measure the important knowledge, skill and ability areas. The examination plan also focuses the item writing efforts by detailing the number of questions that would be included for each knowledge area and examination source.

At this point, I/O Solutions technical writing staff is creating the examination content based on a set of specifications created for the written examination. The SMEs will be meeting in the subsequent months to review this written examination content to ensure it is relevant and appropriate for these positions and to assist in creating the skill/ability exam content.

As a final step, the SMEs will review and finalize all testing content for the positions in question. A content validation workshop will be held where the SMEs evaluate the relevance and job-relatedness of the specific test questions and scenarios. The promotional process will be developed through a content-validation methodology and rely on the input of Trial Court SMEs to ensure the job-relatedness of the test content and thus the legal defensibility of this process.

Exam Administration

The test will be administered by the Massachusetts Trial Court and I/O Solutions will be responsible for scoring the qualifying examination. Examinations are officially scored at I/O Solutions Chicago-area office and rescored as necessary based on the result of any internal appeals process. A passing score will be established on this qualifying examination. While the Trial Court's announcement will contain definitive information on the structure of this promotional process, it should be noted that currently the job knowledge based section and skills/abilities section will both be a pass/fail hurdles. Those not achieving the cut score (set at the threshold required for minimum competence) on BOTH sections will not be eligible for further steps in the promotional process. The Trial Court and I/O Solutions reserve the right to examine alternative scoring methods, such as combining both sections into a single score which shall be used to determine the pass/fail status of candidates.

Section 1: Job-Knowledge Assessment

The job-knowledge section will consist of approximately 80-100 multiple-choice style questions. A typical 100-item exam has an administration time of at least 2 hours and 30 minutes. The timeframe for a longer or shorter section will differ as appropriate.

Typical sources for such examinations include Manuals, Memoranda, Policies and Procedures, Department Rules and Regulations, material on laws relevant to the position and relevant labor agreements. A draft of the reading list was compiled as a result of the job analysis of the ACPO positions in the Massachusetts Trial Court. We then worked with department subject matter experts (SMEs) to refine the written job-knowledge sources (e.g., specific manuals, procedures, etc.) and we are currently working to develop the written examination items. The final test will be reviewed as well, to ensure the examination and content is specific to the Massachusetts Trial Court. This process allows for the highest degree of input, job-relevance and quality-control procedures. Equal attention is being paid to the security of the testing content. There are a number of department SMEs involved in the test development process. Each individual is under a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement. Please note that our SMEs will be unable to discuss any aspect of the examination with anyone in the department or to assist you in your preparation in any way!

Format of the Job-Knowledge Questions

The job-knowledge section consists of questions/items that are based on prespecified resource materials and cover material that is deemed important to successful performance on the job (a list of these materials is provided below). The entire job knowledge section will be a recall examination (no open-book allowed) as is typical with all I/O Solutions' written examinations. Job-knowledge items are constructed in a multiple-choice format. In the case of this exam, this means that there is one correct answer option and three incorrect answer options. Your goal is to select the correct response from among the four possible options. The following is an example of a job-knowledge item from the union contract:

1. A full-time employee who has successfully completed the probationary period, was hired prior to July 2, 2012, and has 3 years of employment will be entitled to vacation during the term of the Union Agreement not to exceed _____ days per year.
 - a. 10
 - b. 15
 - c. 20
 - d. 25

Correct answer: option a. 10. On page 6 of the Union Contract, Article VII, Section 7.01, A., 1., states that employees who have successfully completed the probationary period and were hired prior to July 1, 2012, shall be entitled to vacation as follows: Less than 4 years and 6 months of employment, at the rate of 2.885 hours for each bi-weekly pay period of service, but not exceeding 75 hours (10 days) per year. According to the information in the stem of question 1 above, the employee would receive 10 days of vacation.

Exam Source Materials

The following section presents the examination source materials or reading list for the examination. These materials will be distributed electronically by the Office of Court Management. You should consider this as the primary source material in studying for the job-knowledge section of the examination. Some sources are limited to a particular set of sections/articles/chapters/etc. from which questions will be drawn. If applicable, the list of the limitations is provided as a convenience to candidates so they can focus their studying on the content from which questions will be drawn. If no limitations are listed, candidates are responsible for knowing that entire source material. Candidates are strongly encouraged to study the following materials in preparation for the job-knowledge examination.

While this may seem like a large amount of study material, you will note that great lengths were taken to ensure that the content listed below is highly relevant to the position for which you are applying.

SOURCE MATERIAL LIST

1. OCP Mission Statement

- a. Courtyard – mission statement (file: Probation Service Courtyard Homepage 8-9-17 for 2017 exam.pdf)

2. Internal Controls Guidelines (file: Courtyard - Internal Controls Guidelines.pdf)

3. Massachusetts Trial Court: Job Description and Qualifications for Assistant Chief Probation Officer (file: assistant-chief-probation-officer.pdf)

4. Department memoranda

- a. Memorandum – Updates on Search and Seizure – *Waller* Decision (file: Search Memo to field 2-16-17.pdf)

- b. Memorandum – Updates on Search and Seizure – *Waller* Update (file: Waller Update Memo to Field 3-31-17.pdf)

5. OCP Department Policies and Standards

- a. Probation Department Supervision Standards (file: Supervision Standards For Probation Supervisors (Final) - Effective October 2 2017.pdf)
- b. MASSACHUSETTS PROBATION SERVICE RECORDS RETENTION POLICY, POLICY NO. 01.04.02(a) (file: RR Policy 1-4-16.pdf)
- c. MASSACHUSETTS PROBATION SERVICE DNA POLICY, POLICY NO. 02.02.07 (file: DNA policy 6-26-17.pdf)
- d. DNA Policy Frequently Asked Questions (file: DNA policy FAQs 7-24-17.pdf)
- e. NOTICE TO OFFENDER OF DUTY TO PROVIDE A DNA SAMPLE (file: DNA form (with email).pdf)
- f. MASSACHUSETTS PROBATION SERVICE GPS IN THE COURTS STANDARDS, POLICY NO. 02.07.02 (file: ELMO Courthouse Standards.pdf)
- g. MASSACHUSETTS PROBATION SERVICE GPS INVENTORY CONTROL STANDARDS, POLICY NO. 02.07.03 (file: ELMO Inventory Standards.pdf)
- h. Probation Department's Travel Policy (file: Travel Policy 11-30-16.pdf)
- i. Massachusetts Probation Service Use of Force Model – June 30, 2017 (file: Use of Force Model 6-30-17.pdf)
- j. MASSACHUSETTS PROBATION SERVICE USE OF FORCE AND SAFETY POLICY, POLICY NO. 02.01.09 (file: Use of Force Policy 6-30-17.pdf)

6. Evidence-based Community Supervision Practices (file: EBCSPtools&SkillStepsChartFinal.pdf)

7. OCP Legal Advisories

- a. Legal Advisory – Sex Offenders and GPS Requirements (file: Revised Legal Advisory - Sex Offenders and GPS 2-28-17.pdf)
- b. Legal Advisory – Probation Officer Search and Seizure (file: Search & Seizure Legal Advisory 2-16-17.pdf)

8. **NAGE Contract 2014-2017** (file: 2014-2017-nage-contract.pdf)
9. **Local 6 contract 2014-2017** (file: 2014-2017-local6-clerical-contract.pdf)
10. **Trial Court's Personnel Policies & Procedures** (file: Trial Court Personnel P&P (limited sections and appendices).pdf)
11. **General Laws of Massachusetts, Chapter 6, Sections 177 and 178 ½ (CARI), REQUEST FOR MASSCOURTS/CARI ACCESS** (file: Non-Disclosure forms.pdf)

Examination questions will be drawn directly from the above sources. Correct answers to test items are also identified directly from the listed source material as this is a source referenced job-knowledge section.

Section 2: Skills and Abilities Assessment

The skills and abilities section for the exam will consist of approximately 20-30 multiple-choice style questions. The typical time limit for this type of assessment is at least 45 minutes. The timeframe for a longer or shorter section will differ as appropriate.

The skills and abilities section is included to evaluate your skills and abilities as they relate to the desired position. The assessment also will measure your ability to apply the knowledge you have obtained in working in the Massachusetts Trial Court and while preparing for this promotional process!

The skill and ability assessment is akin to a structured interview, except that it must be administered as a multiple-choice test given the substantial applicant pool seeking promotion in this process. The goal of the assessment is to evaluate skills, abilities and the application of job knowledge. Thus, this is not a “source-based” portion of the assessment. Each question is simulating a particular duty performed on the job and measures skills and abilities necessary to perform that duty. Often, the correct action is not determined by procedures, policies, etc., rather by applying the appropriate problem-solving skills.

In the skill and ability assessment, you will be asked to review a brief written scenario. The scenario is highly job related and will relate to a situation that you could encounter as ACPO in the Massachusetts Trial Court. Following the scenario, and similar to a job-knowledge written test item, you will find four response options. In most cases, your task will be to identify the most effective response to address a given scenario. In many situations, you will be put in a specific role when evaluating which option is “most effective”.

One unique feature of this section of the assessment is that there is often more than one option presented that is acceptable. In most scenarios, your task will be to choose the most effective response option. You *may* also be asked to identify the least effective response option. Thus, you must evaluate the scenario very carefully and evaluate each response option carefully. You must use considerable reasoning, analytical skill and problem-solving skill when choosing a response option. In many cases, you will also have to apply your knowledge of Trial Court policies, procedures, and best practices to identify the best response. You will receive maximum points on a given scenario if you choose the response option identified by Trial Court SMEs as the “most effective” response to the scenario. You *may* receive partial credit if you choose a response that was identified as “acceptable”, though not the “most effective.”

On the following page is a sample question of the skill and ability assessment:

- 1) Probation Officer (PO) John comes to you and says that he does not want to work with PO Dave on any cases for a number of reasons. PO John believes PO Dave disrespects his coworkers, takes his job too seriously, and is trying to make everyone else look bad by trying to work harder than everyone else. From your observations, PO John is an average employee and PO Dave is an above average employee, but has a history of interpersonal issues with other POs. Both POs are effective job performers, but their performance declines when working together. What do you believe is the most effective way to handle this situation?
- a. Refer both of them to your supervisor and recommend discipline for their immature behavior. Clearly, this type of immature behavior is not tolerated and is subject to discipline.
 - b. Tell PO John to work out his personal conflicts with PO Dave on their own time. It is not your job to solve your employee's personal problems with each other.
 - c. Place PO Dave on assignments where he will have limited interaction with other POs until you can determine a good solution. Continue to monitor the situation until you have more information about what is going on between the two employees.
 - d. First, meet with the employees individually to gather more information and discuss the issues that are causing the strained working relationship. Then meet with both employees to discuss the impact of their behavior on their performance and get them to set aside personal differences and work as a team.

Sample Question answers with explanations:

Option a. (0 points): this is an ineffective response because based on the information in the scenario, neither of these employees have engaged in any behavior that would require discipline.

Option b. (0 points): this is an ineffective response because as the supervisor of these two employees, it is your job to ensure your employees are working effectively together.

Option c. (.5 points): this is a somewhat effective behavior because it provides a short-term solution to the problem, however it is not the most effective because it does not fully resolve the issue.

Option d. (1 point): this is the most effective behavior because it addresses the issue at the root and provides a solution that is likely to improve the relationship between these two employees in the future.

General Study Guidelines

As alluded to previously, it will be absolutely necessary to thoroughly read and review all examination source materials and study for the job knowledge section to increase your chances of performing well. There are many proven methods of study that can enhance your performance when applied appropriately. It should be noted that different methods work better for certain individuals. The following section provides a few brief suggestions on methods of preparation for the exam.

Importance of Reading the Study Material

It is critical for candidates to read all of the study material thoroughly. One goal in the test development process is to identify the relevant job knowledge someone needs upon promotion. Therefore, this study material was chosen by subject matter experts within your department to target important job-knowledge areas associated with successful performance. Subsequently, I/O Solutions develops all job-knowledge based written examination questions directly from the identified source material. Thus, becoming familiar with the source material can significantly improve your exam score. The content for the job knowledge section is taken directly from the source material and thus your preparation for this examination will be vital.

Many candidates simply fail to read (or study) the examination material and conduct little or no preparation for the written examination. I/O Solutions has conducted extensive research on the relationship between candidate study habits and test performance. In particular, simply reading the sources has a substantial impact on test performance. In our research, candidates who simply read the examination sources pass the examination (when a cut score is utilized) at a rate of 80%. In contrast, those candidates who fail to read the source material pass at a rate of 30%. Simply reading the examination material can put you in a position to be promoted depending on the specifics of your promotional process!

Note Taking or Other Documentation Techniques

Many individuals find it helpful to take notes on the important material during the course of their reading. With this method, you can put the author's ideas into your own words, which will be easier for you to recall at a later date. Another similar study method involves making "flashcards" on 3" x 5" note cards. The goal of either method is to condense the amount of reading material to the most important and relevant aspects of the source. Also, your goal should be to make this material understandable in your own words. For example, read a section of policy/orders (e.g.) and take some time to decipher the meaning of the code. Then, in your own words, explain the nature and meaning of the policy/order in your notes or flashcards. With either method, you should be prepared to spend some time studying the notes or flashcards in the weeks prior to the exam.

When reading the source materials, you may also want to highlight information that you think is particularly important with a highlighter/marker. Later, as the exam date approaches, you can review the highlighted material. If done properly, this method could supplant note taking and will take far less time than preparing notes or flash cards.

Study with a partner/group

Many individuals find it helpful to study with a partner or group of individuals who are also preparing for the exam. This way you can discuss the material with them, determine what the most important material is and analyze difficult concepts. In addition, study groups can divide duties and prepare brief summaries on the reading material to share with other group members. You might try preparing brief summaries or having various group members describe a particular issue or section of the reading material in an informal presentation. Explaining and describing material to others is a great way to learn the material yourself!

If you have found that you study most effectively by yourself in the past, then try to limit the amount of time you will spend studying with a partner or group. If on the other hand you have found that studying with others helps you quite a bit, then form a study group with other people who are taking the same examination as you. You may find that forming a study group has another important benefit—your commitment to studying may increase (you do not want to let your team down) and thus you may be more focused and motivated in your efforts! More information about studying with a partner or group is provided in a subsequent section.

Answer practice questions

Once you have completed a section of material, you can review the material and try to determine what questions might be asked of you on an examination. You should be able to answer these questions once you have read the material.

If you have assembled a study group, you can prepare practice questions as part of your group efforts. There is no need to focus on the specifics of item construction. You can simply create basic test questions with a single correct answer and multiple response options. Most of the examination questions will follow this basic structure. If your study group has divided up the test content for analysis, you can ask individuals to develop practice questions for their area of focus.

This study guide contains a few example questions so that you understand the basic method of item construction. You should certainly review these questions so you better understand the testing format.

Study the material

This may seem rather evident, but there are two steps to studying. First, you must read the material. Then, you must review the material at a later time. While we often call the entire process “studying,” this review phase is really at the heart of the study period. This may involve reviewing notes, highlighted portions of the material, creating and reviewing flashcards, conducting group study sessions or completely re-reading the source. Regardless, there should be at least one review of the material to gain understanding and help with recall when the actual test occurs. It may go without saying, but if you spend time taking notes, making flashcards or highlighting during your initial reading/study phase, you should then spend time reviewing this material before the exam. For example, if you choose to highlight important material from the text, you should spend some time the week before the exam reviewing the highlighted passages. This may involve reading the highlighted sections several times.

One common mistake occurs when candidates spend a great deal of time preparing notes or flash cards but then they do not allocate enough time to review this important material. You should look at the development of these materials as an investment. You must allow for time at the end of the study period to recoup the cost of your investment (i.e., your time) such that you spend time reviewing this important material.

Keeping Organized

Once all of the suggested materials have been collected, you will have a lot of information to sift through. In order to keep track of all of these materials, organization will be key.

To help with organization, follow these guidelines. They will help you compile the information into meaningful groups.

1. Put all the materials in front of you and begin separating them by topic. For example, put all response procedure related materials in one pile and all leadership related materials in another pile. Group the materials in whatever way is most meaningful and helpful to you.
2. Find some method to hold these materials in their respective groups. This can be a large binder or folder.
3. On each folder create a table of contents. This will make it easier to find what you are looking for.
4. Use bookmarks, tabs, or sticky notes to mark specific information you wish to reference.
5. If you remove a piece of material make sure to replace it or update your table of contents to reflect the move.

Scheduling

Now that you have set your goals and organized your materials, it is time to set a schedule for yourself. This schedule will keep you on track and help keep yourself accountable for your progress.

Here are some steps for creating a successful schedule:

- Make your schedule practical! Many people will set an unrealistic timeline and then become discouraged when they cannot make the deadlines.
- Allow yourself enough time to study each topic or source.
- Prioritize. Start with the most challenging and important topics or sources.
- Schedule short but frequent study times. Try to keep blocks of study time to 2 hours or less.
- If you are planning to study with a group make sure to set a schedule that everyone can adhere to.

Individual Study

Developing a Basic Study Plan

A typical designated study period is approximately 30-60 days. It is in the best interest of the candidate to use the entire study period to prepare for the examination – this means beginning your preparations immediately! Typically, a candidate will use the initial portion of the study period to read the material and highlight, take notes or make flashcards. Thus, for a 60 day study period, a candidate may spend the first 30-40 days reading all of the source material. The final two to three weeks might be spent reviewing notes or other study material and re-reading important sections of the source material.

Typically, candidates can read 15-30 pages of textbook material or department policy in an hour. In contrast, candidates can usually read approximately 10-20 pages of highly technical material in an hour. Highlighting usually doesn't add any significant time to the reading period although taking notes and/or developing flashcards can add a significant amount of time. Taking detailed notes will probably slow an individual to approximately 10-20 pages per hour (textbook material). While this process may slow your progress through the material, good notes can be invaluable to the study process.

Given the guidelines above, you should estimate the overall time it will take to read all of the source materials for the exam and then plan your study process accordingly. For example, you may determine that you have approximately 400 pages of text/department policy to read and 200 pages of highly technical material. You might estimate that you can read 15 pages of text per hour and approximately 10 pages of the technical material per hour. Thus, you estimate that you will need to spend approximately 47 hours to simply read the source material. In addition, you have

decided you will highlight relevant material and make flash cards on critical information. Thus, you estimate that the time to progress through all of the source material and create the flash cards will increase the reading/study period by approximately 150 percent. Therefore, you determine it will take approximately 117 hours to read, highlight and take notes on all of the source material (47 hours to simply read and another 70 hours to take detailed notes and create the flash cards). If you spend the first 8 weeks on reading the source material and preparing these materials, you will have to spend approximately 15 hours a week on your preparation. You might decide to devote two off-days per week to examination preparation, such that you nearly spend a full day reading and preparing materials for your study and review. This information was included as an example. It is suggested that you estimate the time it will take you to read and study all materials and formulate your plan based on a specific estimate.

Finally, you should spend some time studying the material before the exam. It is a good idea to use the last few weeks before the exam to review the material thoroughly, study and memorize critical facts. During this time period, you may up your preparation to 2-3 days per week devoted to the examination.

The study plan outlined above represents the minimum of what might be required of you to obtain a “reasonable” score. In a competitive process, such a study plan for an “average test-taker” may not result in a score sufficient enough to be promoted in the promotional process. Thus, you may need to do more to prepare for this examination! For example, many strong candidates begin their test preparation well in advance of the announcement of a test date as many individuals can surmise what basic material will be included on the examination and then adjust once you begin studying! Ultimately, the decision on how much time to use in preparing for the examination will rest with you based on your motivation and comfort level.

Goal Setting

In preparing for the examination, you will be exposed to a large amount of study materials. Using goal setting, you can develop a process to successfully navigate these materials in an efficient and effective manner.

Goal setting is the process of taking a broad goal, such as passing the examination, into smaller, specific, and manageable goals. This method has been shown to increase motivation and retention of knowledge.

To use this tool:

1. Determine your overall goal.
2. Break this overall goal down into small and specific goals.
3. Write down all of your goals someplace you can easily find for your study period.
4. Rank the goals in order of need. Think of it like a pyramid. What things do you need to learn first in order to better understand subsequent information?
5. Set the time frame in which you plan to achieve each goal (i.e. 2 days or 1 week).
6. Determine how you will achieve each goal. What materials will you need? What is the best way to learn the material relevant to this goal?
7. Keep track of your progress on each goal.

SQ3R Study Method

The acronym SQ3R stands for the five sequential techniques that have been used as a strategy to enhance the understanding and retention of reading material. This strategy includes the following steps:

- **Survey.** Start by gathering the information necessary to focus your understanding of the chapter. Read the chapter title, the chapter introduction, section summaries, the chapter conclusion, and scan through the contents of the chapter (e.g., section headings, diagrams, and pictures). If studying policy, procedure or department orders, you can read the introductory paragraphs and spend time scanning through the policy to gain an understanding of the material before you begin to delve into the specific details of the material. Aim to gain an overall understanding of the structure of the material and how the main concepts are related.
- **Question.** Go through each section of the material and turn the headings into questions that you think will be answered in that section. Write your questions down on a piece of paper. In the next step when you begin reading the sections, you will write down your answers that go along with each question. The purpose of this step is to help you become actively engaged in the reading by having you seek the answers to the questions that you have formed.
- **Read.** Read through each section, keeping the questions you have formed in mind. Read the section, seeking information to answer the questions that you

have written down. Pay attention to determine if there are any other questions that need to be included.

- **Recall.** When you have completed reading through a section, stop and try to answer the questions you have composed without looking back at the reading material. If you cannot come up with the answers, go back to the section as many times as you need to until you can answer your questions from memory.
- **Review.** After you have completed reading through all of the sections using the aforementioned steps, you should continue going over the questions you have created and trying to answer them from memory. If you cannot answer them, you can look back to the material to refresh your memory and then continue to review. Review the material often in the weeks and days leading up to the exam.

Memorization

There is certain material that must be memorized for an exam. While, for example, we can advocate reading and taking notes in your own words, it is important to understand that some material must be memorized directly from the source. I/O Solutions writes exam questions directly from the source material and often uses the wording as it appears in the source material. Also, this is not a reference based examination in that you will not have any reference material with you on the day of the qualifying examination. Thus, recalling the specific information from the passage can be critical in determining your success on the exam.

One-On-One Studying

Studying with a partner is a great way to cover a lot of information. One of the most important steps in one-on-one studying is choosing the right study partner. When choosing a partner, try to select someone who shares similar study habits as you. Make sure that the partner also has a similar level of motivation and similar pace of learning as you. Finally, make sure you select a partner who is studying the same material as you.

Study Techniques

- You can each cover a different topic and then spend time explaining them to one another.
- You and your partner can study the same material then create questions to quiz each other.
- A partner can be helpful when you are having a hard time understanding a subject; use their different perspective to help look at the information in a different way.

Things to Keep In Mind

- If you decide to split up topics and explain them to one another, be sure to still read through the material that was assigned to your study partner.

- When quizzing each other, try to focus on the major topics from the source material, rather than focusing on highly specific information unless that is the nature of the material (e.g., learning definitions to terminology).
- It can be easy to get off-track with side conversations, try to stay focused on the material for the exam.

Group Study

Studying with a group can be a very effective way to cover a lot of information. However, this effectiveness is dependent on the members of the group.

Characteristics of Effective Study Groups

- The group should contain no more than 6 members.
- There should be a group leader at every study session. It does not have to be the same person every time.
- All members should participate. Information is more easily remembered when it is discussed with others.
- Group members should differ in their area of expertise. This will allow for more effective information sharing.

Starting a Study Group: The first meeting

- Gather the group members together for an initial meeting.
- Have the group decide on a leader. This can be for every study session or it could rotate.
- Ask someone to write the information the group covers. This responsibility can also revolve.
- Set some ground rules (e.g., be courteous to others). You may find these rules will not need to be referenced once they are created but they are an effective tool in preventing future conflicts.
- Create a plan for the sessions. This includes setting up a schedule, topics to be covered and group member responsibilities.
- Summarize the information that was covered in the meeting to ensure all members are on the same page.

Conducting the Study Group

- Clearly define what will be studied prior to each group session.
- Plan to hold the study group for about 2 hours, taking periodic breaks.
- Start each meeting by briefly reviewing what was studied last meeting and resolving anything that was unclear.
- Keep the group on-task by limiting other activities during the session (e.g., turn phones off, no checking email, limit side conversations).
- Conclude with a brief review of what was covered and a reminder of what will be covered in the next meeting.

Preparing for Test Day

Diligently studying for this examination will be the best method for ensuring your success; however, there are other considerations that can affect your performance on the day of the exam. Your attitude on the day of the exam, the test-taking strategies you utilize, and your ability to avoid common test-taking errors will all affect the outcome of the exam. These issues are discussed in detail below.

Preparation for the exam

You can increase your chances of obtaining your best score if you spend sufficient time preparing for the exam. This includes carefully reading and studying the materials listed in the *Examination Source Material list*. It is also important that you avoid becoming overly anxious about the examination and implement good test-taking strategies.

Your physical well-being

Get a good night's sleep before the examination. Eat a nutritious breakfast that will provide you with energy for the day. Try to ensure that you are in the best possible condition both physically and mentally on the day of the examination.

Arrive early

Make all necessary arrangements to ensure that you arrive early at the examination site. It would be wise to anticipate traffic delays in traveling to the site and to allocate extra travel time to ensure an early arrival even with delays. Give yourself ample time to settle in at the examination site.

Confidence

The more confident you are in your abilities, the more likely you are to do well on the exam. Try to stay focused so that you don't end up misinterpreting questions or instructions. You want to take control of the examination by feeling confident in your skills. Try to relax but concentrate on the examination you are about to take.

Attitude

This examination is an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have a grasp of the job knowledge necessary to perform successfully, and a positive attitude can have an impact on increasing your score. There are a few ways to fine-tune your attitude about taking this examination: Look at this examination as a challenge but try not to get

"stressed out" by thinking about it too much. By using this study guide and practicing your strategies, you can be more prepared for the examination.

Controlling Anxiety

Many candidates experience anxiety as a result of the stress and pressure to perform well on the job-knowledge section and subsequent components. This is common and is a natural response. There are a few things that you can do prior to your examination to help reduce and prevent your level of anxiety on test day.

- **Practice.** Develop practice questions from the source material. This can be done by yourself or with your study group. Answer these practice questions with a similar time limit to what will be used for the examination to simulate the testing experience. Ideally, if you are studying in a group, each individual would develop several practice questions for each "topic area" and create a basic answer key from the source material.

You will become more comfortable the more you can gain experience with the type of pressure you may experience in the examination. The more experience you gain in regard to the test administration environment, the more comfortable you will feel.

- **Visualize.** Another technique that can help you feel more comfortable on test day is to visualize yourself going through the examination process. Try to find time the week or days leading up to your exam to sit in a comfortable chair or couch and imagine yourself going through the process, providing the best possible responses. Mentally rehearsing the process several times will help your mind hold a picture of what great performance will look and feel like. When it comes time for you to go through your examination, your mind will be familiar with the process and you will feel more comfortable when responding.

General Test-taking Strategies

There are several strategies and tips to keep in mind when taking the written exam that will ensure your test score is accurate and reflects your level of knowledge about the job.

1. **Listen carefully.** The exam administrator will provide you with complete instructions for taking the exam. Be sure that you pay close attention to all test instructions. It is extremely important that you completely understand the directions before the exam begins.

2. **Ask questions.** If there are instructions that you do not understand or if something is not clear, please feel free to ask the exam administrator any questions that you may have before the exam begins.
3. **Note start and end times.** Just before the test administrator begins the test, make a note of the time the test will actually begin and the time that the test will end.
4. **Keep track of time.** It is important that you keep track of your time so that you are able to pace yourself throughout the exam. You do not want to run out of time and have unanswered questions. It is important that you allot a few minutes of time to guess on unanswered questions at the end of the exam. A typical 100-item examination will have a 2 hour and 30 minute time limit. This means you must answer each question in approximately 1 minute and 30 seconds to ensure you complete the examination on time.
5. **Remain calm.** It is important that you remain calm throughout this exam so that you are able to work most effectively. You can't allow yourself to become nervous or confused by a few difficult or challenging questions. There are going to be times when you are not going to know the answer and neither will other individuals taking the exam.
6. **Read each question carefully.** Be sure that you understand what the question requires of you.
7. **Try to answer the question before you look at the answer options.** If you know the answer, compare it to the available choices and pick the choice closest in meaning to the answer you have in mind.
8. **Answer easy questions first.** It is important that you answer the easy questions first on this exam. By doing so, you will afford yourself more time to spend on the difficult questions if necessary. Seek out questions you can answer. If there are particular kinds of questions with which you feel most comfortable, answer those questions first. For example, if you are particularly good at questions in a specific content area, then find those items first and complete them.
9. **Don't waste time on questions you can't answer.** If you believe that you are not able to answer a question, then skip it. It is better to skip a difficult question than to spend a lot of time on it and not be able to complete other exam questions.
10. **Mark your exam booklet.** Mark in your exam booklet those questions that you have skipped so that you are able to come back to them later in the exam. Marking questions that you have skipped in your test booklet will help to ensure that you have answered all of the questions by the time the examination period has ended.

That said, you will likely be required to place all final answers onto a separate answer sheet.

11. **Use a process of elimination.** If a situation presents itself in which you are unable to answer a question, use a process of elimination to narrow your options. First, eliminate any answers that are clearly wrong. Then determine how you feel about the remaining choices. If you believe that some answers are more correct than others, indicate that on your exam booklet. Later in the exam, you may have an opportunity to come back to these questions and answer them without having to read the entire question again.
12. **Guessing.** It is important that you try to get as many points as possible on the examination. Points are given for correct answers only. Because there is no penalty (i.e., points deducted) for guessing on this exam, you should try to answer every question. By leaving yourself enough time at the end of the test to fill in unanswered questions using your "best guess," you will increase the possibility of getting a few of them correct.
13. **Extra time.** If you finish the exam before the time period is over, review your answers and make any changes that are necessary. Also, make sure that you have marked your answers on the answer sheet correctly.

Using the Test Answer Sheet

This section describes the procedures used to fill in the answer sheet during the actual exam. Nearly all of the questions on the examination will be multiple choice. *You will mark your answers on a separate answer sheet that you will be given at the examination, and detailed instructions on how to use it will be outlined for you at that time.*

Things to consider when marking the answer sheet:

- Make heavy black marks that fill the circles completely.
- Erase any answers you wish to change completely.
- Do not make any other marks on the answer sheet.
- You must use a #2 pencil (this will be provided to you). A pencil is required to complete the answer sheet because a computer will be reading these marks.

- Place all of your answers on the answer sheet. Only answers on the answer sheet will be scored. You may use your exam booklet as scratch paper but be certain to record your answers on the answer sheet.
- Use your *exam booklet* for scratch paper.
- Be sure that the number of the question you are working on corresponds with the number that you fill in on the answer sheet. For example, if you are working on question 37, make sure that you fill in your answer on line 37 of the answer sheet. Periodically check yourself to make sure that your answers are in the correct spaces.
- For multiple-choice items there will be four alternatives (a, b, c and d) listed on the answer sheet for each question. Please be sure that you mark your answer in the appropriate column. You may want to go back and check your answers periodically to be sure that you have placed your answer in the correct column.

The reason that we ask you to take such care in marking your answer sheet is because errors can affect the scoring of your written examination.

Helpful Hints about the Exam

This section describes a few helpful hints to remember when preparing for the exam and when answering questions on the examination.

- Job knowledge questions are written directly from the source materials. Questions are often written “word-for-word” from the source to avoid confusion. Thus, the correct answer is also drawn directly from the source (not from subject-matter-expert input). In many cases, the distracters, or incorrect answers, are also drawn directly from the source. Thus, the information may “look familiar” but still be incorrect.
- Since questions are drawn directly from the source material, it is important to note that the correct answers (and hopefully your answers) will be taken directly from this source material. If there is a conflict between “how things are done in the department” and what the source indicates, the source is the deciding factor! In many cases, such items are removed during the review process. In some cases, these items remain in the examination to reinforce “how things should be done.”
- Furthermore, in the rare event that two sources conflict with one another, your answer (and the correct) should come from the source indicated for that particular item. Items are often presented by the source material that they were written from. Thus, you will be informed where the item was written from.
- We attempt to avoid questions on trivial information that is not directly relevant to the job. At a minimum, you should focus your preparation efforts elsewhere. That said, some items may be more difficult and test your knowledge of the details of a particular policy.

Basic Rules Governing the Testing Process

1. Promptness is mandatory for admittance to the test on the date and time scheduled. Please ensure that you arrive at the site well before the examination to avoid being late. No candidate will be admitted after the start time.
2. Photo identification will be needed for admittance to the test. The announcement will contain additional (official) information on what you will need.
3. You may bring the following supplies to the test: #2 pencils, erasers and a watch. A small pencil sharpener is also allowed. No other supplies will be permitted at the test site. Pencils will be supplied during the administration of the written exam.

4. You may be required to turn in mobile phones, other electronic or communication devices prior to testing or leave such devices in your vehicle or at home. We strongly suggest that you leave electronic devices in your vehicle (or home) for the duration of testing. If you choose to use an unauthorized communication device, in violation of testing guidelines, your test will be collected and considered invalid.
5. You will not be allowed to take any other materials with you into the examination room—this includes paperwork of any kind, backpacks, bags, portfolios, etc.
6. Once you are seated in the testing site, you may have access to restroom facilities, though you may have to be escorted by a proctor. Once testing begins, any time taken for this purpose will be counted as test time.
7. You will undergo the same standardized process as all other candidates with respect to the testing process (e.g., notification, instructions, etc.).
8. Due to the security measures that will be in place, only authorized candidates will be admitted to the test site.
9. All questions or concerns that arise during the testing process should be directed to the appropriate designated test administration staff person(s).

Preliminary Examination Plan

Job Knowledge Plan for ACPO

Source Material	%*
1. OCP Mission Statement	1
2. Internal Controls Guidelines	2
3. Massachusetts Trial Court Job Description for ACPO	2
4. Department Memoranda	5
5. OCP Department Policies and Standards	30
6. Evidence-based Community Supervision Practices	5
7. OCP Legal Advisories	5
8. NAGE Contract 2014-2017	10
9. Local 6 Contract 2014-2016	10
10. Trial Court's Personnel Policies and Procedures	25
11. General Laws of Massachusetts, Chapter 6, Sections 177 and 178 ½ (CARI)	5
TOTAL	100%

* The above percentages are approximations of the final percentage of the exam. While the internal examination plan is specific in nature, this is presented to provide you general guidance in preparing for this examination.

- Examination questions will be drawn directly from the above sources. Correct answers to test items are also identified directly from the above source material.

- For more detailed information about the sources please refer to examination reading list.