



Out-of-State & Federal Certificate Equivalency Request Information

Overview

Recent changes in Ohio law allow qualifying out-of-state and federal law enforcement officers to apply for an **Ohio Peace Officer Prior Equivalency Certificate** without attending an Ohio basic training academy. This document provides guidance on the process for obtaining a Prior Equivalency Certificate for qualifying applicants.

Applicants must:

- Meet eligibility requirements under **R.C. 4796.03** or **R.C. 4796.05**
- Submit a complete application with all required documentation
- Successfully pass the **Ohio Peace Officer State Certification Examination (SCE)**

Step 1: Check Eligibility Criteria

Out-of-State Officers (Local/County Officers or Former Officers)

Applicants must:

- Have at least **1 year of full-time law enforcement experience within the last 5 years**
- Hold a valid law enforcement certification or license
- Be in good standing in all jurisdictions

Federal Law Enforcement Officers

Applicants must:

- Have at least **3 years of full-time federal law enforcement experience within the last 5 years**
- Submit a **Federal Evaluation Worksheet** signed by an agency supervisor
- Submit the agency's official description of duties for the position

Important

- Gaps in employment may impact eligibility.
- Prior military experience may be considered if it involves law enforcement or military police duties substantially similar to the duties of an Ohio peace officer.

Step 2: Complete National Web Check

Applicants must complete a **BCI and FBI background check** before submitting an application.

Use the official form attached to the application (**SF102bas**).

Key Requirements

- Transaction Type: **BCI and FBI**
- Reason: **Law Enforcement Employment**
- Must be a **direct copy to OPOTA**
- The Web Check form must be completed and signed by the fingerprinting agency
- Include the completed form with your application as proof of completion

Important

Web Check results must be submitted as a **direct copy to OPOTA**. Results sent to a prospective employing agency or addressed directly to the applicant will not be accepted. If a Web Check is submitted in this manner, it will be rejected, and the applicant will be required to complete a new Web Check.

Step 3: Gather Required Documentation

A complete application packet is required before certification staff review for formal consideration.

(Incomplete submissions will delay processing)

Required Documents

- Completed Application (**SF410/SF411unv**), **witness signatures required**
- Completed Disclosures and Statement of Understanding (**SF101unv**), **witness signatures required**
- Completed Web Check Form (**SF102bas**)
- Employment Verification for **each agency**
- Copy of certification or license
- Federal Evaluation Worksheet (*if applicable*)

Note:

If your state has a publicly accessible online portal that displays employment verification, you may submit documentation from that system for review and consideration. Agencies may still need to be contacted directly for verification purposes.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all relevant agencies have a valid release of information on file authorizing the Ohio Attorney General's Office to verify submitted application materials.

Employment Verification Requirements

Each prior agency, or the agency's human resources section, must provide a letter that includes:

- Agency letterhead or official correspondence sent from an authorized agency email address
- Applicant's full legal name and title (i.e. Police Officer, Deputy Sheriff, Special Agent)
- Dates of employment that match the application submitted
- Confirmation of full-time commissioned law enforcement status (**30+ hours per week**)
- Confirmation that the applicant left agency in good standing, or is currently employed
- Contact information for verification purposes

Note

Full-time experience listed on the application may not include time spent in the academy, even if the applicant was employed full-time by the agency during that period. Only commissioned experience obtained after successful completion of a basic training academy will be considered. Time spent in a basic training academy does not satisfy the statutory requirement for active engagement in the profession.

Step 4: Submit the Application

- Submit by **email only** to: ProfessionalStandards@OhioAGO.gov
- Applications are processed in the order received
- Processing does not begin until Web Check is completed, and all required materials are submitted

Important

Applicants should not apply until they are prepared to sit for the State Certification Examination.

Typical Timelines

- **Fastest:** Approximately 4 weeks
- **Average:** 6 to 8 weeks

Delays Occur When:

- Agencies do not respond
- Documentation is incomplete
- Information in the application is inconsistent with supporting documentation
- Web Check not received or submission of fingerprint cards by mail.

Once an application is approved:

- The applicant will have **30 days** to take the SCE
- The applicant will have **2 attempts** within that 30-day period

Note:

Scheduling testing toward the end of the eligibility window may result in forfeiting the opportunity for a second attempt if one is needed.

Step 5: Verification Process

Certification staff will contact prior agencies by phone and/or email to verify:

- Employment dates
- Full-time commissioned law enforcement status
- Good standing, including confirmation that the applicant has not been demoted, discharged, or resigned in connection with dishonesty, alleged criminal misconduct, or alleged civil rights violations

Important

If an agency does not respond with employment verification, the application cannot be approved. All reported employment must be verified.

Step 6: Application Decision

If approved, the applicant will receive an email from the **State Testing Coordinator** containing:

- Confirmation of application approval
- The **30-day testing eligibility window**
- Instructions for scheduling the SCE with **Pearson VUE**

Step 7: State Certification Examination

- The SCE is administered through **Pearson VUE**
- OPOTC does not set examination fees; Pearson VUE may charge a fee as the third-party testing vendor

Testing Rules

- 30-day testing window
- 2 attempts allowed

Special Accommodations

If special accommodations are needed, the applicant is responsible for notifying the State Testing Coordinator before scheduling the exam. Requests for accommodations must be supported by documentation from a licensed medical provider or an Individualized Education Program (IEP) issued by an educational institution.

Step 8: After Passing the State Certification Examination (SCE)

Applicants will receive an Open Enrollment Letter confirming successful completion of the SCE, and eligibility for appointment by an Ohio law enforcement agency.

Note:

- Open Enrollment Letters are valid for two (2) years from the date of successful completion of the (SCE).
- If the applicant does not secure an agency appointment within that time, a new application must be submitted
- If the applicant is appointed **1 year** from the date of examination, a refresher course may be required before performing the official duties of a peace officer

Step 9: Appointment and Certification

Once appointed by an agency:

1. The agency must submit a **Notice of Appointment (SF-400)**
2. OPOTC will issue a **Training Determination** advising of any additional training requirements, including:
 - Continuing Professional Training (CPT)
 - Statutorily mandated training

Note:

CPT and statutorily mandated training are available through **OPOTA Online** and may be completed online. Access is granted only after an agency submits an SF-400. Access to OPOTA Online cannot be granted before an agency appointment.

Common Reasons for Delay or Denial

Applications may be delayed or denied for:

- Incomplete application
- Missing employment verification
- Failure of a past or current agency to respond to OPOTA
- Inconsistent employment history
- Missing witness signatures
- Failure to meet experience requirements
- Web Check not sent directly to **OPOTA**

Disqualifying Factors May Include

- Criminal misconduct or criminal convictions resulting in a weapons disability
- Certification or license suspension or revocation
- Separation from an agency due to dishonesty or misconduct
- Pending: disciplinary action, criminal matters, or civil litigation
- Civil rights violations

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long does the application process take?

It ranges from **4 to 8 weeks**, depending on the completeness of the application and how quickly prior agencies respond to verification requests.

Can I apply before I'm ready to take the State Certification Examination?

Yes, but it is strongly discouraged. Once approved, applicants only have **30 days** and **2 attempts** to pass the examination.

Is there an examination fee?

OPOTC does not impose an examination fee. However, Pearson VUE may charge a fee. Applicants should contact Pearson VUE directly for current pricing.

What if my former agency refuses to provide employment verification?

Applications cannot be processed until verification is complete. Applicants may need to consult private legal counsel concerning ways to obtain verification. Applicants may also use any applicable state, municipal, or county public records process to obtain documentation.

Do I have to attend an Ohio basic training academy?

No. If the application is approved and the applicant passes the SCE; the applicant may be appointed by an Ohio agency without attending a basic academy.

Is there a preparatory course available for the State Certification Examination?

No. OPOTA does not provide a preparatory course for the State Certification Examination. Applicants are encouraged to:

- Apply their own law enforcement knowledge and experience
- Study independently
- Review relevant Ohio Revised Code sections
- Contact academies to determine whether they offer optional prep courses
- Submit a public records request for the OPOTA Basic Training Curriculum to assist with preparation

What happens if I fail both attempts at the State Certification Examination?

If an applicant does not successfully pass the examination within the 2 allotted attempts during the 30-day testing window, the application will be **DENIED**.

To pursue certification in Ohio after denial, the applicant will be required to:
Attend and successfully complete an Ohio Basic Training Academy

I have a prior or pending criminal offense. Will this prevent me from being approved?

Application approval is determined on a case-by-case basis. Applicants with prior criminal convictions or pending criminal matters must submit official documentation for review by OPOTA's legal division.

Certain offenses may disqualify an applicant from certification. However, OPOTA cannot provide specific determinations before receiving a Web Check and reviewing all relevant documentation. It is the applicant's responsibility to fully disclose all relevant information and provide all required documentation for review.

OPOTA does not provide legal advice. Applicants with questions about their specific situation are encouraged to consult private legal counsel.