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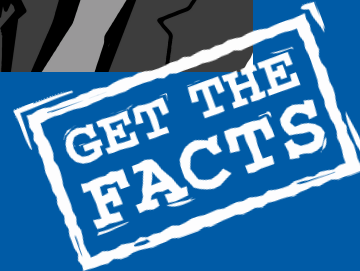
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This project was supported by Grant #97-DB-MU-0017 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions contained in this document do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Printed on recycled paper by authority of the State of Illinois, April 2000. Printing order #00-095.1/50,000 copies.

LAW ENFORCEMENT



*Questions and answers
on the criminal justice
system in Illinois
(Revised, April 2000)*

MULTIPLE CHOICE

(Answers to the quiz are inside.)

- 1) What has been the statewide trend in violent crime in recent years?
 - A) Increasing
 - B) Decreasing
 - C) Staying about the same
- 2) Nationwide, roughly what percentage of violent crimes are reported to police each year?
 - A) 80 percent
 - B) 35 percent
 - C) 50 percent
- 3) How often are firearms used in homicides in Chicago?
 - A) More than 90 percent of the time
 - B) More three-fourths of the time
 - C) About half of the time

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*(Items in **boldface** are defined in the glossary section.)*

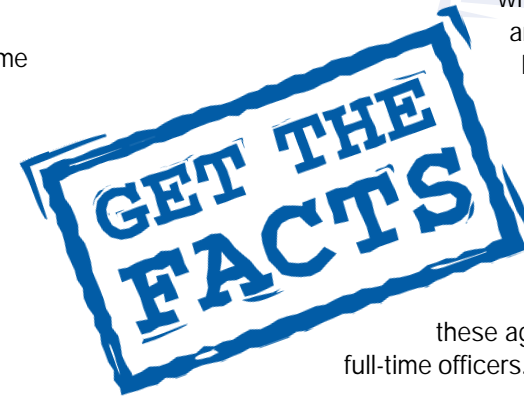
How many police departments are there in Illinois?

There are more than 1,100 police agencies, of which more than 900 are local police departments, whose primary responsibilities are to enforce state laws and local ordinances, and to prevent and reduce crime. In addition to these local departments, there are county, state and federal law enforcement agencies that provide police service in Illinois. Together, these agencies employ about 34,000 full-time officers.

How are police officers trained and what are they taught?

All newly hired police officers must meet certain requirements before they are certified by the state. Each must attend one of six police training academies and complete a 400-hour basic training program and a 40-hour firearms training course as well as pass both a written test and a physical fitness test. The basic training program includes training in making arrests, use of force and the rights of the accused. Officers also receive instruction in communications, crisis intervention, crime prevention, investigation, traffic law enforcement, first aid and community policing.

Many police departments now require new officers to have a college education. Research indicates that college-educated officers perform police tasks better; are better writers and public speakers; are better able to deal with different cultures, races and lifestyles; and have fewer disciplinary problems.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What are the responsibilities of a police officer?

Police officers spend only a small amount of their time arresting people who violate the law. They spend most of their time patrolling their communities and responding to calls for service, which may include answering alarm calls, animal control, assisting injured people, or breaking up rowdy groups. Interviewing victims and witnesses of crimes and collecting evidence at crime scenes are also duties of police officers. Agencies with a strong community policing philosophy have a different range of functions, such as a greater emphasis on problem-solving activities and holding regular meetings with residents and community organizations.

What is community-oriented policing?

Community-oriented policing was introduced in the late 1980s as an alternative to the “professional model” of policing. A philosophy rather than a strict methodology, community-oriented policing proposes that the police and the residents of a community must work together and cooperate to successfully control crime. Under community-oriented policing, police work with citizens to identify and solve crime problems, rather than simply respond to calls for service. Residents give police ideas and information about specific crimes, and also about problem areas and community issues such as abandoned buildings, poor street lighting, and drug houses. Residents and police also work with other city agencies to help improve neighborhood appearances.

What happens after a crime is reported to police?

When an incident is reported to law enforcement authorities in Illinois, police first investigate whether

a crime actually occurred and, if so, exactly what kind of crime it was. If it is determined that a crime has been committed, the officers must then confirm that the offense took place within their jurisdiction. If not, the incident will be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency. If the crime did occur within their jurisdiction, an officer will gather the available information from the victim and file a report. These reports are an important part of the criminal justice system. Each local agency is responsible for supplying a record of certain reported crimes within their jurisdiction to the Illinois State Police’s (ISP) Uniform Crime Reporting program. ISP forwards this data to the FBI, where a record is kept of certain crimes committed throughout the United States. The FBI and ISP publish annual reports on crime statistics based on this information.

When do police make an arrest?

An arrest actually occurs when a police officer indicates by word or action an intention to take a person into custody. Except under certain circumstances, police are required to have a valid **warrant** before making an arrest. One way to obtain a warrant is when a victim or witness goes directly to the county state’s attorney’s office with information about a crime, signs a complaint against the person who has allegedly committed the crime, and appears before a judge who issues an arrest warrant for the alleged offender. Another way is when a police officer files the complaint and goes before a judge to seek a warrant.

A police officer may make an arrest without a warrant if the officer witnesses a crime being committed. Police may also make an arrest without a warrant if there is **probable cause** that an offense occurred and that the person who would be taken into custody committed the crime. Unless it is an emergency, however, a police officer cannot enter a person’s home without a warrant to make an ar-

rest. When a person is arrested, he or she is not necessarily charged with a crime. Some people who are arrested are taken into custody, questioned, possibly put into a lineup, and then released without being charged with an offense.

When do police fingerprint suspects?

Most offenders, except those accused of minor and traffic offenses, are fingerprinted as part of the “booking” process. Law enforcement agencies forward those fingerprints and other information to the Illinois State Police. The state police use the fingerprints and information pertaining to the arrest to update an offender’s criminal history record or start one for someone with no previous record. The reporting of the arrest triggers the creation of a new part of that person’s criminal history record (or rap sheet), which will track that particular case. Today, many agencies are adopting an electronic fingerprinting system called **livescan**.

How do the police check a suspect’s criminal history?

Criminal history records contain information on a suspect’s record of arrests and convictions. One way police access these state “rap sheets” is through the state’s Law Enforcement Agencies Data System (LEADS), which is maintained by the Illinois State Police. A query to the system simultaneously checks the Interstate Identification Index, a national system that can determine whether a subject has a federal record or a record in another state. These inquiries are made on the basis of the person’s reported name, race, gender, and date of birth – without positive identification of the subject. Fingerprints, which provide positive identification, are another common way to conduct criminal history checks on arrestees or suspects.

GLOSSARY

Warrant:

Arrest Warrant – is a written order from a court directed to a peace officer commanding the arrest of a person.

Search warrant – is a written order from a court authorizing the search of a person or place and describes particular things to be seized.

Probable cause: When an officer has a reasonable belief that a person is violating, or has already violated, the law.

Livescan: An electronic fingerprinting system that uses an optical scanner and imaging software to capture a digital image of a fingerprint and save it to a computer file. These files can then be sent electronically to the Illinois State Police, where they are stored as part of the state’s computerized criminal history database.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

- 1) **B.** Violent crime declined 2.7 percent in 1998 compared to 1997, and violent crime declined in each of the three previous years.
- 2) **C.** According to a U.S. Justice Department crime victimization survey, about half of all violent victimizations and about one-third of all property offenses were reported to police each year from 1993 through 1998.
- 3) **B.** Firearms were used in 76 percent of the murders in Chicago in 1998. Of those firearms, 83 percent were handguns. (Statewide data on firearm use in homicides is not available.)