



Law Enforcement Officer (LEO)

BACJ related certificates and concentrations:

- Law Enforcement certificate/concentration

BACJ-related courses:

- CRJU 4043 - Law Enforcement (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 4540 - Evidence-Based Approaches in Law Enforcement (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 3310 - Contemporary Issues in Law Enforcement (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 3320 - Police-Community Relations (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 3520 - Juvenile Justice (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 3530 - Juvenile Delinquency (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 4014 - Federal Wildlife and Fisheries Investigations (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 4410 - Criminal Law and Constitutional Procedures (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 4430 - Law and Society (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 4450 - Homeland Security (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 4600 - Special Topics (3 credit hours) - some of these topics are law enforcement related

Complementary/recommended minors: Spanish, Psychology, Sociology, Human Development & Family Relations, English Writing, Communication, Law Studies

Recommended extracurricular activities and experiences: Alpha Phi Sigma Criminal Justice Honor Society, study abroad, other community involvement and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) experiences such as a student association or club, volunteering in the community, or other experiences that expose you to communities and cultivate a service-minded perspective.

Complete a law enforcement related internship: This could be at the local, state and/or federal level.

Duties and Responsibilities: Law enforcement officers enact the first step of the criminal justice system, which many think is arrests. However, policing is far more than making arrests. Due to evidence-based practices gaining traction and community policing being at the forefront of policing duties, LEO's are in a unique position to prevent crime from occurring, through their service and relationships with their communities. Responding to crime and other calls for service, working with stakeholders in criminal justice related institutions, and forming relationships with their communities all give officers a sense of purpose in their personal and professional lives. Law enforcement positions are with local agencies, state patrol, rangers, schools, post-secondary schools, courts, and many other areas. This career is ideally suited for people who prefer to be out of an office, although there are some officer positions that may be more administrative.

Work Environment: The work environment varies-however, it tends to be a more active position less likely to be found behind a desk. All officer positions will have a writing component, however, so writing skills are an important facet of this position. Many officers enjoy that no day or service call is the same, which helps to keep shifts interesting. The reality of an officer is not two cops busting in, guns drawn on a suspect, but rather may involve responding with a partner to citizens in crisis or responding with other units and agencies to large-scale emergencies in their communities. The variability of teams and partners will depend on the agency, the nature of the circumstance, and other factors.

Work Schedule: Depending on the agency size, location and operations, the work schedule typically occurs in shifts covering a 24-hour/7 days a week period often resulting in longer hours but fewer work days. For example, an agency may have their officers work 4 ten-hour days or 3 twelve-hour days with the remaining days of the week off. It's rare for an agency to have their officers scheduled for 5 eight-hour days per week. Overtime is common in law enforcement as a call for service or other front-line situation may keep an officer on duty past their scheduled shift end time. LEOs are likely to work weekends and holidays. Shifts may be different at each agency, by rank, and by the nature of their duties as they advance in rank.

Career Path/Promotion: An officer will begin their career as a recruit at the agency's academy and will advance through the officer ranks over time after completing various hours, education, training, and written exams. Those agencies who do not require a degree may incentivize officers who do have a degree, or degrees may be required for promotion.

Education, Training and Certification: Some agencies are now requiring a bachelor's degree for recruits, although in light of recruitment and retention difficulties some departments are now moving back to a non-degreed position. To work in law enforcement, attendance at a police academy and Peace Officer Standards and Training certification, in addition to academy and P.O.S.T. training, both of which occur at the hiring process, are required.

Special Considerations: LEO undergo extensive background checks and psychological examinations as part of the hiring process. Those interested in working in law enforcement should be aware that drug use and criminal activity may greatly inhibit their ability to work in the field. Each agency has their own requirements and students are encouraged to conduct research as early as possible to better understand possible eliminating employment factors.

Skills and Competencies: Problem solving, attention to detail, listening skills, observation, writing, service mindset, emotional intelligence, and analytical skills.

Colorado Salary averages:

Bottom 10%: \$57,920

Top 10%: \$99,740

Median: \$82,250

Median Salary in U.S. as of 2021: \$66,020 per year/\$31.74 per hour

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Police and Detectives, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/protective-service/police-and-detectives.htm> (visited May 31, 2023).