

Thornton Police Department

Transparency Frequently Asked Questions

Employment Process, Education and Training Requirements for Officers

What types of training do Thornton Police Department (TPD) officers have? How does Thornton PD train officers to eliminate implicit bias, discrimination, and excessive force?

- There are multiple stages of certification and training required to become a police officer. The first stage is Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification, which is established by the State of Colorado legislature, and is a minimum of five hundred fifty six hours of training covering a variety of material including constitutional law, implicit bias, discrimination and use of force. The Colorado POST Board is an independent entity and oversees certification for all officers in the State of Colorado, ensuring annual training is completed and standards are met. They also provide oversight of certification revocations and de-certifications. Additional information on specific classes that are required to obtain the Colorado POST certification can be found on the Colorado official state website <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/post/mandated-training>
- The second stage of training that is required to be a Thornton Police Officer is the in-house training academy for officers that is three hundred and fifty hours of training, to reinforce skills and training received as part of their POST certification. This training includes department expectations of officer conduct, ethical behavior, constitutional law, responding to resistance, de-escalation, victim's rights, department policies and procedures and our culture of community policing and engagement. Once the training academy has been completed, officers enter the third stage of their training and begin working in the community with a field training officer assigned to them to ensure the knowledge they have learned in class is applied to calls for service. The field training program is approximately sixteen weeks in length and follows the nationally recognized San Jose model of field training. Upon completion of this final stage of the initial training officers receive upon being hired into the department, they continue to be mentored by members of the field training unit for one year.
- Police officers are also required to attend on-going training throughout the course of their career. While the Colorado POST requires twenty-four hours of training each year for officers, TPD officers complete approximately sixty hours of training each year in high-liability areas such as skills, driving, decision-making, legal updates, anti-bias policing, harassment, diversity and interpersonal communication. Colorado Revised Statute 24-31-315 delineates training required for officers on an on-going basis and can be found at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/post/crs-24-31-315-training-resource-guide>.

Are the officers in the Thornton Police Department thoroughly vetted to ensure that they do not have a history with abuse, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, or discrimination?

- Yes. The Thornton Police Department has set high standards and expectations for individuals seeking to join the department and has a dedicated recruitment officer and background investigators to ensure applicants meet these standards.
- The Thornton Police Department and Human Resources strive to achieve diversity in hiring and attend a variety of recruitment events including college job fairs, Women in Policing events, military & veteran job fairs, high school career fairs, and other community events to make a concerted effort to recruit diverse police department members that are reflective of our community.
- The hiring process contains multiple steps. Each step requires successful completion to move forward in the process and includes:
 - Application – which is reviewed by Human Resources and subject matter experts
 - Written testing – which evaluates cognitive and integrity of the applicant
 - Oral board interview – conducted by hiring and background personnel
- If the applicant successfully passes the oral board, they continue on to the background investigation to ensure applicants do not have a history of abuse, racism, poor conduct or discrimination. The background investigation includes:
 - Personal History Statement and Waiver of Confidentiality
 - Contacting previous employers, references, friends, neighbors, family, any further identified people during the process
 - Education, Criminal, and Financial History
 - In-depth review of all social media
 - Home Visit (one of the few agencies that conducts these)
 - Computerized Voice Stress Analyzer (Lie Detector)
 - Ride along with a field training officer
- If the applicant successfully passes the background investigation, they move forward to interviewing with the Chief of Police and an executive staff member. Upon successful completion of the Chief's interview, they are sent to complete a psychology exam by an outside police psychologist and medical physical exam before being offered a position by Human Resources.
- Job requirements for a police officer include:
 - High school diploma or GED
 - Must be at least 21 years of age
 - Colorado Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certificate
 - Valid Colorado driver's license with a safe driving record
- Additional information can be found on the City's webpage, under Human Resources, Job Descriptions
<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/thornton/classspecs/85469?keywords=police%20officer%20&pagetype=classSpecifications>

Community Policing and Engagement

How does the police department engage with the community to ensure they have a voice and feel safe?

- The department embraces a community policing philosophy that is reflective of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing and the pillars of Building Trust and Legitimacy, Policy and Oversight, Technology and Social Media, Community Policing and Crime Reduction, Officer Training and Education, and Officer Safety and Wellness.

- The department implemented a Safe Community Strategic Plan (SCSP) in 2016 with the goal of providing citizens the ability to pursue and realize the full benefits from their social and economic lives without fear or hindrance from hazards or threats that result from criminal or anti-social behavior of others. The SCSP encompasses:
 - Department Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Core Values
 - Allows the department to maximize its ability to effectively prevent and control threats to public safety
 - Provides security through the engagement of department members and the community in problem solving initiatives
 - Is supported by data driven crime analysis through proactive crime initiatives
- Additionally, there is a spectrum of methods that the department engages in to gain community involvement ranging from National Night Out to a ten-week citizen's academy offered annually to encourage engagement and trust.
- There has also been an extensive effort to increase the department's social media presence through the Community Relations team utilizing platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.
- With our diverse community, the department recognizes and incorporates a diverse approach to involve our citizens of all generations ranging from youth services to active adults.
- The department fosters collaborative community partnerships with specialized agencies like the Link Juvenile Assessment Center, which provides youth, family counseling, and countywide services and Community Reach Center (CRC), which provides comprehensive mental health services to citizens.
- The department engages in a highly interactive Youth Initiative through School Resource Officers, the Youth Academy, Hooked on Fishing Programs and Explorer Programs.
- The department implemented technology in the 9-1-1 Communication Center and created a Technical Services team to provide enhanced levels of service to the citizens through a variety of ways such as Code Red emergency notifications, Online Crime Reporting, and a home and business security camera program. (<https://www.thorntonco.gov/public-safety/Pages/default.aspx>) (<https://www.thorntonco.gov/public-safety/police-department/Pages/crime-reporting.aspx>) (<https://www.thorntonco.gov/public-safety/police-department/Pages/security-cam-registry.aspx>)

Ongoing Evaluation of Officer Behavior / Complaint Process

How do you ensure that there is no corruption in our police department? Is there an early intervention system enforced to address complaints and correct officers who demonstrate biased behavior or use excessive force?

- The department actively and continually reviews employee performance at all levels in the organization. The department is also in the process of becoming accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), which ensures policies and practices are in line with national standards (projected completion in 2021).
- The department tracks all complaints and maintains an early intervention system to identify patterns of behavior that require corrective measures. Corrective measures may include discipline, remedial training, coaching or counseling, and employee assistance.
- Complaints can be submitted to various areas in the city, including directly to the department, to the City Manager's Office and City Council. Complaints are investigated and reviewed at all layers of police department supervision, up to and including the Chief of Police. Additionally, the

department Professional Standards Unit reviews complaints and responds directly to the Chief of Police, which acts as an independent review outside of the department's chain of command. Complaints can be filed in person, online on our webpage, through the My Thornton App, through email or by telephone. The link to the online form can be found at <https://www.thorntonco.gov/public-safety/police-department/Pages/tpd-complaints-complaints.aspx>. To phone in a complaint, please call 720-977-5020 extension zero.

Independent Investigations

Do we have an independent, unbiased team to investigate police actions?

- Yes, any officer involved shootings or in-custody deaths will be investigated by the independent 17th Judicial District Critical Incident Investigation Team. This team is a multi-agency law enforcement investigative team, working under the District Attorney's office, to conduct independent investigations of incidents throughout Adams County. The team is comprised of law enforcement officers throughout the 17th Judicial District, selected and approved by the District Attorney and member agencies. Members of the agency involved in the incident are not permitted to participate in the investigation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation may also conduct an investigation of officer involved shooting instances and in-custody deaths.
- Additionally, any allegations of criminal misconduct by an employee of the Thornton Police Department is evaluated to see if it will be investigated internally or if an outside law enforcement agency will be requested by the Chief of Police to do an independent investigation.
- Once accredited through CALEA, the Thornton Police will also be required to prove compliance annually with over one hundred sixty professional standards representing industry best practices.

De-escalation Tactics

Are the police officers in the Thornton Police Department being trained to de-escalate altercations by using peaceful conflict resolution strategies? What are your de-escalation tactics?

- Yes, officers receive on-going training regarding de-escalation through daily training videos and information as well as quarterly scenario based training, which are developed and taught to reinforce de-escalation tactics.
- Over the course of the past several years, there has been an increased focus on responding to individuals in mental health crisis and advanced training in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for officers and dispatchers, working with the Community Reach Center on a Mental Health Initiative.
- Focusing on the mental health and well-being of officers as well as citizens is also a priority for the department through the development and implementation of a peer support team and on-site clinical psychologist.

Use of Force Tactics

Are there guidelines for the types of force police officers in the Thornton Police Department can use as well as policies on types of restraint that can be used? Are they forbidden from using chokehold restraints?

- Yes, Policies 300 - Response to Resistance, and 302 – Handcuffing and Restraints, address the specific guidelines for officers related to types of force and types of restraints that can be used.
- Yes, both department policy and state law prohibit officers from using chokeholds.
- The Thornton PD trains officers according to the philosophy of responding to resistance rather than using force because responding to resistance is not initiated by officers, it is responding to an action of a citizen. When officers are engaged in any response to resistance encounters, they are trained and held accountable to use only that amount force which is necessary to resolve a situation. An officer's first priority is preserving human life.
- Officers are taught to create distance with the citizen in order to give them time to react and assess the situation. Additionally, they are taught that verbal communication skills are critical in relating and actively listening to gain information and diffuse the situation. Additional information on these policies can be on our website at https://www.thorntonco.gov/public-safety/police-department/Documents/200615_Policy_Manual_RELEASE.pdf

Are officers allowed to shoot at or from moving vehicles?

- No, per Policy 300 – Response to Resistance, officers are not allowed to shoot at or from moving vehicles unless there is imminent threat of death or physical injury to the officer or to another person and there is no other reasonable avenue of escape.

Are the officers in the Thornton Police Department trained to perform and seek necessary medical action after using force?

- Yes, all officers are trained in basic lifesaving skills, CPR and the use of tourniquets. They utilize these skills when responding to many calls for service, and are trained to seek medical action following incidents where force was necessary to resolve the situation. Policy 433 – Medical Aid and Response, addresses additional information on this topic. https://www.thorntonco.gov/public-safety/police-department/Documents/200615_Policy_Manual_RELEASE.pdf

Intercede Requirements / Use of Force Reporting Requirements

Are the police officers in the Thornton Police Department required to intervene if they witness another officer using excessive force? Are the officers in the Thornton Police Department required to report each time they use force?

- Yes, federal law, state statute and department policy require that officers intervene if they witness another officer using excessive force.
- Yes, all uses of force by officers are required to be reported and are reviewed at all levels of supervision, including the Chief of Police, Training Unit and Professional Standards to identify training needs and patterns of behavior. Findings of review could generate disciplinary action if policies and procedures were violated.
- Policy 300 – Response to Resistance provides additional information on this topic. https://www.thorntonco.gov/public-safety/police-department/Documents/200615_Policy_Manual_RELEASE.pdf