Verensics Report Finds About 1 in 7 Correctional Officer Applicants Fall into High or Critical Risk Categories

Multi-state analysis of 5,070 candidates identifies warning signs involving authority, professional boundaries, and reluctance to report misconduct

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, September 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Verensics today released Behavioral Trends in Correctional Officer Applicants, an analysis of pre-employment screening data from 5,070 correctional officer candidates at state corrections agencies in multiple states. The analysis covers 705,846 questionnaire responses involving attitudes toward abuse of authority, inappropriate relationships, and gang affiliation. The report compares the 2026 findings with Verensics benchmarks from 2023 through 2025.

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>
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About one in seven candidates (13.9%) fell into the company's High or Critical behavioral-risk categories. The results give corrections hiring teams documented information for targeted follow-up and more informed hiring decisions.

Abuse of Authority. Nearly one in five candidates (19.4%) said senior officers may delegate personal tasks to lower-ranking officers. Four percent, or 202 candidates, found it acceptable for a senior officer to trade a position for sexual favors, compared with 3.4% in 2023. Another 15.5% said employees should follow a supervisor's orders even when those orders violate the rules.

Inappropriate Relationships. Nearly one in six candidates (16.1%) believed it is better to overlook minor offenses by an inmate they like, roughly triple the 5.4% recorded in 2023. In addition, 2.3% found it acceptable to accept personal favors from an inmate, 1.1% found it acceptable to supply contraband or smuggle items, and 5.2% would not report a romantic relationship between a senior officer and a subordinate.

Gang Affiliation. Reluctance to report gang contact more than doubled year over year, from 0.8% in 2025 to 2.0% in 2026. When asked about answering gang-related questions truthfully, 4.5% of

candidates responded they would not. Separately, 7.1% reported friends or family previously involved with a gang, and 4.6% reported friends or family currently involved.

The report groups indicators across three stages: past involvement, present attitude, and future reporting reluctance. The findings show why agencies may benefit from examining candidates' attitudes and rationalizations rather than relying solely on documented past conduct. In corrections, character must be verified, not assumed.

Risk indicators also overlap. More than a quarter of applicants (27.7%) triggered at least one risk signal in both abuse of authority and inappropriate relationships, while 7.8% triggered signals in all three categories. Candidates with elevated risk in these core categories were about four times more likely to show honesty, integrity, and turnover concerns, and four to five times more likely to show substance-use and workplace-violence risk signals.

"A clean record doesn't tell you what a candidate thinks is acceptable," said Tony Paixão, CFI, CFE, Vice President of Investigative Platforms at Verensics. "About one in six of these applicants already believes it is fine to look the other way on a small offense when they like an inmate. Risk shows up in attitudes long before it ever shows up in a record."

Paixão presented the findings on August 17, 2026 at the Southern States Correctional Association conference in Savannah, Georgia.

Methodology. The report analyzes aggregate pre-employment questionnaire data from 5,070 correctional officer candidates who completed the Verensics screening questionnaire in early 2026 and compares 2026 findings with Verensics benchmarks from 2023 through 2025. The results describe the applicant population analyzed and should be considered alongside interviews, background checks, reference checks, and other hiring information.

About Verensics. Verensics provides AI-powered adaptive questionnaires, which adjust follow-up questions in real time, for pre-employment screening, insider threat programs, and workplace investigations. Its platform helps organizations collect and document self-disclosed behavioral information, identify areas for follow-up, and maintain an auditable review process.

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