



Milwaukee County
Department of Human Resources
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

File 26-575

Date: July 8, 2026

To: Marcelia Nicholson-Bovell, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Genaro Baez, Director HR Operations and Talent Acquisition, Department of Human Resources

Subject: From the Director of HR Operations, Department of Human Resources and Deputy Sheriff Director, MCSO providing an informational report comparing the classifications involved in Courthouse security.

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

Per the request of Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson-Bovell, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors has received concerns regarding the nature, scope, level of responsibility, and risk associated with Courthouse security functions. The Chairwoman requested that Human Resources, in partnership with those responsible for Courthouse security operations, prepare an informational report for consideration during the July committee cycle. This report provides an objective comparison of the classifications involved in Courthouse security, including job responsibilities, qualifications, training and certification requirements, decision-making authority, working conditions, and other factors considered in position classification.

POLICY

Wisconsin State Statutes:	Wis. Stat. § 59.26 (Sheriff); Wis. Stat. § 59.27 (Undersheriff and Deputies)
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	17.14 – Employment Definitions
Specific Adopted Budget:	
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

BACKGROUND

Related File No's:	Per Chairwoman Nicholson-Bovell request – July 2026 Committee Cycle
Previous Action Date(s):	N/A

Milwaukee County's Courthouse and justice facilities are secured through the combined efforts of two distinct personnel classifications: **Deputy Sheriffs** and **Public Safety Officers (PSOs)**. While both classifications contribute to maintaining a safe and secure environment at County facilities, they differ substantially in statutory authority, qualifications, training requirements, scope of responsibility, and risk. This report provides a structured, side-by-side analysis of these two classifications to assist the Board in understanding their distinctions and similarities.

Overview of Courthouse Security Classifications

The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) is responsible for providing security at the Milwaukee County Courthouse, Safety Building, Criminal Justice Facility, and the Vel R. Phillips Youth & Family Justice Center. Two distinct employee classifications carry out these security responsibilities, each with a different scope of authority, training, and function.

Comparative Analysis of Classifications Compensation, Classification & Employment Status

Factor	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
Employment Type	Full-time, Hourly	Full-time, Hourly
Hourly Pay Range	\$36.38 – \$46.64	\$16.87 – \$25.31
Pay Differential	Approximately 2x–2.5x PSO rate	Approximately 40–55% of Deputy Sheriff rate
Collective Bargaining	Represented by Milwaukee Deputy Sheriff Association	Subject to Civil Service Rules
Probationary Period	2,600 straight-time paid hours	Standard civil service probation

Minimum Qualifications & Education

Factor	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
Education – Minimum	High School Diploma or GED	High School Diploma or GED
Education – Higher	Associate degree or 60 college-level credits required within 5 years of initial law enforcement employment	Associate degree or higher preferred (not required)
Citizenship	U.S. Citizenship required at time of appointment	Not required
Residency	WI residency required within 6	Current WI residency required at

Factor	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
	months of appointment; maintained throughout incumbency	time of application
Minimum Age	Age 20 at application; 21 by academy graduation (non-LESB) or at contingent offer (lateral)	Not specified
Driver's License	Valid driver's license required; WI license within 60 days of establishing WI residency	Not required
Military/Law Enforcement Experience	Law enforcement training program completion required	Military, security, or law enforcement experience preferred (not required)

Training & Certification Requirements

Factor	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
Law Enforcement Certification	LESB (Law Enforcement Standards Board) certification pathway required; must successfully complete the MCSO Deputy Sheriff Training Academy	Not required; no law enforcement academy
Weapon Qualification	Required – must qualify with service weapon on a regular basis	Not applicable – PSOs are not armed
Physical Fitness Test (Entry)	LESB Modified PRT: • 1.5 mi run ≤ 20:20 • 300m run ≤ 82 sec • 18 push-ups minimum • 24 sit-ups in 1 minute • 11.5" vertical jump • Agility run ≤ 23.4 sec	No formal fitness test required
Physical Fitness Test (Exit)	LESB Academy Exit Standards: • 1.5 mi run ≤ 16:57 • 300m run ≤ 68 sec • 23 push-ups minimum • 30 sit-ups in 1 minute • 14" vertical jump • Agility run ≤ 19.5 sec	Not applicable
CPR / First Aid	Required as Law Enforcement First Responder; emergency medical care is an enumerated duty	CPR training required

Factor	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
In-Service Training	Required per LESB standards and MCSO service area requirements; ongoing developmental training	On-the-job training on facility screening protocols and emergency response procedures
Background Investigation	Comprehensive MCSO Background Investigation required; Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ)	Pre-employment background check required; completed by MCSO
Pre-Employment Testing	Drug test, medical examination, and physical agility test required	Pre-employment drug test required

Job Responsibilities & Scope of Duties

Function	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
Primary Security Function	Full law enforcement: patrol, crime prevention, arrest authority, force application including deadly force	Facility access control: screen entrants via magnetometer, X-ray, and handheld metal detectors
Arrest Authority	Yes – statutory arrest authority; may apply force up to and including deadly force	No – PSOs contact Deputy Sheriffs in emergencies; no independent arrest, detention or restraint authority
Courthouse / Building Role	Serve as court bailiff; preserve peace and order in courtrooms; manage required court documents for jail records	Assist citizens with directions; ensure expected behavior in facilities
Prisoner / Detainee Custody	Yes – maintain custody of prisoners during hearings, hospital security missions, transport to other institutions	No
Warrant Service	Yes – serve warrants, subpoenas, and civil documents	No
Investigations	Yes – investigate crimes; interview victims, witnesses, suspects; gather and preserve evidence; testify in court	No
Emergency Response	Yes – Law Enforcement First Responder; provide emergency	Contact Deputy Sheriffs in emergencies; CPR trained; no

Function	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
	medical care; apply force to maintain order	independent response authority
Building Security	Participate in facility security and jail booking, identification, classification, and monitoring of occupants	Building sweeps after closing to ensure doors are secured; remove citizens without business in building
Equipment Operated	Service weapon, law enforcement equipment, patrol vehicle	Computer, X-ray magnetometer with conveyer belt, handheld metal detectors, two-way radio
Specialized Assignments	Eligible for specialized units (e.g., SWAT, K-9, detectives, fugitive task force)	Not applicable

Decision-Making Authority & Risk

Factor	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
Statutory Authority	Vested with full law enforcement authority under Wis. Stat. § 59.26; may make arrests, apply force, carry firearms	No statutory law enforcement authority
Use of Force Authority	Yes – authorized up to and including deadly force	No – must defer to law enforcement
Independent Decision-Making	High – must make rapid, high-stakes judgments involving public safety, criminal activity, use of force, and emergency response	Moderate – primarily procedural decisions within defined screening and access-control protocols
Level of Risk	High – exposed to dangerous and volatile situations including armed individuals, violent offenders, and life-threatening emergencies	Moderate – works in controlled facility entry points; escalates to law enforcement in emergencies
Liability Exposure	High – personal and County liability associated with arrest, use of force, custody, and law enforcement action	Lower – limited to facility access screening within defined protocols
Supervision of Others	May provide direction to PSOs and civilians in emergency or law enforcement situations	Works under direction of supervisors and law enforcement

Working Conditions

Factor	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
Work Settings	Patrol areas, Courthouse, County Jail, courts, correctional and justice facilities; hospital security missions	Milwaukee County Courthouse, Safety Building, Criminal Justice Facility, Vel R. Phillips Youth & Family Justice Center
Schedule	All shifts, holidays, weekends; mandatory overtime required	Standard facility hours; specific schedule not specified
Physical Demands	Continuous fine/manual dexterity; frequent standing, walking, running, climbing, driving, bending, kneeling; lifting/carrying 100 lbs+; pushing/pulling 200 lbs+; vision and hearing standards required	Ability to lift, carry, push, and pull 10 lbs.; prolonged standing at screening stations
Exposure to Hazards	Regular exposure to violent offenders, armed individuals, dangerous situations; inherent risk of injury	Exposure limited to general public at facility entry points; escalates dangerous situations to law enforcement
Psychological Demands	High – must make time-critical decisions in dangerous, emotionally charged, and legally consequential situations	Moderate – customer-service oriented with stress management skills required; no independent enforcement authority

Knowledge, Skills & Abilities

Factor	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
Core Knowledge	Law enforcement principles; criminal law; evidence handling; use-of-force law; court procedures; custody management	Security practices and procedures; facility screening protocols; two-way radio operation
Communication Skills	Report writing; court testimony; interrogation and interview techniques; inter-agency coordination	Oral and written communication with public; ability to follow written and oral directions
Technology Skills	Law enforcement systems; in-car computers; criminal records databases; evidence documentation	Computer use for report writing; X-ray magnetometer; handheld metal detectors; two-way radio

Factor	Deputy Sheriff	Public Safety Officer (PSO)
Public Interaction	Victim, witness, and suspect contact; court proceedings; community engagement	High-volume public contact at entry screening; assisting citizens with directions and building navigation

Summary of Key Distinctions

The comparative analysis above shows the distinctions between the Deputy Sheriff and Public Safety Officer classifications. These distinctions reflect fundamentally different scopes of authority, training investment, risk exposure, and compensation:

- Deputy Sheriffs are sworn law enforcement officers vested with full statutory authority under Wisconsin law, including the authority to make arrests, carry and use firearms, and apply force up to and including deadly force. PSOs have no statutory enforcement authority and must defer to law enforcement in emergency situations.
- Deputy Sheriffs require substantially greater pre-employment qualifications, including law enforcement academy completion, LESB certification, rigorous physical fitness standards, weapons qualification, and an associate degree or equivalent college credits. PSOs require a high school diploma and current Wisconsin residency.
- Deputy Sheriffs are compensated at approximately 2x to 2.5x the hourly rate of Public Safety Officers, which is consistent with the significant difference in authority, training, risk, and responsibility between the classifications.
- Both classifications contribute to Courthouse security but perform distinct and complementary functions: PSOs provide facility access control and screening at entry points, while Deputy Sheriffs provide law enforcement presence, courtroom security, prisoner custody, warrant service, and emergency response.
- The level of decision-making risk and individual liability associated with Deputy Sheriff duties are substantially higher than that carried by PSOs, reflecting the nature of law enforcement authority and the situations Deputies are required to manage.

Considerations for the Board

Based on the foregoing analysis, Human Resources offers the following observations for the Board's consideration:

- The distinctions between these classifications are consistent with broadly applied classification principles, including differences in scope of authority, level of responsibility, training and certification requirements, risk, and working conditions.
- The compensation differential between Deputy Sheriffs and Public Safety Officers reflects the additional authority, training investment, liability, and risk carried by sworn law enforcement personnel, and is consistent with comparable law enforcement agencies and classification standards.
- The Board may wish to consider whether the current deployment model—using PSOs for facility screening and Deputies for law enforcement functions—is

optimally structured to address the specific security concerns raised. Human Resources and the Sheriff's Office are available to provide additional analysis if the Board identifies specific areas for further review.

- Human Resources recommends that any evaluation of security staffing include input from the Department of Administrative Services, Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, and the Office of Corporation Counsel to ensure that any changes to security classification structures or deployment models are consistent with statutory requirements, collective bargaining obligations, and operational needs.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3A: Invest "upstream" to address root causes of health disparities
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

FISCAL EFFECT

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

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