

How to select a polygraph examiner/ A check list

Whether you are an attorney seeking evidence or John Q. Citizen looking for resolution through polygraph testing, you need to find a competent polygraph examiner?

The problem is that the federal government and most state governments do not want to regulate private polygraph examiners.

In Massachusetts to be a polygraph examiner the only requirement is a Private Investigators License. There is no requirement for polygraph training, internship, or even what a polygraph instrument should consist of. The state mandates the licensing of barbers and hairdressers, whose biggest mistakes will grow out in a month, but turns a blind eye on polygraph examiners, whose determinations will affect a person's life for years to come.

I have compiled the following check list to help you select a competent polygraph examiner.

1. Find out if the examiner belongs to a state, national or international polygraph association?

Most polygraph associations have standards of practice and a code of ethics that their members must follow to maintain membership. The gold standard for polygraph associations is The American Polygraph Association (APA). Established in 1966 it is the oldest and largest international polygraph association in the world. Every polygraph school in the world strives to be accredited by The American Polygraph Association. The APA standards of practice and code of ethics that it rigorously holds its members accountable to mirrors the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards for the polygraph profession.

2. Ask the examiner what class of membership he possesses in a particular association?

This will give you a lot of information about the examiner. For example, a Full Member in The American Polygraph Association must have a Baccalaureate Degree; must be a graduate from an APA Accredited School; and must complete no less than 200 actual examinations.

In my opinion these are basic requirements for a person to conduct polygraph examinations. If an examiner does not have these minimum requirements do you really want him or her making a determination that could affect your freedom, reputation, or marriage? If an examiner does not possess these basics, what competent jurisdiction would even entertain his results as a form of proof or evidence?

3. Find out where the examiner received internship if any?

Ideally, he or she was a law enforcement or government polygraph examiner mentored by experienced examiners in a structured environment. Be cautious of examiners who simply graduated from a polygraph school and opened a polygraph business. Great doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen and polygraph examiners are not born great they are mentored by great professionals.

4. Ask about continued training, every profession requires it?

The American Polygraph Association has a Certificate of Advanced and Specialized Training which signifies the member has completed at least thirty hours of additional polygraph training every two years. The polygraph profession is changing rapidly and it is essential for examiners to keep up with these changes.

5. Ask what type of polygraph examinations does the examiner specializes in?

There are pre-employment screening examinations; post conviction sex offender examinations, investigative exams and evidentiary exams. Each type of examination requires unique and specialized training. An examiner who specializes in evidentiary exams should have requisite training necessary to get polygraph results admitted as evidence in a pending judicial proceeding. That also means the examiner should only use validated testing practices, state of the science instrumentation and his or her credentials are kept current.

6. What type of polygraph instrumentation is the examiner using?

There are four major polygraph instrument manufacturers: Axciton, Limestone, Lafayette and Stoelting. All are very good. If the examiner says he is not using one of these instruments, hang up the phone! Ask if the instrument is an older analog technology or a state of the science

digital (computer) instrument. Does the instrument employ a “movement sensor”, *an absolute necessity in this day and age to render competent decisions on truth or deception?*

7. Ask questions regarding how acceptable the examiner’s results are to those who weigh the value of evidence?

In other words, who relies on the examiner’s results? Has the examiner taught polygraph? Has he or she lectured on polygraph and where: locally, regionally, nationally, internationally? Has the examiner ever been published? Has the examiner worked as a board member in any associations to better the profession? How many years of experience does the examiner have? Has the examiner ever done polygraph research?

Regarding research, it should be pointed out that very few examiners ever get the opportunity to conduct polygraph research. Most research projects cost several hundred thousand dollars to conduct. That means that usually only federal governments and universities around the world can afford to undertake meaningful scientific polygraph research. If an examiner claims to have conducted polygraph research ask if it has ever been peer reviewed by the APA, a University or a government. Was the research ever published in a scientific journal and accepted by the scientific community? Was the research replicated and by who? If the answer is “no” to any of these questions it’s probably not worth the paper it’s written on.

8. Is the examiner Marin Certified?

This is a competency test to determine an examiner’s ability to correctly score numerically one hundred confirmed polygraph tests. The test was developed by Deputy Director Don Krapohl of the United States Department of Defense Academy for Credibility Assessment Fort Jackson South Carolina. He developed the examination to assist the American Polygraph Association and the American Society for Testing and Materials in determining compliance to a recently enacted standard of practice stating that an examiner conducting Investigative Polygraph Examinations should have a proven scoring accuracy of at least 80% and an examiner conducting Evidentiary Polygraph Examinations should have a proven scoring accuracy of at least 90%. This is a relative new requirement and the examination developed by Deputy Director Krapohl has only been available for a couple of years. As of December 2010 only about forty examiners nationwide have taken the examination.

When conducted properly, polygraph has been shown to be very accurate in multiple validated studies. It is an essential tool to protect our way of life.

John "Jack" Consigli