

Missouri Career Mentor video transcript



Officer Keith Porter

Jefferson City Police Department

I am Officer Keith Porter. I am a D.A.R.E. instructor for our police department. I have a degree in commercial art with a minor in military science. My day-to-day duties include teaching the D.A.R.E. program, drug awareness, and protecting and serving the citizens of our community.

Joys & Challenges

What I enjoy most about my career is being able to protect and serve the community, especially being able to work with children and to be able to nurture young minds and that kind of thing. It's a very rewarding feeling to be able to solve a crime and help citizens that have been victimized. Some of the challenges are the long shift work and being on call and working holidays and weekends and that kind of thing.

Skills & Characteristics Needed

Law enforcement agencies look for people who are well-rounded and mature, who possess a willingness to serve others, and they should have very solid communication skills. It's very important to make good decisions when you are younger, because if you say, for instance, have a criminal record or if you have engaged in things of an unethical nature, that can ruin your chances for a career in law enforcement.

Some of the characteristics and skills that we look for in law enforcement are for you to be mentally fit – and that means emotionally stable. In some cases you may have to manage a force continuum. You may also have to perform under stressful conditions and in stressful situations. Also being mentally (physically) fit will enhance that because you need to be able to have the physical might to perform in such situations. We perform rescues quite often, and we perform in a lot of high tactical situations once in awhile, so it's good to be mentally and physically fit so you can be successful.

Early Interest

Well, I first got interested in law enforcement by working as a juvenile court officer the local juvenile center. I was a residential officer, I was a detention officer, and I also was what we called a tracker. I went out and supervised the juvenile who were on supervised probation. And I found it very rewarding and challenging.

Early Influences

When I was in elementary school I joined a drum and bugle corp. And types of activities that we did, the marching, the performance, the discipline – those kinds of things, along with nurturing from the director of the corp who was a retired police officer, they kind of gave me the insight to want to stay in para-military sort of organizations and to become a police officer.

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Disciplines

I did go to a military high school and so I still remember our cardinal principles: self-discipline, self-control and self-esteem. Those kind of traits and those kind of principles got me interested in law enforcement and beginning on the path of something para-military in some kind of a way. And so law enforcement was a natural fit.

Law Enforcement... and the Arts??

You know I do use art quite a bit with the D.A.R.E. program. The art, the music, the performing arts background – it entirely works for D.A.R.E. and for community service. They see me as being a real, well-rounded, a whole, real person. I mean, when you are in a patrol division, it's like hey, do that, do that, take this ticket, you know that's it. Up and down, black and white. But now, being able to work with the schools, I can sing, I can dance, and I act, I can do all these things. I can teach and we use a lot of emotional vitality when we're teaching the D.A.R.E. program and that kind of thing. And they think it's pretty special that a police officer can come and relate to the public in that kind of way.

Memorable Moment

One thing I have done in my career, being in the Army reserve and in the police department, is when I got deployed for the Army I was allowed to put on my D.A.R.E. instructor hat for awhile and I am the only D.A.R.E. instructor in the world that has taught classes to Iraqi kids, and that was a pretty big deal. It was a great day, a great moment to do that kind of thing.

High School Classes

As far as classes that eventually helped me in my career, I would say that the communication skills were the most crucial. You have to have sound communication skills – writing and dictating and talking to people. I mean they help you quite a bit in this field and they are crucial.

In Retrospect

If I could think of one thing that I would have done better in high school is to get a little higher grades, because academic scholarships are out there, and it would have been quite nice not having to work and pay my way through college.

Final Words of Wisdom

Final words of wisdom? Get off the couch. Make it happen. Your future starts today. Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something.