

# Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services

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## DIVISION OF PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIAL PROCESSING PRIVATE DETECTIVE LICENSE APPLICATION INFORMATION

To be licensed and to perform private detective services as defined in [Wis. Admin. Code § SPS 30.02\(12\)\(a\)](#), an applicant must be licensed under an existing licensed private detective agency or may apply for their own private detective agency license. If a person operates a private detective agency and conducts private investigations, both the individual and the agency (whether a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or a sole proprietorship) must be licensed.

No person may act as a private detective until the proper license has been issued by this Department. Failure to comply is in violation of [Wis. Stat. § 440.26\(8\)](#) and is subject to penalties. The private detective license will not be issued until the criminal records search results and all requested application materials have been received.

### **AN APPLICATION IS NOT COMPLETE UNTIL ALL OF THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED:**

1. **Application for Private Detective License** – Apply online and pay \$8.00 fee online via LicenseE, <https://license.wi.gov/>. An individual applying for both a private detective and a private detective agency license must complete the employer portion of the Application for Private Detective License as if the agency were already licensed, leaving the license number blank. The Department will fill in the license number. (If license has expired more than 5 years an additional \$25.00 late renewal fee is required.)
2. **Fingerprints** – All applicants must submit their fingerprints electronically for a background check. The Department will contact you with details after the application and Form 2687 are received.
3. **Authorization for Release of FBI Information (Form 2687)** - Provisions set forth in Title 28, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 16.34, require us to notify you that your fingerprints may be used to check the criminal history records with the FBI. Identification records obtained from the FBI may be used solely for the purpose requested and may not be disseminated outside the receiving department, related Agency, or other authorized entity. The Department of Safety and Professional Services does not deny a license based on the information in the record itself, but does require the submittal of a certified copy of the criminal complaint and judgment of conviction in any matter which would appear to be cause for denial of a license. **All applicants must attach a recent photograph (head and shoulders only) to Form 2687.**
4. **Convictions and Pending Charges (Form 2254)** - All applicants will be required to answer questions on the application form about convictions of any crime, other violations and pending charges in Wisconsin or any other state. The Department will obtain a state and federal criminal records search on all applicants. If any applicant was **ever** convicted of a felony in Wisconsin or any other state and not pardoned, the applicant's application will be denied. There are no exceptions. If an applicant has been convicted of one or more misdemeanor or other violations or has pending charges, and if the Department determines that the crimes or violations are substantially related to the practice of a private detective, the Department will not grant a license until it has received sufficient information to determine whether the license should be granted, denied, or limited. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide complete information to the Department. Applications are deemed complete after submission of all relevant background information by the applicant. A certified copy of the police report, criminal complaint, and judgment of conviction is required for each conviction.
5. **Employment Requirement** - Every private detective applicant is required to be employed by a private detective agency licensed in Wisconsin. **An authorized representative of your employing agency must complete [Form 3038](#).** If an applicant wishes to work for him or herself, a private detective agency license must be obtained by completing and submitting the Application for Private Detective Agency with the appropriate fee and required documentation. (See [Form 456](#) for details.)
6. **General Liability Insurance Policy or Bond** - A private detective must either be covered by a comprehensive general liability insurance policy maintained by the private detective agency or be bonded for \$2,000. Enclose a copy of the certificate of liability insurance with the Statement Concerning Liability Insurance ([Form 1482](#)) or the Bond of Private Detective or Private Detective Agency ([Form 1483](#)). The Department is not able to issue a license until it has verified that you are covered by your employing agency's liability policy or you have received a bond.
7. **State Examination** - The state licensing exam is available online from a home, work, or public computer. Directions for accessing the exam will be emailed to you upon receipt and processing of your application. Please ensure you provide a current email address in your application. Pay the \$127.00 state law exam fee online in LicenseE.

Related Statutes and Administrative Code - <https://dsps.wi.gov/Pages/RulesStatutes/PrivateDetectives.aspx>  
Exam Information - <https://dsps.wi.gov/Pages/Professions/PrivateDetective/Exams.aspx>