



Policy Analyst

MCJ- related certificates and concentrations: Crime Analysis

MCJ- related courses:

- CRJU 5003 - Research Methods (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 5004 - Statistics for Criminal Justice (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 5015 - Intelligence Writing and Briefing (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 5325 - Qualitative Methods for Criminal Justice (3 credit hours)
- CRJU 5331 - Crime Analysis and GIS (3 credit hours)

Recommended extracurricular activities and experiences: Independent research projects, law enforcement officer ride-along, Alpha Phi Sigma Criminal Justice Honor Society, study abroad, other community involvement and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) experiences such as a student association or club, volunteering in the community, or other experiences that expose you to communities and cultivate a service-minded perspective. Criminal justice national conferences such as Justice Information Resource Network or International Association of Crime Analysts.

Internship: An internship within law enforcement or other governmental entity, preferably within an analysis unit.

Duties and Responsibilities: Within the context of criminal justice, policy analysts work to understand how policies are affecting systems, or how potential policies may be recommended to the legislature.

Often housed within law enforcement or government agencies, policy analysts are similar to crime analysts – or the duties overlap - and serve to collect data, perform quantitative and qualitative analysis on crime data, and assess the efficacy of programs. Policy analysts create reports to various governmental entities such as the city in which the law enforcement agency resides, and interpret results as well as offer recommendations. These functions typically have the purpose of helping to identify trends, reasons for crime, and help to inform preventative measures. Various entities may also hire analysts such as state public safety offices, judicial, corrections, non-profit and social justice groups, and sometimes media.

Work Environment: Typically office-related work and sedentary. Some agencies are offering remote work options for analysts.

Work Schedule: Tends to be a standard core business hours around 8am-5pm

Career Path/Promotion: Often analysts with a government agency will begin their career within a classification system. For instance, the State of Colorado has classifications for analysts such as Research Analyst I, II, III, IV, or Statistical Analyst I, II, III, IV. A new graduate will likely need some experience to begin as a stat analyst II, and a master's degree would be most beneficial to enable an analyst to move up through the classifications into policy analysis. Graduate statistics classes are particularly important to statistical analyst roles and these skills often carry over into implications of data for policy assessment. Policy analyst is a higher-level position and usually requires additional experience.

Additional opportunities for an MCJ degree: With a Master's degree there are other opportunities that may be of interest. With an MCJ teaching as an adjunct with a university is a possibility. Also, if one becomes an expert in their chosen field or subject within the criminal justice system, there may be opportunities for media contact, publication, and/or testifying before the legislature.

Education, Training and Certification: Bachelor's Degree with significant experience, or Master's Degree preferred with some analysis experience, and usually necessary for higher classification positions.

Special Considerations: Crime and policy analysts often have access to large amounts of sensitive data. While records are public, entities do not disclose identifying information of victims, offenders, or other. Due to this, some agencies may require extensive background checks. Within the State of Colorado, Division of Criminal Justice, for example, new employees are required to undergo an approximately 40 page relatively invasive background submission and verification, fingerprinting (sometimes more than one), a polygraph and any other assessments that may be required. You should be prepared to provide details on crimes you've committed or have been a victim of as well as any drug use in the past or present. Past issues do not necessarily preclude you from employment, but your suppression of the past information might.

Skills and Competencies: Analytical skills, emotional intelligence, ability to work independently, statistical programming, research methods.

Colorado Salary Averages:

For policy analysts the range can vary widely with years of experience, the employing agency, or classification level, or classification type. Many policy analyst classifications within the state begin at a classification V: a policy analyst V may make upward of \$90,000.

Salary.com reports:

Bottom 10%: \$58,450

Top 10%: \$74,619

Median: \$65,500

Average Salary in U.S. as of 2021: \$64,833