

STATE OF COLORADO

STANDARDS

For The

STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTING (SFST)

PROGRAM

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George Atencio - Colorado Department of Transportation
Bev Capps - Colorado State University
Jeff Cohn - Lakewood Police Department
Glenn Davis - Littleton Police Department
Gary Gale - Colorado State Patrol
Mark George - Boulder County Sheriff's Department
Mike Greenwell - Lakewood Police Department
Cindi Grein - Northglenn Police Department
Susan Mertz - Colorado State University
Jim Williamson - Littleton Police Department
Shari Thorson - Colorado State University

Colorado Department of Transportation

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Executive Summary

Since the mid-1970s, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), with the cooperation and assistance of the law enforcement community, has conducted research that resulted in the development of a battery of three standardized field sobriety tests (horizontal gaze nystagmus, walk-and-turn, and the one leg stand) to assist police officers in detecting impaired drivers. The program, which was previously termed Improved Sobriety Testing, was initially developed by the Los Angeles Police Department and was validated in laboratory with field studies conducted by the Southern California Research Institute. Training in how to conduct the tests is included in the NHTSA course DUI Detection and Standardized Field Sobriety Testing.

In 1986, the Advisory Committee on Highway Safety of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) passed a resolution which recommended that law enforcement agencies adopt and implement the field sobriety testing training program developed by NHTSA. As the program has grown, it has become apparent that in order to insure continued success, nationally accepted standards must be established. These standards, which establish criteria for the selection and training of SFST practitioners, would help insure the continued high level of success of the SFST program. In 1992, the IACP Highway Safety Committee recommended the development of this system of nationally accepted standards.

In April of 1992, the IACP and NHTSA sponsored a meeting at the headquarters of IACP in Arlington, Virginia. Persons invited to this meeting included senior SFST instructors from several states, curriculum specialists, and training administrators. The participants met in working groups to reach a consensus concerning the many issues relating to the SFST program and to develop recommended minimum standards to the IACP Advisory Committee on Highway Safety. The standards were drafted and presented to the committee for their review at the midyear meeting in June 1992.

The Advisory Committee on Highway Safety, by resolution, adopted the national standards for the SFST Program. Voting membership of the IACP subsequently approved the standards.

Presented in this document are standards specifying the requirement for selection and training of SFST practitioners and SFST instructors in the State of Colorado.

The Colorado Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the Rocky Mountain Institute for Transportation Safety (RMITS) DUI/SFST Curriculum Committee, has accepted the National Standards for implementation in the State of Colorado.

I. STANDARDS FOR TRAINING IN STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTING

Standards in this section specify the criteria that must be met prior to an individual's completion in the Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) Program. These criteria outline the knowledge and skills required to be considered for training, as well as the knowledge required for completion of the program.

The current approved curriculum involves a three-day training program. Prior to beginning the training program, students should have an interest in traffic law enforcement with an emphasis on DUI. During this training, students are taught to administer and interpret the results of the SFST battery, including horizontal gaze nystagmus (HGN), walk-and-turn and the one-leg-stand.

Upon completion of this classroom training, the student must pass a comprehensive written examination and successfully complete a proficiency examination witnessed by an SFST instructor.

1.1 In order to be considered for training in the SFST, a person shall be employed and under the direct control of a public criminal justice agency or institution involved in providing training services to law enforcement agencies.

Commentary: At the discretion of the agency head or administrator, and with consent of the training authority, other persons may audit or observe any or all portions of the SFST training.

1.2 SFST students shall complete an approved classroom training course which shall, at a minimum, achieve the learning objectives as stated in the IACP/CDOT-approved training curriculum.

Commentary: Because of the differences in the type and level of training for officers in the detection of impaired substances, agencies should determine the most effective means of providing classroom training in SFST. However, in order to maintain the credibility and integrity of the program, agencies that use a training program other than that currently approved by the IACP/CDOT must have the alternative curriculum approved by the IACP Advisory Committee on Highway Safety and CDOT as meeting the required learning objectives. In addition, the IACP Drug Evaluation and Classification Program Technical Advisory Panel, an advisory arm of the Advisory Committee on Highway Safety, will be responsible for providing periodic updates and modifications to the IACP-approved training curriculum. Presently, the core SFST training course is 16 hours in length and includes at least two controlled drinking sessions utilizing volunteer drinkers, (i.e., "live alcohol workshops"). CDOT prefers the use of two "live" workshops, however, an acceptable option to the "live" workshops involving the use of videotapes have been approved. The acceptable alternative is to substitute NHTSA/IACP approved videotapes of "dosed" subjects for the first alcohol workshop, but to conduct the second alcohol workshop "live".

It is critical to note that the purpose of this training is to ensure that students become proficient in administering and interpreting standardized field sobriety tests. NHTSA, IACP, and CDOT recognize the limitations some agencies have in conducting live alcohol workshops. If either option is selected, each student must maintain a log of each SFST administered.

1.3 All SFST candidates shall attend and complete all classroom portions of an approved SFST curriculum. This shall include satisfactorily completing all assignments and required examinations. Students shall not be permitted to “test out” of portions of the training nor shall they be permitted to attend only those classes that they have not previously completed.

NOTE: In Colorado, the P.O.S.T. required 8-hour training for basic certification cannot be substituted in either the 16 or 24-hour SFST training course.

Commentary: Class sessions missed should be made up at the earliest possible time.

1.4 In order to satisfactorily complete the classroom portion of the training, SFST candidates must complete the IACP/CDOT-approved final examination with a score of not less than eighty percent (80%). Candidates scoring less than 80% on the final may retest one time under the supervision of an SFST instructor. The retest shall be completed not less than 15 nor more than 30 days following the completion of the classroom training.

Commentary: The examination used to retest the candidate shall be an IACP/CDOT-approved examination and shall not have been administered to the candidate previously. If the candidate does not achieve a passing score on reexamination, the candidate must retake the classroom portion of the training and pass the final examination. **NOTE:** In Colorado, an SFST Instructor who is from a different agency than the student shall give the re-test. CDOT will maintain a resource list of instructors for re-testing.

1.5 Upon completion of training, the candidate must demonstrate the ability to administer the SFSTs in the approved sequence and appropriately document and interpret the results.

Commentary: One of the primary factors in the success of the SFST program has been the emphasis upon a standardized approach. The training stresses the importance of a systematic, structured administration of the SFSTs. This includes completing all portions of the field sobriety tests in the appropriate sequence.

II. STANDARDS FOR TRAINING AS INSTRUCTORS IN THE STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTING PROGRAM

These instructors will have successfully completed the IACP/CDOT-approved Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) training program or its equivalent, and will have experience in administering the SFSTs and in providing testimony in court in the area of DUI enforcement. Dedicated, qualified instructors are critical to the continued success of the SFST program.

SFST instructors are responsible for observing, evaluating and verifying their performance of SFST candidates throughout the training process. Therefore, only persons experienced in the administration of the SFST battery should become instructors in the SFST training program.

Also addressed in this section are standards for instructors/trainers in the program. These individuals are responsible for training the SFST instructors.

2.1 Only persons who have successfully completed the IACP/CDOT-approved DUI Detection and Standardized Field Sobriety Testing training program, or its equivalent, may be designated as SFST instructors.

2.2 Any SFST trained person desiring to become an instructor in the SFST Program shall make a written application through and be recommended by their agencies as meeting all requirements to become instructors.

Commentary: The agency head or SFST coordinator shall verify that a candidate instructor meets the prerequisites to enter SFST instructor training. Prerequisites may also include any state, local or agency requirements specified for instructors within the jurisdiction.

2.3 The candidate instructor shall satisfactorily complete the IACP/CDOT -approved SFST Instructor School, or an approved equivalent, which shall include both knowledge and practical examination of candidate instructors. IACP/NHTSA - certified DRE instructors are recognized as SFST instructors and are approved to instruct the SFST program.

Commentary: This requirement does not preclude state or local jurisdictions from placing additional requirements on persons assigned to teach in local law enforcement programs.

The IACP Highway Safety Committee/CDOT shall be responsible for reviewing and evaluating alternative training programs submitted by agencies. Those programs meeting or exceeding the approved learning objectives for instructor training shall be deemed "equivalent". **NOTE:** In Colorado, all candidate instructors must complete the written examination with a test score of 90% or better.

2.4 All training sessions conducted as part of the SFST Program shall be coordinated by a designated SFST instructor who has previously instructed, to insure proper conduct and delivery of the approved curriculum.

Commentary: To ensure that all training classes are conducted in accordance with the standards, it is recommended that the instructor coordinating the training have a minimum of one-year experience as a SFST instructor.

2.5 An instructor trainer (a person who is training instructors) shall have demonstrated proficiency as an instructor.

2.6 An instructor trainer must be knowledgeable of and have completed the SFST School and the SFST Instructor School, and must be thoroughly familiar with the SFST student and instructor manuals.

Commentary: An instructor must demonstrate evidence of the satisfactory completion of the IACP/NHTSA/CDOT -approved Instructor Development Course or equivalent. Instructor trainers must be familiar with the approved SFST Training Program and be thoroughly familiar with the lesson plans for their assigned blocks of instruction.

III. SFST REFRESHER TRAINING

A topic area not previously addressed is that of re-certification of individuals who utilize the Standardized Field Sobriety Test battery. As more agencies have become involved over the years in the program, it has become apparent that a system is needed to insure that all officer's maintain proficiency. Just as standards in the previous sections have outlined the criteria for original certification, standards are required to ensure that professional integrity is maintained throughout the system.

The standards in this section outline the requirements for periodic re-certification of all SFST practitioners.

3.1 All agencies shall maintain records concerning the training and certification of those officers trained in the SFST's.

Commentary: Guidelines for the retention of pertinent records concerning the program operation help to assure integrity of the program and provide valuable information for purposes of statistics and court verification of training. Other records as deemed appropriate by local agencies may be required.

3.2 All Officer's trained in the SFST's must renew their certification of continuing proficiency every two years from the date of their most recent certification.

3.3 All SFST instructors shall complete a minimum of 8 hours of re-certification training that is approved by CDOT in the two year period.

Commentary: The methods of training are left to the individual departments. Some may wish to conduct an 8-hour class, others may want to break up the training into training blocks or conduct briefing training sessions. Instructing a course shall not be considered as part of the re-certification requirement.

3.4 All SFST practitioners must complete a minimum of 2 hours of re-certification training in a two year period.

Commentary: The methods of training are left to the individual departments. Some may wish to conduct a 2-hour class, others may want to break up the training into training blocks or conduct briefing training sessions, utilizing SFST Instructors who are certified and have had updated training classes meeting the criteria set forth in 3.3.

IV. STANDARDS FOR DECERTIFICATION OF SFST/HGN PRACTITIONERS AND SFST/HGN INSTRUCTORS

The standards in this section outline the circumstances and procedures for decertifying individual SFST/HGN practitioners and instructors. In order to assure that standards of performance are maintained, a means of removing persons unable to meet those criteria of competence and professionalism from the roles of the program is needed. The final authority and responsibility for maintaining program standards lies with the agency and the CDOT State Coordinator. It shall be incumbent upon the agency coordinator to assure that certified SFST/HGN practitioners and instructors meet approved standards for conduct and qualifications every 2 years.

4.1 Decertification shall occur when an SFST/HGN practitioner or instructor fails to meet minimum standards and requirements for certification, re-certification, or demonstrates unethical or unprofessional behavior that reflects adversely on the program.

Commentary: All SFST practitioners and instructors are responsible for maintaining and forwarding to the CDOT State Coordinator, or their designee, information regarding their training or experience. If such information is not provided in the time limits set forth, certification will lapse.

Local agencies may establish certification and decertification criteria that meet or exceed state standards.

4.2 Requests for voluntary decertification will be honored when submitted by an SFST/HGN practitioner or instructor to the CDOT State Coordinator or their designee.

4.3 Cases involving poor performance or inconsistent findings shall be referred to the CDOT State Coordinator, or their designee, for investigation, recommendation, and action.

4.4 Certification of an SFST/HGN practitioner or instructor shall not terminate so long as that individual meets the requirements of Standards 1.1 through 4.1.

NOTE: In Colorado, all SFST/HGN practitioners or instructors who have been decertified will have to attend the basic 24-hour DUI/SFST course and meet the stated requirements to be certified in the SFST.

NOTE: In Colorado, the CDOT State Coordinator, or their designee, will work with the agency involved and shall have the right to investigate any and all recommendations for decertification, and may decertify the individual.

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