

# Becoming a CSI in Orange County, California

(Source: <http://www.crimesceneinvestigatoredu.org/california/>)

## FAQS:

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicated that, as of May 2011, there were over 12,500 CSIs employed in the U.S. with a predicted 19 percent increase, or another 2,400 CSI jobs, by 2020. In 2011, 1,730 of these CSIs were employed in California with 70 CSIs working in San Diego, 100 in Sacramento, 260 in San Francisco and 520 in Los Angeles.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average mean salary for CSIs in California is \$72,000. The breakdown for some large cities is:

- Sacramento: \$61,720
- Los Angeles: \$79,220
- San Francisco: \$80,860

**Thus, the salary range is from \$61,720 to \$80,860 for a CSI in California!**

(These are approximates.)

## Prerequisites for Becoming a CSI

**Education** – The right education is the most important requirement for a successful career as a CSI. Some California schools offer a certificate in crime scene investigation that usually involves 20 credit hours in such relevant courses as:

- Introduction to Criminal Law/Procedure
- Crime Scene Photography
- Crime Scene Management
- Fingerprint Techniques/Impression Evidence
- Forensic Report Writing
- Rules of Evidence
- Blood Pattern Analysis
- Forensic Digital Imaging

Although an associate's degree and/or a certificate will possibly qualify a person for an entry-level position, most jobs in the field, and any hope of advancement, require a bachelor's degree in a physical or biological science with at least eight semesters of chemistry and three semesters of quantitative analyses. It is especially important for prospective CSIs to take science courses that include lab work.

**Other Knowledge/Skills** – Must have knowledge of scientific methods/techniques used in crime scene investigations as well as photographic skills since CSIs photograph evidence. Must also have the ability to:

- Test blood and fluids, including DNA analyses
- Identify and compare hair, fibers, soil, glass, paint. Etc.
- Perform toxicological analyses
- Compare firearms, bullet marks
- Perform chromatographic tests

**California Criminalist Examination** – Some jobs, like those with the Attorney General’s Office, require passing a Criminalist Test that covers knowledge of scientific methods normally used in crime scene investigations. Information about times and places the test is given can be acquired by going online to <http://oag.ca.gov/careers/exam> or writing to Department of Justice, Testing Unit, P.O. Box 944255, Sacramento, CA 94244-2550.

**On-the-Job-Training** – Most employers require entry-level CSIs to spend a prescribed period of time working in the field directly under an experienced investigator.

**Personal Characteristics** – Successful CSIs also need certain personal characteristics, including being methodical, patient, able to work under pressure, detail-oriented, able to work with blood, gore and noxious odors, and willingness to work irregular hours.

## Specialized Crime Scene Investigation Careers

Because the field of crime scene investigation is so vast and subject to continuing technological advances, many career CSIs elect to specialize in a certain aspect of the work. Some specializations in California include:

- Fingerprint experts
- DNA Profilers
- Entomologists (scientific study of insects)
- Odontologists (teeth)
- Forensic Anthropologists (human remains/bones)

## Crime Scene Investigators Working in California

The daily routine of a CSI, also often called a criminalist, may consist of any or all of the following functions:

- Examine crime scene to study, collect and preserve physical evidence, including hair, fiber, tissue samples, glass, paint, soil, liquids, etc.
- Photograph relevant aspects of the crime scene
- Collect fingerprint samples
- Analyze blood spatter

- Perform chemical and biological tests on evidence collected
- Analyze blood samples – perform DNA tests
- Conduct firearms tests
- Interpret test results for law enforcement officers, attorneys, etc.
- Prepare written reports
- Testify in court

## **Other Sources for CSI Jobs in California**

<http://www.indeed.com/q-Crime-Scene-Investigation-l-California-jobs.html>

<http://www.crime-scene-investigator.net/employment.html>

<https://www.monster.com/jobs/q-crime-scene-investigator-jobs-l-california.aspx>

[http://agency.governmentjobs.com/oc/job\\_bulletin.cfm?JobID=395183](http://agency.governmentjobs.com/oc/job_bulletin.cfm?JobID=395183)

<http://ocsd.org/divisions/fieldops/crimelab/sections>

<http://ocgov.com/gov/volunteer/internships/college/forensicspec>