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A Review of the Huntsville Police Department's
Field Training Program

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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement administrators and criminal justice scholars agree that field training programs are an important and necessary function in today's police agency. It would be unrealistic to expect every graduate from the police academy to have retained and learned to apply the total detail of the extensive information presented. The field training program assists the police recruit in making the transition from civilian life to the duties of a police officer.

The purpose of this project is to provide information to the Huntsville Police Chief regarding the state of Huntsville's field training program. A comparison to other Texas law enforcement agencies programs will be made to identify any variations.

The conclusion of this research indicates that several changes should be made to improve Huntsville's field training program. These changes include policy development concerning formal selection criteria for field training officers (FTO's) , implementing an annual review of the program, providing additional career development training to FTO's and, compensating the FTO during actual field training.

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to provide information to the Chief of Police of the Huntsville Police Department regarding the current state of Huntsville's field training program. A comparison of Huntsville's program to other Texas law enforcement agencies programs will be made to identify variations and offer recommendations for improvements.

In reviewing the overall structure or format of field training programs, several issues will be examined. Possibly one of the most important issues to examine is the selection process for field training officers. Additional concerns will be whether or not the officer conducting the training receives field training officer certification, questions of how often to conduct an in-house evaluation of the program, determining an appropriate program length, and additional compensation.

This research will be beneficial to those officers and supervisors responsible for the implementation and management of field training programs. In addition, smaller agencies who may not currently have a formal field training program may use this research in their program development.

The information in this study will be from various sources, including books, journals, departmental manuals and personal interviews.

The intended outcome of this project is to provide the Huntsville Police Chief with information on which to base future program revisions. From a manager's viewpoint, training should be

considered an investment in the future of the organization. This philosophy will ensure a high quality of law enforcement service to the community.

Historical Context

During the early 1950's police officers fresh from recruit school would report to their shift supervisors and receive their assignments. After a brief introduction to the other officers, the supervisors would provide them with a copy of the departmental rules and regulations and a copy of the general orders. The supervisors would then issue the new officers a call box key and assign a veteran officer to them, to familiarize them with their beats (Clowers, 115-117). During this time there was no formal training for police officers after recruit school, either in quantity or quality. In the late 1950's the California Highway Patrol initiated a form of field training where a trainee would ride with an experienced officer for a period of one month. This program did not involve extensive detail or standardization of field training programs now in use (MacKenna, 5-6).

In 1965 the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration recognized that police training was inadequate and recommended that police agencies implement supervised field training programs. Even with this recommendation, the police community still ignored the necessity of establishing the field training program. In 1968 a survey was conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police which indicated that 58% of police departments in cities over 10,000 population had no

formal field training for their recruits (MacKenna 6).

During the 1970's many criminal justice scholars suggested that field training programs were an important tool in the professional development of police officers. In 1972 the San Jose (California) Police Department implemented a structured and standardized field training program that many historians believe to be the first of it's kind. This program consisted of fourteen weeks of field training and was followed by twenty-two weeks of additional mentoring and evaluation. This was meant to ensure that all recruits received consistent information and training. The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals submitted a 1973 recommendation that field training programs should be a minimum of four months in length and that officers assigned to coach or instruct in the program receive forty hours of specialized training (McCampbell 112). It should be noted that during this time and even into the early 1980's, Texas police officers could be hired, given their badge and firearm and placed on the streets without any form of training. The Texas officer was afforded a one year grace period for academy training from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education (Garner).

The police field training programs gained significant support in 1983 from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Incorporated (CALEA). This commission developed standards that each police agency must meet when seeking national accreditation. CALEA's training standard required that agencies

must conduct formal field training for their new officers and stipulated that: a) the program be a minimum of four weeks in length, b) there be a field training officer (FTO) selection process, c) liason with police academy staff be maintained, d) training and in-service training for FTO's be provided, e) rotation of recruit field assignments be established, f) guidelines be developed for the evaluation of recruits by FTO's, and, g) reporting responsibilities of the FTO be established (CALEA, 33.4.6). Interestingly, these same standards apply today as noted in the Standards Manual of the Law Enforcement Accreditation Program, 1994 edition (CALEA, 33.4.4).

In 1987 Michael McCampbell published a one year survey for the National Institute of Justice. A random sampling of police agencies accross the United States revealed that of those agencies using field training programs, 57% based their program on the San Jose Model (McCampbell 114). In 1996 a similar study was conducted in Bexar County, Texas. This study indicated that 88% of the Bexar County agencies using field training programs were also based on the San Jose Model (Adams, 4).

The development and implementaion of field training programs have been shown to significantly impact police practices. The learning that takes place during this period can significantly influence the career behavior of the police recruit (Geller, 281).

Review of Literature and Practice

The great majority of police departments in Texas are currently using a formal field training program. In reviewing the

practices of other Texas police departments, copies of field training programs from Abilene, Conroe, Denton and Georgetown were examined. These departments were selected for several reasons, including their size, structure, and progressive reputations. These programs were all documented to be standardized and well supervised.

In comparison, one important finding was that, like Huntsville, none of the agencies conducted a formal review on a regular basis (See Appendix 1). This is an area inconsistent with the literature, as a regular review of should be conducted on an annual basis to afford administrators the opportunity to see if it is valid, reliable, and effective (Amaral, 83).

Regarding the area of field training program length, the four field training programs range from twelve to twenty-four weeks (See Appendix 1). In each program there are distinct training phases and standardized guidelines for recruit evaluation. This is consistent with the recommendation from CALEA (33.4.4) and is comparable to other agencies in Texas and accross the United States (McC Campbell, 115-117).

The four field training programs reviewed, as well as Huntsville, were also consistent in requiring that the officers designated as field training officers receive certification training in that area (See Appendix 1). Interestingly, only the Denton Police Department provides additional in-service training for their FTO's as a form of career development in the field training area. This training consists of team building training,

such as the Reality Oriented Processing Experiential Services (ROPES) and TCLEOSE Instructor certification training (Macsas). This is a good practice in that the FTO is the most critical element of any field training program. The best-planned, expertly designed program will be worthless without motivated and competent training officers (Housewright, 6).

Three of the agencies examined had minimum requirements and a formal process for field training officer selection (See Appendix 1). Although Huntsville does require two years minimum experience for their FTO's, there is no formal process for selection. Both Denton and Abilene Police Departments require their officers to have two years minimum police experience, submit an application for the FTO position, have a favorable recommendation from their immediate supervisor, have recent favorable performance evaluation, and pass an interview board. In addition, the Abilene Police Department requires that the applicant for FTO pass a written examination and have been working in the Patrol Division for the six months prior to application (Abilene Police Department, Field Training Manual, 1.1-1.5). Georgetown Police Department's FTO selection process is unusual compared to other agencies. Their field training is conducted by the department's Corporals. The Corporals' job description lists field training as one of their duties, so those officers who promote to Corporal are aware of this added responsibility (Pearson). By establishing a formal application process and requirements for the field training officer position, the agency will ensure that the FTO's are motivated,

mature, patient, and knowledgeable (Geller, 282).

The final area of comparison examines the practice of compensating an officer for conducting field training operations. Three of the agencies, excluding Huntsville and Conroe, do compensate their FTO's in some manner (See Appendix 1). Denton and Abilene Police Departments are similar in that they both pay \$50.00 per month in incentive pay for FTO's. In addition, Denton authorizes two hours of compensatory time per week of actual field training (Macsas) and Abilene authorizes one hour of compensatory time per day of actual field training (Smith). Georgetown Police Department, as stated earlier, compensates their FTO's in the form of a promotion to Corporal which is in a higher pay grade than officer (Pearson). Compensating field training officers is a recommended practice for several reasons. Michael McCampbell (119-120) argues that compensating FTO's ensures that the most qualified personnel are attracted to and retained in the program when following formal FTO selection criteria. David MacKenna (5-6) contends that it is very important that FTO's be compensated. His recommendation is that FTO's be monetarily compensated whether they are actually training or not. This practice enhances the status and increases the interest in the position. Prior to making any decisions regarding this issue, administrators should consider possible problems with compensating FTO's. It is very likely that some officers would apply for the position for monetary purposes only, with little regard for the success of the program. Robert Johnson (36) argues that the use of material or monetary rewards

may fail to take into account the powerful effect of a positively motivated and self-disciplined officer, or lack thereof. This statement is the result of a study he conducted for the Anne Arundel County Police Department in Maryland.

Discussion of Relevant Issues

Criminal justice scholars and police administrators agree that field training programs contribute to better qualified officers capable of meeting the needs of the community in an effective and efficient manner. A field training program should be tailored for each individual agency to meet the unique situation and complexities inherent in each (Buckley 11-12).

As mentioned earlier, none of the agencies examined conducted any type of evaluation at regular intervals on their field training programs. It is quite possible for an agency to have had the same program for a number of years with only minor modifications. During this time, not only has there been a tremendous technological change, but the needs of the community have changed as well. This mentality may be the result of the "If it isn't broke, don't fix it" philosophy (Black). Committing the resources to properly evaluate a department's program could be quite costly. However, if the department's personnel have the expertise necessary to conduct the review, it would consist primarily of an internal cost and would not necessarily create any hardship.

When examining the appropriate length of field training programs, it must be tailored to fit the needs of the individual agency. By adopting the recommendations of CALEA (33.4.4) and the

National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals in reference to the length of field training programs, most agencies should be able to meet at least the minimum recommended length of four weeks.

All agencies in this comparison required that officers who conduct field training receive FTO certification training and three of the agencies compensates the FTO's. The compensation issue is probably the most difficult to get police administrators to implement. This may be due to the cost constraints associated with this type of benefit. However, it is possible to compromise, such as compensating FTO's only when they are actually training or provide compensatory time to FTO's in lieu of monetary compensation. Several criminal justice scholars and police professionals support this practice (MacKenna, 9).

By establishing a formal field training officer selection process and including minimum requirements for the position, a department can recruit knowledgeable and experienced officers. In addition, officers may see the positions as one affording the use of leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills. The officers who view the position in this manner are highly motivated and are possibly seeking self-actualization (Lynch, 41). Both Denton and Abilene have a model field training officer selection process which could easily be adopted and modified to meet the particular needs of most agencies.

Another issue not described in the Introduction, but relevant to this project, arose in an interview with Sergeant Steve Macsas,

Denton Police Department. The career development training for a field training officer is very limited except what is offered in-service by the FTO's agency. Denton's response to this problem is to provide TCLEOSE Instructor certification training and ROPES training. This type of additional education to enhance the FTO's knowledge and skills is commendable. Other training that may be appropriate for FTO's continuing education may be curriculum design and performance evaluation courses offered by Universities, Community Colleges, and Police Academics.

Conclusion/Recommendations

As previously stated, the purpose of this project is to provide the Huntsville Police Chief with information regarding the current state of Huntsville's field training program. The research was conducted to determine the program's compatibility with other Texas law enforcement agencies programs.

In determining the compatibility of Huntsville's program, several issues were examined. These issues include the question of how often to conduct an evaluation of the program and an appropriate program length. One of the most important issues to examine is the selection process for field training officers. Additional concerns include field training officer certification training and compensation.

Based on this process, it is apparent that the Huntsville Police Department's field training program is compatible with other Texas police agencies program length. Huntsville's program is also consistent with other agencies concerning the requirement that

officers conducting field training must receive certification.

Recommendations for improvement based on the findings in this project include: a) the formulation of a directive that addresses the minimum requirements and selection criteria for field training officers (This criteria should consist of: 1) two years minimum police experience with Huntsville P.D., 2) a favorable recommendation from the applicant's immediate supervisor, 3) recent favorable performance evaluations and, 4) pass an interview board), b) conduct an annual review of the field training program, c) provide TCLEOSE Instructor certification training for FTO's and, d) consider compensating FTO's during actual field training.

By implementing these recommendations, the Huntsville Police Department's field training program will be improved and brought in line with other Texas law enforcement agencies programs. These recommendations would also ensure that the program would keep up with advanced training trends and meet the needs of the community.

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APPENDIX 1

	Program Evaluation	Program Length	Formal FTO Selection Criteria	Formal FTO Certification Training	FTO Compensation
Abilene P.D.	None	12 Weeks	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conroe P.D.	None	12 Weeks	No	Yes	No
Denton P.D.	None	24 Weeks Max.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgetown P.D.	None	14 Weeks	Yes *	Yes	Yes *
Huntsville P.D.	None	17 Weeks Max.	No	Yes	No

* Corporals perform field training, as defined in their job descriptions.

Light shading indicates areas of compatibility.

Heavy shading indicates areas in which change is recommended to improve Field Training Program.