

**The Bill Blackwood  
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**Field Training Programs**

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**An Administrative Research Paper  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This Administrative Research Paper illustrates the importance of Field Training Programs and its components. The issue surrounding the Field Training Program is; are they successful and do they alleviate organizations from vicarious liabilities and ridicule?

Surveys, Field Training Manuals, Journals, and self experience are several resources that were used to substantiate the methodology of the paper. Through research, it is determined that Field Training Programs are important to the success of an organization and the recruit. When the recruit goes through a complete phase of field training, he gains knowledge of the operating procedures of an organization and receives guidance from the Field Training Officer.

It is my recommendation, that all Law Enforcement Agencies examine the interior of their program, to ensure the recruit is getting the best training and Field Training Officer

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the nation, many law enforcement agencies have developed some type of Field Training Program. Some agencies are fortunate to have the financial funding and time to provide excellent training for probationary officers. Majority of police organizations have a strong will to provide the best training and education for probationary officers entering their organization. Field training is defined as a test of whether or not the police recruit can perform the actual tasks of policing (Haider 1990), Police agencies that do not provide adequate police training are vulnerable to lawsuits and ridicule. Providing constant training keeps officers prepared and knowledgeable to face their daily tasks. The citizens of the United States deserve to have a professional and knowledgeable officer in their community.

The ideas presented in this research paper project will address concerns in regards to Field Training Programs. The paper will show a comparison between different law enforcement agencies. We want to determine if the listed agencies have programs that are useful to the new recruits and the community. It will also provide information for police organizations seeking guidance for new and improved programs. Hopefully, it will determine successful rates of each agency identified.

This subject is important to law enforcement because it assists the Probationary Police Officers with hands-on policing. This type of program will ensure that the new recruit becomes familiar with the department's operational procedures and policies. In addition, the Field Training Officer must be knowledgeable in the areas of state law, municipal ordinances, and organizational policies and procedures. The success of a new recruit depends on the Field Training Officer. The Field Training Officer must be a

role model, good communicator, good listener, able motivate and be able to lead by example.

The intended outcome of this research paper is to determine if Field Training Programs are successful and if they are helpful to new recruits. This paper will compare several agencies Field Training Programs. Many of the generic functions of law enforcement can be instilled in the recruit through academy training (Haider 1990). “Generally the best way to improve these (field training) centers on improving the quality of the Field Training Officer, primarily through better selection, training and compensation.”

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

To become a licensed peace officer in the state of Texas an individual must pass a basic Police Academy. The state has mandated that a total of 618 hours of classroom instruction must be administered. Upon successful completion of the academy the person becomes eligible to take state examination. If the candidate passes the examination, he or she is eligible for hire with a Law Enforcement agency in the state of Texas.

The Houston Independent School District Police Department, Harris County Sheriffs Department and The Houston Police Department are agencies within the Houston area that is used to complete this research paper. The agencies are the Houston Independent School District Police Department, the Harris County Sheriffs Department, and the Houston Police Department. The Houston Independent School District Police Department has a small Field Training Division. This department does not have a basic Police Academy. The division has an eight-week field-training program that consists of two weeks of introduction to the department and six weeks of actual field

training through a certified FTO (Field Training Officer). Without well trained training officers, how can a training program succeed? Training of the personnel that will be teaching the recruit officer is therefore, essential in any field training program. The field training officer is the key to any program. (Leichliter 1999).

If a recruit does not successfully complete the eight-week process, he or she will be assigned to a different FTO for remedial training. The remedial training will cover the areas of weakness the recruit displayed. The remedial phase will be conducted over a three-week period. Over the past three years, this department has had a good success rate. With the exception of the two recruits that failed the initial phase of the field training process. One of the recruits resigned, and the other successfully completed the remedial phase. The training staff stated that their Field Training Program was successful. The staff stated that it takes a special and qualified FTO to instruct and lead. In conclusion, this department is one of the largest school district Police agencies in the country and has been recognized as an accredited organization.

In a comparison, the Harris County Sheriffs Department and the Houston Police Department have several similarities. Both agencies are large in the number of officers and have a Police Academy that their new recruits must attend prior to entering the Field Training Program. The new recruits enter the police academy where they will undergo intense police training. Qualified instructors will teach the new recruits laws, firearms proficiency, defense tactics, and people skills. Also, the new recruit must successfully complete the academy before he or she moves towards field training. There are up to sixty recruits that may enter either academy at any time. Upon completion of the Police Academy the recruit will go through an extensive field-training program with a certified FTO. If field training is imposed as an assignment, the program may be doomed to

mediocrity from the onset (MacKenna 1985). The recruits spend at least six weeks in the field, experiencing and administering tasks they have learned.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this research paper, the question to be answered is “What Makes Field Training Programs Successful?” The researcher believes that Field Training Programs are successful, due to the professionalism and constant training that is required by TCLEOSE. Successful field training programs are essential to the success of an organization. The stronger the training program the better chances an agency can survive vicarious liability and ridicule. There is so much information in regards to field training such as; journals, books, past lemit papers, Internet, law enforcement agencies and community leaders. Especially, the input received from other agencies and community leaders.

The survey sample covered three of the largest departments in the greater Houston area. The departments are diverse and multicultural. All the agencies serve the Houston area in a different capacity. Seventy five surveys were issued out to officers, training supervisors, and upper command staff. Attached is a blank survey that was distributed to three agencies in the greater Houston area. The survey is intended to measure the success rate of the agency field training programs.

## **FINDINGS**

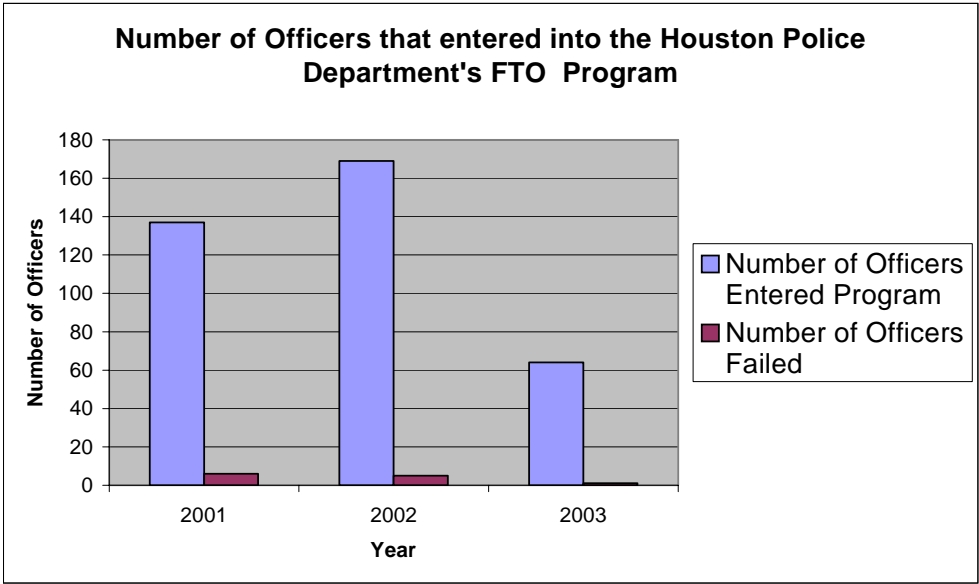
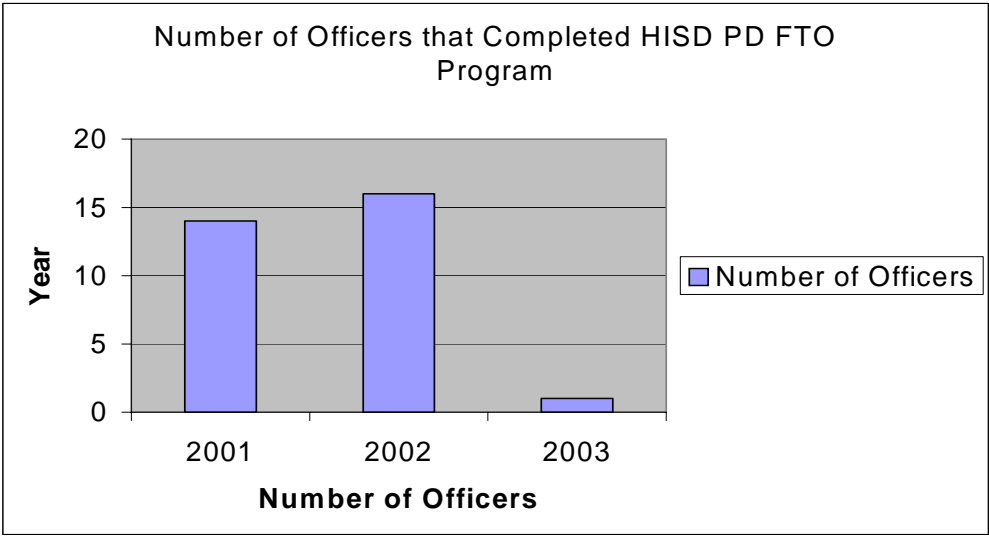
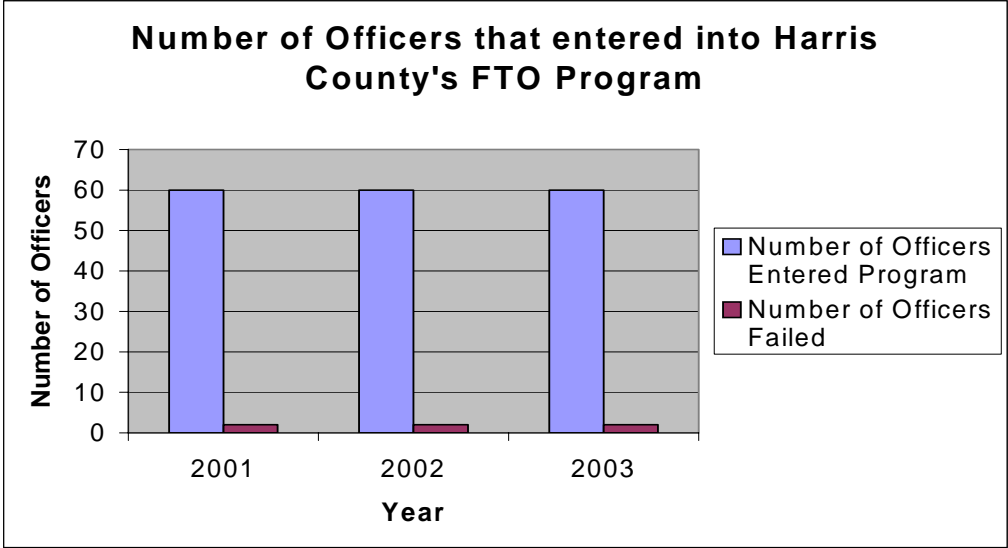
There were officers from the Houston Independent School District, Harris County Sheriffs Department and the Houston Police department that participated in the evaluation process. All of these agencies serve the Houston area. Field Training Supervisors must be aware of legal issues associated with training, such as failure to train, vicarious liability, and failure to supervise. All the participating agencies have the

same philosophy, that *training officers must make a professional commitment to themselves and to the organization of which they are members.* It has been determined that field training is best defined as, a test of whether or not the new recruit can perform the actual tasks of policing. A recruit will not learn everything about law enforcement during this process. An intelligent and committed veteran officer can give direction and leadership to encourage the recruit to look outside the box, and to continue to learn and adapt to changes.

A Field Training Program is the backbone of an organization. The things that are being taught to the new recruit are essential to the success of the department. Everyone in the organization should have the same vision and goals. This includes support staff, field training officers, and command staff. The FTO will be responsible for the new recruit gaining knowledge to assist him with performing his normal duties. The FTO has big responsibility and much of the effectiveness of the training depends on him. There are all types of incentives that can be given to a FTO, to praise him for his time and commitment to the organization. The Houston Independent School District Police Department has chosen to compensate their officers by providing overtime for the time they train the recruit. The Harris County Sheriffs Department provides their FTO'S with a take home vehicle and a stipend for their contributions. Last but not least the Houston Police Department, this agency compensates their FTO'S with a take home vehicles as well as stipends. Compensating FTO'S for their contributions is one way to motivate the officer, and praise them for their efforts. Now, on the other hand, the FTO'S will be held accountable for all documentation that is to be processed concerning the new recruit, including their actions during after the field training phase. So, research has shown that field training is an important aspect of law enforcement. Setting a strong



foundation in the beginning of the new recruit's career majority of the time the organization will not be the victim of vicarious liabilities. In conclusion, Field Training Programs can work and be successful, but it takes everyone in the organization to have the same vision and goals. Below is a graph of the Houston Independent School District Police Department. The graph indicates the number of officers that were hired, the year and the success rate.



## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research paper is to determine if Field Training Programs are successful and do they eliminate organizations from vicarious liabilities and ridicule. When an officer makes a mistake in the field, critics are quick to question where did the officer receive his training, who was his FTO, what agency does he work for, what are they teaching these officers? A successful Field Training Program can lay a steady foundation for a positive and respectful organization. Through this research I have showed that there are successful Field Training Programs throughout the state. On the other hand there are still some law enforcement agencies that do not have a Field Training Program. A person can only imagine the type of liabilities and ridicule these departments are setting them up for. It has been determined that having good leadership and management skills is just a minor part to a successful program. It has been proven that organizations that have vision and goals are successful in the field training process. When looking at it, all components of an organization must express and adhere to the same goals and visions. It was also stated that the FTO has the most important job in this process. The FTO is responsible for all documentation and actions displayed by the recruit during the training phase as well as his entire probationary period.

What makes a quality Field Training Officer? Many authors have stated that he must exhibit the following characteristics:

- Knowledgeable of Job Description
- A Good Motivator
- Exhibit Patience
- Firm

- Well Groomed
- Competent in State and Local Laws
- Veteran Officer
- Positive Attitude
- Familiar with Organization Visions and Goals
- Committed

These are only a few characteristics a good FTO must display. FTO'S must be well - trained and receive continuing in-service training and support from upper command. The agencies that were researched have good Field Training Programs. The larger agencies, being the Harris County Sheriffs Department and the Houston Police Department have Police Academy's that can lay a foundation the is conducive to the working environment they will be exposed to. Whereas, the Houston Independent School District Police Department can not provide a new recruit with this type of luxury. So, many recruits enter the school district environment not knowing what to expect. As we all know school district policing is a different style of policing. Who would have ever thought, Police Officers in our schools? Through this research it has been concluded that all the agencies provide the new recruit with the tools and knowledge he or (she) needs to be successful. The findings did support the hypothesis. The ideas and thoughts that were provided to me makes one believe that Field Training Programs are successful. There are so many components involved in the success of an organization and the bottom line is it starts with training. Most agencies realize this theory and put a lot of time and effort into providing the best training possible for the new recruit.

This study is relevant to law enforcement because an individual will recognize why field training is important to an organization as well as the community. It will also

show how successful agencies are in the Houston area. This study is also important to law enforcement because many agencies do not have a Field Training Program. It will be an eye opener for some agencies to better their programs and others to create a program. Several agencies as well as communities may be affected by these findings. Police Officers can better serve the communities they police in. The community can feel a sense of honesty, fairness and commitment from the officers that serve their community. Probationary officers will get the best training possible from the FTO.

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# FIELD TRAINING PROGRAM

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is the name of your law enforcement agency?
2. Do your department have a field training program, if so how long is the process?
3. How many recruits enter the field training program annually?
4. What is the percentage of recruits that successfully completes the training?
5. Do you feel that field training programs should be a standard for law enforcement agencies?
6. What do you think makes field training programs successful?