

TELEMASP BULLETIN

TEXAS LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM

May 1996

Vol. 3, No. 2

Law Enforcement Accreditation

Historical Overview

The inception of law enforcement accreditation is rooted in the "reform era" of policing (Kelling and Moore 1988). The movement for professionalism in law enforcement is epitomized by the 1967 President's Commission reports which provided many recommendations for personnel and operational changes to improve the quality of law enforcement throughout the country. Several commissions were subsequently established which echoed the recommendations of the President's Commission, including the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968), the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (1969), and the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals (1973). Complementing the government's effort to enhance the quality of law enforcement, three changes occurred that had an impact on the development of accreditation: (1) an increasing number of college-educated police officers, (2) increased sophistication in police management, and (3) the re-emergence of Title 42 of the United States Code, Section 1983, Civil Action for Deprivation of Civil Rights (Carter and Sapp 1992). The integration of these reports and the three contemporary changes encouraged police agencies to become more professional. Accreditation is seen as a benchmark of professionalization.

In 1979, a voluntary accreditation program for law enforcement began with the creation of the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), formed by four national organizations—the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). CALEA's goals were:

to establish a body of standards designed to (1) increase law enforcement agency capabilities to prevent and control crime; (2) increase agency effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of law enforcement services; (3) increase cooperation and coordination with other law enforcement agencies and with other agencies of the criminal justice system; and (4) increase citizen and employee confidence in the goals, objectives, policies, and practices of the agency (Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies 1994).

Initially, 944 accreditation standards were developed, but CALEA continued to modify them until the number was reduced to 436 in 1994. As of November 5, 1995, there were 375 accredited agencies nationwide and 325 agencies that had either purchased an application package or were in the self-assessment phase in the process of accreditation.

National accreditation is considered by its proponents as a means to achieve police professionalism. Some suggest possible conflict with the philosophy of community oriented policing (COP). Whether there is compatibility between these two significant programmatic developments remains unanswered. The most recent study regarding the compatibility issue was conducted by Cordner and Williams (1995). Their preliminary findings reveal that, for the most part, the standards are silent or neutral regarding COP. The few standards that pertain directly to COP principles (namely, community input and community reciprocity) are more often supportive than contradictory.

Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas

The Accreditation Process

CALEA is a nonprofit corporation governed by a 21-member commission appointed by the joint action of IACP, NOBLE, NSA, and PERF. The governing body is responsible for providing philosophical direction, reviewing documentation, and awarding accreditation to an agency. The accreditation process takes approximately two years to complete and involves the following steps: (1) an agency submits a formal application to CALEA that is reviewed to verify that the agency meets the eligibility criteria; (2) the agency then conducts a comprehensive self-assessment documenting compliance with the applicable standards; (3) CALEA sends an assessment team to the agency to verify its compliance with the standards; (4) the commission reviews the final report with suggested recommendations and then awards the agency accredited status for a three-year period if all requirements are met (Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies 1994). Once accredited, the agency must remain in compliance with the standards and must repeat the process at the conclusion of the three-year period to maintain accredited status.

Accredited Agencies in Texas

Currently, 16 agencies in Texas are accredited. In 1987, the Burleson Police Department was the first Texas agency to receive accredited status. The Hurst Police Department is the most recent agency to be accredited. Table 1 shows accredited agencies in Texas by type of agency, number of full-time personnel, and accreditation date. Municipal agencies account for 15 of the 16 accredited agencies in Texas.

The mean number of full-time personnel is 172. The number of accredited agencies has gradually increased each year. Eight agencies were accredited before 1990, and an additional eight agencies have been accredited since 1990. Moreover, seven agencies are in the self-assessment phase. To date, the Houston Police Department is the only previously accredited agency not to seek reaccreditation.

The purpose of this bulletin is to examine the attitudes of police administrators from accredited agencies regarding the effects and attributes of being accredited. Most survey questions asked the respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with statements pertaining to accreditation. The analysis is based on the responses from 14 accredited Texas police agencies which reported the effects and attributes of accreditation. The study also examines why 25 non-accredited agencies chose not to participate in the accreditation program. Results of the survey follow.

Accreditation Attributes

The effects of accreditation. The survey asked whether the police agencies agreed or disagreed that accreditation has provided a basis for evaluation and budget justification, created better morale and modernization for the department, and deterred lawsuits. All of the respondents agreed that accreditation has modernized policies and procedures and provides a basis for evaluation. A majority of the respondents also agreed that accreditation offers budget justification for required resources (85.7%) and creates better morale for the department (78.5%). However, only 42.8 percent agreed that accreditation deterred lawsuits or reduced litigation costs (see Figure 1).

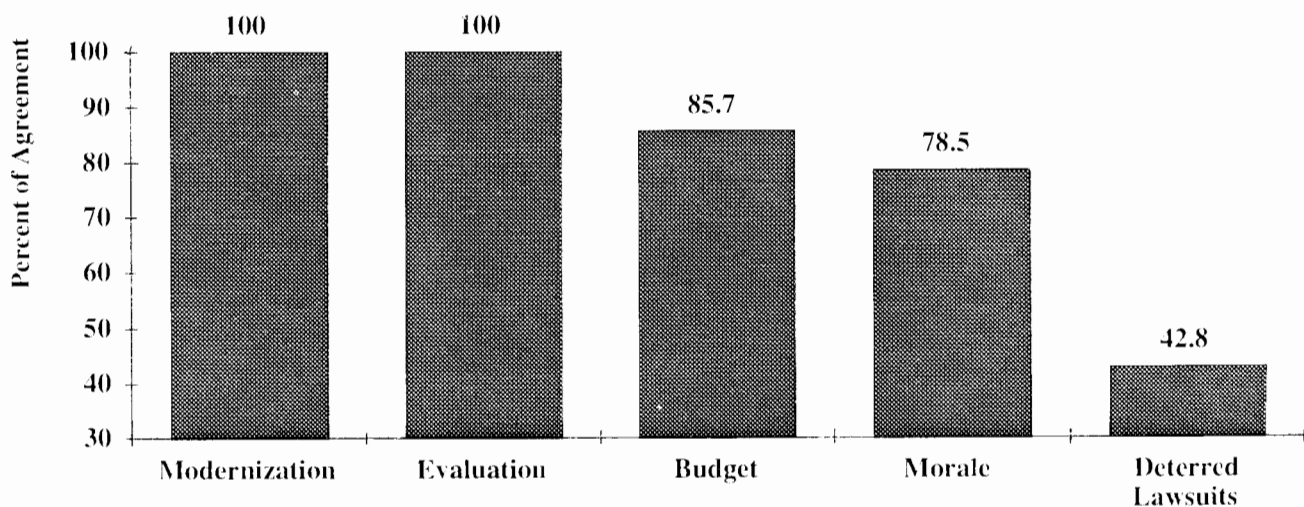


Figure 1. Positive Impacts of Accreditation

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Texas Accredited Agencies

Department Name	Type of Agency	Number of Full-Time Personnel*	Accreditation Date**	Reaccreditation Date
Amarillo Police Department	Municipal	343	11-18-89	11-18-94
Arlington Police Department	Municipal	511	11-18-89	11-18-94
Burleson Police Department	Municipal	45	07-12-87	07-12-92
Carrollton Police Department	Municipal	187	03-20-88	03-20-93
College Station Police Department	Municipal	119	11-16-91	-
De Soto Police Department	Municipal	74	03-27-93	-
Highland Park Department of Public Safety	Municipal	64	07-24-88	07-24-93
Hurst Police Department	Municipal	86	07-28-90	07-28-95
Midland Police Department	Municipal	202	11-20-93	-
Pampa Police Department	Municipal	36	11-20-88	11-20-93
Plano Police Department	Municipal	289	11-21-92	-
Tyler Police Department	Municipal	186	03-25-95	-
University of Texas at Houston Police Department (Medical Center)	University	183	03-26-94	-
Victoria Police Department	Municipal	140	04-02-89	04-02-94
West University Place Police Department	Municipal	28	11-21-92	-
Wichita Falls Police Department	Municipal	259	03-20-88	03-20-93

*Mean number of full-time personnel=172.

**As of April 1, 1993, accreditation status is valid for three years (prior to that date accreditation was valid for five years).

Regarding morale, the Plano Police Department reports that the work environment is improved because employees know what is expected of them and are provided a clear statement of policy and procedures. The Burleson Police Department also reports that the majority of their employees appear to experience a sense of accomplishment after receiving accreditation or reaccreditation.

When agencies were queried concerning gaining higher status in both the law enforcement community and from the public, all agreed that through accreditation higher status was gained from other agencies, and 78.5 percent indicated receiving higher status from the public.

The University of Texas at Houston Police Department reports that accreditation enhanced its reputation and status since University police agencies are often of suspect quality within Texas law enforcement. The Plano and Burleson police departments also reported that they are contacted daily by both local and national agencies for copies of directives, crime prevention programs, etc. Moreover, although the public is unaware that the departments are accredited, the departments are more highly respected because the public benefits from improved operations.

When respondents were asked about the effect of accreditation on liability insurance costs, 71.4 percent reported that there was no effect due to their self-insurance policy, 7.1 percent indicated no effect even though they are insured, and 21.7 percent reported some reduction in insurance costs. For example, the Pampa and Tyler police departments reported that based on their accredited status, the savings of liability insurance costs would be approximately 8 to 10 percent or \$6,468 to \$8,085.

Summary of other benefits derived from accreditation:

- Accreditation builds consistency in the agency by providing workable policies and procedures.
- Accreditation increases productivity and responsible use of available resources.
- Accreditation moves the department toward professionalism (*Plano Police Department*).
- Accreditation provides a network of valuable resources for both local and out-of-state police agencies (*Burleson Police Department*).
- Accreditation provides the department with a quality control by using both internal and external monitoring devices to properly address all critical areas of concern before appropriate policies are implemented (*Hurst and University of Texas at Houston police departments*).
- Accreditation improves employee benefits through budget requests that allow purchasing of equipment such as body armor and portable radios (*College Station and Amarillo police departments*).

The negative attributes of accreditation. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed that some accreditation standards are administratively-focused, impractical, outdated, or unrealistic. Of the 14 responding agencies, only 14.3 percent agreed that the standards are mostly administratively-focused rather than outcome-oriented, and only 7.1 percent agreed that some standards were impractical, outdated, and unrealistic (see Figure 2).

Regarding the outdatedness of some standards, the Plano and College Station police departments reported that the system is in place and is very actively used to add, delete, or change standards after a complete review was held in April of 1994. For example, standard 81.01.06 requiring "line load studies" which actually hampered the use of modern telephone equipment was deleted.

Respondents were asked to compare the value of accreditation and its cost in terms of fees and personnel time. Almost one-half of the respondents (42.9%) reported that the fees of accreditation are appropriate, whereas 35.7 percent reported that accreditation is expensive, and 21.4 percent believed it was inexpensive.

Regarding the cost of accreditation in terms of personnel time, 50 percent of the respondents stated that the process of accreditation requires an appropriate use of personnel time, 35.7 percent stated that the process demands too much personnel time, and only 14.3 percent indicated that the process uses too much personnel time.

When the agencies were asked about seeking reaccreditation, all 14 accredited agencies indicated a positive affirmation, with 92.9 percent stating they would definitely seek reaccreditation and 7.1 percent stating they would probably do so.

Reasons for non-accreditation. Twenty-five police agencies were asked to rank-order the reasons for not seeking accreditation. In Figure 3, the mean ranks of seven frequently cited impediments are reported. The higher the mean, the higher the average ranking of the impediment. As shown in Figure 3, high cost was found to be the most often cited reason for not seeking accreditation, followed by time commitment.

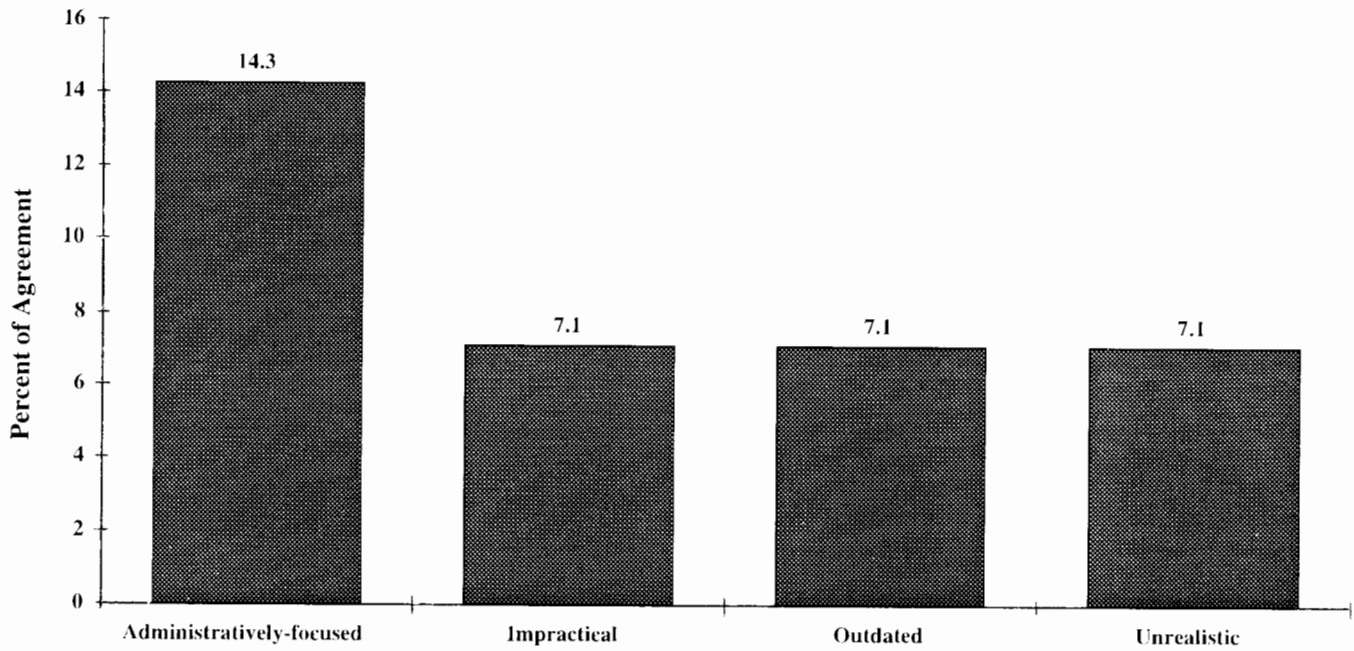


Figure 2. Negative Attributes of Accreditation

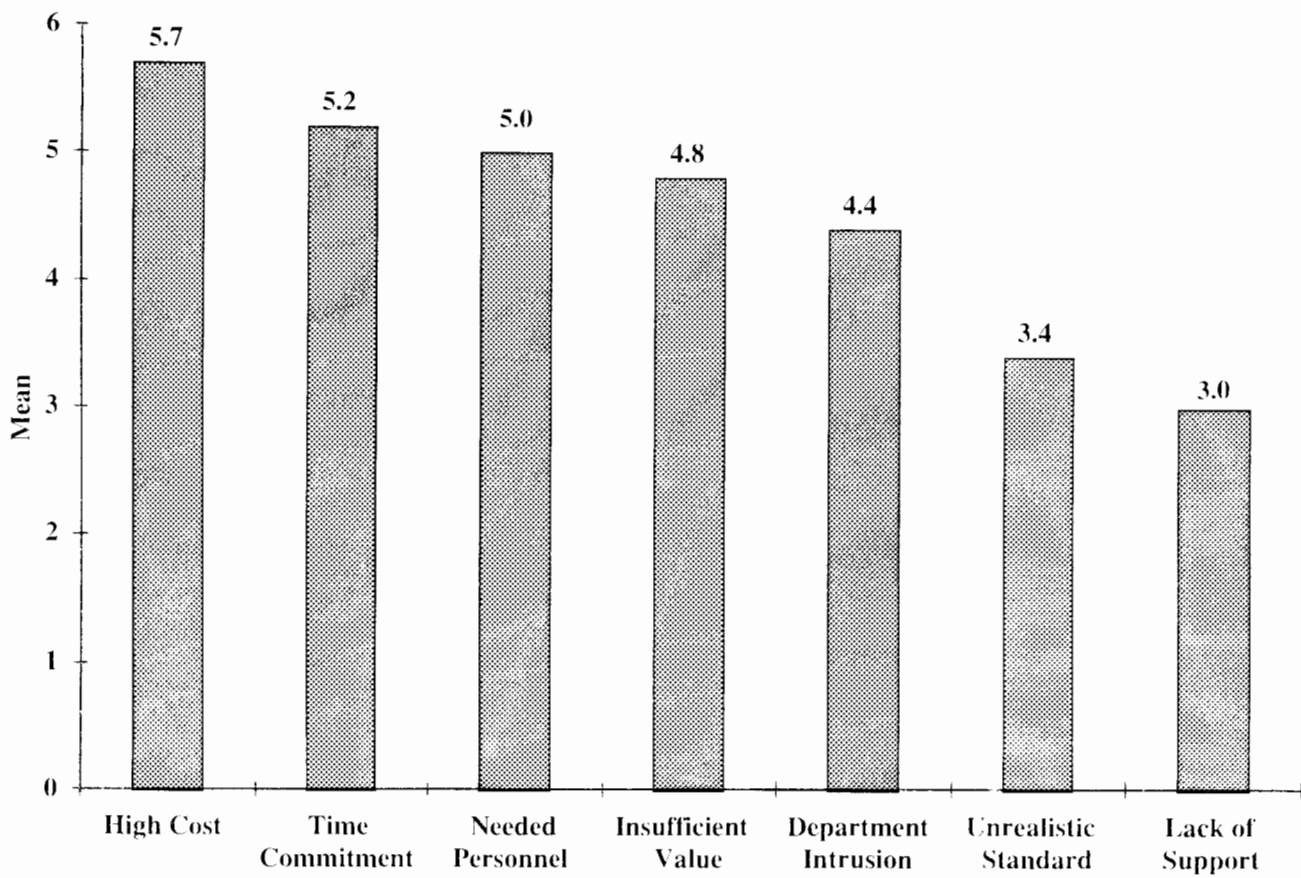


Figure 3. Rank Order of Reasons for Not Seeking Accreditation

Discussion

The descriptive results indicate that accredited law enforcement agencies in Texas view accreditation as beneficial to their departments. All of the accredited agencies agreed that accreditation produced sound policies and procedures and provided a basis for evaluation. These positive effects of accreditation can obviously be observed when one considers three major issues in law enforcement—police pursuit policy, deadly force, and collection and preservation of evidence—that often result in either liability or failed prosecution. In a study by Williams (1988), it was found that prior to accreditation, only 70 percent of accredited agencies already had a pursuit policy that addressed forcible stops and/or the issue of inter- and intra-jurisdictional pursuits, only 75 percent addressed what conditions were necessary for the use of deadly force, and only 58 percent had policies that dealt with the conditions and timing of submitting physical evidence to a forensic laboratory.

Regarding the negative aspects of accreditation, most respondents agreed that the high cost and time commitment were the two major hurdles for seeking accreditation. CALEA requires an accreditation fee ranging from \$5,500 to \$22,000, depending on the size of the agency (see Table 2).

Table 2
Accreditation Fees Required by CALEA

Number of Full Time Employees	Standard Fee	Single Payment* Schedule
1-9	\$5,500	\$5,225
10-24	\$8,000	\$7,600
25-49	\$9,000	\$8,550
50-199	\$11,500	\$10,925
200-499	\$14,500	\$13,775
500-999	\$17,000	\$16,150
1,000-2,999	\$19,000	\$18,050
3,000 up	\$22,000	\$20,900

*Single payment schedule is 95 percent of accreditation fee.

Other than the direct cost of the accreditation fee, there are indirect expenditures on programs, equipment, and facilities to bring the agencies into compliance. These indirect costs significantly increase the expense of accreditation. They can vary depending upon the size and type of agency and the service area size. In a comprehensive study involving the costs of accreditation, Bizzack (1993) calculated the cost of accreditation reported by 148 diverse-sized agencies accred-

ited through CALEA with the costs reported by agencies accredited through state programs in Colorado, New York, and Washington. A summary of his findings pertaining to CALEA costs are shown in Table 3. Bizzack (1993) contended that the figures in Table 3 are important because of the "... vast difference between the least and the most amounts the process might cost" (p. 47). The total costs of accreditation indeed vary significantly.

Table 3
Cost Range of Accreditation

Cost Range (by Dollar*)	Percentage of CALEA Agencies in Cost Range
0-4,300	11.6
4,301-16,500	5.7
16,501-26,000	16.4
26,001-36,471	2.6
36,472-61,950	35.5
61,951-89,057	1.5
89,058-150,496	3.8
150,497-187,000	0.7
187,001-257,000	1.3
257,001 or more	20.9
Total Percent	100.0
Average Cost:	\$ 89,568

*Cost range does not include fees.

The average time for an agency to move through the process is estimated to be 23 months, although the results of Williams' study (1988) revealed an average of 21 months. The most recent study (Bizzack 1993), however, concluded that it now takes 34 months. Bizzack attributed this increase to variables such as retirements, job changes by chief executive officers (CEOs), budget cuts, lack of committed resources, and meeting more compliance requirements.

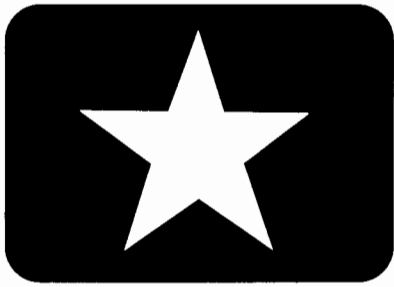
Although viewed as beneficial, law enforcement accreditation raises concerns among agencies, especially the cost and time issues. However, the effects and attributes of accreditation should not be overlooked by police executives if the goals of their agencies are to strive for consistency, accountability, and professional operating standards and procedures. Commitment to accreditation must precede its process. Belief in accreditation must exist from the highest to the lowest level in the agency. Otherwise, sound policies and procedures will only appear on paper but be futile on the street.

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TELEMASP Monthly Bulletins,
ISSN 1075-3702, are produced
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Police Research Center

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