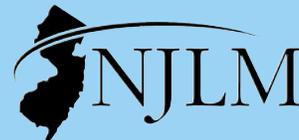


Community Safety Leadership

Is this on your agenda?

Police Agency Accreditation



New Jersey State League of Municipalities



MUNICH-AMERICAN RISKPARTNERS

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The New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police presenting the accreditation award to the Stafford Township Police Department. Pictured, from left to right are Egg Harbor Police Chief John Coyle, Accreditation Assessor; Stafford Police Chief Larry D. Parker; Stafford Patrolman Herman Pharo, Accreditation Program Manager; and Mitchell C. Sklar and Lloyd E. Nippins, III of the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police.

Introduction

In today's complex society, police agencies are subject to continuous scrutiny from the courts, press and the public. In this environment, agencies must have their policies up to date and supported with detailed training records for each officer. This is no small task.

Many police agencies are now seeking accreditation as a way of assuring the public that the agency meets the highest standards for professionalism, training and discipline – exactly what all of us expect from our law enforcement officers. Research shows that accredited agencies have 11% fewer police professional liability claims, 18% fewer workers compensation claims and 31% fewer auto liability claims.

Accreditation is the certification by an independent reviewing authority that a law enforcement agency has met specific requirements and prescribed standards. In New Jersey, accreditation is voluntary. A few New Jersey police agencies have been nationally recognized by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). For further information, log onto <http://www.calea.org/index.htm>. However, CALEA's requirements are often too extensive for most communities in New Jersey because of the relatively small size of the typical municipality.

Two New Jersey based accreditation programs have been developed to resolve this problem. Both the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police (NJSACOP) and "Pro Active", a private firm, provide accreditation services to New Jersey municipalities. Inquire with your municipality's joint insurance fund (JIF) or insurer to determine the accreditation programs it recognizes.

The Community Safety Leadership (CSL) Program is a joint effort between the Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund (MEL) and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJSLOM) to provide local elected officials with the information they need on safety and municipal liability issues. CSL publications are provided at no charge to all communities in the State. We wish to thank Munich-American Risk Partners and the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey for their continuing support of the CSL program.

The Accreditation Process

The public expects law enforcement agencies to operate in accordance with well-established and up-to-date policies and procedures. Some of these standards are established by the State Attorney General or the County Prosecutor. Most are established by the local agency itself and adapted to the specific needs of the community. Unfortunately, too many agencies have not updated their standards and training records.

To become accredited, a law enforcement agency must make a complete review of its procedures and correct any deficiencies. This takes a substantial commitment starting with the support from elected officials.

The cost depends on how far behind the town's law enforcement agency is at the beginning of the process. An agency seeking national accreditation from CALEA is required to have no less than 441 separate policies and associated training records. The programs offered by the New Jersey based accreditation programs require compliance with a smaller number of core standards.

All accreditation authorities review policies in nine general areas. Specifically:

Model Policies and Standards

- Role, Responsibilities and Relationship with Other Agencies
- Organization, Management and Administration
- Personnel Structure
- Personnel Process
- Operations
- Operational Support
- Traffic Operations
- Prisoner and Court-Related Activities
- Auxiliary and Technical Services

For a more complete description, log onto: <http://www.calea.org>

CASE STUDIES

Jury Acquits Department in only 20 minutes

A jury needed only 20 minutes to decide that an accredited police force acted properly in the arrest of a man after his wife called the police during a domestic dispute. The man died during a scuffle while being arrested. After reviewing the Department's policies and training records, the jurors decided that officers at the scene were not negligent and that the agency held itself to the highest standards.

Appellate Court Throws Out Patrol Officer's Suit

A federal appellate judge dismissed a patrol officer's claim that he was "constructively discharged" because he failed to comply with the police department's "illegal quota system" for traffic citations. The police agency was able to demonstrate that its policies conformed to nationally accepted models and that accreditation was verification from an objective third party that the department complied with these standards. In particular, the judge cited the department's policies on traffic enforcement, training, career development and promotion.

Excessive Force Charge Dropped

A civil rights advocacy organization threatened litigation after a mentally challenged young adult was injured in a confrontation with police. Fortunately, the department's policies had just received accreditation and included procedures for handling people with special needs. The department was able to show that the officer followed the model procedure during the incident. The civil rights organization expressed surprise that the police took seriously the needs of the mentally challenged.

Chief Praised for "Following the Book"

An accredited police agency and the town's elected officials came under fire by the news media for allegedly covering up a sexual assault in order to protect the reputation of the community. However, the chief was able to deflect the controversy by citing the agency's "Public Information" policy, based on state and county directives that all press releases concerning incidents such as this must come from the County Prosecutor.

For more case studies, log onto:
<http://www.calea.org>

Self-assessment Phase

The process begins with the assignment of an accreditation officer (typically a Lieutenant or a Sergeant) responsible to review the agency's compliance with the standards established by the particular accreditation authority selected by the town. While the agency will be provided detailed instructions for conducting the self-assessment, most agencies will require assistance. Accreditation authorities offer consultation assistance from retired law-enforcement professionals.

Policy Development Phase

After preparing a checklist, the accreditation officer must begin any needed policy development. Accreditation authorities usually have model policies and procedures, often available on disc. However, these models must be adapted to the particular needs of your community and requirements of the State Attorney General and County Prosecutor. The consultation support offered by the accreditation authority is especially useful at this stage.

Training Phase

Law enforcement policies include requirements for training documentation that must be maintained for each officer. After the policies have been updated, the accreditation officer must gather the necessary documentation or arrange for the training as needed. It is at this point that the accreditation process begins to pay dividends in improved law enforcement service to the public.

On-site Assessment Phase

During the on-site visit, the assessors appointed by the accreditation authority review all policies and verify the agency's compliance with all applicable standards. Some accreditation authorities also interview elected officials and schedule a hearing where the public is invited to comment on the agency's performance. The assessors will provide the agency with a verbal report at the end of the visit followed by a complete written report of their on-site evaluation. If compliance issues remain unresolved, the agency may return to the self-assessment phase to complete unfinished work.

Maintaining Compliance and Re-accreditation Phase

Accreditation is for a period of three years. To maintain accredited status, the agency must submit an annual report to the accreditation authority attesting to continued compliance and reporting changes or difficulties experienced during the year. Before the end of the three-year period, the agency must apply to have its accreditation renewed. The accreditation authority will conduct another on-site assessment to confirm the agency's continued compliance.



Benefits Of Accreditation

Stronger defense against lawsuits and citizen complaints: Accredited agencies are better able to defend themselves against lawsuits and citizen complaints. Many agencies report a decline in legal actions once they become accredited.

Strong support from government officials: Accreditation provides objective evidence of an agency's commitment to excellence in leadership, resource management, and service-delivery. Government officials are more confident in the agency's ability to operate efficiently and meet community needs.

Increased community advocacy: Accreditation embodies the precepts of community-oriented policing. It creates a forum in which police and citizens work together to prevent and control challenges confronting law enforcement and provides clear direction about community expectations.

Greater accountability within the agency: Accreditation standards give the chief a proven management system of written directives, sound training, clearly defined lines of authority, and routine reports that support decision-making and resource allocation.

Job Satisfaction: Officers in accredited agencies are able to take pride that they have been objectively recognized for their professionalism and adherence to the highest standards.

Lower insurance costs: Accredited status often results in lower premiums. Research has shown that accredited agencies experience significantly fewer liability and worker's compensation claims. Check with the municipality's joint insurance fund (JIF) or insurer to determine the discounts available to accredited law enforcement agencies.

Acknowledgement

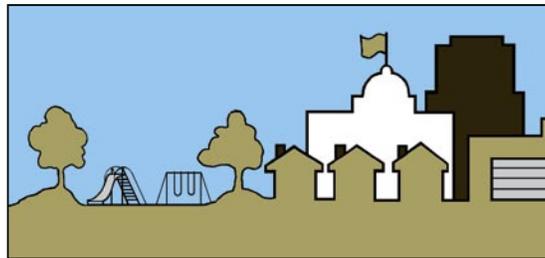
The Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund has prepared this issue of Community Safety Leadership with the assistance and cooperation of the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police. It also draws upon publications and websites of the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police and the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc.

Nine Easy Ways To Make Safety a Priority

Your municipality can reduce its accident rate by:

- Requiring that a formal safety program be in place and that its status be a recurring item on the governing body's regular workshop agenda;
- Committing to making municipal safety - for both residents and workers - a priority;
- Comparing your safety record to other towns;
- Determining how your safety program is structured and how it can be improved;
- Tracking your safety record to see if it's improving;
- Requiring monthly meetings of your community safety committee, focusing on public safety as well as municipal employee safety;
- Publishing the safety committee's minutes and distributing them to the governing body;
- Communicating potential hazards with your work force and encouraging them to share this information with you as well;
- Having a mechanism in place for employees and residents to report unsafe conditions and a procedure for remedying them on a priority basis.

If you want to serve on the steering committee or have questions regarding the CSL Program or suggestions for improving it, please contact us at (201) 587-0555.



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Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund

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