

TPCAF ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

Getting Started ([getting-started-with-accreditation](#))

What is the Law Enforcement Agency Best Practices Accreditation Program?

The Law Enforcement Accreditation Program is a voluntary process where police agencies in Texas prove their compliance with 170 Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices. These Best Practices were carefully developed by Texas Law Enforcement professionals to assist agencies in the efficient and effective delivery of service, the reduction of risk and the protection of individual's rights.

While similar in nature to the national accreditation program, the Best Practices Accreditation Program is easier to administer, lower in cost and is designed specifically for Texas Law Enforcement. The Texas Legislature demands a great deal of professional law enforcement in Texas and the Best Practices were specifically designed to aid Texas agencies in meeting those demands and providing the best quality of service to the people of our State.

Since its inception in 2006, over 200 Texas Law Enforcement Agencies have been Accredited and many more are currently in the process to become Accredited Agencies. While members of the Texas Police Chiefs Association recognize and support the national accreditation program, The Texas Best Practices Accreditation Program has clearly become the new Gold Standard for Texas Law Enforcement!

How were these Best Practices developed?

A Committee of Chiefs of Police and Command level officers from across Texas assisted in the development of standards that were believed to be necessary for proper functioning of Texas

law enforcement agencies. They reviewed Texas law and other State Accreditation Program standards to determine which were most appropriate.

An appointed Committee of professional Police Chiefs from across the state then reviewed these standards and approved them for testing. The standards were then tested by several Texas agencies and adjusted to be both appropriate and achievable. That same Committee of nine Police Chiefs now conducts the final review of an agency's efforts and awards "Accredited" status in addition to conducting an annual review of the Best Practices for additions and modifications.

What do the Standards look like?

Below are some examples of the Texas Best Practices:

1.04 Written System of Agency Directives

The agency has a written directive system in place that includes all agency policies, procedures, and practices. The written directive system must:

1. Be numbered and organized in a manner that allows numerical reference.
2. Require a periodic review and updating of directives to include that all directives are in accordance with applicable Texas law.
3. Require directives and updates be made available to, and reviewed by, all affected agency personnel in a manner designated by the Agency Director.
4. Require maintenance of documentation proving receipt of directives by agency personnel in a manner designated by the Agency Director.

1.09 Sworn Personnel Basic License

The Agency has a written directive that requires personnel holds a Texas Peace Officer license before performing law enforcement duties.

2.04 Internal Investigations

The Agency has a written directive on how to receive, investigate, and conclude complaints against employees. Sustained complaints must be based on facts determined during the investigation.

2.11 Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment

The Agency has a written directive that prohibits sexual or other unlawful harassment. The written directive must provide for reporting procedures that include when it is appropriate to make a report outside the chain of command or outside the Agency. The agency must provide training to all personnel.

2.14 Truthful

The Agency has a written directive requiring all employees to be truthful in all official verbal and written communications and reports. Employees will be truthful in any court-related testimony or agency investigations.

3.02 Use of Deadly Force Training

The agency has a written directive on training its sworn personnel at least annually in the proper use of deadly force and the use of any firearm used in the course of law enforcement duties.

4.05 Off-Duty Employment

The Agency has a written directive that specifies the criteria for off duty employment. The Directive must:

1. Address who is authorized to work off duty employment.
2. State the types of employment prohibited by the agency.
3. Include the approval procedure for off-duty employment.

6.01 Authorization to Use Force

The Agency has a written directive that authorizes designated employees to use only the level of physical force that is necessary and reasonable to achieve the desired legal objective.

6.02 Authorization of Deadly Force

The Agency has a written directive that authorizes police officers to use deadly force when the officer reasonably believes that his/her life is in immediate danger of death or serious bodily injury or a third person is in immediate danger of death or serious bodily injury.

6.03 Use of Force Documentation and Review

The Agency has a written directive requiring completion of a specific administrative form for this purpose only to document the use of force by agency personnel, including a review process of each incident by supervisory personnel. The form may be electronic or paper and the format will be designated by the agency.

7.13 Vehicle Pursuits

The Agency has a written directive for vehicle pursuits. The written directive includes:

1. The criteria for initiating a pursuit
2. The method of conducting a pursuit.
3. The supervision of a pursuit.
4. The criteria for terminating vehicle pursuits.

The Department also trains appropriate personnel in the pursuit policy.

7.14 Pursuit Documentation

The Agency has a written directive that requires a pursuit report to be completed after each pursuit. The report is forwarded through the chain of command to the Agency Director or designee. The Pursuit report will document at a minimum:

1. The reasons for the pursuit.
2. The personnel involved.
3. The result of the pursuit.
4. Any injury or damage.
5. Any other significant events that occurred.

An annual report of agency pursuits is prepared for the Agency Director.

8.01 Barricaded Suspect and/or Hostage Incidents

The Agency has a written directive instructing personnel how to respond to a barricaded suspect or hostage incident which includes:

1. Responding to the scene.
2. Determining the nature of the event and securing the scene.
3. Calling appropriate assistance and/or supervision.
4. Evacuating or protecting bystanders.

10.01 Searching and Transport (E)

The Agency has a written directive addressing searching and transporting adult prisoners. The written directive includes at a minimum:

1. That all adult arrested persons be searched before any transport.
2. The approved methods of how to safely transport arrested persons.
3. Methods or actions for transporting sick, injured, or disabled arrested persons.
4. Search of the transporting vehicle before and after the transport.
5. The proper use of any restraining devices.
6. Monitoring of the prisoner to avoid medical difficulties.

Training of agency personnel in searching and transportation of prisoners is also required.

12.08 Inventory of Property/Evidence

The Agency has a written directive requiring a sampling of individual items stored in the property and evidence area at least annually, and when a new person is assigned who is in direct control of the property/evidence function. Any sample should include an adequate number of items to determine the overall accountability and integrity of the inventory system.

How do you become "Accredited?"

An agency that has been awarded “Accredited” status has undertaken a careful internal review of its policies, procedures, equipment, facilities, and operations. Most agencies find that some adjustment and revisions of their policies and procedures may be necessary. The agency then submits proof of their compliance with the standards (usually electronically) to independent assessors. After an independent review of their written documents and proofs, a team of assessors is sent to the agency to review their operations and facilities, and to interview the Department’s staff. A Final Report outlining the findings is sent to the Accreditation Committee. The Committee reviews the findings and votes whether or not to award “Accredited” status.

How long are you “Accredited?”

The “Accredited” status is awarded for a four year period. During the four year period, the agency must submit an annual report and show continuing compliance with several performance-related standards. These are reviewed as they are received and compliance verified. During the last year of the period, the agency must prepare updated documentation on all Best Practices and another on-site review is conducted. The Accreditation Committee must then vote again to approve “Accredited” status for the next four years. If the agency does not submit the required annual proofs, or if there is an indication received by the Committee that the agency is not in compliance during the period, the Committee may vote to remove “Accredited” status. The Texas Police Chiefs Association Foundation has contracted with an outside group to manage the accreditation process and ensure integrity and accountability.

The Standards Manual is available by emailing Chief Kevin Lunsford (Ret.), Accreditation Program Director, at klunsford@texaspolicechiefs.org (<mailto:klunsford@texaspolicechiefs.org>).

Unlike other programs, The Texas Police Chiefs Association does not charge for copies of any program materials. If your agency is unable to participate due to funding, you are encouraged to use

the standards without joining the program in order to make your department better.

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