

In early 1990, the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office began pursuing the idea of law enforcement accreditation. This was to be an aggressive endeavor to bring the operations, policies and procedures of the office up to the standards outlined by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). In order to accomplish the task, it was important that all members of the department could understand the benefits associated with the award of accreditation and also to participate in the transformation that was to take place over the next few years in preparation for task.

Key Benefits to Accreditation for the Agency

- **Great accountability within the agency.** CALEA Standards give the Chief Executive Officer a proven management system of written directives, sound training, clearly defined lines of authority and routine reports that support decision-making and resource allocation.
- **Reduced risk and liability exposure.** Many agencies report a reduction in their liability insurance costs and/or reimbursement of accreditation fees.
- **Stronger defense against civil lawsuits.** Accredited agencies are better able to defend themselves against civil lawsuits. Also, many agencies report a decline in legal actions against them, once they become accredited.
- **Staunch support from government officials.** Accreditation provides objective evidence of an agency's commitment to excellence in leadership, resourced management, and service-delivery. Thus, 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 law enforcement agencies and citizens work together to prevent and control challenges confronting law enforcement and provides clear direction about community expectations.

Key Benefits to Accreditation for the Community

Those men and women who are dedicated to public service and safety for their citizens also recognized the importance of accreditation on their community. It increases the law enforcement agency's ability to prevent and control crime through more effective and efficient delivery of law enforcement services to the community it serves. Accreditation enhances community understanding of the agency along with its goals and objectives. It works in conjunction with the philosophy of community policing committing the agency to a broad range of programs, such as crime prevention, that directly benefits the public. Finally, accreditation helps to create a forum in which police and citizens can work together to control and prevent crime.

Key Benefits to the Sheriff

The Sheriff of Winnebago County is ultimately responsible for the law enforcement activities of his officers and is accountable to the citizens in his jurisdiction that expect and deserve quality law enforcement services. Accreditation increases cooperation and coordination with other law enforcement agencies and other branches of the criminal justice system that work directly with the Sheriff in accomplishing common goals.

The accreditation process requires an in-depth review of every aspect of the agency's organization, management, operations and administration to include:

- Establishment of agency goals and objectives with provisions for periodic updating;
- Re-evaluation of whether agency resources are being used in accord with agency goals, objectives and mission;
- Re-evaluation of agency policies and procedures, especially as documented in the agency's written directive system;
- Correction of internal deficiencies and inefficiencies before they become public problems;

Accreditation provides the agencies with objective measures to justify decisions related to budget requests and personnel policies and serves as a yardstick to measure the effectiveness of its programs and services. It streamlines operations, providing more consistency and more effective deployment of agency manpower.

A DECISION TO MOVE FORWARD

After a thorough review and analysis of the benefits of accreditation and receiving the support of governing bodies, the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office began its aggressive schedule to revamp its agency to meet accreditation standards.

The First On-site Process – January, 1994

The Sheriff's Office experienced its first on-site inspection by a team of assessors provided by CALEA. Those assessors were Captain Martin F. Stephens, Marion County Sheriff's Office, Ocala, Florida, Sheriff John R. Isom, Loudoun County Sheriff, Leesburg, Virginia and Captain Lucy V. Zastrow of the Durham County Sheriff's Office in Durham, North Carolina. The on-site dates were from January 22 through January 27, 1994. Inspections were made of squad cars, specialty vehicles and specific equipment. In addition, an intense review of policies and procedures monopolized most of the assessor's time. Proof of compliance were required as samples to specific policies showing that those policies were, in fact, being followed and statistics relative to some operational needs were being kept. Assessors also found time to tour the Sheriff's jurisdiction, meet with public officials and conduct a public hearing for interested citizens.

Following this process, Sheriff Donald J. Gasparini, Chief Deputy Richard Meyers, Deputy Chief Larry Schultz and Lt. Gary Maitland traveled to New York, New York for their first time experience in front of the CALEA panel of Commissioners. The Commissioner Beverly Harvard, Police Chief of Atlanta, participated in the panel.

Following the hearing, the Sheriff's Office was notified that it successfully earned the honor of becoming the 295th Accredited Law Enforcement Agency in the country in January of 1994.



Accreditation Becomes A Commitment

Following the first successful audit, the Sheriff's Office embarked upon its permanent commitment to the accreditation process. For future audits, the agency was armed with not only the experience of running a new accredited agency, but the fundamental practices that were now in place. What was needed between the success of the first audit and the anticipated future on-site inspections was a dedication to the upkeep and monitoring of the agency's activities to maintain the integrity of the accreditation award.

Between 1994 and 1999, Sheriff's personnel worked regularly to ensure that the accreditation guidelines were being met. It was important to monitor any agency operational changes and how they might affect accreditation status and that those changes followed CALEA guidelines. Training of personnel, upkeep of equipment and day to day operations of the Sheriff's Office were all touched by accreditation standards. After all, it would only be five short years before another on-site would be conducted by CALEA.

The Second On-Site Process- January, 1999

The second on-site was conducted January 24-27, 1999. Assessors included Chief William Dean, Gwinnet County Police Department, Georgia; Commander Dennis Schueller, Alameda County Sheriff's Department, California; and Sgt. Robert Mobley of the Lee County Port Authority Police Department, Florida. Again, a thorough inspection of the Sheriff's Office policies, procedures and operations was done. Similar tasks were

performed by the assessors as in 1994. This time, the accreditation hearing was conducted in Denver, Colorado, In place at the hearing were CALEA Commissioners William J. Buckner, City Manager, Marietta Georgia; Henry I. DeGeneste Sr., Vice President and Director of Corporate Security for Prudential Securities; Robert E. DeuPree, Chief of the Astoria, Oregon Police Department; and Patrick Oliver, Chief of Grandview Heights, Ohio Police Department. Once again, the Sheriff's Office was awarded accreditation status.

The Third On-Site Process – December, 2001 – ACCELERATED

From December 8 – 11, 2001, the Sheriff's Office hosted CALEA Assessors Captain Michael Peterson of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office, California and Lt. Randy Cripe, Elkart County Sheriff's Office, Indiana. The hearing was held in Jacksonville, Florida and was attended by the Sheriff, and two department accreditation managers. CALEA Commissioners conducted our third hearing included Pat Sullivan, Sheriff of Arapahoe County, Colorado; Phil Keith, Chief of the Knoxville Tennessee Police Department; Jack Bishop, Pope County Supervisor, Des Moines, Iowa and John Glover, Vice President of Corporate Security for Bristol-Myers Squibb Company.

This accreditation process was done on an "accelerated" schedule. The primary benefit of the accelerated on-site to the agency was the financial savings. The Sheriff's Office had undergone significant budget cuts over the previous two years and in order to maintain their accreditation status, the Sheriff opted to go through the inspection early in order to save dollars.

Accelerated on-site criteria includes:

- Unconditional accreditation award under the third edition Standards Manual;
- Prompt application for re-accreditation
- Timely and accurate submission of all annual reports;
- No major reorganization within the department during the accreditation period;
- No change in the Chief Executive Officer;
- Demonstrated active participation by the accreditation manager in a state or regional accreditation coalition and/or attendance at one or more Commission meetings per year by the Chief Executive Officer or accreditation manager;
- No unresolved internal/external complaints, including major incidents or allegations receiving significant media or public attention; and
- Successful Mock assessment of the agency.

In attendance at the hearings were Sheriff Richard Meyers, Accreditation Manager Earl Farmer and Detective Roland "Butch" KinCannon. The Sheriff's Office was able to meet

the specific criteria for an accelerated on-site. The third hearing resulted in the Sheriff's office continuing status as the 295th accredited law enforcement agency.



The Fourth On-Site Process –

From December 11 to December 15, 2004, the Sheriff's Office was exposed to its fourth on-site inspection. Assessors Major Harry T. Bootwright from the Charleston County Sheriff's Office, South Carolina, Lt. Gary Heller, University of Pennsylvania Police Department and Lt. Vincent Dauro, Huntsville, Alabama Police Department, conducted the review. The hearing location was in Birmingham, Alabama. CALEA Commissioners Ted Kamatchus, Lou Dekmar and Patricia Ticer conducted the hearing. Attending the agency's fourth hearing were Sheriff Richard Meyers, Deputy Chief Donald Gasparini and Lt. Brad Fitz.



The Fifth On-site Process – August 11 – 15, 2007

During the time period August 11 through August 15, 2007, the Sheriff's Office once again participated in the process that would allow it to maintain its status as an accredited law enforcement agency. This on-site would be different from the others in that it would be the first conducted in the new Criminal Justice Center. The Sheriff's Office law enforcement operations moved into the new complex in May of 2007. The move from its previous space into the newly designed facility proved challenging. Internal procedures had changed with the new layout and policies were re-written to accommodate operational adjustments. Deputy Chief Donald Gasparini, serving as the agency's accreditation manager, along with Sgt. Mike Schneider and office support staff, diligently worked to ensure that the new building concept and operations were conducive to the expectations of the accreditation guidelines.

Assessors arrived on August 11, 2007. They were Major Russell Jamerson of the Washington County Sheriff's Office, Tennessee, Colonel Dennis Nelson, Forsyth County Georgia Sheriff's Office and Captain Brian Masterson of the Alameda County Sheriff's office, California.

The accreditation hearing location was held at Colorado Springs, Colorado. CALEA Commissioners included Louis Dekmar, DeWade Langley and Theron Bowman.

The Sheriff's Office was successful in its most recent bid for re-accreditation status. Attending from the Sheriff's Office were Sheriff Richard Meyers, Chief Deputy Kurt Ditzler, Deputy Chief Donald Gasparini, Jr. and Deputy Michael Schneider.



THE FUTURE

The next accreditation on-site inspection is scheduled for December, 2010. At that time, *the Sheriff's Office will receive the Egon Bittner Award*. This award is presented to Chief Executive Officers who have commanded a CALEA Accredited Agency for fifteen or more continuous years. It was created to recognize these leaders for their significant contributions to the public safety profession and the CALEA.

The Sheriff's Office will remain committed to securing its stand in the law enforcement community as the 295th accredited law enforcement agency. Through experience, the Sheriff's Office has found that the morale of its agency is enhanced by increasing the employee's confidence in the effectiveness and efficiency of their own agency. This is a benefit often cited by CALEA.

Accreditation is an award that symbolizes the commitment, dedication and long term goals and objectives of an agency. It reflects in an agency's professionalism and competence.

*Resource: CALEA ON-LINE
Commission on Accreditation
Winnebago County Sheriff*