

**WHAT WILL THE SCOPE OF FIELD TRAINING
PROGRAMS BE BY THE YEAR 2002?**

JOURNAL ARTICLE

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This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future--creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

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INTRODUCTION

There are over 17,000 publicly funded local police departments, 3,100 county sheriff's departments and 1,250 state and federal police agencies enforcing government laws in the United States. These agencies employ over 600,000 sworn peace officers, each of whom participate in an initial on-the-job training program.¹

The importance of initial on-the-job training, commonly referred to as field training, was recognized in 1977 when the International City Management Association stated:

Probably nothing else has a greater impact on the newly hired police officer than the content and conduct of recruit training. Not only will the new employee be provided with the information and experience needed to perform in a competent manner, but he or she will also acquire a frame of reference for the philosophy and work structures, formal and informal, as they exist in the organization.²

This sentiment was echoed in the Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department (Christopher Commission) Report in 1991 when it stated:

The FTO guides new officers' first contact with citizens and with "the streets," and has the primary responsibility for introducing these probationers to the culture and traditions of the Department. FTOs thus have enormous influence over the development of new officers' skills, work habits and attitudes.³

Historically, the term field training referred to initial on-the-job training which new police officers received upon completion of

their basic training academy. The term field training as discussed in this article, however, refers to all training conducted in a field environment by a qualified Field Training Officer.

The face of California is changing. It is estimated that every 24 hours, just over 2,000 people are added to the state's population. Half are babies, the other half immigrants. At the same time, California is losing more residents to other states than it is gaining.⁴

Only thirteen percent of today's work force comes from non-white or non-native-born segments of society. In the next eleven years, the non-white or non-native-born will comprise forty-three percent of new entrants into the work force.⁵ The American work force is becoming more female, more Black, more Hispanic, and more Asian.⁶ Field training programs, in order to provide quality service to the community, will be required to offer enhanced training and guidance. This training will empower officers and provide them the tools to accomplish the goal of enhanced service to the community.

California is heading toward a two-tier society. California State University at Long Beach's Charles Moble, professor of political science and an expert on political economy, sees a shrinking middle class. One segment will be moving up, particularly families with two well-educated wage earners, and a much larger segment will be

moving down to lower paid jobs and more part-time work. The latter group is more likely to be people of color, women and single parents.⁷ Children appear to be affected the most by this trend. A report by Children Now states that "34.4. percent of the children living in San Francisco, 31.6 percent in East Lost Angeles....and 27.8 percent in Los Angeles, are living in poverty."⁸

As cost-cutting throughout government forces cutbacks in services, including reductions in police funding, public pressure for more effective service is growing.⁹ Stephen Covey, in his book Principle-Centered Leadership, addressed the issue of Total Quality when he stated:

The movement toward Total Quality as the operating model for businesses large and small, manufacturing and service industries alike, is increasing at an exponential rate because quality is widely seen as the key to American economic survival and success.¹⁰

Today, citizens expect far more of police agencies than simply the delivery of protective services. Professional police behavior, respectful treatment, maintenance of human dignity, responsiveness, and value added to life, are all areas of concern and interests.¹¹ It is apparent that a positive public perception of law enforcement officers is essential for officers to adequately perform their job.¹² The systematic shifting of public perception, and the self-image of police themselves from "crime fighter" to "social engineer," is occurring.¹³ Community oriented policing is a natural outcome of this evolution.

Accompanying the rapid social changes occurring in society, is the overwhelming technological advances increasing in pace each year. The changing social and technological environment will lead to new definitions of crime and new challenges for the criminal justice system. As technology changes, new crimes and new methods of combating crime will emerge.¹⁴

The rapid social, technological and economic changes in society will continue unabated in the future. In order for law enforcement to respond to the wants and needs of society, police officers of the future must be highly trained. The most important training that these officers will undergo will be initial field training. The importance of field training to the success of the new officer and to the organization will be even more important in the future.

For these reasons, a State of California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training Command College study was undertaken on this most important topic. For the purpose of this project and subject, an issue statement was developed. **"What will the scope of Field Training Programs be by the year 2002?"** is one of the most crucial issues affecting law enforcement in the future.

In exploring the subject of field training, several important sub-issues were identified. The first sub-issue, **"What will the selection criteria be for field training officers?"** is the most significant. Field Training Officers should be the "cream of the

crop" and not selected based primarily on tenure alone. Tenure is important, but there are many other areas that need to be scrutinized before an FTO is selected.¹⁵ Leadership, desire and commitment are a few of the qualities that good FTOs possess.

"What should the subject content be for field training programs to best fit the needs of the community and agency?" was identified as the second sub-issue. This sub-issue explores the different dimensions of field training programs and how they will need to be modified in the future to best serve the employee, agency and public.

The third crucial sub-issue identified was, **"What structure will Field Training Programs need to take to accomplish their mission?"** Structure is the basic element needed to provide for a successful field training program. If field training programs should be structured around community oriented policing, how they will be monitored, and if they will be integrated in the basic training academy, are just some areas to be considered. Effective programs are fluid and must be adaptable to change as needed.

Given this background information, a study of the future needs of field training programs was undertaken. Future needs of law enforcement and society were examined to develop a preferred strategy for the future delivery of field training.

FINDINGS

To begin the process of identifying what the future may hold in store for field training programs, significant possible events and related trends were forecasted. The probability of each event and the level of each trend was also forecasted. The importance of forecasting possible events and their probability, as well as related trends and their level to assist in forecasting the possible future state of policing organizations and their field training program, is paramount.

These significant possible events and related trends are also vital in forecasting the future state of society. Since policing organizations do not operate in a vacuum, changes in society must be considered and anticipated. As the norms, values and customs of society changes, so must the norms, values and customs of policing agencies. Failure to adapt to changes in society will result in poor law enforcement services to the community.

When analyzing the significant possible events and the related trends, their relationship to each other must be considered as well as their effect on the policing organization and society. Two events identified, using a Nominal Group Technique (NGT) and a Modified Conventional Delphi Process, as having a possible significant impact on field training programs were: "Misdemeanor

crimes not prosecuted" and "Misdemeanor crimes decriminalized." The effect that these events may have on one another and in turn upon society and law enforcement field training programs, if they were to occur, are significant.

If, for example, misdemeanor crimes are not prosecuted, the probability of occurrence for misdemeanor crimes being decriminalized increases 100 percent. With the failure to prosecute misdemeanor offenders, the constitutional question arises as to whether an individual should be deprived of his or her freedom knowing that criminal prosecution will not occur. This constitutional issue will most likely become the posture of such groups as the American Civil Liberties Union. With court challenges and legislative lobbying, it is felt that the likelihood of decriminalization of misdemeanors under these circumstances is almost certain.

These two events also affect a related identified trend, "The level of public confidence in law enforcement." Frustration of the general public will increase as the option of arresting misdemeanor offenders is reduced or eliminated. The community will feel law enforcement is ineffective and that wrongdoers receive no punishment. This will result in a dramatic decrease in the confidence level of the public in law enforcement.

It is of utmost importance that law enforcement training programs, in particular field training programs, be future oriented and attempt to anticipate what the future may hold. Based on the forecasting of the possible future events and related trends, an analysis of the relationships between the possible events and related trends and how these relationships may affect society and law enforcement, a literature scan and discussions with experts in the field of law enforcement field training, several major policy considerations that may need to be addressed to move law enforcement field training into the 21st century have been identified. These policy considerations are:

1. Qualifications and selection criteria for field training officers.
2. Structure of field training programs.
3. Measurement standards for field training programs.
4. Field training officers and mentors.
5. Relationship between field training programs and advanced officer training.

Using a Strategic Planning Process which involved an Environmental Analysis, Organization Capability assessment, identification of stakeholders and their potential assumptions and through the use of a Modified Policy Delphi Panel, a preferred strategy for providing law enforcement field training by the year 2002 was developed.

PREFERRED STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING A COMPREHENSIVE FIELD TRAINING PROGRAM BY THE YEAR 2002

The preferred strategy broadens the scope of field training from its traditional role of providing only initial training to becoming involved in a mentoring program as well as advanced officer training. Field training will become a continuous process involving advising, coaching and training officers once they have completed their initial field training. The field training program will become a vehicle by which to expand department training and provide career development counseling. The field training program will be based on a Community Oriented Policing model.

Quality of training is primarily based on the knowledge, skills and abilities of the trainer. As trainers, Field Training Officers must be more than senior officers who have demonstrated competence in the performance of their duties. Therefore, selection criteria and the screening process is the most important step in developing a successful field training strategy by the year 2002.

As the roles of Field Training Officers expand to that of mentors and trainers for advanced officer training, selection criteria becomes much more important. Qualities such as patience, communication skills and organizational commitment are needed. The Field Training Officer must recognize the important of his/her role and, most importantly, feel they have the total support of the

organization. They must realize that their commitment to all employees in the department is ongoing and does not end after the initial training period.

As a result, training of field training personnel, whether sworn or non-sworn, is of utmost importance. Training must be ongoing and break away from the traditional mold. Training in mentoring, cultural diversity, Community Oriented Policing, and other specialized topics, is needed. Specific training in instructional techniques and how to effectively identify and deal with special learning problems is also needed. Law enforcement must begin using the successful techniques of education in field training programs.

As society has become more diverse, both in its ethnic makeup and its desires, the role of a peace officer has changed. To provide a global view of this role, it is necessary to have a wide scope of training officers (instructors) for officers participating in field training programs. It will no longer be acceptable for a trainee to have one or two field training officers during the course of his/her training. Use of such non-sworn positions as field evidence technicians, emergency services coordinators, volunteer coordinators and administrative personnel, will help provide this wide scope. Citizen volunteers within the community should also be integrated into the field training process and used for such special training as cultural diversity and language (basic Spanish, etc.).

The involvement of Field Training Officers in basic academy training should become mandatory. The use of Field Training Officers as instructors and evaluators at the academy allows for enhanced academy training while at the same time provides updates for the Field Training Officer. One of the primary advantages of this segment of the strategy is it allows for officers who are currently working in the field, to add reality to basic training. In far too many instances, academy staff and instructors have been removed from basic police work due to retirement or their position within the organization.

Field Training Officers have a vast knowledge of police work and training. Their knowledge, skills and abilities must continue to play an important role within the organization once their primary responsibility of training new officers has been fulfilled. Use of Field Training Officers as mentors will provide the continued coaching and assistance in career development for officers who have completed the initial field training program. Mentoring will allow for new, less experienced employees to have an avenue for assistance when needed and an in-place support system.

The use of Field Training Officers in advanced officer training will provide a new dimension to the field training program. One-on-one training, in a field environment, will be possible. Specific training, i.e. narcotic investigation, driving under the influence, and traffic collision investigation, would lend

themselves to such training. Advantages are cost effective training while maintaining personnel staffing levels.

To judge the success of any program, measurement standards must be developed. Such standards will allow monitoring of field training programs and allow for modification on an as needed basis. Areas that may be measured are: success rate of officers passing their probationary period; number of officer complaints; number of training problems identified once an officer has completed the field training program; and, amount of litigation resulting from police action. Additional measurement standards may be developed once this strategy is implemented.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Implementation of any new or enhanced program is unique to every organization. The successful implementation of a new or enhanced Field Training Program rests with how the plan is implemented within the organization. Stakeholders and their concerns must be identified. There are many groups and individuals who have an interest in the quality, content, and structure of law enforcement field training programs. Examples of such stakeholders are Police Officers Association, police officer trainees, and such civic groups as the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Critical individuals or organizations, who through their lack of

support may cause a project to fail, also must be identified. If the level of support of a member of this group must be changed, a strategy must be developed to insure proper positioning of the individual or group to achieve optimum effectiveness. Examples of individuals or groups who may fall into this category, as it relates to field training programs, may be the Police Chief or Sheriff, Field Training Officers, and the City Council.

It is suggested that the implementation process for the preferred strategy of providing law enforcement field training by the year 2002 be a five phase process. Improvements in law enforcement, as in most government agencies, is best accomplished only in relatively small increments. Striving for constant and continual improvement in incremental steps is a sure path to success.¹⁶ It is anticipated that the implementation process, outlined below, will take six to seven years to complete.

Phase One is the development of selection criteria and selection process for Field Training Officers. Teaching abilities, dedication, loyalty, desire, communication skills, and above average performance, are all critical attributes that must be considered.

Phase Two entails providing the necessary training to improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals selected as field training personnel.

Phase Three involves the mandatory involvement of field training personnel in the basic academy process.

Phase Four entails the Field Training Program becoming involved in Advanced Officer Training.

Phase Five entails the implementation of a mentoring program within the framework of the Field Training Program.

CONCLUSION

No matter what selection standards and qualifications are used to select police officers of the future, and no matter what the content and structure of basic training academies will be, one thing is definite...there will be a need for initial field training of novice police officers. This on-the-job training is needed to build upon what has been learned in the basic academy, and to instill organizational, cultural, norms, values, policies and procedures in new officers.

As society becomes more culturally diverse, with the rapid advances in technology, as economic restraints continue, and as the political process becomes more involved in policing activities, the officer of the future must adapt. Police agencies will continue to develop Community Oriented Policing models resulting in re-design of police structures as we know them today. In this change

process, the field training program will be the forerunner in instilling this new philosophy in officers.

The success of any organization or program lies in the selection of well qualified personnel. This sub-issue, above all others, is regarded as the most critical element of a successful field training program. Teaching abilities, dedication, loyalty, desire, communication skills and above average performance, were echoed by all as critical attributes of Field Training Officers.

To meet the needs of police officers, both novice and experienced, and the needs of policing agencies by the year 2002, subject content of field training programs was identified as an important sub-issue. Traditional field training programs deal with the training of novice police officers once they have completed their basic academy training. While this will continue to be the primary function of field training programs in the future, these programs must expand subject content to provide enhanced service to the community, agency and officer.

With proper selection requirements and procedures in place, and with enhanced training, Field Training Officers can fulfill other critical roles. As the fiscal health of the state, counties and cities continues to be precarious, new and innovative methods of training must be developed. One such method identified is use of Field Training Officers in Advanced Officer Training. One-on-one

advanced officer training conducted in a field setting has many advantages to the individual officer as well as the organization. One-on-one learning, which allows for immediate and direct feedback, will enhance training and will be cost effective for the organization, who will realize savings in both training time and expense. There are many obstacles to overcome in this area. These barriers must be addressed and eliminated in the transition from the current state of field training to the desired state by the year 2002.

The mentoring component of field training programs of the future is perhaps the most exciting addition. Mentoring is not a new concept. It was chronicled by Homer in the Odyssey around the year 1200 B.C. when he appointed a guardian to his household while he made ready to leave for the siege of Troy.¹⁷ Officers need direction and guidance throughout their careers, especially during their early years. This is usually provided by the first line supervisor. Through the use of Field Training Officers as mentors, this direction and guidance takes on a new dimension with peers acting as role models, coaches and advisors to less experienced officers. The complexity of the future will require such mentoring. Transition to a field training format which includes a mentoring component will require time, fiscal commitments, and above all, a desire on the part of the Field Training Officer.

To insure quality delivery of the various components of future

field training programs, there must be a structure in place which allows this to occur. Mandatory involvement in the basic training academy program is seen as essential. In the future, all Field Training Officers must be involved in academy instruction and evaluation to provide the needed continuity in training. Expertise levels are important in providing instruction. Through the use of sworn officers, non-sworn employees and citizen volunteers as instructors, learning can be greatly enhanced. Modification of current field training programs, to allow for such instruction, will take innovation and risk taking, but the outcome for the future is promising.

As law enforcement moves toward a Community Oriented Policing model, it will be necessary to organize field training programs to emphasize this concept. The role of police officers of the future must be that of problem-solvers...one who looks for the root cause of problems. Citizen expectation of police officers will demand such a role.

No program can be effective unless it contains a measurement component. Feedback is necessary and as law enforcement becomes more complex and demanding in the future, measurement standards must be developed to meet these needs. No program should ever be static, and a comprehensive measurement program will insure that field training programs will be fluid and adapt to the needs of the future as they change.

The answers to the sub-issues of selection, subject content and structure will define the path of the issue question, "What will the scope of field training programs be by the year 2002?" These sub-issues affect the issue question by addressing the major components of field training programs by the year 2002 as outlined in the preferred strategy. Selection of qualified Field Training Officers, subject content and structure of field training programs all must be studied and adapted to meet future needs of police officers, police organizations and society. The status quo is no longer acceptable. Field training programs must adapt to the future needs of society and become one of the leading programs in "Charting the Future" in law enforcement.

ENDNOTES

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