



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE SAN ANTONIO POLICE DEPARTMENT ACCREDITATION PROGRAM



➤ WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is a special status that is accorded to a law enforcement agency by the Commission on the Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). Accreditation in law enforcement is similar to accreditation of other fields i.e., hospitals, or colleges. It means the agency has met specific standards of excellence and operates according to norms established by international law enforcement practitioners.

➤ WHY ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is a self improvement process for law enforcement agencies. The purpose of accreditation is to provide law enforcement agencies the opportunity to demonstrate voluntarily that they meet nationally recognized practices of quality in the law enforcement field, while still maintaining local control. Accreditation compels an agency to operate within specific guidelines, thereby strengthening accountability throughout all levels of the agency. The CALEA accreditation process also acts as a valuable management tool, providing the necessary structure to continually promote the efficient use of resources and improve service delivery.

➤ WHAT IS CALEA?

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) is a nonprofit, non governmental organization headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia. CALEA was established in 1983 after four years of work by the following nationally recognized professional law enforcement organizations:

- ◆ The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
- ◆ The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
- ◆ the National Sheriff's Association (NSA)
- ◆ Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)

These four organizations received a \$1.5 million dollar federal grant in 1979 to set up the accreditation process and establish standards. In 1983, however, CALEA became a separate organization, independent from the 4 founding organizations, whose primary objective is the promotion of professionalism in law enforcement.

➤ WHO MAKES UP THE BOARD AND STAFF AT CALEA?

A Commission Board composed of 21 members governs CALEA. Eleven must be law enforcement practitioners; the balance is selected from the public and private sectors. Generally, they reflect a representation from local, state/provincial and international law enforcement and public safety organizations, along with business, academia, the judiciary, and state/provincial and local government. The Commissioners are appointed by the four founding law enforcement organizations, and serve without compensation. A paid staff, consisting mostly of retired law enforcement officers, conducts all daily administrative and operational duties.

➤ **HOW DOES AN AGENCY BECOME ACCREDITED?**

- ◆ Upon completion of an enrollment package from CALEA, including submission of application and payment, the agency is then entered into a binding agreement with CALEA to become accredited in no more than 36 months from the date of the agreement.
- ◆ The agency completes the self assessment phase of the process, which involves careful examination of existing agency policies to ensure compliance with CALEA standards.
- ◆ Once the self assessment phase is complete, an on site assessment of the department by CALEA assessors takes place.
- ◆ The on site assessment is submitted to the Commission for review and the decision on accreditation status is determined.
- ◆ Once accredited, compliance must be maintained and the agency must become reaccredited every 3 years.

➤ **WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF ACCREDITATION?**

- ◆ To increase a law enforcement agencies capabilities to prevent and control crime, and to enhance the safety of the agency personnel, as well as the community members.
- ◆ To increase departmental effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of law enforcement services.
- ◆ To increase cooperation and coordination with other law enforcement agencies and with other agencies within the criminal justice system.
- ◆ To increase citizen and employee confidence in the goals, objectives, policies, and practices of the department.

➤ **HOW LONG DOES THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS TAKE?**

To achieve accredited status, an agency must complete the accreditation process in 36 months or less.

➤ **WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION?**

Among the many benefits of accreditation, a few of the most prevalent are in regards to the following:

- ◆ **Lawsuits:** Maintaining accreditation assists with deterring frivolous lawsuits when attorneys are aware of our national accreditation status.
- ◆ **Contracts:** Accreditation ensures that what is in the collective bargaining agreement is being carried out in policy.
- ◆ **Training:** Accreditation provides training that protects the employee by requiring that the agency provide the necessary training for the weapons and tools used in the performance of duties.
- ◆ **Community:** Accreditation 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.

➤ **WHAT AREAS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT ARE COVERED BY ACCREDITATION STANDARDS?**

- ◆ The Law Enforcement Role.
- ◆ Law Enforcement Administration.
- ◆ Law Enforcement Operations.
- ◆ Law Enforcement Auxiliary and Technical Services.

➤ **WHAT IS AN ACCREDITATION MANAGER?**

The Accreditation Manager is an officer appointed by the Chief of Police to coordinate the accreditation process and to act as a liaison between the Department and CALEA.

➤ **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER ACCREDITATION?**

Once a department becomes accredited, it maintains this status by remaining in compliance with the standards. To ascertain that a department remains in compliance, CALEA requires two things:

- ◆ The department must submit annual progress and compliance report(s).
- ◆ The department must undergo a reassessment every 3 years.

➤ **HOW MANY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ARE ACCREDITED?**

There are currently 581 law enforcement agencies accredited throughout the United States.