



# Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police Oklahoma Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation and Professional Standards Program



## ***ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW***

The Oklahoma Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation and Professional Standards Program is intended to provide law enforcement agencies of this State with an avenue for demonstrating that they meet commonly accepted minimum standards and best practices for efficient and effective operations.

Law enforcement executives who seek accreditation under this program will have every phase of their agency's operations scrutinized. They will make conscious decisions about policies and procedures, will have implemented those policies, and thoroughly trained their employees in their use.

Other disciplines such as medical and education accreditation programs served as the concept for law enforcement accreditation. As with those widely accepted programs, law enforcement accredited agencies must meet or exceed an established set of professional standards and best practices.

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## ***THE CONCEPT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT ACCREDITATION***

The concept of law enforcement accreditation began in the 1970's when the need to upgrade the profession's public image was apparent. The goal was to instill "professionalism" into every phase of police service.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) sought Federal funding to explore and implement a program of national accreditation. Borrowing heavily on the experience of other disciplines, the original standards were developed by IACP, the National Sheriffs Association (NSA), National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). The project was subsequently transferred to the newly established Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA).

Although law enforcement accreditation gained ground under CALEA, the cost for many agencies was prohibitive. As a result, several states responded by launching their own law enforcement accreditation programs. The first state to adopt their own program was New York, followed by numerous other states including Oklahoma. The state programs have been successful in developing exceptional programs while keeping the cost within reach of almost every agency.

### **Oklahoma Implements Law Enforcement Accreditation**

In July 1996, the Oklahoma District Attorneys' Council awarded a grant to the Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) to implement an Oklahoma Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation and Professional Standards Program. A fourteen member Oklahoma Professional Standards Committee was formed to select appropriate standards. The Committee included representatives of OACP, state, county and municipal law enforcement, municipal assurance attorneys and a Fraternal Order of Police representative.

Oklahoma law enforcement accreditation received another boost in 2007 with the passage of key legislation that increases the number of CLEET Council members. One of the new positions on the Council includes a member that represents the establishment of law enforcement accreditation standards and training programs.

### **The Oklahoma Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission (OLEAC)**

In 2001, the OACP Executive Board established an informal Professional Standards Commission to support growth and enhancement of the accreditation program and to train assessors and agency accreditation managers. In June 2004, the OACP Executive Board responded to a recommendation to formalize the Commission by adapting By-Laws and increasing the number of Commissioners from four to nine members, with one, two and three year terms to ensure orderly rotation. The By-Laws of the newly formed OLEAC and recommended changes were approved by the OACP Executive Board in August 2004.

### The Oklahoma Police Accreditation Coalition (OPAC)

The OLEAC By-Laws included a provision for an Oklahoma Police Accreditation Coalition (OPAC), an informal association of individuals involved in one stage or another of their agency's accreditation process. The members are appointed by the Chief Law Enforcement Officer (CLEO) of each eligible agency. The intention is for appointees to be individuals who have demonstrated support for the accreditation program by acting as agency accreditation managers, assessors or expressing a sincere desire to become knowledgeable about law enforcement accreditation. Additionally, others who have demonstrated knowledge relating to law enforcement accreditation and a desire to promote the program objectives may be appointed to the Coalition as at-large members.

There is no membership fee and the Coalition meets monthly in conjunction with the Commission. Although Coalition members are encouraged to participate on ad-hoc accreditation committees and contribute in open discussion regarding accreditation issues, they are a non-voting body.

### ***BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION***

#### *Benefits to the Community*

Accreditation 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 law enforcement agency and its role in the community as well as its goals and objectives. Citizen confidence in the policies and practices of the agency is increased. Accreditation, in conjunction with the philosophy of community policing, commits the agency to a broad range of programs (such as crime prevention) that directly benefit the public. Accreditation creates a forum in which police and citizens work together to control and prevent crime. This partnership will help citizens to understand the challenges that confront law enforcement. Law enforcement will, in turn, receive clear direction from the community about its expectations. Thus, a common set of goals and objectives will be arrived at and implemented.

#### *Benefits to the Chief or Sheriff*

Increases cooperation and coordination with other law enforcement agencies and other branches of the criminal justice system.

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;
- The opportunity to re-organize without the appearance of personal attacks.

The accreditation standards provide norms against which agency performance can be measured and monitored over time.

Accreditation provides the agency with a continuous flow of Commission distributed information about exemplary policies, procedures, and projects.

Accreditation provides objective measures to justify decisions related to budget requests and personnel policies.

Accreditation serves as a yardstick to measure the effectiveness of the agency's programs and services. The services provided are defined, and uniformity of service is assured.

Accreditation streamlines operations, providing more consistency and more effective deployment of agency manpower.

### *Benefits to the Officers*

Accreditation requires that agency policies and procedures are in written form and are available to all agency personnel at all times.

Accreditation assures employees that every aspect of the agency's personnel system is in accord with professional standards, and that the system is both fair and equitable.

The agency is compelled to operate within specific guidelines. It is accountable to the Commission. The agency must stay in compliance with the standards set forth by the Commission in order to retain its accreditation. The morale of the agency is enhanced by increasing the employees' confidence in the effectiveness and efficiency of their own agency. Operations become more streamlined and consistent.

Accreditation policies address officer safety issues and provide for adequate training and equipment of the officers.

Accreditation is a coveted award that symbolizes professionalism, excellence, and competence. Employees will take pride in their agency, knowing that it represents the very best in law enforcement

## ***PROGRAMS WITHIN THE PROGRAM***

We understand that every agency may not have the resources to attain accreditation. At the same time it is imperative that every agency adopt and implement certain directives to help protect the agency and its officers from litigation. With this in mind, the Program offers Certification Level I and Level II in addition to full Accreditation.

### What is Certification Level I ?

The Level I Certification program is designed to encourage smaller agencies to adopt and implement certain critical written directives. The Level I program encompasses approximately 23 standards that address the following high liability issues:

- ◆ Use of force
- ◆ Emergency vehicle operation
- ◆ Search and seizure
- ◆ Care and custody of prisoners
- ◆ Domestic violence
- ◆ Off-duty or secondary employment
- ◆ Selection and hiring
- ◆ Harassment
- ◆ Evidence and property control
- ◆ Complaints against agency employees
- ◆ High risk warrant service
- ◆ Dealing with the mentally ill

### What is Certification Level II ?

The Level II Certification program adds a second tier of professional standards to those in Level I. Agencies who attain Level I are encouraged to strive for the Level II Certification. Ideally, Certification Levels I and II could be steps toward attaining Accreditation.

The Level II program is comprised of approximately 86 standards that address the Level I standards plus selected standards dealing with:

- ◆ Law enforcement authority and management
- ◆ Records management
- ◆ Traffic control
- ◆ Victim and witness services
- ◆ Compensation and benefits
- ◆ Discipline
- ◆ Training

Certification status represents a significant professional achievement and acknowledges the implementation of written directives that are conceptually sound and operationally effective.

### What is Accreditation ?

Accreditation is the process in which the agency meets all standards prescribed in both Certification Programs and about 80 additional standards prescribed by The Oklahoma Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation and Professional Standards Program.

## ***THE OKLAHOMA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS***

### ***Developing the Standards***

Professional standards are specific requirements that must be met by an organization and its members through recognition of, and compliance with, written directives, policies, procedures and practices designed to support desirable professional objectives. A committee established by the OACP Executive Board was charged with developing the law enforcement accreditation standards for Oklahoma. That committee considered and adopted many standards from other accrediting entities.

These accreditation and certification are grouped into three major areas:

- Administration (ADM)
- Operations (OPR)
- Personnel (PER)

The committee submitted the standards and program operation plan to the OACP Executive Board for consideration. The OACP Executive Board quickly adopted the recommendation and the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Accreditation Program was officially launched.

Three new standards were added in 2005 regarding disposition of evidence, agency computers, electronic and wireless messaging. This addition brings the number of standards to 194.

In 2005, The Oklahoma Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission recognized that some law enforcement agencies are often not able to achieve accreditation due to a lack of financial or other resources. The Commission examined the 194 accreditation standards and identified 93 standards as essential for the development of professional law enforcement agencies in Oklahoma. The Commission recommended that a certification program be created utilizing the 93 essential standards as criteria for certification. The OACP Executive Board approved the “Certified Agency Program” in December 2005.

With the intention of providing even more options for smaller agencies, the OACP Executive Board adopted the recommendation of the Commission in June 2007 to include a second tier of certification. This new level of certification is based on very fundamental standards that every law enforcement agency, regardless of size, should subscribe to.

### ***New and Revised Standards***

From time to time, The Oklahoma Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission will consider new or revised standards due to legislation, legal or best practice resolutions. With a majority vote in favor, the new or revised standards are forwarded to the OACP Executive Board for approval.

## ***FEES***

### *Program fees*

Program fees are based on the total number of full time equivalent (FTE) commissioned and civilian personnel authorized for the candidate agency. These are program fees only and do not include lodging and per diem costs for the assessors who conduct the site visit.

The Initial Enrollment Fee may be paid in a lump sum or in three equal installments. If paid in installments, the first third is due when the Participation Agreement is submitted. The subsequent installments are due prior to the site visit.

The Annual Renewal Fee is due the on the first and second award dates with the Annual Compliance Report. The third year Annual Renewal Fee is due prior to the re-assessment site visit.

Requests for payment extensions must be submitted and approved prior to due dates. Failure to pay the second installment of the Initial Enrollment Fee or the Annual Renewal Fee without approval may result in termination of the process and forfeiture of funds paid.

<b>Number of Authorized FTE Personnel</b>	<b>Certification Level I</b>		<b>Certification Level II</b>		<b>Accreditation</b>	
	<b>Initial Enrollment Fee</b>	<b>Annual Renewal Fee</b>	<b>Initial Enrollment Fee</b>	<b>Annual Renewal Fee</b>	<b>Initial Enrollment Fee</b>	<b>Annual Renewal Fee</b>
1 – 9	\$300	\$67.00	\$400	\$100	\$500	\$115
10 – 19	\$600	\$140	\$750	\$175	\$1000	\$250
20 – 29	\$900	\$215	\$1100	\$260	\$1500	\$335
30 – 49	\$1100	\$250	\$1500	\$335	\$2000	\$465
50 – 99			\$1900	\$435	\$2500	\$585
100 – 300			\$2200	\$500	\$3000	\$700
301 +					\$3600	\$835

If an agency attains Certification and applies for an advanced level, the fee will be prorated.

The fees include:

1. Access to all accreditation/certifications documents and forms
2. Written directive support
3. Accreditation or certification credentials for agencies that successfully complete the process
4. Reasonable on-site assistance

The accreditation/certification process is time consuming and labor intensive. It is highly recommended that the agency NOT complete and submit the Accreditation Participation Agreement until the agency accreditation manager has attended a few coalition meetings and interacted with other experienced agency accreditation managers. This will afford him/her the opportunity to understand and evaluate the time and resources necessary to complete the process.

The agency must successfully complete an on-site assessment every third year within thirty (30) days of the anniversary.

The on-site assessment team usually consists of two or three assessors, depending on the size of the agency. Although the assessors are non-paid volunteers, the agency seeking accreditation is responsible for lodging, meals, travel expenses (if any), and incidental expenses related to the assessment process incurred by the assessors.

#### *OACP Membership*

Candidate Agency CLEO must maintain active membership in the OACP to be eligible for accreditation program participation.

## ***THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS***

The accreditation and certification process entails four phases beginning with the initial application to the final review and decision for Award of Accreditation or OLEA Certification. The four phases are application, self assessment, on-site assessment, and decision.

#### *Application*

The accreditation or certification process begins when an agency requests information from the OACP Accreditation Program Manager regarding the program. All program forms and standards are available on the OACP website under the Accreditation tab.

#### *Self Assessment*

The agency seeking accreditation or certification initiates a self assessment to determine compliance with the standards. Assuming the agency seeking accreditation /certification decides to proceed with the process, it will ensure compliance with the standards using the completed

standard file folders and contents as proof of compliance.

The agency seeking accreditation or certification may apply for a waiver of standards that may not be applicable. Waivers, however, will not be granted for economic reasons or the agency's inability to fund or permit a required change.

The OACP Accreditation Program Manager will tentatively grant or deny the waiver and notify agency seeking accreditation or certification of the decision. The decision of the OACP Accreditation Program Manager is tentative as the on-site assessment team may recommend reversal of the decision if sufficient supporting evidence exists.

The agency seeking accreditation or certification will be given the opportunity to comply with the standard in question during the on-site assessment. Otherwise, the CLEO of the agency seeking accreditation or certification may appeal the assessment teams recommended reversal to the OACP Executive Board.

### *The On-Site Assessment*

The on-site assessment team will be selected by the OACP Accreditation Program Manager. The agency seeking accreditation or certification may challenge the appointment of any team member with cause. Challenges should be in writing and addressed to the OACP Accreditation Program Manager and include the cause.

Mutually agreeable on-site assessment dates and related logistics are determined by conferencing between the OACP Accreditation Program Manager and the CLEO or agency accreditation manager from the agency seeking accreditation or certification.

The assessment team will typically be on-site for two and one-half days. The site visit for certification review will typically take two days. They will review all standard files, make personal observations, interview employees, and conduct other like activities that will assist to confirm proofs of compliance with the standards.

Standards that, in the opinion of the on-site assessment team, are not compliant will be discussed with the CLEO and/or agency accreditation manager as soon as they are discovered. The agency will have the opportunity to provide the necessary proofs of compliance during the on-site visit or later by supplying the necessary documents or other proofs of compliance to the OACP Accreditation Program Manager. The time to submit the proofs of compliance may vary but efforts should be made to complete the task within sixty (60) days of the on-site visit.

The on-site assessment team leader is responsible for preparing the assessment report draft. The draft will be provided to each assessment team member who will have the opportunity to suggest revisions. The final report will be a product that meets the approval of the entire team.

### *Review and Decision*

The completed assessment report will be forwarded to the OACP Accreditation Program Manager for presentation to the Commission for action at their regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

The Commission requires a majority vote from its members to recommend or deny an agency for accreditation.

If the Commission recommends accreditation or certification, the recommendation will be forwarded the OACP Executive Board for action.

If the Commission recommends withholding accredited or certified status, the specific cause will be forwarded the CLEO of the agency seeking accreditation or certification. When the cause for denial is resolved, the Commission will re-consider.

The agency seeking accreditation or certification may appeal any Commission recommendation by submitting written documentation that includes the reason(s) for the protest through the OACP Accreditation Program Manager to the OACP Executive Board.

### ***MAINTAINING ACCREDITED OR CERTIFIED STATUS***

To maintain accredited or certified status agencies must submit the Annual Compliance Report for Accredited or Certified Agencies to the OACP Accreditation Program manager within thirty (30) days of the first and second year anniversaries. The Annual Compliance Report is designed to ensure that accredited and certified agencies maintain compliance with the Standards, thereby protecting the integrity of the Accreditation and Certification Programs.

The agency must submit to an on-site assessment every third year within thirty (30) days of the anniversary.

#### ***On-site Assessment for Renewal of Accreditation***

An on-site assessment for renewal of accreditation or certification shall be conducted within thirty (30) days of the anniversary of the third year. The cycle of submitting the Annual Compliance Report for Accredited and Certified Agencies with an on-site assessment for renewal of accreditation or certification will continue throughout the life of the accreditation or certification.

#### ***New or Revised Standards Relative to Renewal of Accreditation***

Accredited or certified agencies or agencies seeking accreditation or certification are responsible for compliance with new or revised standards if the on-site assessment is six (6) months or longer from the date the standard(s) is disseminated.

#### ***Revocation of Accredited or Certified Status***

One of the objectives of the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation and Professional Standards Program is to ensure that accredited or certified agencies maintain their accreditation or certification. To this end, the Commission will act in a reasonable manner to ensure this goal is met. However, the integrity of Program is foremost. Although taken only in extreme cases, the Commission reserves the right to recommend revocation of accredited or certified status of any agency for cause.

## ***AGENCY ELIGIBILITY***

All law enforcement agencies having a primary responsibility for the enforcement of Oklahoma criminal and traffic laws are eligible for accreditation or certification under this program. Questions of eligibility are resolved by the OACP Executive Board.

## ***HOW DOES MY AGENCY PARTICIPATE***

The Chief Law Enforcement Officer or designee should contact the OACP Accreditation Program Manager for information about accreditation meetings, training sessions, coalition, and obtaining the standards and documents.

The candidate agency may want to schedule a presentation to explain details of the process. Accreditation Commission representatives will travel to your community and present a program that will explain the program in detail. The presentation will also include a question and answer portion.

When the candidate agency decides to participate, accreditation manager training and apprentice assessorship will be scheduled.