



National Association of Field Training Officers Indiana Chapter

The Art of Training

Most of us are aware that today's policing and community strategies are a blend of traditional reactive policing and newer proactive methods of solving identified social problems. About fourteen years ago, the administration in our department realized a need to improve the training of new officers. The San Jose Model *Field Training Program* was selected to accomplish this. Using problem solving as a major tool of community policing and law enforcement training itself serves as an enhancement to capitalize on the officer's reason for entering law enforcement in the first place, which is, "To help others". The *Field Training Program* has been designed to improve the overall quality of police officers for the City of Evansville by providing a method of evaluation and training to new officers.

In tailoring the *Field Training Program* to the department, we considered management responsibilities, weighing the legal issues raised by the courts. Court decisions regarding the negligent appointment/retention of employees and vicarious liability of the department mandates that management makes every effort to hire and retain only qualified personnel. To this end the Evansville Police Department has developed a valid job-related Field Training Program, using the Standard Evaluation Guidelines (SEGs) and the assignments of (over 490) random reference numbers (*unique to the Evansville Program*). The anchors and numbers provide better reference for meetings or for reviews months later. 1. The use of random reference numbers in the SEGs overcomes the normal shortcomings failure of the Field Training Officer to use the guidelines each time. 2. The inability to remember why a particular rating was given at a later time. 3. It also allows the student to relate the rating to the guidelines and supports a narrative for each rated task.

The newly assigned officers receive additional training in the field, they learn from the officers who have already gained a great deal of practical experience. The Field Training Officer process introduces a newly assigned officer to the internal operation of the department including policies and procedures. It provides for the initial formal and informal training specific to day-to-day police operations. Our Field Training Officers are experienced, motivated officers who are selected and trained as instructors during a 40-hour Field Training Officer Instructor School and by monthly training and review meetings.

After returning from the police academy the student receives 240 hours of classroom instruction and about ten full days of scenario training before field rotations. With a rotation of shifts and field instructors, training briefs, incident frequency checklists, etc., each new student is given the best environment to succeed over the next 24 weeks. The program has been devised to assist student officers in making the transition from what they have learned during scholastic studies and the police academy to performing general law

enforcement duties and handling quality of life issues competently in the field. Field Training Officers thoroughly review the field training material with the new student officer and demonstrate proper procedures.

Student officers are required to perform various law enforcement duties under the guidance and supervision of their assigned Field Training Officer and the Field Training Coordinator or Field Training Manager. Our Field Training Unit staff observes the student and Field Training Officer relationship during unannounced ride-a-longs each rotation, (*this was unique to the Evansville Program*). The student's performance is evaluated daily by the Field Training Officer and monitored by the program staff. This one-on-one style of training, and the fact that the instructor/teacher must guide the training in real law enforcement situations, sets it apart from any prior academic endeavor.

To assure the success of this task, the Field Training Unit has a training philosophy that ensures every student is given the maximum opportunity to show that he or she can do the job. In order to accomplish this, the program creates a positive environment in which learning is maximized, and a new officer is encouraged to perform to the best of his or her ability. The approach is fair, firm, friendly, and above all professional in that it recognizes that not everyone has the capability to perform the complex and demanding tasks required of a police officer. Our responsibility requires us to train and retain only the most competent officers. Over the last thirteen years, 93% of the officers that entered the Field Training Program have satisfactorily completed the program. Approximately 20% of the officers that completed the program have encountered problems during the training, which required additional training. This training is designed and documented by counseling and the development of a training plan with the student officer and FTO to assist in the remedial learning process. In the event that the student does not meet the acceptable standards, despite the field training staff's efforts, the department will have the documentation required for termination.

After the department and their field training staff have fully carried out their responsibilities, the results can be measured in improved report writing, more complete and detailed field investigations, officers who work better as teams, and who have fewer and less serious vehicle accidents.

Our Field Training Staff has the monumental responsibility of building the future of the department through the people we train. The Field Training Unit has a significant impact on the individual student and the Field Training Officer instructor in terms of imprinting attitudes, style, values, and ethics in carrying out the duties of police work. Consequently, it is probably the most effective influence on the direction of our department. The Chief and field training supervisors are certain that the program, which introduces officers to the department, not only develops the necessary technical skills but also reflects the policing philosophy of the department and the community that we serve.

By virtue of the improved education and training, today's new officers start their careers better prepared than their predecessors did. Highly motivated veteran officers (Field Trainers) willing to use their experiences have molded new public servants to a higher standard of responsiveness to the citizens of Evansville. Many other agencies over the

years have found our program can be adjusted to fit their needs and have sent officers and deputies to our 40-hour FTO instructor courses. The success of the Evansville Police Department Field Training Program is validated by the fact that it follows nationally recognized standards and has not been successfully challenged in its thirteen-year history. This has resulted in the improved quality of our officers, as well.

The success and feeling of accomplishments of the Evansville Police Departments Field Training Program comes in watching our students succeed.

Gary R. Anderson,
FTO Manager