



National Association of Field Training Officers Indiana Chapter

STANDARDIZATION FOR FTO PROGRAMS

by
Jack Molden

A subject which is long past-due for discussion is the development of national standards for FTO programs. To my knowledge, there are virtually no uniform standards existing at this point in time. The only references of which I am aware are by 1) The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals who recommend at least one week of training for FTOs, and 2) The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, who require the establishment of a FTO program, but go no further in establishing standards.

There are many exemplary FTO programs currently existing that have adopted very high program standards. The smaller departments try to emulate the larger more successful departments, but in the final analysis it becomes every man for himself. Has the time come for the various FTO organizations to band together and establish a set of recommended standards for FTO programs to be submitted to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, The National Sheriffs Association, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies and other professional organizations for their input and support?

WHAT STANDARDS ARE NEEDED?

There are numerous areas of concern in the development and management of a FTO program. These are only a few:

- * What should be the minimum qualifications for a FTO?
- * How long should a FTO serve in that capacity?
- * Is there a limit to the number of recruits that should be trained by a FTO in a given length of time?
- * Should FTOs be compensated?
- * How much training should a FTO and other program staff receive?
- * What should the curriculum consist of?
- * Should a FTO have other duties / specialties, i.e., sergeant, evidence technician?

- * How should the FTO program be organized within the department?
- * Should a recruit officer be enrolled in the FTO program prior to graduation from basic recruit training?
- * Are the FTO and the recruit considered a one, or two officer patrol unit?
- * What is the minimum training time a recruit should receive in the Field Training Program before assignment to solo patrol?
- * Are there minimum record-keeping requirements? What are they?

There are other standards that probably need to be addressed. We would like to have your ideas and input. That is, are standards needed? Which ones are important?

Another problem that needs to be addressed is: What organizational vehicle can accomplish standardization of FTO programs? Currently, there are a number of state FTO groups, but only recently has there been a move to form a national organization. Just recently, the formation of the National Association of Field Training Officers (NAFTO) was announced. If this organization is successful, and gets full national participation, it might be the vehicle to move us towards standardization of field training.

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