



Texas Police Chiefs Association Foundation

Law Enforcement Agency Best Practices

Recognition Program



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What is the Law Enforcement Agency Best Practices Recognition Program?

The Law Enforcement Recognition Program is a voluntary process where police agencies in Texas prove their compliance with 166 Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices. These Best Practices were carefully developed by Texas Law Enforcement professionals to assist agencies in the efficient and effective delivery of service, the reduction of risk and the protection of individual's rights.

What does it mean to be “Recognized?”

Being “Recognized” means that the agency has proven that it meets or exceeds all of the identified Best Practices for Texas Law Enforcement. These Best Practices cover aspects of law enforcement operations such as use of force, protection of citizen rights, pursuits, property and evidence management, and patrol and investigative operations. Noted police researcher G. Patrick Gallagher identified 12 critical issues (other than vehicle accidents and employee injuries) which get police departments in trouble. These critical areas are:

- Use of Force
- Emergency Vehicle Operation and Pursuits
- Search, Seizure, and Arrest
- Care, Custody and Restraint of Prisoners
- Domestic Violence and agency employee domestic misconduct
- Off-Duty Conduct
- Selection and Hiring
- Sexual Harassment
- Complaint and Internal Affairs Management
- Narcotics, SWAT, and High-Risk Warrant Service
- Dealing with the Mentally Ill and Developmentally Disabled
- Property and Evidence Management

Recognition Program Standards address these areas in an attempt to minimize risk and increase officer safety and training. While being “Recognized” does not guarantee an agency will not make a mistake, it does ensure that the agency has studied these critical issues, has developed policy and procedures to address them and has systems in place to identify and correct problems.

How were these Standards developed?

A Committee of Chiefs of Police and Command level officers assisted in the development of standards that were believed to be necessary for proper functioning of Texas law enforcement agencies. They reviewed Texas law and other State Accreditation Program standards to determine which were most appropriate.

An appointed Committee of professional Police Chiefs from across the state then reviewed these standards and approved them for use. That same Committee of nine Police Chiefs now conducts the final review of an agency's efforts and awards "Recognized" status in addition to conducting an annual review of the standards for additions and modifications.

What do the Standards look like?

Below are some examples of the Texas Best Practices:

1.04 Written System of Agency Directives

The agency has a written directive system in place that includes all agency policies, procedures, and practices. The written directive system must:

- a. Be numbered and organized in a manner that allows numerical reference.
- b. Require a periodic review and updating of directives to include that all directives are in accordance with applicable Texas Law.
- c. Require directives and updates be made available to, and reviewed by, all affected agency personnel in a manner designated by the Agency Director.
- d. Require maintenance of documentation proving receipt of directives by agency personnel in a manner designated by the Agency Director.

2.04 Internal Investigations

The Agency has a written directive on how to receive, investigate, and conclude complaints against employees. Sustained complaints must be based on facts determined during the investigation.

2.11 Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment

The Agency has a written directive that prohibits sexual or other unlawful harassment. The written directive must provide for reporting procedures that include when it is appropriate to make a report outside the chain of command or outside the Agency. The agency must provide training to all personnel.

2.14 Truthful

The Agency has a written directive requiring all employees to be truthful in all official verbal and written communications and reports. Employees will be truthful in any court related testimony or agency investigations.

3.02 Use of Deadly Force Training

The agency has a written directive on training its sworn personnel at least annually in the proper use of deadly force and the use of any firearm used in the course of law enforcement duties.

4.05 Off-Duty Employment

The Agency has a written directive that specifies the criteria for off duty employment. The Directive must:

- a. Address who is authorized to work off duty employment.
- b. State the types of employment prohibited by the agency.
- c. Include the approval procedure for off-duty employment.

6.02 Authorization of Deadly Force

The Agency has a written directive that authorizes police officers to use deadly force when the officer reasonably believes that his/her life is in immediate danger of death or serious bodily injury or a third person is in immediate danger of death or serious bodily injury.

6.03 Use of Force Documentation and Review

The Agency has a written directive requiring completion of a specific administrative form for this purpose only to document the use of force by agency personnel, including a review process of each incident by supervisory personnel. The form may be electronic, or paper and the format will be designated by the agency.

7.13 Vehicle Pursuits

The Agency has a written directive for vehicle pursuits. The written directive includes:

- a. The criteria for initiating a pursuit
- b. The method of conducting a pursuit.
- c. The supervision of a pursuit.
- d. The criteria for terminating vehicle pursuits.

The Department also trains appropriate personnel in the pursuit policy.

7.14 Pursuit Documentation (EV)

The Agency has a written directive that requires a pursuit report form to be completed after each pursuit. The report is forwarded through the chain of command to the Agency Director or designee. The Pursuit report will document at a minimum:

- a. The reasons for the pursuit.
- b. The personnel involved.
- c. The result of the pursuit, to include any injury, damage or other significant events.

An annual report of agency pursuits is prepared for the Agency Director.

12.08 Inventory of Property/Evidence

The Agency has a written directive requiring a sampling of individual items stored in the property and evidence area at least annually, and when a new person is assigned who is in direct control of the property/evidence function. Any sample should include an adequate number of items to determine the overall accountability and integrity of the inventory system.

What are the benefits of “Recognition?”

Police Officers exercise government’s most awesome powers – the power to stop and question a citizen, the power to arrest a citizen, to seize his person and property, and the power to use force in that process. Officers often operate alone without direct supervision. Police agencies direct and control officer’s activity through supervision, training and written policies and procedures. Since supervisors cannot always be present, the training and the policies and procedures of an agency are critical to ensuring proper performance. Appropriate equipment is also necessary. The Recognition Program ensures an agency has addressed the most critical law enforcement issues in both policy as well as actual operation. The Recognition Program does not tell an agency what their policy must be, but rather it ensures that the policy, procedure, or operation addresses the critical aspects of an issue.

The Recognition Program assures both City Management and the citizens of a city that their Police Department is operating in a manner that reflects the current Best Practices of Law Enforcement. It can provide citizens with reassurance and improve community relations and cooperation – and also leads to improved performance within the department.

Will this process keep you from being sued? It will provide direction to officers that should prevent them from acting in a manner which could result in liability. But, as you are aware, agencies are often sued even when they do everything correctly. Should this occur, the Recognition Program can ensure the agency is better prepared to successfully defend a lawsuit.

Combined Knowledge!

Every Police Chief and every Police Agency has learned from their own mistakes and they likely develop systems to keep from making the same mistakes again. The Texas Best Practices are the combined knowledge of all Texas Chiefs regarding mistakes and methods to avoid those mistakes in the future. They also ensure that agencies are following all legislative mandates and requirements.

How do you get to be “Recognized?”

An agency that has been awarded “Recognized” status has undertaken a careful internal review of its policies, procedures, equipment, facilities, and operations, and has then requested an outside review to prove their compliance with the standards. After an independent review of their written documents and proofs, a team of assessors is sent to the agency to review their operations and facilities, and to interview the Department’s staff. A Final Report outlining the findings is sent to the TPCAF Recognition Committee. The Committee reviews the findings and votes whether or not to award “recognized” status.

How long are you “Recognized?”

The “Recognized” status is awarded for a four-year period. During the four-year period the agency must submit an annual report and show continuing compliance with several performance related standards. These are reviewed as they are received, and compliance verified. During the last year of the period the agency must prepare updated documentation

on all Best Practices and another on site review is conducted. The TPCAF Recognition Committee must then vote again to approve “Recognized” status for the next four years. If the agency does not submit the required annual proofs, or if there is indication received by the Committee that the agency is not in compliance during the period, the Committee may vote to remove “Recognized” status. The TPCAF has contracted with an outside group to manage the recognition process and ensure integrity and accountability.

How do agencies participate?

The first step toward “Recognized” status is for the Chief of Police to understand the program completely. This can be done by attending the basic Familiarization training program at one of the TPCA meetings. These meetings are held several times a year and regional training for this program is also provided. A schedule of upcoming training is provided on the TPCA website. The individual assigned to manage the program within the agency is also required to attend this training as well as Program Manager training.

If the agency wishes to pursue Recognition after familiarization training, the agency should submit an application. The TPCAF Committee will review the application and if approved place the agency in line to enter into the program. A contract is also required prior to an agency starting the actual recognition process. (It is recommended that agencies complete a review of their policies and procedures, making the necessary changes to comply with Recognition Program standards before applying.)

When the contract is approved by TPCAF, the agency has two years to complete its internal review, submit documentation and prepare for the final review visit. The Final review team, consisting of a Chief and other assessor from another area of the state will typically conduct a two day on site Final Review.

The Chief conducting the Final Review prepares a report on the team’s findings and the agency package is submitted to the TPCAF Recognition Committee for review. Agencies achieving “Recognized” status are introduced at the Recognition Luncheon at Texas Police Chiefs Association Annual Conference. Local presentations of the award can also be arranged for appropriate news coverage in the local area.

What kind of help is available?

One of the biggest problems for police agencies is keeping their policy manual up to date. Policies are critically important in that they protect the department and our officers.

The TPCA provides a Complete Sample Policy Manual that meets all 168 Best Practices. It is the combined work of many police chiefs in Texas and has been used by over 100 of our Recognized Agencies. All parts of the Manual are editable, and you can use all or only part of the manual that you may need.

We also provide training around the state on various topics required by the Best Practices.

How much does the program cost?

To participate in the program, the agency Chief must be a member of the Texas Police Chiefs Association. Current dues for membership are \$3.00 per \$1,000 of annual salary for the Chief of Police. Membership also provides numerous other benefits including legal updates, legislative representation on law enforcement issues, training, and access to Chiefs around the state to assist in solving problems.

Recognition program costs depend on the size of agency. Recognition Program annual fees depend on the size of agency as listed below:

Sworn Officers	Fee Amount
1-10	\$ 350.00
11-25	\$ 500.00
26-50	\$ 1,200.00
51-100	\$ 1,600.00
101-200	\$ 2,000.00
201 or more	\$ 2,400.00

The agency is also responsible for the expenses of the Final Review team (This expense is incurred every four years). Final Review teams are from another area of the state but overnight travel expenses are not expected to exceed \$1,200.

More Questions?

Please feel free to contact the Program Director!

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