

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

**The Contemporary Field Training Program
Generation X Training Generation Y**

**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

The modern day Field Training Program (FTP), the accepted method of providing recent law enforcement academy graduates with the knowledge to safely and efficiently operate in today's policing environment, is facing a potential crisis due to generational issues between new recruits, field training officers, administrative staff, and command staff. The purpose of this research project was to identify the various influences affecting the success of Generation X instructing Generation Y in the Field Training Program and, if indicated, to develop an alternative method in the approach and delivery of the Field Training Program, which could satisfy the needs of all generations within the law enforcement profession.

The author's research methods included the review of textbooks, professional journals, published articles, law enforcement and business related websites, as well as a survey of a number of Texas Law Enforcement agencies. It was discovered that many of the respondent agencies found that their current Field Training Program was lacking or antiquated, and the quality of recruits generated rated merely "average" by the time they were released from the Field Training Program. This researcher discovered that modern day professional law enforcement agencies could take advantage of each generations' positive ability and revitalize policies, procedures, and training programs so that the contemporary officer thrust into the community will be of an "above average" quality any agency would be diligent in retaining.

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INTRODUCTION

When law enforcement agencies recruit new officers, the intention is for the new employee to become a productive and proactive member of the organization. Most commonly referred to as Millennial or Generation Y, agencies are investing these recent graduates in the hopes of retaining a highly effective officer. The Field Training Program (FTP) is commissioned with the responsibility for providing complex instruction, the understanding of liability, and instilling accountability in a modern day law enforcement officer. The issue to be examined considers whether or not the Field Training Officer (FTO), who is more than likely a Generation X law enforcement officer, has the foundation, ability, and administrative support to perform this very daunting task.

The relevance of questioning the ability of Generation X to educate Generation Y, to attain a commendable level of performance in the FTP, purposely identifies many considerations and current issues. An examination of generational experiences will be compared for similarities and differences that could cause an observable reaction to the Field Training Program, from either generation involved. The community of police officers will be shown the need for an alternative method in the approach and delivery, which could satisfy the needs of all the generations within the current law enforcement profession.

The purpose of this research is to determine the various influences of Generation X instructing Generation Y in the Field Training Program. The Generation X Field Training Officer should be able to properly deliver and evaluate the response to the needed instruction. Generation Y recruits will benefit and become motivated to retain the instruction provided by the Generation X Field Training Officer. There is some

degree of administrative pressure to pass the recruit when the new recruit has already passed the extensive background investigation. New employees look impressive on paper and during initial interviews, but they fail to fulfill the agency requirements in the Field Training Program. The ineffective recruits are consistently being retained due to the need to satisfy a vacant position.

In an effort to gain insight on this subject, there will be several avenues of research used during the initial phase of this report. The research will consist of recent journals, publications, articles, and reviews of Generation X and Generation Y influences, in connection to the Field Training Program. The primary source of information will be conducted through surveys of Texas law enforcement agencies, seeking specific details concerning current practices within the Field Training Program.

It is anticipated that the research will show obstacles, which involve Generation X training Generation Y, with the current mindset of administrators involved in the entire process. This researcher hopes that the perspectives developed will influence agency administrators to be more acquainted with the current practices in their agency's Field Training Program, and they will reevaluate the set program requirements. When a Generation X Officer is provided the tools to be an effective Field Training Officer, he/she will then have credibility and the skills to instruct the Generation Y recruit.

Law enforcement relies on set practices, such as those mandated by a progressive Field Training Program, to train knowledgeable, efficient, and safe officers. Whether the new recruit has limited or no experience in this profession, the agency must utilize their finest officers, who will educate and instruct the new officers in the agency practices, policies, and the laws of the State of Texas and the United States of

America. This research is beneficial to the appointing law enforcement agency to utilize proven Generation X Field Training Officers and Program Coordinators who have accountability and remain focused on the goals set forth within the FTP.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Information regarding the generational influences identified through research reveals that there is a noticeable difference between the three generations predominantly involved in modern day law enforcement. These are the “Baby Boomers” (1943-1960), “Generation X” (1961-1979), and “Generation Y” (1980-2000) (Gainsford, 2005). Many analysts debate over these year trends. For instance, Sprafka and Kranda (2003) suggested that Traditionalists are born from 1900 to 1945; Baby Boomers are born from 1946 to 1964; Generation Xers are born from 1965 to 1980; and Millennials or Generation Y is born from 1981 to 1999. For the purpose of this research, Generation X and Generation Y will be studied in comparison to one another and in collaboration with their respective talents brought to the field of law enforcement. Throughout the body of this paper, or unless specified in the source of information, Generation X will be referred to as Gen X, Generation Y will be referred to as Gen Y, Field Training Program as FTP, Field Training Officer as FTO, and Probationary Police Officer as PPO. The sources of information are not uniform in their reference to each named generation.

Proper selection and training of the FTO is paramount to the success of the FTP. Organizational loyalty will grow as employees feel anchored to the organization that shows them respect and consideration (Fischer, 2002). Fischer (2002) also noted that many good trainers will recognize differences between individuals and make the needed

adjustments to support successful training outcomes for the individual and the agencies that hire them. Contrary to popular myth, the generation joining police agencies that enter the 21st Century is vision-driven. Members of the so-called Generation X and Generation Y have been found to not only desire, but indeed, require vision to maintain interest and be productive in their work lives (Stephens, 1997)

Generally, many theorists provide personality descriptions for Gen Xers, in reflection to the time period of mass retrenchment, while they were growing up. They do not expect anything delivered on a silver platter. They have learned to take care of themselves. They work on their talents and see each job as a way to enhance their knowledge and skills. The downside of this style is that they do not maintain bonds with employers, and they can get caught up in the anonymity of e-mails and testing. Isolation, rather than a network of diverse relationships, is more typical (Conroy, 2005). Muchnik (1996) declared that given clear, consistent communication of vision; positive recognition; considerable autonomy and trust; and a collegial atmosphere, Gen Xers often become the type of creative, dedicated colleagues employers strive to retain.

In comparison to Gen X, the Gen Y is described as “can do,” optimistic, cooperative, capable young people, who welcome change and new technology, and they expect to change the world. Several theorists maintain that the perfect, dedicated, visionary, problem-solving, create a “better world” partner has arrived (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This generation has been pampered, nurtured, and programmed with a slew of activities since they were toddlers, and Amour (2005) provided a series of identifiers of Gen Y, which are having high expectations of self and employers, needing continuous

challenges, and being extremely goal oriented with the need to achieve important objectives immediately (Armour, 2005).

According to Henchey (2005), members of the 102 million-strong Generation Y have yet to make their full impact on the law enforcement workplace, but they will be the majority of new police officers and deputies hired in the coming decade. By the year 2020, most police officers will be members of Gen Y. At present, law enforcement agencies have a window of opportunity to properly prepare Gen Y to progress from new arrivals in the profession to its future leaders (Henchey, 2005). To improve the modern FTP model, each generations' learned characteristics and career potential should be recognized. Gen Xers tend to be entrepreneurial and want to be allowed to participate in decision-making. Flexibility and positive work relationships are important to Gen Xers, although they shy away from discussing feelings; they prefer to focus on facts and the future (Conroy, 2005). When the combinations are mixed properly, the focus will be less on the problems facing the FTP and more on the future goals for the organization.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor report titled "Protective Service Occupations: Correctional Officers,"(2005) employee retirement is one factor contributing to the need for replacing police officers, correctional officers, and probation and parole officers. National statistics related to the aging and the anticipated retirements of the current work force show that the labor force will continue to age during the next several years. In fact, by 2012, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005) reports that the baby-boom cohort will be 48 to 66 years old.

There are significant differences in the events and experiences by each of the generations discussed. It is important to look at the values and behaviors that generally

apply to each generation. Individual exceptions always occur but understanding generational differences helps put behaviors in an understandable context (Raines, 2000). As baby boomers are retiring from police service, many organizations are feeling the vacuum of knowledge and experience that is difficult to replace. Both Gen Xers and Millennials are not only receptive but depend on mentoring relationships with their senior colleagues. The workplace values and behaviors of Gen Xers reveal a need to belong, while being independent and adaptable. This can be attributed to the theory that Gen Xers parents generally worked outside the home, leaving them without a large amount of guidance, support, and feedback. Consequently, Millennials are accustomed to being cared for and valued by parents and friends (Zemka, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000).

Significant historical events such as the Iran Hostage Crisis, downsizing of the 80's, both parents working, latch key kids, high divorce rate for parents, introduction of computers, and expanded media emphasis have cultivated the values and behaviors of Gen Xers. Zemka and Raines (2000) provided that based on these historical events, the behaviors and values exhibited by Gen Xers are commonly considered independent spirit, creative, adaptable, likes a challenge, multi-tasking capabilities, skeptical, impatient-especially with technophobes, careful with loyalty, commitment and organizational longevity is not a priority.

The values and behaviors of Generation Y have been cultivated by events such as September 11, 2001, terrorism threats, economic boom, technology boom, school shootings, and strong parental involvement (Sprafka & Kranda, 2003). Likewise, the behaviors and values commonly displayed by Generation Y includes an optimistic spirit,

collective action, patriotic/heroic character, polite and tenacious, needs supervision and structure, deals well with change, collaborators and inexperienced with difficult people.

Hickman and Murphy collaboratively provided that the most important component of the FTP belongs to the supervisor or coordinator of this invaluable tool. These agency coordinators have the most important responsibility in developing leadership quality and styles within the FTO. Sometimes overlooked, this is the most important responsibility in providing clear direction. FTOs need to be educated in the specific parameters required to get the job done. Coordinators need to remember to always expect the best, not the worst from a FTO. Some will perform poorly, but a larger number will do their very best to follow the policies to be successful. Finally, coordinators must support the FTO, while also supporting the organization.

The maintenance of positive dialogue between the FTP coordinator and the command staff is imperative. When disagreements or issues within the FTP arise, a reasonable resolution can be attained, providing a win-win situation for everyone. This is especially critical when cases of deficient policies, practices, or requested changes to training are brought to the attention by the line officers and mid-level supervisors. The potential revisions to these defunct policies are a possibility when they no longer fit the reality of the job (Hickman & Murphy, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The issue to be examined considers whether or not the Field Training Officer, who is more than likely a Gen X law enforcement officer, has the foundation and ability to perform the very daunting task of training a Gen Y PPO. The relevance of questioning the capability of Gen X to educate Gen Y in the Field Training Program, in

such a capacity that the PPO is considered a highly competent officer, purposely identifies many considerations and current issues. Modern day law enforcement administrators will be shown the need for an alternative method in the approach and delivery, which could satisfy the needs of all the generations within this profession.

The methods of inquiry used for this research consisted of a literature review of books, journals, periodicals, and a survey in the form of a written questionnaire to support or negate the hypothesis developed. It is hypothesized that law enforcement agencies are realizing a decline in the quality of officers who have completed the FTP and the quality of FTOs who are conducting the training.

A questionnaire will be used for the collection of the data to reflect the sentiments of the law enforcement community. The participants involved in this study will be from law enforcement agencies from within the State of Texas. The respondent agency size varied from small (10-20) to large (250+) employees.

The questionnaire will be hand-delivered to 50 representatives from various law enforcement agencies. Of those, 88% were returned completed by those having direct knowledge of their respective Field Training Program. The agency population reflected that 34% were from agencies with fewer than 40 sworn officers, 36% were from agencies with 41 to 100 sworn officers, 23% were from agencies with 101-1000 sworn officers, and 4% reflected agencies with over 1,001 sworn officers. A copy of this survey can be found in Appendix 1.

Information obtained from the compilation of data gleaned from the surveys will prompt law enforcement agencies to reevaluate the current FTP. Many will see a need to develop a strategic plan for the training of future law enforcement officers.

FINDINGS

The survey results will visually illustrate and separate the information learned from various law enforcement agencies from across the State of Texas. The questions were specific, and many were relative in numerical terms.

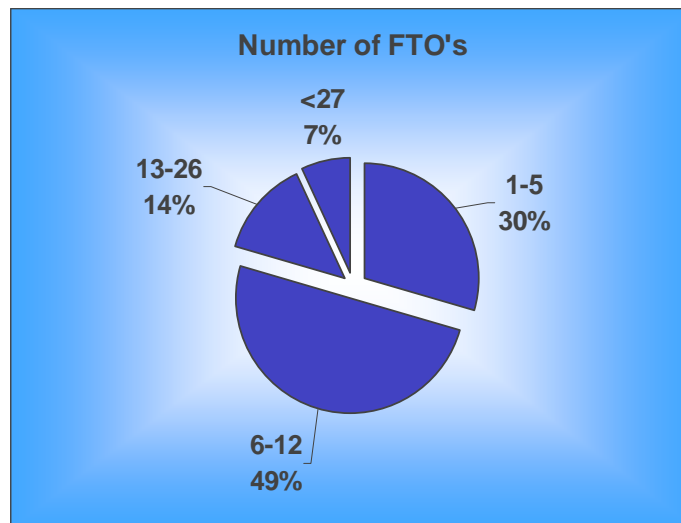


Figure 1. Average percentage and number of FTOs in Texas law enforcement agencies.

Figure 1 identifies that of the agency respondents in this survey, 49% employed 6-12 Field Training Officers in the FTP. The second largest percentage of 30% retained 1-5 Field Training Officers. This figure provides a rough estimate of approximately ten Field Training Officers within an 80 sworn member organization, with a service population of roughly 30,000 citizens.

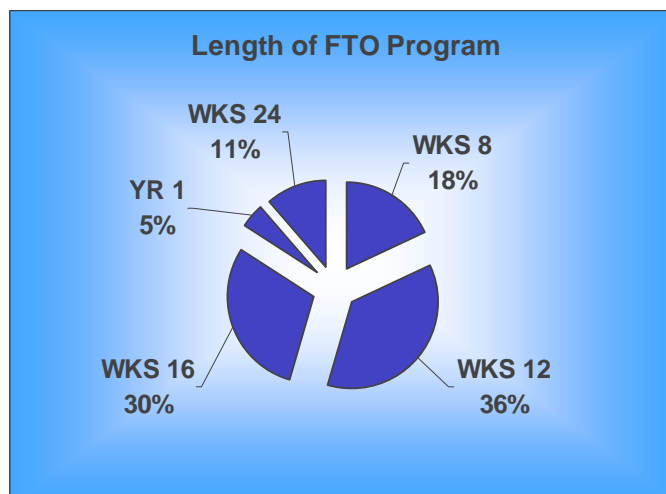


Figure 2. Average percentage and weeks in FTP.

The most common length of a FTP, shown above in Figure 2, according to respondent agencies is between 12 to 16 weeks, with an eight-week program for the remaining 18% of law enforcement agencies. Approximately 16% of agencies reported to have a FTP of between 24 weeks and one year. No agency polled reported to not have a FTP in place, suggesting the importance of continued training after a recruit has successfully completed a law enforcement academy.



Figure 3. Quality of PPO performance after FTP completion.

Figure 3 illustrates the predominant consensus of the respondents on the issue of PPO quality. (This particular question was specified as to reflect the PPO upon completion of the FTP) Approximately 73% of the 44 respondents provided that the PPO was found to be on an “average” level. This could be a positive or a negative, as the respondents provided that 18% rated “above average” and 9% rated “below average”. In contrast no responding agency reported a rating of either “superior” or “poor”.

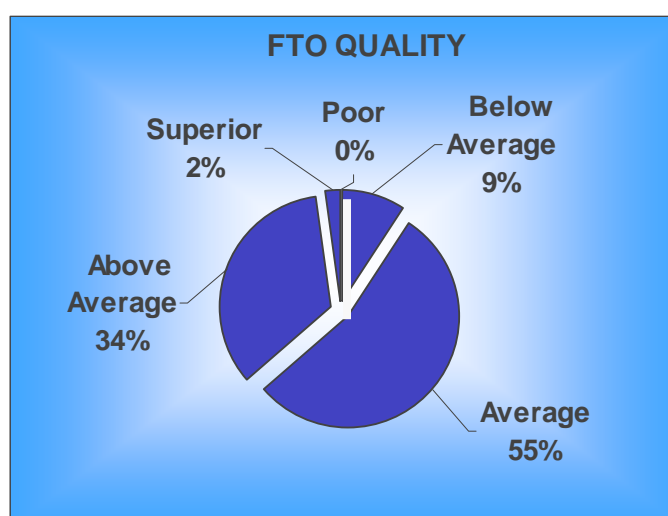


Figure 4. Average quality of the FTO during FTP.

The predominant results from the respondents, shown in Figure IV, reported that 55% of FTOs were “average” in quality. FTOs were judged to be “above average” by 34% of their respective agencies, and nine percent were deemed as “below average.” In relation to Figure 3, the comparison of the PPO and the quality of the FTO was minute, noted as “superior” rated two percent, and “poor” rated zero percent. In reviewing the respondent results, an approximate percentage of “above average” and “average” FTOs, 89% are producing 91% of “above average and “average” PPOs.

A-Poor selection/background of new hire
 B-Poor training by FTO
 C-Lack of commitment to Program
 D-Pressure to Pass Recruit
 E-Other-See *Table Below*
 F-Not Applicable
 G-Combination

E/Dysfunctional Program and inadequate
 Supervisor of FTO Program

E/Lack of Supervision of FTO Program

E/Mixing the role of instructor/evaluator

E/Program should be longer

E/Quantity before Quality of FTO's was initial p
 roblem to handle # of PPO

E/Training Program not long enough



Figure 5. Reasons for poor to average quality of PPO

The above illustrations in Figure 5 contain the reasons provided from the respondents when asked what their educated reason for a rating of “average,” “below average,” and “poor” rating for the PPO, FTO, or both. As a means of reflecting on the issues currently faced within the FTP, many of the respondents provided an “above average” rating on all participants within the FTP; therefore, 30% of the answers provided were “not applicable.” By selecting answer “E,” 14% of respondents supplied a mixture of written responses identifying the problematic areas where deficiencies were noted. An equal number, 14% of respondents, identified that there is a failure in the commitment to the FTP. A preponderance of the surveyed respondents, about 70%, were able to clearly identify current issues contributing to the failure of their current FTP.

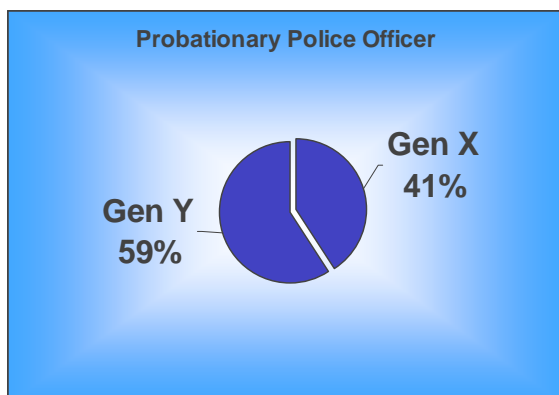


Figure 6

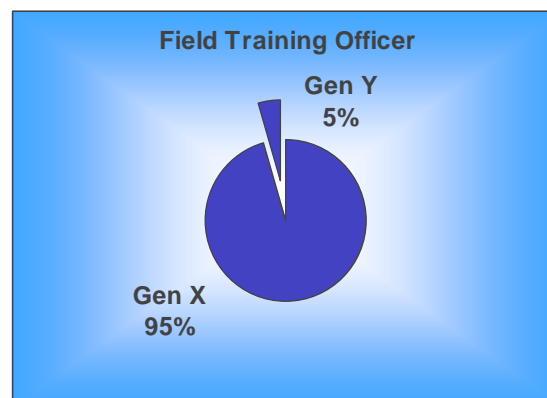


Figure 7

Percentage of generations in FTP

A comparison of the generations involved in the FTP were detailed by the respondents, which revealed a disproportionate number of Gen X FTOs are instructing both Gen Y and Gen X in the FTP. It is clear in Figure 6, however, that the majority of PPOs fall within Gen Y, with 59% occupying the largest account of new officers in the law enforcement profession.

Included in this survey were questions regarding the timeliness of recent changes to the respondents FTP and the need for change according to the respondents who have not seen a recent update or change in their respective organizational FTP. The percentages mirrored one another, as reflected in Figure 7, with 77% of the respondents articulating that their respective agency had changed or updated the FTP within the last 5 years, and these changes were critical to the success in the FTP. Of that same question, 23% responded that they were in need of a change or update to their agency FTP and had not experienced an update to the FTP in more than 5 years.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The issue to be examined by the researcher considered whether or not the Field

Training Officer, who is more than likely a Gen X law enforcement officer, has the foundation and ability to perform the task of instructing a Gen Y Probationary Police Officer.

The research question focused on examining the ability of Gen X to educate Gen Y in the Field Training Program to become a qualified and valued officer in the profession of law enforcement purposely identifies many considerations and current issues. The community of police officers will be shown the need for an alternative method in the approach and delivery of training, which should satisfy the needs of all the generations within the current law enforcement profession.

The researcher hypothesized that the future of law enforcement will benefit greatly from re-evaluating current FTP models that have overlooked examination and updates in recent years. When an agency takes into consideration that the FTO is a Gen Xer as well as the responsibilities in the development and training provided to the Gen Y PPO, it is of supreme importance that structure and communication are essential for the FTP to be successful. As current models are scrutinized, the average agency has been found lacking. Today's police agencies are handing over the training of a PPO to an "average" FTO and are being reciprocated with an "average" or "below average" PPO. In order to prevent the creation of a mediocre generation of law enforcement officers, agencies must be proactive in improving training methods that have become antiquated or policy and procedures dialogue that is a contradiction for Gen X or Gen Y.

Upon compilation of the survey results and research accumulated, the findings supported the hypothesis in some ways, and in other ways, the hypothesis was not

supported. It was found that 63% of the respondents were satisfied with the current qualities displayed in the FTO and PPO. In the remaining 37% of the agency representatives who found a less than average quality rating of both the FTO and PPO articulated discrepancies were documented within their organizational FTP. This resounding number also denotes the difference in rating the quality of the FTO and the PPO.

Figure 5 reflects that 30% of respondents stated that there were no issues with the FTP utilized by their organization. This figure conflicts with the “average” and “above average” quality on both the FTO and PPO rating. Fifty-five percent were rated as “average” for quality of FTO, and 73% were rated “average” for quality of PPO. The “average” FTO is producing less than acceptable PPO; in contrast, 34 % of total FTOs are deemed “above average” and are only producing a total of 18% “above average” PPOs. According to these statistics, an “average” rating is no longer deemed acceptable as the bar has been raised and expectations are higher in today’s Field Training Program.

The respondents were not clearly identified as actual coordinators or supervisors within the FTP but were deemed as command staff and supervisory level of their respective organizations. However, due to the conflicting percentages of quality of PPOs versus FTOs, it is possible that the administrators involved in the survey may not have continuous access to training critiques conducted by FTP supervisors. It was determined that they would have substantial knowledge of their agency’s FTP or the ability to obtain this information in order to complete the survey.

The study of Gen X training Gen Y in the contemporary Field Training Program is relevant to the modern day law enforcement agency, in that, as time passes, all things change. If the Baby Boomer generation's FTP model could be located and was compared to current models, the differences would be amazing. While pursuing this research, the ability to produce such a document was not found to be successful. Future generations of law enforcement stand to benefit by the results of this research because if the proper attention to detail and appropriate supervision is delegated, a successful FTP can be created.

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APPENDIX/APPENDICES
Appendix 1
Survey of Field Training Program

1. Service population
 - a. >10,000
 - b. 10,001-40,000
 - c. 40,001-80,000
 - d. 80,001<
2. Sworn personnel
 - a. >40
 - b. 41-100
 - c. 101-1000
 - d. 1001<
3. Number of active Field Training Officers
 - a. 1-5
 - b. 6-12
 - c. 13-26
 - d. 27<
4. Length of Field Training Program
 - a. 8 weeks
 - b. 12 weeks
 - c. 16 weeks
 - d. 1 year
 - e. 24 weeks
5. Quality of new officer after completion of Field Training Program.
 - a. 1-poor
 - b. 2-below average
 - c. 3-average
 - d. 4-above average
 - e. 5-superior
6. Quality of Field Training Officer, while performing duties of FTO.
 - a. 1-poor
 - b. 2-below average
 - c. 3-average
 - d. 4-above average
 - e. 5-superior
7. Reason for Quality 1-3 rating.
 - a. Poor selection of New officer/Poor background investigation
 - b. Poor training by Field Training Officer
 - c. Lack of commitment to Field Training Program
 - d. Pressure to pass recruit
 - e. Other _____
 - f. Not Applicable
 - g. Combination

Survey of Field Training Program

8. Are most of your FTO's?
 - a. Baby Boomers (age 45-61)
 - b. Generation X (age 29- 44)
 - c. Generation Y (age 21-28)
9. Are most of your PPO's?
 - a. Baby Boomers (age 45-61)
 - b. Generation X (age 29- 44)
 - c. Generation Y (age 21-28)
10. Has your agency updated your current FTP in the past 5 years?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not that you know of
11. If answer is No, do you see a need to update the currently used FTP?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

An update to the program could from adding modules or weeks for the training period, to changing dialogue or documentation techniques in the program.

Please return to Rebecca Carlisle-Thank you for your participation!!