

LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

A REPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING
LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPLORING

A LEARNING CONTRACT
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
MODULE II

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INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), "America's hope for the future lies in the youth of today,"¹ led to the development of the Law Enforcement Exploring program. L. E. Exploring is designed for career-oriented young adults aged 14 through 21, and is an expansion on its older, more traditional programs. Recognizing the changing needs of today's youth, and the complexities associated with their integration into the adult work force, L. E. Exploring helps bridge the gap and ease that transition.

Instituted just over 20 years ago, today there are over 2,171 local groups called "posts" and 34,780 Explorers nation-wide.² The success and growth of L. E. Exploring is due, in large measure, to the basic concept of L. E. professionals who share experience and knowledge with young adults interested in law enforcement as a career and who provide these young people with meaningful information and experiences.

The program of an Explorer post is based on matching the program resources of adults in the organization with the needs and interests of Explorers in the post. Each post program is unique, as it is planned around what the organization is able and willing to do. The purposes of the organization and the BSA are best served when a well-rounded program is planned through Exploring's six experience areas--fitness, career, social, service, citizenship, and outdoor. This planning provides participants an exciting and worthwhile program leading to personal fitness, citizenship, training, and character development.

The intent of L. E. Exploring is to educate and involve youth

in police operations, to interest them in possible law enforcement careers, and to build mutual understanding. The education aspect provides knowledge of the law enforcement function whether the participant will enter policing or not. Through involvement, the law enforcement Explorer program establishes an awareness of the complexities of police service.

THE LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPLORER PROGRAM

"The purposes of Exploring are the purposes of the Boy Scouts of America. But the methods which are necessary to attract and hold young adults to our program are different."³

District Scout Executives begin by conducting an interest survey in the local high schools. Interested students and their parents are then invited to an information/organization meeting. Working with the local law enforcement agency, scout executives assist in program guidelines, adult leader recruitment and selection, and identification or location of resources.

Basic preliminaries completed, a post forms. L. E. Professionals provide guidance and training. Explorers elect member leaders, embark on fundraising projects, select and secure uniforms and distinctive shoulder patches, and embark on a training commitment leading to ride-along privileges.

The ride-along program consists, in this case, of accompanying uniformed police officers in patrol cars during a regular shift of duty on all but hazardous calls. The explorer is an observer only and will not, unless emergency dictates, take an active role.

Posts usually meet weekly for training or planning. BSA offers program suggestions and adult leader training. Explorers are not

boys, girls, or "kids," they are young adults. Many can drive, own cars, have jobs, make their own decisions; those over 18 can vote; therefore, the program must be adult-like. Explorers will want to be involved in leadership, decision making, and planning. They expect adult guidance but not dictatorship. They know Scouting is a good organization with a code of conduct, but they must be treated as young adults or they will not join. And leaders must recognize that they are busy; school, homework, jobs, social life, clubs, sports, music, and other attractions affect their participation in Exploring.

BSA, recognizing that size, resources, area, level of activity, ect., make every law enforcement agency unique, recommends each post program be tailored to the sponsoring agency. In support, BSA offers area, state, and national competitions and activities, as well as securing sponsors for youth scholarships. This blend of Police and Scouting has proven to be enormously successful and mutually rewarding.

ADVANTAGES

The Department itself benefits by volunteer manpower represented by the explorers. Explorers can be readily used for a variety of public relation or crime prevention activities as well as assisting in service area duties. An indirect benefit to the department is the possible source of future manpower as represented by the individuals in the post. Explorers are future cadets, reserves, or regular officers in the making.

The community benefits by receiving expanded services with no increase in budget. Explorers can be utilized at the station to answer phones, greet the public or conduct tours. They can perform various administrative tasks such as filing, dispatching, or recordkeeping.

They can maintain and clean police vehicles and equipment. At fun runs, parades, block parties, etc., Explorers assist with traffic control, crowd monitoring, guarding barricades, or helping lost children.

They can be invaluable for perimeter control at crime scenes or in search and rescue operations. They can greatly increase a Crime Prevention units effectiveness by conducting Operation Identification programs, residential and business surveys, senior citizen awareness programs, liason with the Neighborhood Watch program and department-sponsored bicycle safety or fingerprint clinics for children.

The Explorers benefit by gaining experience, knowledge, self-confidence and satisfaction. They experience a potential career at first hand. They gain a knowledge of a governmental system that provides insight and understanding that lasts a lifetime.

CONCERNS

The advantages look good. There are, however, potential disadvantages. Cost, liability, manpower commitments, impressionable young adults, and officer acceptance and morale are some of the areas that need to be addressed. L. E. management must assess these "hidden" costs before making the implementation decision. In the case of a favorable decision, they must implement the necessary safeguards and procedures to eliminate or minimize these areas of concern.

Cost

There is no direct financial obligation for the sponsoring law enforcement agency other than the expense incurred in providing a meeting place, use of equipment, facilities, etc. However, most sponsoring agencies find it beneficial to provide the post with the basic Exploring literature.

The sponsoring agency may choose to provide the post with funds for parts of the uniform such as jackets or emblems, or may underwrite some of the expense of the Advisors and/or Explorers who represent the sponsor at local or national conferences. This is an agreement between the sponsoring agency and its post.

Youth members pay a national annual fee. A post may also ask members to pay dues to cover post activities and trips. Each Explorer automatically receives a subscription to Exploring magazine as part of the annual registration fee and is eligible to participate in Exploring activities on local, regional, and national levels.

The post may decide to conduct approved money-earning projects to finance trips, projects, uniforms, etc.⁴ Parents support Exploring by their contributions to their local United Way as well as by participating in the annual sustaining membership enrollment campaign of the local council.

The council provides professional, technical, and support services. It makes available literature and program materials. It recruits and trains a volunteer structure to help each post. The council service center, through its Exploring Division,⁵ annually conducts a career-interest survey in the high schools within the council's area. This survey results in a listing of prospective Explorers according to their career and avocational interests.

In addition, the BSA council provides outdoor facilities such as camps for Exploring activities. Further, the council and its Explorers take part in local activities that tie in with national events such as the road rally, Explorer Olympics, regattas, speakers' contest, National Explorer Presidents' Congress, and Young American awards.

The services provided by the BSA council are financed by United Way and sustaining membership contributions, by foundation grants, corporate or individual gifts, income from trust funds, project sales and activities.⁶

Liability

Explorers and their parents must sign liability waivers before being eligible to participate in the program. And though most minor accidents and incidents are not reported to the National Office, the National Office reports only one death since the inception of the program. Departments regularly carry automobile insurance policies, general (or specific) liability policies, and workmans compensation insurance. The BSA carries several types of liability insurance for the post and the individual explorers.

To date, no department has incurred a loss because of injury or death of participating youths. BSA liability limits per insured Explorer are generous and deemed more than adequate by the BSA Executive Staff.⁷ Department guidelines on participation in certain situations can greatly reduce potential risk.

What can police executives anticipate in the future? Civil suits, in general, have been on the rise for several years now. There is no reason to believe that this trend will not continue, or even accelerate. BSA executives realize that increased exposure by departments to liability could effectively eliminate the Explorer program. They are committed to preventing this from happening. However, L. E. executives must remain aware of trends in civil liability.

Impact on Officer Morale and Acceptance

Virtually all L. E. professionals serving as Explorer Post

Advisors that were interviewed agreed that education of the officers reduces potential problems to a minimum. Officers need to be oriented to the program, its goals and benefits. Guidelines and procedures must be clear, understood, and enforced. Officer participation, especially that of advisor, should be voluntary. Favorable publicity and release from some routine tasks are generally appreciated by the officers.

Franternization

The problems that can arise with young officers and impressionable, even younger Explorers of the opposite sex can generally be avoided by proper management. Department guidelines or procedures should specifically define the extent and nature of participation. Enforcement of these procedures helps eliminate abuse.

The National Office suggests that a policy of assigning Explorers to an officer of the same sex has proven very successful. In situations where this is not practical, they suggest assignment to significantly older officers.⁸

Department Procedures

The BSA recommends specific policies be instituted by each department sponsoring an Explorer post. The general guidelines recommended by BSA are:

- 1) Membership in a law enforcement Explorer post is open to young adults age 14 and in high school through age 20.

- 2) Parental approval including signatures by the Explorer and his/her parents on a general liability release form.

- 3) A check of the applicant's background to determine that the individual has not been convicted of a serious crime or of moral turpitude.

- 4) A scholastic standard requiring minimum grades for entry and

continuance.

5) Good health

6) Successful completion of a recognized Explorer basic academy, or other similar training.

7) Specific guidelines for determining the degree of Explorer involvement in police activities.

a. The department should ensure that Explorer involvement is meaningful, but at the same time, restrictive enough to preclude unnecessary exposure to potentially dangerous situations.

b. Federal and state regulations regarding privacy and confidentiality mean that police agencies must carefully consider Explorer involvement in such activities as interrogations, searches and seizures.

8) Every law enforcement agency should establish uniform dress and appearance codes. This does not mean exact conformity with department hair regulations for uniformed officers.

9) As non-commissioned volunteer personnel, Explorers are neither expected to utilize nor carry firearms or nonlethal weapons such as chemical mace or batons.

In addition to these general guidelines, the BSA recommends a specific set of guidelines for the ride-along program. BSA suggests three reasons for adoption of the ride-along program.

1) To provide the law enforcement Explorer with a firsthand knowledge of the patrol function as well as a broader knowledge of basic police procedures.

2) To supplement classroom training in basic police procedures through observation and conversation with police officers during their performances of routine patrol functions.

3) To foster mutual respect between community youth and the criminal justice system.⁹

Every law enforcement agency should establish a detailed written procedure for its ride-along program. Each participating agency to minimize its risks should formalize a procedure that maximizes the discretion of on-site commissioned personnel. BSA recommends the following minimum guidelines:

1) Prior to ride-along involvement, Explorers receive orientation consisting minimally of post guidelines, geographic area responsibility, traffic and patrol functions, and communications and radio procedure.

2) At all times, the duties of Explorers will be under the direction of the officers with whom the Explorers are riding.

3) Explorers are observers and as such should not:

a. Assist in criminal interrogations.

b. Accompany the ride-along sponsor inside any dwelling, structure or building except the police station or for meals while performing ride-along missions.

c. Leave the vehicle, except upon specific instruction of the officer providing the ride-along experience.

d. Assist at the scene except as specifically directed by the ride-along officer.

4) Explorers must be punctual and report at assigned times. A sign-in log should be maintained for monitoring participation.

5) A notarized waiver of liability with an updated list of cleared Explorers should be on file in the department and available to shift supervisors responsible for ride-along assignments.

6) The officers with whom the Explorers are scheduled to ride

should be thoroughly familiar with objectives of the L. E. Explorer program and, specifically, the ride-along program.

7) When policy conditions or the judgement of on-site commissioned personnel indicate that it is appropriate to terminate Explorer participation in a particular police activity, pre-established methods for disengaging ride-along participants should be used. Each department must consider its own needs and public expectations in developing options.

In addition to the BSA suggested guidelines, departments may wish to formalize procedures to address some of the mentioned concerns, or to adapt the program to fit their particular department.

SUMMARY AND GENERALIZED CONCLUSIONS

While L. E. Exploring is not designed to be utilized as a replacement, or even a supplement, to the Law Enforcement role, it is a system that provides interested career-oriented youth who can provide expanded department services, or assume limited non-enforcement tasks, freeing officers for more critical functions.

It is an opportunity to develop a positive program that reaches the youth, their parents, and the entire community. Increased public awareness, trust, and regard for police and youth alike are natural consequences.

Costs are negligible or non-existent, liability coverage is generous and provided by BSA, rate of officer acceptance is high, and problem areas have been recognized with tried remedies available.

The results of the program are a multiple of the effort expended. Eager explorers providing manpower or supplementing programs present a positive image of both the department and the explorer.

The L. E. Explorer program represents resources, especially with perpetually limited police budgets, that deserve consideration by police executives.

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NOTES

1. William Bish, "Exploring Law Enforcement," The Police Chief, February 1984, 26.
2. Statistics provided through 30 June 1990.
3. District Guide to Exploring (Irving, Boy Scouts of America, 1980), 1.
4. The BSA Council and the sponsor must approve all money-earning projects.
5. Both volunteers and professionals.
6. Law Exploring, Post Organization and Program Techniques (Irving, Boy Scouts of America, 1983), 16.
7. BSA provides regular coverage to all participants and will provide extra special event coverage upon request.
8. It was felt by BSA executives that based on their information this occurs with much less frequency than police executives might fear.
9. Law Enforcement Exploring (Irving, Boy Scouts of America, 1986), 5.

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