The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas

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**Texas Police Chiefs Association:
Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program**

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**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

The Texas Police Chiefs Association's Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because it gives agencies the opportunity to professionalize the services they provide to their community. For many years, the only way to reach this goal was to become accredited through an outside organization. For small agencies with minimal personnel and small budgets, reaching an accredited status has been especially difficult for several reasons.

The only accreditation process for law enforcement has long been the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) (CALEA, 2009). CALEA was formed in 1979 by the International Association of Chief's of Police, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, the National Sheriff's Association, and the Police Executive Research Forum. CALEA has up to 459 standards which an agency must meet in order to gain the accreditation status. The standards assist law enforcement in creating policies that were accepted by the organization and proved the agency has met the minimal accepted practices in the police profession. CALEA does not dictate how the policies are written but only that the agency has such policies in place. This is how the standards are met. The process is demanding and expensive, especially for small agencies. Recently, the Texas Police Chiefs Association created the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program. This program substituted standards with their own best practices. These best practices were fewer and unique to Texas law enforcement. There are currently 154 best practices compared to the 459 standards used by CALEA. The program is less expensive and did not require as much time from the agency's personnel.

The purpose of this research is to help agencies decide if the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program is right for them. It will also inform agencies of the process of becoming recognized by the Texas Police Chiefs Association. The method of inquiry used by the researcher will include a review of articles, Internet sites, journals, and program manuals. The research will also include a survey distributed to agencies already accredited or recognized.

The researcher discovered that agencies are searching for ways to move law enforcement from a vocation to a profession. The recognition program does give agencies an option that is simpler and less cost prohibitive for smaller departments. The research also showed command staff should involve all personnel in the process and allow them to participate, even on a small scale. The recognition program has fewer standards that address the department's policies and procedures, and these are unique to Texas law enforcement.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem or issue to be examined considers whether or not law enforcement agencies should consider the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program by the Texas Police Chiefs Association in order to become accredited. Accreditation for law enforcement has been around since 1979 but was limited to those departments with larger budgets and plenty of manpower. Accreditation is sought by many disciplines, including health, legal, and some private sectors. Since 1979, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies was the only to offer such a program to law enforcement. Now Texas law enforcement has a second option to gain accreditation status. The Texas Police Chiefs Association offers the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program to departments as a way of becoming accredited. Many agencies are searching for ways to change the perception of law enforcement as a blue collar job. Departments are also searching for guidance in writing their policies and procedures.

The relevance of the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program by the Texas Police Chiefs Association to law enforcement is that there is a program that is designed specifically for Texas agencies. The program addresses Texas laws and rules set by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education on police agencies. The program is made for Texas law enforcement by Texas professionals and offers agencies an option other than CALEA's costly program. The purpose of this research is to discover how the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program can help agencies of all sizes in this state gain accreditation status. Law enforcement in Texas is moving towards a

profession that demands certain policies and training from the community. These policies and training can be reached with the help of such a program. The policies are put in place by the best practices, which cover use of force, pursuits, evidence management, and other important areas in law enforcement.

The research question to be examined focuses on whether or not this new accreditation program can help Texas law enforcement reach their professional standards and goals without straining budgets and overwhelming personnel. The intended method of inquiry includes a review of articles, periodicals, journals, and websites. A survey has also been used to help determine if being accredited helps an agency with its professional image.

The intended outcome or anticipated findings of the research is to demonstrate to law enforcement agencies in Texas that accreditation can be obtained, thus increasing professionalism in departments across the state. The recognition program was not designed to replace the CALEA accreditation but was created as a unique program specific for Texas law enforcement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Law enforcement will either be considered a profession or a vocation by the community. For many years, police agencies have struggled to move towards a professional occupation in the view of the communities they serve. The public has had difficult time recognizing law enforcement as a profession (Falzarano, 1999). One way to gain such a status is by setting high standards for the department through an accreditation program. In 1979, four major law enforcement associations combined efforts to begin the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc.

(CALEA). These agencies were the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) (Wilcox, 2004). The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies offered the first of these programs. Many agencies never participated or, those that did, eventually dropped out for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons were that the CALEA program became too costly and strained police personnel beyond what they could handle. Some agencies found the benefits were not worth the sacrifice and eventually dropped the program. The CALEA program was achieved by complying with up to 459 different standards, depending on the size of an agency. These standards were proofs of compliance an agency would keep as a file to show they were performing a certain task.

The Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program is similar to the CALEA model but was written by Texas law enforcement professionals and is tailored for Texas issues. Instead of having "standards" the recognition program is a voluntary program that uses the term best practices. An agency finally gains "Recognition" status when they comply with the current best practices according to the size of the agency and its functions. The best practices cover a number of key issues in law enforcement, including police pursuits, civil rights, use of force options, and patrol functions. A big difference between the CALEA program and the recognition program is that it is written specifically for Texas police. CALEA also offered a recognition program that was somewhat simpler than the accreditation system, but it was still too costly (Texas Police Chief Association, 2007).

There are many benefits in obtaining recognition status. The policies and procedures that are implemented by a chief executive officer help ensure police services are delivered in a professional and proper manner. Abraham Lincoln said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." Police are given great powers and authority. The police have the authority to stop and question citizens, the authority to arrest and seize property, and, at times, the right to use force to obtain their objectives. Many times, officers work alone without or with little supervision. The decisions they make greatly affect the department, the officer and the community. The recognition program ensures the department has appropriately equipped the officer and given him sound policies and guidelines to follow (TPCA, 2007).

According to Wilcox (2004), there are a number of benefits for choosing to become accredited. By having sound and fair policies, agencies can control liability insurance costs. Insurance companies will support and cover departments who are part of a program that enables them to have directives in place. This benefit is reached by instituting the best practices and, in turn, will help lower costs and premiums. A department that reaches accreditation status holds its officers responsible for violating the policies and directives obtained through the program. One example of a best practice that must be met by a department is simply creating an organizational chart. The organizational chart tells the officer who he is directly accountable to. A department may not know the importance of such a chart but because of the program, its importance is discovered. City managers, mayors, and council members should also be educated about the program. They should attend an overview of the program, which

will help them understand it and help support the agency in gaining their accreditation. The agency can then share the program with citizens of the community. The citizens can share their concerns and see how the program can help the agency provide better policing and community services.

A myth that is believed by many agency administrators is that the recognition program will not allow them to manage the agency. In contrast, the program simply ensures the policies address the critical aspects an agency should already be reviewing. It may also help an agency address certain aspects or issues that may have not been thought of before. The program does not dictate to the administrator how to write the policies but simply requires that certain policies be in place.

The city administration and citizens of the community can be assured the department is working under the latest and current best practices. Another benefit that was discovered with the recognition program is the networking that has occurred across the state among different agencies. Although policies will differ depending on many factors, agencies may become uniform and possibly standardized with their approach on writing these guidelines.

METHODOLGY

The research question to be examined considers whether or not the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program will help an agency obtain an image of professionalism. The researcher hypothesizes that an agency that obtains recognition status will gain a sense of proficient and skilled image. The method of inquiry will include a review of articles, magazines, articles, and websites. The instrument that will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding the subject

of the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program will include a questionnaire that will compare the amount of agencies that are part of the recognition program or the CALEA program. The size of the questionnaire will consist of 11 questions, distributed to different participants from the Texas law enforcement community. The questionnaire will be distributed to participants who work under the recognition program and to those who are not. The questionnaire was sent to 50 participants of different organizations. The participants were chosen by how much they knew of the program. The participants had to know what the program was about and how it could affect their agency. The researcher hypothesizes that officers who are not "Recognized" believe such a program will help them gain a professional status.

The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in 19 responses from the participants. The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by the researcher to identify if agencies are for or against any type of accreditation process. Agencies must first commit to make changes to their policies and procedures. The agencies will have to find financial support and dedicated staff to help sustain the program.

FINDINGS

The questionnaires were returned from participants that were either working under the recognition program or knew about it but were not participating in the program. Participants were asked if their department was currently working with the recognition or accreditation program. The survey showed that 63% of the departments currently had a program. Thirty-seven percent of the departments were not currently involved with any type of accreditation program.
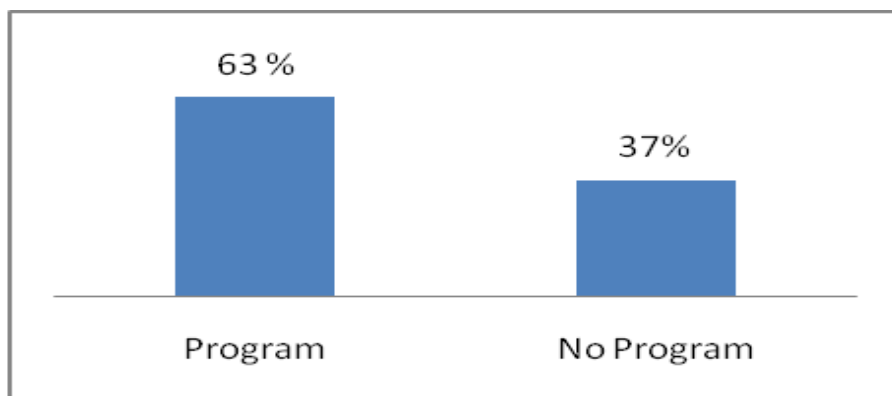
Figure 1. Percentage of departments with or without program.

The research asked whether the participants understood what the program stood for and if the program could help them have a sense of professionalism with their department. Unfortunately, 32% of officers have little knowledge about the program according to the questionnaire. The officers commented they did not understand enough about the program. Administrators and program managers should involve as many officers as possible with the program in order to educate them and show the importance of the program. Having officers help with finding the standards will show them the reason the program exist in the first place. The research questions showed that officers were part of large and small communities. Officers who responded were also employed by large and small agencies. According to the surveys, there were six agencies which had a population of 20,000 or more. This was the most common population. There were four agencies that worked in a community of a population less than 10,000. There were no surveys indicating a population of thirty or forty thousand. The majority of departments, at 37%, had 20 or fewer officers. Twenty-one percent of departments had 50 or fewer officers. The other 42% of departments had 50 to 200 officers. Figure 2 shows the other populations cited in the survey.
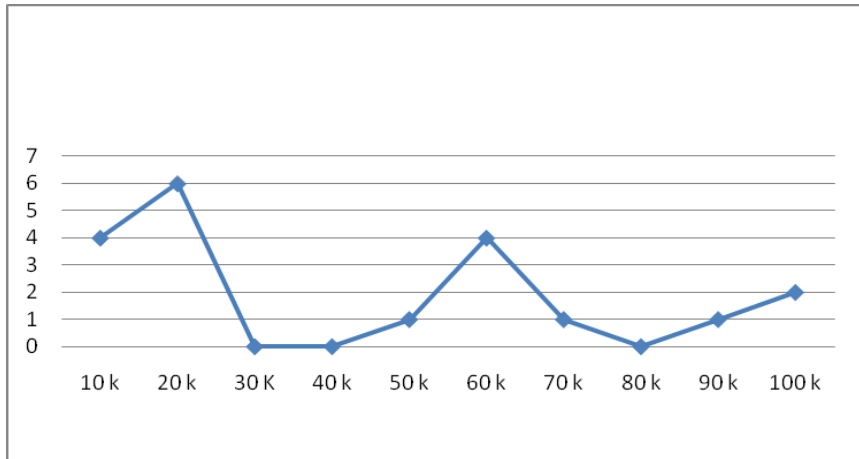
Figure 2. Number of agencies and the population they serve.

Two-thirds of the participants who responded stated the program was positive for their department but stated it was difficult to determine if the program was helping in reducing crime. Only one participant responded that there was no positive effect from the program to their department. One-third of the participants were directly involved with the program if their agency was recognized or accredited. Fifty-eight percent of the participants said they would recommend the program to another agency.

Figure 3 shows that 84% of the participants believed the program could help them gain a professional status and help their agency in a positive manner. The participants commented on how the recognition program helped them write policies and that those guiding principles allowed for a more effective delivery of services to the community.
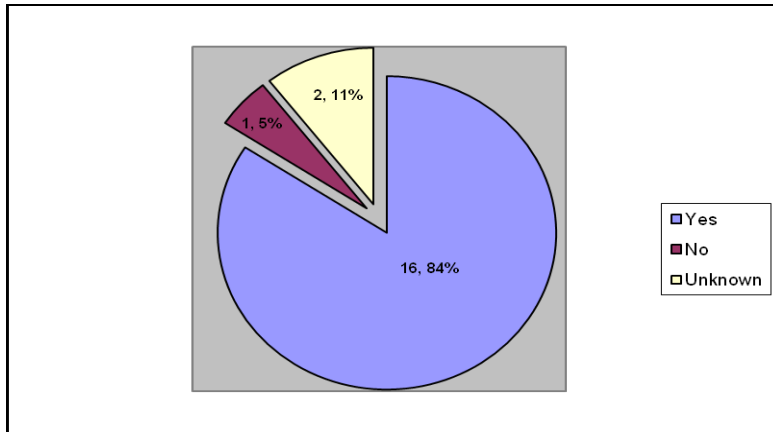
Figure 3. Percentage of participants who believe professionalism is gained through recognition program.

The questionnaire included a question that asked participants about any negatives attributed to the recognition program and had extra space for comments. Forty-two percent of participants responded there was a negative effect from the program. A negative response that was discovered was the amount of work it takes to achieve the recognition status. The participants commented the program can become quite demanding on the entire agency. The recognition program requires that an agency assign a program manager. The program manager is usually someone in the upper administration who is trained and helps keep the agency in compliance with each standard or best practice. The program manager will inevitably seek the help of others within the agency. The program manager needs help in finding proofs for each best practice. The proofs can consist of a memo, training roster, or certificate showing the agency is compliant in a specific area.

Participants wrote that the administrators spend a great deal of time preparing for the final review. The review consists of a team of facilitators who are sent to the agency to review the operations, policies, and proofs, which show the agency is meeting the best practices set out by the recognition program. The facilitators are usually a team of

command staff who are also involved in the recognition program in their own agency and have an expertise with the program. The team of facilitators will send a final report to the TPCAF Recognition Committee who will vote whether or not to award the agency with the recognition status (Texas Police Chief Association, 2010).

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not participants consider their department's image as being more professional because of their involvement with an accreditation or recognition program. The purpose of this research was to determine if the recognition program could bring benefits to agencies of all sizes in the state of Texas. The research question that was examined focused on agencies that had a recognition program or had accreditation status. The researcher hypothesized that most participants would agree that such a program could bring a better image of professionalism to the field of law enforcement.

The researcher concluded from the findings that about half of the participants were involved with the recognition program and were already accredited through CALEA. The majority of the participants agreed the recognition program was beneficial and assisted agencies in writing comprehensive policies that reflected a better image for the agency. The findings of the research did support the hypothesis. The reason why the findings did support the hypothesis are due to most of the participants being staff who were familiar with CALEA's accreditation process or had heard of the Texas Police Chief's Recognition Program. The recognition program addresses training issues and encourages agencies to better equip their officers. Providing officers with equipment is sometimes not enough. A department must train in order to keep a professional staff

that meets the demands of today's law enforcement challenges. Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted because the recognition program is new and not everyone has been informed about its benefits. The research was also limited because professionalism can be hard to measure. This research paper can be used as a resource for agencies seeking recognition status.

The study of the recognition program is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because it will provide information to agencies who are willing to conduct a self assessment and improve the way they deliver police services to the citizens they serve. It is a way to change the stigma law enforcement has had and moves this field into the area of professionalism. The recognition program provides the agency with something they can provide to the community, which shows they are meeting the best practices in law enforcement. The program has been designed for all agencies to gain the recognition status regardless of size. There are currently 31 recognized agencies that have met the best practices and another 33 are in the process (TPCA, 2010).

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APPENDIX 1

Research Questionnaire

This survey is for research being conducted for the completion of the requirements of the Leadership Command College of the Law Enforcement Institute of Texas. The words Recognition and Accreditation are used interchangeably in this questionnaire. Most are familiar with the Accreditation process.

Project Name:	Texas Recognition Program by Texas Police Chief's Association
Researcher's Name:	Ray Resendez/Canyon Police Department

	Criteria		**Comments**
1	Population		
2	Number of Officers		
3	**Part of:** Texas Recognition Program CALEA Accredited Department CALEA Recognition Program Unknown	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
4	How Long Recognized/Accredited		
5	Do you understand the Recognition Program?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
6	Do you believe the Dept. is or would be more professional because of the Accreditation status? How	☐ Yes ☐ No	
7	Have there been any positives because of the accreditation status?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
8	Have there been any negatives because of the accreditation status?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
9	Has the Recognition Program reduced crime in your city? How?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
10	Are you personally involved with the Recognition Program?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
11	Would You recommend the Recognition program to another agency?	☐ Yes ☐ No	

Thank you very much for your assistance and input with this research project.