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Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas

The Development and Implementation  
of the Comal County Sheriffs Office  
as an TCLEOSE Agreement Training Provider

An Administrative Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
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by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The Comal County Sheriff's Office has doubled in size in the last six years. There is a need to design and implement an in-service training program for these officers. One of the tasks of this research was to determine how an agency could petition TCLEOSE for an agency training agreement number and to design an in-service training program for its officers.

Law enforcement training is an integral part of each officer. The training they receive is what makes them who they are, how they act or react, and what they will do when the circumstances or situation dictates. Each officer deserves the best training they can, for it is this training that they rely on and the tactics they have been taught.

Literature researched concerning petitioning TCLEOSE for a training number revealed a "Needs Assessment Application" and an "Application for Training Provider." During the course of the research both were completed resulting in the Comal County Sheriff's Office being awarded its own training provider number.

The cost of implementing an in-service training program will be minimal. The Emergency Operation Center when not in use can be used as a classroom. The state of the art facility already has the multi-media equipment needed for modern training. The training budget allotted can now be used to bring in instructors from outside sources to instruct training for the entire office. The Sheriff's Office has over 45 police instructors who may now instruct their specialized fields to other officers within the agency, who will now obtain training credit. The training budget may also be spent more wisely on specialized training for officers that may not be received within the agency.

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## **Introduction**

At the present time the Comal County Sheriffs Office is considering the development and implementation, of it's own law enforcement training provider program. In the last five years the number of personnel commissioned by the Comal County Sheriff's Office has almost doubled. Currently there are qualified experienced personnel that could provide in-service training to deputies and correctional personnel. but there is no efficient time saving way to report the training to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education, (TCLEOSE, the Commission).

There are a number of factors to be considered in this decision such as manpower, time, budget, space, and the need for in-service training. Law enforcement agencies may apply for a needs assessment to the Commission for consideration to become a training academy or an agreement training provider. The Commission has not "been in the habit" of assigning training numbers to agencies due to the fact of improper reporting of training that has not been instructed. Another reason cited by the Commission for not assigning numbers is surplus academies in the agency's geographical area.

The goal of this research is to determine if the Comal County Sheriff s Office would benefit from its own training academy and the proper procedure for applying to TCLEOSE for an agency training number. This training number is very important in the fact that it is the agreement between the agency and the Commission that allows in service training within the agency it is assigned. The information collected will be submitted to the sheriff s office administration for review to determine what course should be taken

Research will be sought through publication databases at the Sam Houston State University and Southwest Texas State University libraries. A telephone survey of equal size surrounding agencies will also taken to indicate geographical need. The data will then be reviewed for content and that information recorded. It will also be necessary to interview in person and by phone liaison specialists with the Commission to determine if the Comal County Sheriff's Office meets the criteria for licensing as an agreement trainer.

It is anticipated that research will support favorable findings that the Comal County Sheriff's Office would benefit from being able to provide in-service training to it's licensed personnel. Also, it is believed that training it's own personnel would save the sheriff's office time, money, and manpower shortages will be reduced. Further it is anticipated that this research will be submitted to the TCLEOSE in the form of a needs assessment to apply for an agency training agreement provider number.

If the Comal County Sheriff's Office meets the necessary criteria for application as an agreement trainer it will need to implement an in-service training schedule for it's personnel. This will save the Sheriff's Office time in sending officers out of town and more time can be spent on assigned duties and be more effective. The budget spent on sending officers out of town and for lodging can now be spent on in-service mandated TCLEOSE training and can be used more effectively on special-needs training for officers.

## **Review of Literature**

In-service training programs have changes significantly in the last four decades. In the past officers would complete peace officer training and once employed by their agency would be told by experienced officers to forget everything they were taught because they would learn everything they needed in "the real world" (Senna, 1990 as cited in Biggerstaff, 1992). Continued in-service training enhances officer's knowledge and contributes to the career development of professional officers (Clifton, 1992).

Professional officers today must possess a variety of skills and knowledge; they are social workers, legal advisors, problem solvers, and negotiators on top of being law enforcement officers (Doane, 1993). In 1989, TCLEOSE mandated required in-service training for officers in the State of Texas. This training was in specific areas set forth by TCLEOSE (Martin, 1994). Today those requirements have been enhanced. Current TCLEOSE rules state that officers must have at least (40) hours of continuing education each training cycle, which consist of (2) years (TCLEOSE, 2002[f]). Within this training cycle TCLEOSE mandates specific training in the areas of child abuse, family violence, sexual assault, sex offender characteristics, cultural diversity, and recently added in 2001, racial profiling and asset forfeiture.

In October of 2000, TCLEOSE asked the Comal County Sheriff's Office to use its new Emergency Operations Center to conduct a TCLEOSE rules and regulation course. Members of the Sheriff's Office were allowed to attend. During an interview with Gerald Koewn, he stated it was unlikely that would receive a training number from TCLEOSE if it request one. He suggested two ideas, the first being to conduct training and report it on an F-6 (TCLEOSE Report of Training) but warned this method would

only work temporarily. The second suggestion was for Comal County to look for a training provider that would allow it to "piggy-back" off of its number (Koewn, 2000).

The training coordinator from Comal County contacted Bill Fultz with the Alamo Area Law Enforcement Academy, a subsidiary of the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG). AACOG is where Comal County sends most of its officers for training. Fultz in several meetings had agreed to allow Comal County to "piggy-back", but during one of the last meetings Fultz wanted Comal County to sign an agreement contract that's content severely limited the training that Comal County could provide its personnel, citing that it was reducing money coming into AACOG (Fultz, 2001). This was unacceptable to the Sheriff of Comal County who suggested looking elsewhere.

Agencies wishing to participate and implement a multi-jurisdictional training program must sign contracts and appoint personnel to represent their respective agency and apply to TCLEOSE for a number that represents both agencies (Martin, 1990[b D. The problem with this is the agreement contracts between the agencies. Administrators especially Sheriffs are less likely to sign an agreement due to individual policies, and then there is always the possibility of a new Sheriff during an election year (Martin, 1990[a]). The management of law enforcement agencies may seek the potential of serving a broader purpose in lieu of the individual training needs of the agency (Haas, 1991, as cited in Ramirez, 1995).

David Hughdiburg a TCLEOSE training provider assessment coordinator was contacted. During a telephone interview it was brought to his attention the problems that Comal County was experiencing in a bid to obtain its own training number. He

suggested a letter in writing of the events to be forwarded to Dr. Fred Dozier or Dr Crain Campbell, the director and assistant director of TCLEOSE (Hughdiburg, 2001).

A letter in detail of the attempts to gain a TCLEOSE training number was sent to Dr. Dozier. In response to that letter Ed Lane contacted Comal County. Lane sent an agency training needs assessment survey. This survey is filled out by the agency and sent back to TCLEOSE. Its purpose is to weigh the needs of the agency to the training providers surrounding the agency seeking the training number (Stewart, 1996). The Sheriff's Office completed this survey and sent it to TCLEOSE, and the facility to be used for training was inspected several weeks later. In May of 2002 the Comal County Sheriff's Office received its own training agreement provider number from TCLEOSE.

Comal County did not seek an academy number due to the manpower required for a law enforcement academy. The difference between a TCLEOSE law enforcement academy and an agreement-training provider is that an academy must have at least one peace officer school each calendar year. An agreement-training agency may teach any approved TCLEOSE course except for a licensing course such as peace officer or county jailer (TCLEOSE, 1996[b D.

This training number will allow Comal County to implement its own in-service training program. It will also open new avenues for training such as training over the internet, and training courses by compact disc (Smith, 2002). Comal County may put on courses for other agencies also and charge a fee but is not required to do so. This money may be put back into the training program but must be recorded for TCLEOSE. Similarly Comal County may apply for free training or grant money for its in-service program (TCLEOSE, 1995[a]).



## **Methodology**

Is there a need for the Comal County Sheriff's Office to develop and establish an in-service training program? Since January 1, 1997 the Sheriff's Office has almost doubled in law enforcement licensed personnel and is continuing to grow. If the current trend of growth in Comal County continues the Sheriff's Office will also have to continue to grow and must find a way to provide in-service training in a more efficient way.

An in-service training program should help reduce cost sending officers to outside training and cost for travel. At this time the majority of the training budget is spent to send officers to outside training providers, and for travel expenses. An in-service training program would also cut time of sending officers out of county and thus keep them in the county and reducing loss of manpower on shifts. Training would be monitored "in house" providing better and standardized training of officers.

During Module I of Leadership Command College a preliminary questionnaire was passed out to all 30 participants, representing 27 law enforcement agencies. The agencies represented were from all parts of Texas and was a good reference sample of different size agencies. The return on the preliminary questionnaire was one hundred percent. Upon returning from Module I another telephone survey was conducted of agencies surrounding Comal County and the six largest agencies in Texas:

- Bexar County Sheriff's Office
- Hays County Sheriff's Office
- Blanco County Sheriff's Office
- Kendall County Sheriff's Office
- Guadalupe County Sheriff's Office
- San Marcos Police Department
- Houston Police Department
- Dallas Police Department
- Fort Worth Police Department
- San Antonio Police Department

- Austin Police Department
- El Paso Police Department

There was a one hundred percent response rate to the telephone questionnaire. The purpose for the second questionnaire was to include more Sheriff's Offices, and agencies that have had their own in-service training programs.

The data collected will be analyzed and put into different categories. Categories sought are advantages and disadvantages of having an in-service training program, and how in-service training is scheduled and conducted. This material will then be transferred into a visual chart so that recorded responses can be seen.

### **Findings**

The preliminary questionnaire and proceeding telephone survey conducted produced much more than was originally anticipated. Agencies tend to design their own in-service training programs around their specific needs. Staying within TCLEOSE guidelines, agencies use a variety of different methods to train their personnel.

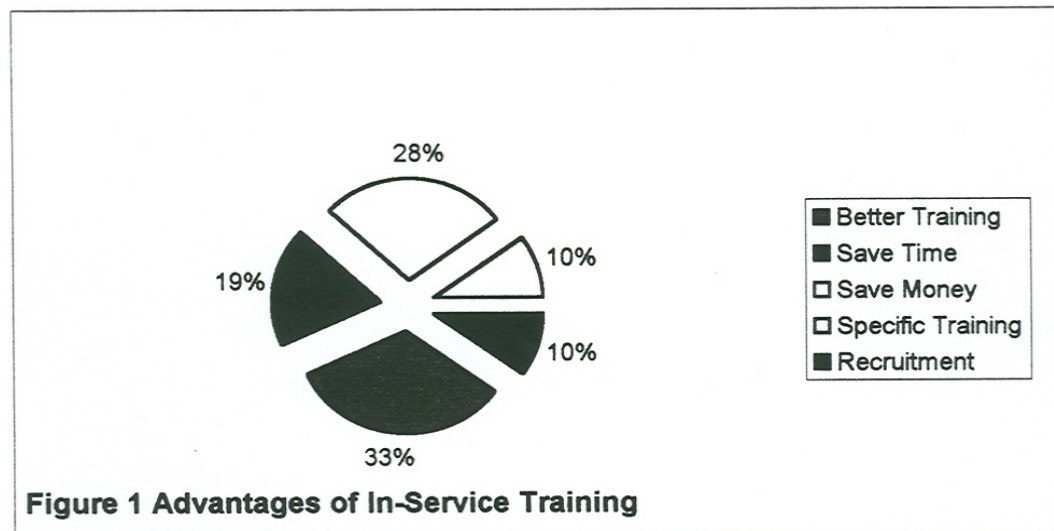
In both the preliminary questionnaire and supplement survey agencies were asked several specific questions:

- Does your agency have a TCLEOSE training academy or training provider number?
- Does your agency provide in-service training?
- By what method does your agency schedule its personnel for in-service training?
- What are the advantages to the agency having its own training number?
- What are the disadvantages to the agency of having its own training number?

During a conversation with TCLEOSE, the commission does not currently issue out agency training academy numbers (Faldyn, 2002). In the State of Texas there are too many law enforcement academies and the quality of training is diminishing, so the current trend is to grant training provider numbers on an individual needs basis (Miller, 2002).

Of the agencies that participated in the questionnaire only 50% had their own TCLEOSE training number, and of those 81% were larger metropolitan agencies. The number of agencies with TCLEOSE academy training numbers is falling and those being awarded a TCLEOSE training provider number are on the rise (TCLEOSE, 2001 [g])

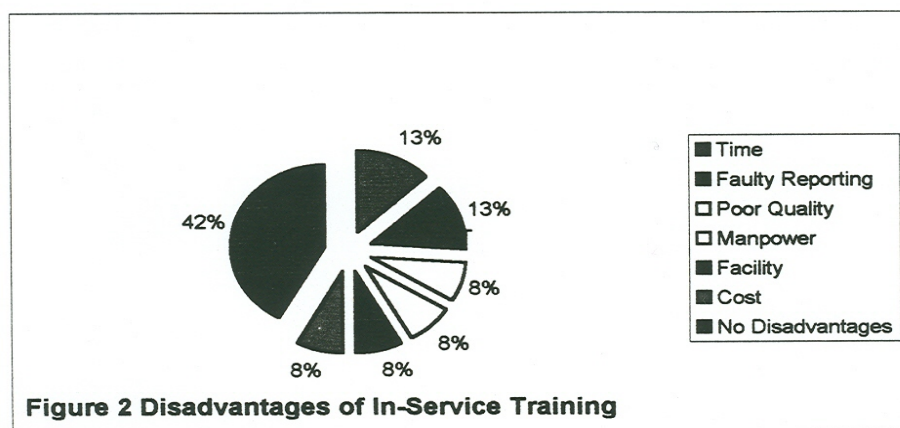
Figure 1 below shows the response to the question of advantages to an agency having its own training number.



Better training was the answer with the greatest response. Agencies responded that they could standardize their training so that all of their personnel received the same training from the same instructors. Agencies that have their own training number and an in service training program save time not only training their own personnel but save time on

normal patrol duties due to the standardized training procedures. Money saved on training personnel in-house could be used for other purposes. Some of the suggestions were bringing in outside instructors or specific training that an agency or in-house instructors were not qualified to teach.

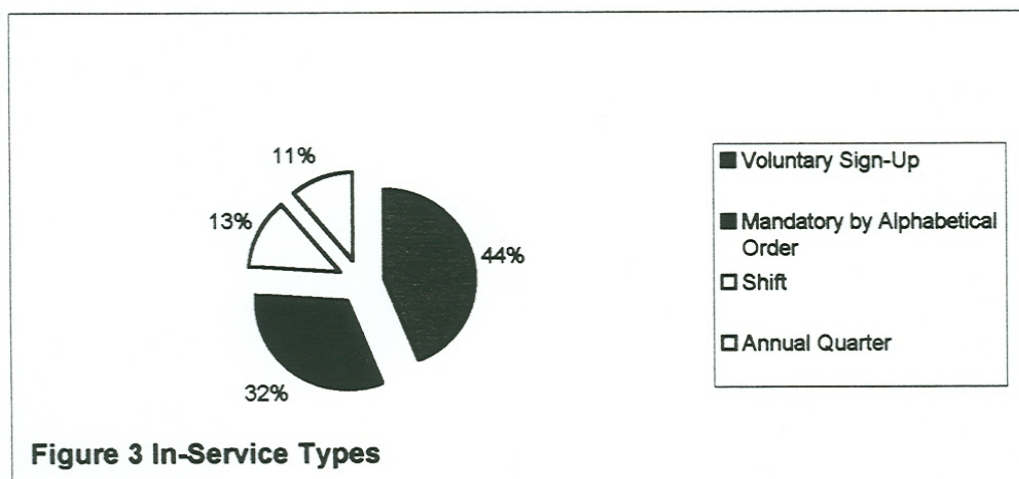
Figure 2 depicts the responses to the question; what disadvantages are there to an agency having its own training number and in-service training program. This particular question was one that always received a response as the chart shows. Agencies may have been pressed to give an answer, which may have lead to improper numbers.



As shown in Figure 2, 42% of the responses reflected that there were no disadvantages in having a TCLEOSE training number or an in-service training program. Time and faulty reporting tied as the biggest disadvantages stated. Time constraints could be taken care of by the implementation of a scheduled in-service training program so there would be no loss of manpower. Faulty reporting of training and poor quality of instruction could be negated by the appointment of a quality Training Coordinator pursuant to the rules set forth by TCLEOSE (TCLEOSE 2002 [e]). The disadvantage of not having a facility in the case of the Comal County Sheriff's Office is negated because it has one in place. The

cost of implementation would be minimal and monies spent on sending people out for training would now be spent on in-house training. Money could also be made by putting on instruction for other agencies, which could then in turn be put back into the training program

One of the major questions asked during the questionnaire and telephone surveys is how they scheduled in-service training. Figure 3 illustrates the different ways in which agencies schedule in-service training for their personnel.



There are no set guidelines that TCLEOSE requires for an agency to schedule in service. According to the data recovered from the questionnaire, larger agencies have mandatory in-service training scheduled by alphabetical order of officers last name. The training coordinators state that is the only way they can keep up with required training for so many officers. Most of the smaller agencies similarly have a voluntary sign-up for training due to the fact there is less personnel for them to keep up with. Some agencies reported that they have in-service training by shift so that all officers working a respective shift will all have training together. Training coordinators will schedule

training according to that shift. The least report way to schedule training was by annual quarter. Those training coordinators would have mandatory in-service training every three months and may be used in conjunction with the alphabetical order method.

The Comal County Sheriff's Office may want to employ several of these types of in-service scheduling in its in-service training program. Each of them has its advantages and disadvantages as listed in Tables 1 and 2. Most of the agencies that participated in the research had the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Database Distribution System (TCLEDDS). This system allows Training Coordinators to keep up with individual officer training, post training rosters via e-mail and much more. Comal County has already had this system installed for its training program, anticipating the implementation of its own in-service training program.

### **Discussions/Conclusions**

Is there a need to develop and establish an in-service training program for the Comal County Sheriff's Office? If the Sheriff's Office did establish its own in-service training program it would save time, money, help in the recruitment of new officers, and be able to provide more personalized and standardized training to its personnel.

During the course of research the administration of the Comal County Sheriff's Office determined that it did want to pursue establishing its own in-service training program. By doing so it would save money sending its personnel out for training and travel expenses. The money saved could be used to support the training program and bring it outside specialized instructors, thus also saving time in the process. An in

service program would bring standardization to all Sheriff's Office personnel, thus enhancing it.

Research supported the hypothesis that the Comal County Sheriff's Office would benefit from establishing its own in-service training program. Those agencies that helped in the research supported the hypothesis, and stated that establishing the training program would help in other areas such as avoidance of liabilities.

There were no hindrances during the course of research except the variety of different training programs. That proved to be a benefit due to the availability of different ideas and philosophies in the area of training. This will be helpful to the Sheriff's Office because it can take the best ideas of each to develop its program from the outset.

During the course of research the Comal County Sheriff's Office through all of its contacts and fact-findings applied for and has received its own training provider number. With the establishment of its own training number the Sheriff's Office will now begin designing its own in-service training. The establishment of the Comal County Sheriff's Office Training Center is going to benefit not only the Sheriff's Office but also all of Comal County. The time and money saved along with the training received will enhance the service of the Sheriff's Office on the community.

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