

The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas

The Development and Implementation of a
Supervisory Training Program

A Policy Research Project
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the Leadership Command College

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ABSTRACT

The development of a first line supervisors training program, not only for the Travis County Sheriffs Office, but also for any other police agency in this or any other State, is a natural and objective response to meeting the demands of the job of the first line supervisor.

The value of a first line supervisors training program to the Travis County Sheriffs Office can only be measured by the assured quality of supervision and inevitable success of the first line supervisor.

The purpose of this project is to assist the Travis County Sheriffs Office, in becoming a more progressive agency, while elevating the confidence and professionalism of the first line supervisor.

During the course of this project, law enforcement trainers as well as current police journals were utilized as methods of research. Because there is so little literature in place regarding the training of the first line supervisor, most of research was gathered by police trainers and piecemealed together by the use of aforementioned literature.

The need for a training program for first line supervisors is a "must do" as opposed to a "nice to do" proposition. In a day and age where accountability and responsibility are paramount, the first line supervisor must be properly trained to face the variety of scenarios that both he and his command will be subject to on a day-to-day basis.

It is recommended that all police agencies, particularly the Travis County Sheriffs Office, begin to put forward the steps to implement an intensive classroom and field training program for first line supervisors.

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Introduction

The purpose of this Policy Research Project is to show that the training of Police supervisors cannot be based on a hit or miss method, nor can it be left to chance. This Policy Research Project will show that the current procedures, which are in place to train newly promoted Sergeants, are both ineffective and antiquated. This Policy research Project will demonstrate a viable plan to both train and evaluate the performance of the newly promoted Sergeant / first line supervisors.

The issue that will be examined in the Policy Research Project will be how all too often Law Enforcement Agencies select supervisors based technical skills, that is their ability to write a good report or conduct a thorough investigation, and not their managerial skills. Unfortunately these newly select Supervisors fail far too often. They fail, not because they lack intelligence or motivation, but simply because no one has provide them with any kind of managerial and / or leadership training that is so vital to their new jobs.

It is the intention of this Policy Research Project to both address and educate the Administration of the Travis County Sheriffs Office with the findings and the research into this extraordinary problem.

Along with current reference material found in Police journals and managerial text, the sources of information that will be used to comprise this Policy Research Project will consist of supervisory training material already being used by Police Departments throughout the State of Texas.

The intended purpose of choosing this topic and completing this project is to develop and implement a supervisory training program which will insure that the community gets the protection and service that it deserves while the Police Officers get the professional status that they crave.

Historical, Legal or Theoretical Context

Prior to any real historical discussion of the training of the police supervisor, a little understanding to the promotional process must be obtained. The current road of promoting supervisors for the vast majority of this country's police agencies is very simply. First one must possess the seniority, have a high grade on a competitive examination, above average personnel evaluations and an acceptable score on a promotional examination. The candidate, should he / she meet the aforementioned criteria, is then placed on an eligibility list and then promoted when available supervisory positions are opened. In other, usually smaller, police department's police supervisors are promoted by administrative personnel based upon their perceived efficiency and supervisory aptitude. Once in the supervisory position the newly promoted first line supervisor is given his first supervisory assignment.

At this point in the newly promoted supervisor's career most departments felt (and as you will see most departments still do feel) that all of the prior police training, career experience and life experience, combined with very short field training indoctrination with an experienced supervisor, is enough to insure that the new supervisor is properly trained. Even in years past when society was not nearly as complex, liability filled and even dangerous, was this means of training police supervisors adequate. First line supervisors were, and still are, being trained by the supervisor that they served under, who, in most cases, was not properly trained. The perpetuation of inadequacy was handed down like an heirloom from first line supervisor to first line supervisor.

In recent years the first line supervisor has become an integral part of management. Because of their closeness to everyday operations and the citizens who they serve, executive -level managers are calling upon the first line supervisors to assist in the overall "decision making"

process of their organizations. The first line supervisor is confronted with problems and challenges that were unheard of even several years ago. The first line supervisor is challenged with the human relations aspect in dealing with a community and a police department, which are growing in various ethnic and racial compositions. The challenges continue as the first line supervisor is tasked with the responsibility of responding to a variety of tactical scenarios that seem to be virtually limitless in scope. The first line supervisor is further tasked with possessing beyond a working knowledge of laws, criminal procedures and departmental directives to insure the lawful, ethical and safe "day to day" operation of their command. All of these situations present new challenges to the first line supervisor and it would seem reasonable to assume that the problems will not only increase in number but will become more complex. Only through proper and adequate training will the first line supervisor be able to meet and succeed against these challenges. The importance of first line supervisors in their strategic role in police management is not in question. The only question is how to go about training the first line supervisor to fulfill this role.

Governmental agencies are prone to think of cost and benefit when it comes to the deployment of the tax dollar. Although many think of police training beyond the cadet in the academy as being expensive and redundant, the lack of training, especially the training of the first line supervisor, can be costly beyond any monetary loss. In a day and age when one mistake by a police supervisor can mean the life of an innocent person, allow a career criminals to go free, generate massive civil disobedience or create wide spread distrust of the police department, there is no room for an improperly trained police supervisor. Only the properly trained first line supervisors are viewed as efficient, effective and productive by the public that they serve. There is also no doubt that these same first line supervisors tend to lead with competence and self

confidence when they are properly trained. If supervisors are successful in the performance of their duties, it follows that the organization will become more effective and efficient. Only through managerial training does the first line supervisor function as a professional. Only when the first line supervisor functions as a professional does he lead the officers in his command to the successful completion of their assignments.

Training of the first line supervisor beyond the old "fend for themselves" mind set; that is the procedure in which first line supervisors learn their supervisory role exclusively from other supervisors, is critical in this theater of American law enforcement. The first line supervisor is the focal point between line officers and the upper-level police managers. If the police department's are to become more effective in dealing with today's complexities the first line supervisor must play a role in responding to the change that impacts the department. The first line supervisor can only deal with this change if he is trained to do so.

Review of literature or practice

Currently the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education mandates that all newly promoted supervisors attended a 40-hour Supervisors Training Course with the first 24 months after they are promoted. This training can also be completed prior to the promotion, if and when an employee or agency feels that the employee will be promoted at some time in their career. The Supervisors Training Course at the Travis County Sheriffs Office is an 80-hour training course comprised of topics such as workers compensation procedures and forms, rules regarding TCIC and NCIC, use of force policy, maintenance of employee development folders and timesheets. Within the 80-hour block of instruction the new supervisor, or supervisor to be, also receives training on management skills and the role and responsibility of

managers. Although this particular block of instruction is valuable in as far as overall philosophies of management, it falls short of in dealing with the hands on management concerns that are germane to the law enforcement field. Examples of this would be critical incident management, crime scene management, traffic supervision and investigative supervision to name a few.

After the completion of the supervisory training course the supervisor has meet the minimum training requirement for all supervisory personnel in the State of Texas. At no point for the remainder of their career is the supervisor mandated to meet any update or on-going training that would be considered supplemental to the aforementioned Supervisors Training Course. After an employee is promoted to the rank of a first line supervisor there is no procedure set forth regarding a structured field-training program. The newly promoted supervisor is given his first assignment, and his training for that assignment is the sole responsibility of the first line supervisor's immediate supervisor. Because there is no set training protocol in place, the training of the newly promoted first line supervisor is based upon the subjective opinion of their immediate supervisor. The requirements of the first line supervisor to his assignment are usually considered to be understood by the first line supervisor based upon their observations of the their supervisor when they were line officers. It is generally considered the responsibility of the first line supervisor to ask the appropriate question when confronted with an unknown situation. This hit or miss philosophy is furthered by the belief that there are certain "acceptable mistakes" for the newly promoted first line supervisor to make, and that after a brief instructional session those mistakes should not re-appear.

It is not uncommon regarding other forms of training for law enforcement agencies to go far beyond the minimum requirement set forth by TCLEOSE. In using the Travis County Sheriffs

Office example, Peace officer's assigned to the law enforcement division of the Sheriffs Office currently are required to qualify with their firearms on a quarterly basis. This is four times the minimum requirement, of the one qualification per year, set forth by TCLEOSE. The Sheriffs Office also requires all Deputies assigned to the law enforcement division to complete 40-hours of mandatory training per calendar year. The minimum requirement set forth by TCLEOSE is 40 hours every 24 months, half of what the Sheriffs of Office requires. Although the Sheriff Office offers training courses that would be of great benefit to the police supervisor throughout his career, there are no requirements by the Sheriffs Office to mandate the supervisor to complete anyone going training to deal with the ever-changing atmosphere of police work.

When conducting the research for this Policy Research Project it was discovered that minimum supervisory training in other police agencies throughout the State of Texas was not the exception, it is the rule. During a one-year period interviews were made with representatives with several police agencies in the State of Texas. Most police agencies met only the minimum requirements set forth by TCLEOSE and have no field-training program for first line supervisors in place. Only the larger Texas agencies, such as the Houston Police Department (Lt. Frank Miller, Personal Communication, June 1999) and the Austin Police Department, (Detective Todd Harrison, Personal Communication, June 1999) have the 80-hour training course, while mid range to smaller Departments, such as the Round Rock Police Department (Officer Robbie Cline, Personal Communication, October 2000) and Hays County Sheriffs Office, (Deputy Ramsey Garza, Personal Communication, June 1999) offer the 40-hour course. In every case, every agency contacted utilized the "trial by fire" training method, that is no formal field training protocol augmented by the subjective training practice of a mid - level supervisor, to train their first line supervisors. Even though the responsibility of training the fist line supervisor has rested

almost exclusively on the shoulders of the mid-level supervisor, the accountability of "the job not so well done" has traditionally fallen on the first line supervisor. In the next area of discussion it will be shown that this no longer the custom. The police officer, of any rank, not properly trained is the direct failure of the local government and Agency administrators.

Discussion of relevant issues

The current emphasis in the training of first line supervisors is without a doubt the expedient placement of the first line supervisor into his supervisory role. The mind set is one of personnel quantity as opposed to job performance quality. The mere fact that the current ideology dictates that it is understandable that the first line supervisor will make "acceptable mistakes" and in the process of correction, the first line supervisor will be trained on how to avoid the similar mistakes in the future, is flawed beyond reason. There is no concern with the effect that the "acceptable mistakes" will have on the way the police Department will be viewed by the society that it serves, served by the personnel that it employees, as well as the negative effect that it will invariably have on the first line supervisor who is, to a varying degree, destined to fail. These same officers, who as patrolmen and / or Detectives, generally excelled in their performance are now moving blindfolded through a labyrinth of new challenges with little guidance.

The implementation of a first line supervisors training protocol is a two-fold process. The training of the first line supervisor mirrors that of the recruit in regards to classroom training versus field training. The 80-hour supervisors training is the current training criteria of the more progressive police Department in Texas. However, the content of the training is often lack-luster in regards to training which is germane to first line police supervision. The emphasis of the

supervisory training should be one of supervisory training for the first line *police* supervisor.

This training should be an intensive 80-hour training course that requires competitive testing in order to obtain successful completion. The blocks of instruction throughout the 80-hour course should deal not only with the development of the conceptual and human skills that are needed for both managerial and leadership development, the instruction should also furnish up to date tactical training to assist in the development of the first line supervisors ability to perform and lead the officers in his command through varying critical incident scenarios.

Although many job related tasks can be taught in the controlled environment that is the class room, there are many tasks that are needed to be taught in the one on one situation that is a field training program. It is because of this need for a field training program that a comprehensive Supervisory Field Training Manual must be developed. This Supervisory Field Training Manual should be the primary tool utilized by those responsible for the field training of the first line supervisor. The manual should be designed to guide those responsible for the training through on-the-job training sequences. The manual should outline the proficiency level of the first line supervisors who are performing the specific assignments. The intent of the Supervisory Field Training Program is to provide a desirable structure to reinforce the basic principles of supervision, as well as develop the abilities need to perform supervisory duties once the 80 hour supervisory course has been completed. The use of the Supervisory Field Training Manual provides the Department, Office, or Agency with the consistency and continuity of supervisory training, as well as an instrument to insure propriety in the documentation of the first line supervisor's abilities. The required areas of competence should have a thorough task analysis and evaluation process. The Supervisory Field Training Manual would include categories of police work such as:

- Patrol Supervision
- Records and Documentation Traffic
- Supervision
- Investigative Supervision
- Supervision of Unusual Occurrences

Each category of training should be divided into areas related to specific field assignments.

These assignments should consist of very specific tasks. The trainer is required to document and sign off on each required task. There should be a Supervisory Field Training Coordinator to oversee the Supervisory Field Training Program. When a first line supervisor completes the entire training evolution, the Supervisory Field Training Coordinator insures that all required training has been completed to the minimum required proficiency level and then the first line supervisor is assigned to his command.

Intensive supervisory training could be viewed by some as excessive and expensive. However the lack of this training, when all social, ethical and professional instincts say that training is necessary can be costly beyond the imagination. Effective training will almost certainly reduce the frequency and severity of civil litigation. Police departments traditionally worried whether their policies or procedures were responsible for any deprivation of rights enumerated in the U.S Constitution. Now, State and Federal Courts have extended liability to police departments when they have determined there was a duty to perform and that failure to perform caused a loss or injury. One of the major areas of concern is negligent training. A working definition of negligent training is police who are either improperly trained or not trained at all. In a landmark Federal case (Owens v. Haas, 601 F.2d 1242 -1979), local governments, heads of agencies and supervisors have "an affirmative duty to train their employees." Two areas of negligence have been prime sources of litigation in recent years: "negligent supervision" and "negligent training." The courts have ruled that a deliberate indifference to supervision and / or training is proper

grounds for civil liability. In some cases, even meeting state mandated minimum-training standards might not be enough to avoid liability. The failure to provide training that is above and beyond the required minimum has been determined to be a "negligent failure to train."

Conclusion / Recommendation

The purpose of this research project is two-fold. The first purpose was to show that the current procedures of training first line supervisors are both obsolete and inefficient. The second was show a thorough and effective means of training and evaluating first line supervisors to meet the ever-changing and dynamic world in which society exists.

The ability of the law enforcement agency to show the public that it has done what it needs to do to insure that it's police supervisors are properly trained makes the establishment of a training program for first line supervisors relevant and applicable.

The current protocol for training first line supervisors in law enforcement is placing them with other supervisors who were, and currently are, improperly trained. The newly promoted first line supervisors are expected to make mistakes and they are responsible for finding answers to unknown questions. This perpetuation of inadequately would never be tolerated in the private sector where business people spare no expense in the training and cultivating their newly promoted supervisors. Only when today's law enforcement agencies realize the cost of not properly training first line supervisors, and the negative effect that it has on all of the law enforcement function, will these agencies be able to truly raise the level of their professionalism.

As the result of this research the following conclusions were made. Police agencies, as a whole, fail to properly train their first line supervisors. The level of this failure runs the gambit between mere oversight, all the way to wanton disregard of established moral,

ethical and professional standards, which are in place throughout other areas of law enforcement training. It is recommended that the Travis County Sheriffs Office adopt and implement both an intensive classroom and field-training program for the newly promoted first line supervisors. The development of the Field Training Manual should be done with constant attention to today's ever-changing role of law enforcement. The field training of the first line supervisor should be done with the emphasis on quality of training rather than expedience of training.

With the implementation of the First Line Supervisors Training Program newly promoted first line supervisors will no longer need to rely on the subjective opinion of their immediate supervisor to structure their training. The training of the first line supervisor will be the collective compilation of the entire chain of command. The Travis County Sheriffs Office and the citizens of Travis County will reap the rewards of a first line supervisor who is properly trained to lead and manage the men and woman within their commands. Thus insuring the level of protection and service that the citizens of Travis County, Texas deserve.

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