

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS

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Serving the Law Enforcement Community & the Citizens of Washington



Accreditation

A Way of Doing Business

For many agencies, accreditation is an event that takes place only once every three or five years. Agencies operating under this philosophy typically select and assign one employee as the department's accreditation manager who is responsible for the entire accreditation program. Problems for agencies operating under this philosophy typically include:

- Lack of support and involvement from command staff;
- Lack of understanding and support from other agency personnel/sections and;
- Lack of support when he/she is involved in the self-assessment phase

The accreditation manager in this position typically is solely responsible for the entire process which consists of collecting the information needed to develop and complete the mandatory annual reports as well as collecting all information needed for the accreditation files in order to prove compliance. If the manager waits until the accreditation date is near to collect the information they often time have difficulty locating three or five years worth of proofs of compliance.

In an effort to reduce or eliminate these problems many agencies are adopting the philosophy that accreditation *must be* “**a way of doing business**”. Implementing this philosophy should ensure the following:

- All command staff and managers will be knowledgeable and supportive of accreditation;
- Agency personnel will understand the benefits of accreditation;
- More personnel are involved in ensuring the agency is accredited and that it maintains its accredited status;
- Mandatory reports, inspections and audits are completed in a timely manner and;
- The agencies liability risks are reduced.

Following are suggestions for agencies that want to develop the philosophy that accreditation is “a way of doing business”:

- Accreditation must become institutionalized and include every component/section of the agency both in the self-assessment (initial accreditation) and during accreditation renewal.
- Agency command staff and all agency managers need to understand and support accreditation.
- Every department member needs to fully understand accreditation and the benefits accreditation brings to the department. Standards require that familiarization with the accreditation process is provided to agency employees as follows:
 1. To all newly hired agency personnel within a reasonable period (time-line created by the agency) after their employment begins.
 2. To all agency personnel during the self-assessment phase associated with achieving initial accreditation and each re-accreditation.
 3. To all agency personnel just prior to an on-site assessment associated with initial accreditation and each re-accreditation.

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Standards require that agencies have a system for ensuring that periodic reports, reviews and other activities mandated by applicable accreditation standards are accomplished. Every component of the agency (patrol, traffic, juvenile, detectives, records, support staff, jail, evidence, volunteers, etc.) must be involved. Each agency component should produce monthly reports that address mandatory accreditation reporting requirements. As an example, Patrol/Operations supervisors would report on the following: performance reviews completed, training classes/hours, roll call training issues/topics, equipment and personnel inspections and use of force issues and audits.

- Periodic reports (daily, monthly, semi-annually and annual) will be sent through the chain of command for approval and then filed in the appropriate accreditation standard folder.

Agencies should realize that after they have been awarded accredited status it is critically important to maintain the positive momentum that got them through the accreditation process and to keep accreditation on the agencies “front burner” throughout the year.