Accreditation is a progressive and time-proven way of helping organizations evaluate and improve their overall performance. The cornerstone of this strategy lies in the promulgation of standards containing a clear statement of professional objectives. Participating administrators then conduct a thorough self-assessment to determine how existing operations can be adapted to meet these objectives. When the procedures are in place, a team of independent professionals verify that all applicable standards have been successfully implemented. The process culminates with a decision by an authoritative body that the agency is worthy of accreditation. IACLEA accreditation is unique in that it offers campus public safety standards by campus public safety professionals.

Generally, the IACLEA accreditation standards identify “what” an agency must do, not “how” to do it. The majority of standards call for the development and implementation of written directives that articulate the agency’s policies, procedures, rules, and regulations. These directives serve as a proof of compliance to affirm the agency’s commitment to the standards. Other standards may require an activity, a report, an inspection, or other action. Standards may or may not be applicable based upon the functions performed by the agency. The agency must consider its mission, its legally mandated responsibilities, and the demands of its service to the community in determining which standards are applicable to the agency and how it will comply with them. Standards are considered applicable if the function is an integral element for improving the delivery of law enforcement, public safety or security services or professional management of an agency. Much of the value of accreditation is the self-assessment process, when agencies must contemplate what functions they do, or should, perform.

What is IACLEA Accreditation?

Accreditation is a progressive and time-proven way of helping organizations evaluate and improve their overall performance. The cornerstone of this strategy lies in the promulgation of standards containing a clear statement of professional objectives. Participating administrators then conduct a thorough self-assessment to determine how existing operations can be adapted to meet these objectives. When the procedures are in place, a team of independent professionals verify that all applicable standards have been successfully implemented. The process culminates with a decision by an authoritative body that the agency is worthy of accreditation. IACLEA accreditation is unique in that it offers campus public safety standards by campus public safety professionals.

Generally, the IACLEA accreditation standards identify “what” an agency must do, not “how” to do it. The majority of standards call for the development and implementation of written directives that articulate the agency’s policies, procedures, rules, and regulations. These directives serve as a proof of compliance to affirm the agency’s commitment to the standards. Other standards may require an activity, a report, an inspection, or other action. Standards may or may not be applicable based upon the functions performed by the agency. The agency must consider its mission, its legally mandated responsibilities, and the demands of its service to the community in determining which standards are applicable to the agency and how it will comply with them. Standards are considered applicable if the function is an integral element for improving the delivery of law enforcement, public safety or security services or professional management of an agency. Much of the value of accreditation is the self-assessment process, when agencies must contemplate what functions they do, or should, perform.

IACLEA Accreditation is a blueprint for best practices in campus public safety.”

Anne P. Glavin,
Chief of Police, California State University, Northridge
There are 5 steps to the IACLEA Accreditation process

1. Inquiry and Application – Departments interested in the accreditation program can initiate the process by a simple inquiry to IACLEA Headquarters. They are also encouraged to thoroughly review the IACLEA Accreditation Standards Manual. A familiarity with the scope and complexity of the standards will enable the agency to make an informed and reasoned decision about beginning the accreditation process. The application form is available on the Association website (www.iaclea.org). Upon submission of the application and the $150 application fee, IACLEA staff forwards a package to the agency, which includes a contract, a Department Profile Questionnaire, and the IACLEA Accreditation Process Manual, the guidebook for completing the process.

2. Compliance Development and Review – The department now begins a thorough examination of its operational practices and written policies. Written directives may have to be prepared or modified. Systems or procedures may have to be established to meet standards requirements and ensure accreditation maintenance. Proofs of compliance with applicable standards must also be identified, copied and filed. The department will typically be required to meet ALL applicable standards. The compliance documentation must be arranged in such a manner as to easily facilitate review by accreditation assessors. When the department has completed compiling all necessary proofs and is satisfied that it has met all of the IACLEA standards requirements, it contacts IACLEA staff to arrange for an on-site assessment.

3. Agency Evaluation – The IACLEA Accreditation Commission will select a team of assessors to visit the agency and review its suitability for accreditation. IACLEA will make all arrangements for travel and accommodations, without any expense to the agency. Assessors will be experienced campus law enforcement professionals or trained and certified assessors from related fields. The evaluation will generally consist of a tour of facilities, interviews with agency personnel and members of the campus community served by the agency, and a compliance review of applicable standards. The assessors’ relationship with the candidate department is non-adversarial, providing on-site feedback to the department as the assessment progresses. The assessors will prepare a formal written report and submit it to the agency and the IACLEA Accreditation Commission.

4. Commission Review – The final report will be distributed to the IACLEA Accreditation Commission for review. The Commission, the program’s governing body, consists of twelve voluntary members. Nine are IACLEA members representing both sworn and non-sworn agencies. Three additional members are drawn from allied associations, including the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO); the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA); and the American Council on Education (ACE). When the IACLEA Accreditation Commission is satisfied that the department has met all compliance criteria they grant accreditation to the department. Accreditation is for a period of four years.

5. Award and Maintenance – When the IACLEA Accreditation Commission grants the agency accreditation, the agency is notified via letter and a Certificate of Accreditation is forwarded to them. They will also be invited to attend the next IACLEA Annual Conference for recognition during the Award Ceremony. To retain the accredited status the department must maintain compliance with all applicable standards. Prior to the end of the four-year period, the department will be required to undergo another evaluation to confirm continued compliance.

“The accreditation standards are a constant reminder of ‘community policing’ and the service expectations of a university environment.”

Elgin Austen
Director, Campus Community Police Service, Western University
Reducing Legal Liability through IACLEA Accreditation

Negligent security cases are an emerging area of civil law as crime victims increasingly attempt to hold the premise owners and not the actual perpetrators civilly liable for crimes against them. Whenever a negligent security claim is brought against a university, that university and its campus public safety or security agency must demonstrate that it has established and adheres to reasonable security standards. Achieving and maintaining accreditation is one method by which campus security agencies can demonstrate compliance with professionally accepted standards of operation for law enforcement and security agencies. Accreditation, therefore, may make it more difficult to hold an institution liable for the criminal actions of a third party since the institution is able to demonstrate it acted with reasonable care in ensuring the security of its premises.

This assertion is supported by several independent studies by state league-sponsored, self-insured pooling organizations. These surveys examined the differences in claims and judgments against accredited and non-accredited police departments. In each case, the researchers found that professional liability was prevented and losses were reduced among departments that were accredited.

“Participating in an accreditation process forces departments to ensure that they adhere to appropriate standards regarding their facilities, equipment, training and policies,” said Attorney Elliot B. Spector, Principal for the Connecticut Criminal Law Foundation, which provides training to law enforcement agencies. “In the last five years, the most common administrative civil rights actions have been in the areas of failure to train, and inadequate or unconstitutional policies. A natural protection against such claims is the upgrading of training and policies, which should occur during the accreditation process,” said Spector, who has presented educational workshops on civil rights and police civil liability for the International Association of Chiefs of Police annually since 1992.

Accreditation can also help a department to defend against employment claims, including discrimination, harassment, and retaliation – which are all active areas of litigation. By incorporating standards addressing compensation, conditions of work, disciplinary procedures, and other employment issues, achieving accreditation helps ensure that campus security agencies have adopted sound employment practices.

There are three key elements in reducing professional liability. First, an agency should demonstrate compliance with a set of professional standards that reflect the best practices within the profession. Second, compliance with those standards should be thoroughly documented. Employees must be trained in the proscribed policies and procedures. Records of inspections, evaluations, investigations, and analysis must establish a consistent pattern of conformance to the standards. Written policies alone are insufficient if it is customary to violate them. Third, credibility should be established through voluntary participation in self-assessment, an independent review by outsiders, and continuing documentation of compliance.

Fees & Additional Information

An application fee of $150 initiates the accreditation process and provides the agency with the IACLEA Accreditation Process Manual, the guide to the self-assessment process. The application fee will be applied to the accreditation fee if the accreditation contract is signed within six (6) months of the application’s submission.

The annual fee for IACLEA accreditation is based on the institution’s full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment. For schools with an enrollment of fewer than 10,000 students, the fee is $3,000 for the first year and $2,500 per year thereafter. Institutions, whose enrollment is 10,000 or greater, pay an annual fee of $3,000. The annual fee includes access to all required forms and materials, as well as the on-site evaluation by a team of assessors.

The IACLEA website (www.iaclea.org) is a particularly good resource for general information about the Accreditation Program. Simply click on the “Accreditation” tab on the left side of the home page and it will give you access to several links, including the following: “Standards”, which has a link to the IACLEA Accreditation Standards Manual that can be downloaded and printed; “Agencies in Accreditation”, which identifies departments that have applied to the program, as well as those that have achieved Accreditation; and “Frequently Asked Questions”, which provides general information about the benefits, fees and procedures of accreditation.

Individuals, agencies or institutions, interested in IACLEA Accreditation, are encouraged to contact Jack Leonard, Director of Accreditation & LEMAP Services; (860) 586-7517 Ext. 558; jleonard@iaclea.org.
Benefits of IACLEA Accreditation

• Provides a professional benchmark for measuring policies and practices
• Assures the university administration, the community served, local law enforcement and institutional peers of a high quality of service
• Ensures procedures are documented and staff is given clear guidance
• Enhances the recruitment and retention of qualified staff
• Ensures that staff is trained and functions according to established policy and procedure
• Strengthens an institution’s defense against complaints and lawsuits
• Boosts institutional pride and employee morale
• Provides periodic, professional review of department operations, administration, and services