

## Accreditation Program Anticipates a Busy Spring

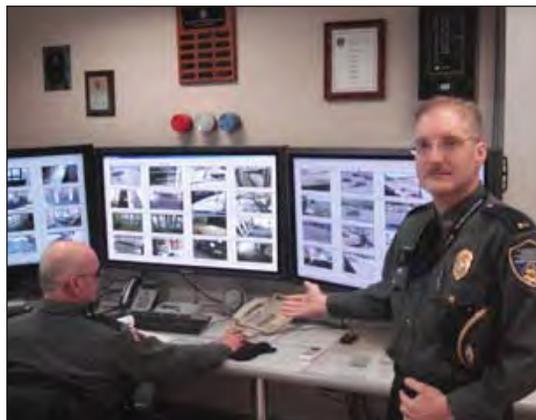
By Jack Leonard, IACLEA Director of Accreditation and LEMAP Services

Spring brings longer, warmer days, commencement exercises, baseball, and, for the IACLEA Accreditation Program, this spring brings assessments. From March through early June, as many as seven member agencies will schedule on-site assessments to achieve accreditation or reaccreditation. Additionally, five campus police departments, accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), are scheduled for joint IACLEA reaccreditation, following their CALEA reviews.

The on-site assessment signals the end of the self-assessment process, during which the agency developed written policies, refined operational procedures, and collected documentation showing its compliance with standards. The prospect of acquiring accreditation is nearing. It also means that a team of outside assessors will evaluate and critique the thoroughness and accuracy of the agency's efforts. This exposes the department to a comprehensive appraisal of their professional practices and their preparation for the review.

When a candidate agency determines that it is prepared for the evaluation, the IACLEA Accreditation Commission selects two or three assessors to visit the department and confirm its compliance with the standards. Assessors are experienced campus law enforcement professionals or trained and certified assessors from related fields. The evaluation consists of a tour of facilities, interviews with agency personnel, a compliance review of applicable standards, and receipt of public comment. The assessors will review all standards to verify compliance with the applicable ones, as well as confirm those standards that do not apply to the agency.

Contrary to some fears, the assessors' relationship with the candidate department is nonadversarial. The assessors provide on-site feedback to the department as the assessment progresses. Upon the completion of their visit, the assessors conduct an exit interview with the agency head and prepare a formal written report for submission to the agency and a



*Compliance with some standards, including those related to communications, can be confirmed during the agency tour.*

Compliance Review Panel (a subset of the Accreditation Commission), which makes a recommendation to the Commission. Then the full Commission votes on accreditation.

To achieve accreditation, an agency tour is not mandatory, but may be conducted to familiarize the assessment team with the agency's facilities and personnel. Assessors can meet key staff members, enabling them to return and conduct interviews about the application of standards and agency operations. Often, assessors will verify compliance with certain standards through observations made during an

agency tour. A complete tour should include all components, functions, and areas addressed by observable standards, such as property/evidence storage areas, emergency equipment, communications facilities, and vehicles.

Assessors need a separate workspace for the duration of their three-day visit. Each assessor will need an adequate work area (e.g., table top or desk) to review files and resource materials. A conference room or similar space generally provides ample quarters. The work area should also be equipped with a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart (on an easel), to permit the assessors to make notes and track the status of standard files.

The agency should provide a "reference table" with complete copies of the agency's policy and procedure manuals, orders and directives, statutes, regulations, and other documents used as proof. Most of the standard files will contain only portions of the written orders and directives; the assessors should have access to the entire documents in their proper context. Typically, an agency will stock a table or bookshelf with copies of the department's Administration and Operations Manual, the Emergency Procedures Manual, the University Staff Handbook, University Employee Policies, and General Counsel Policies, making it easily accessible in the assessors' workspace.

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Beyond reviewing the agency's standard files and observing its operations, the assessors are interested in any relevant input from the agency's constituents. A candidate agency is required to have a dedicated telephone line for two consecutive hours, available for public comment and agency employee input regarding the agency's compliance with accreditation standards. The agency must publish the phone number and announce its candidacy for accreditation at least 30 days prior to the on-site evaluation.

In order to ensure a smooth and successful evaluation, the department's accreditation manager and his/her team should be immediately available to the assessors. During their file review, they will likely have questions that can be quickly answered if agency staff is close by.



*Assessors conduct an exit interview at the conclusion of their site visit.*

The on-site visit is generally accomplished within three days. The first day consists of introductions, the agency tour, and the assessors beginning their review of the standard files. The second day continues the file review, with standard compliance being substantiated with staff interviews, observations, and ride-alongs. The final day is reserved for completing the review, gathering all of the documentation for the final report, and the exit interview, when the team summarizes its findings.

Agencies undergoing reaccreditation are asked to submit a portion of their files for review prior to the on-site visit. The candidate agency may mail a selection of files in order to accelerate the review process and to condense the on-site activities. The assessment team leader, in consultation with the agency's accreditation manager, will determine the number and identity of standard files sent to the assessment team for review. Agencies should be prepared to mail



*A static display of vehicles and equipment familiarizes the assessors with the agency's resources.*

approximately 40% of their applicable standards. Agencies may elect to use an electronic format of accreditation file management. IACLEA allows PowerDMS and PMAM to host the standards on their websites, and agencies can contract directly with the vendors for their accreditation management services. The agency can then give the assessors electronic access to the files.



*The assessor workspace should be quiet yet accessible – note bookcase in rear with reference materials.*

All of the agencies that achieve accreditation or reaccreditation during the past year will be recognized during the Awards Ceremony of the Opening General Session on June 23 at the 2017 Annual Conference in Milwaukee.

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