


CITY OF ARDMORE – POLICE DEPARTMENT

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: February 25, 2008
TO: Dan Parrott, City Manager
FROM: David Leonardo, Chief of Police 
SUBJECT: **POLICE ACCREDITATION**

I am pleased to recommend that the Ardmore Police Department begin the process to become an internationally accredited agency. Listed below is a summary of information available from CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies) regarding accreditation.

CALEA was established in 1979 through the combined efforts of four major police organizations that wanted to establish standards ensuring professional business practices within law enforcement. The founding agencies were:

- The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
- The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
- The National Sheriff's Association (NSA)
- The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)

Nearly 900 of the law enforcement agencies in the United States have joined CALEA and are at one stage or another of accreditation. There are over 8,000 separate law enforcement agencies in this country, so you can see only the most professional agencies have taken the challenge of meeting the level of commitment and service required in order to become accredited.

In Oklahoma there are currently only three (3) CALEA accredited agencies. They are the Tulsa Police Department, the Tulsa County Sheriff's Department and the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI). (There are approximately 175 law enforcement agencies in Oklahoma)

WHY SEEK CALEA ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is not mandated by any governmental group, but is a voluntary process sought by agencies wishing to distinguish themselves as being committed to professional business practices and the most current law enforcement service standards.

BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION INCLUDE:

- **Stronger defense against lawsuits and citizen complaints**

Accredited agencies are better able to defend themselves against lawsuits and citizen complaints. Agencies report a decline in legal actions against them, once they become accredited. According to CALEA, agencies that are accredited experience 17% fewer lawsuits than non-accredited agencies. In those instances where liability is found, CALEA accredited agencies pay out 33% less than non-accredited agencies.

- **Greater accountability within the agency**

Accreditation standards give the Chief of Police a proven management system of written directives, sound training, clearly defined lines of authority, and routine reports that support decision-making and resource allocation.

- **Staunch support from government officials**

Accreditation provides objective evidence of an agency's commitment to excellence in leadership, resource management, and service delivery. Thus government officials are more confident in the agency's ability to operate efficiently and to meet community needs.

- **Increased community advocacy**

Accreditation embodies the precepts of community-oriented policing. It creates a forum in which police and citizens work together to prevent and control challenges confronting law enforcement and provides clear direction about community expectations.

STEPS IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

■ Application

An agreement is executed between CALEA and the agency. Accreditation must be attained within three years from the date that the agreement is executed. I recommend that we execute an agreement sometime in the latter half of 2008.

■ Self-Assessment

After application, the initial step in accreditation is a rigorous evaluation by the agency of its policies and practices for compliance with CALEA standards. CALEA has established more than 600 standards which reflect the best practices in law enforcement. To obtain accreditation, an agency must comply with all of the mandatory standards and at least 80% of the optional standards. During the self-assessment stage, the agency compares its practices with these standards and makes necessary adjustments.

■ On-Site Assessment

After the self-assessment phase, an on-site assessment will be scheduled. Prior to the on-site being conducted, the assessment team will request that the agency send them copies of department policies and written directives so that the team can be better prepared to assess the agency. A team of three assessors will come to Ardmore to inspect the CALEA files, the facility, meet the staff and to inspect the operations of the Ardmore Police Department. Also during the on-site assessment, the assessors will:

- ✓ View a display of department facilities and equipment.
- ✓ Conduct a panel review of particular standards by interviewing police personnel.
- ✓ Interview police officers, civilian employees, and others.
- ✓ Ride along with officers to observe police functions.
- ✓ Staff a phone line for public comments.
- ✓ Conduct a public hearing regarding the Ardmore Police Department and the applicable standards.

■ **CALEA Commission Review**

After the on-site assessment, the assessors will prepare a report and make a recommendation to the CALEA Commission. If awarded accredited status, the award will be made at a national conference. Representatives from the agency are required to attend the conference to answer questions from the Commission and to formally accept the accreditation award, should it be granted.

■ **Maintaining Compliance and Reaccreditation**

To maintain CALEA accreditation, agencies must maintain ongoing file updates and compliance with all applicable standards. Departments must complete annual internal assessments and submit an annual report to CALEA certifying continuing compliance with standards. Assessors return every three years for on-site inspections. This ensures that the agencies continue to comply with CALEA standards.

PUBLIC ACCREDITATION FILES

As part of the accreditation process the CALEA Commission requires that agencies maintain a public accreditation file for review by any citizen or employee who wishes to know more about the standards and the agency's involvement in the accreditation process.

COSTS

CALEA assesses costs to agencies according to categories based upon agency size. According to CALEA our annual cost would be approximately \$5,500. The annual fee would pay for the costs of the CALEA on-site assessment team to come to Ardmore for our assessment inspection.

In addition to the annual fee there is a need for ongoing efforts to maintain compliance with all CALEA standards. Staff members need regular update training, and participation in CALEA Training Conferences is expected.

Memorandum to City Manager
Police Accreditation
February 2008

Additionally, in order to be successful with accreditation, the department must appoint an Accreditation Manager, an individual assigned on a long-term basis to manage the accreditation process. Further, accreditation involves everyone in the department from the Chief to the beat patrol officer, all of whom must become familiar with the principles, practices and standards which need to be followed in the day-to-day operations of the agency. Accreditation is a full-time commitment and philosophy, and not just a short-term program.