



## AN INSIDE LOOK AT AN ILEAP ASSESSMENT; AT A “FIRST IN THE NATION” AGENCY IN ILLINOIS

By Lt. Jeff Hamer



The College of Lake County Police Department recently attained two accreditations: from the International Association of College Law Enforcement Accreditation (IACLEA) and also through the Illinois Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (ILEAP). How did they do it? This case study may serve as a guide for other agencies going through the ILEAP process, which allowed the CLC PD to become the first community college police department in the United States to have both state-level and international accreditation.

I am not only the ILEAP coordinator for the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, but also an ILEAP assessor. As the Lead Assessor for College of Lake County’s initial Tier 1 assessment, my main goal was to assess the agency to see if CLC PD met the 67 ILEAP Standards. Once I began this assessment, I knew I wanted to share the experience with other accreditation managers and chiefs. Since the College of Lake County is an institution of higher learning, it stands to reason its police department would be a model for other agencies going through the process. Chief Tom Guenther and his staff were excited to allow his department to become this case study.

For those new to the accreditation process as a whole, the assessment is the agency’s final step in earning accreditation. The assessment punctuates months and months of policy alignment with the ILEAP standards, review of procedures, auditing those procedures, and gathering proofs of compliance to the ILEAP standards.

### Step 1: Application and Self-Assessment

To understand the work that is put into the assessment, consider the whole process. The ILEAP process begins with an application to the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police. Once payment of the ILEAP fees are made and the application is approved, the department may start the process. The procedure begins with a period of “self-assessment.”

The agency needs to designate an Accreditation Manager (AM) to oversee this process. My chief in Macomb designated me to do this

when I was a [RANK]. During self-assessment, the agency digests the standards and modifies its policies, written directives, and / or training manuals to adopt the ILEAP standards. The standards are divided into four general subject areas: Administration, Operations, Personnel, and Training. All are mandatory except for those that are “not applicable” by function. The two tiers are not based on size, but on how comprehensive the accreditation. Tier one has 67 standards and Tier 2 has 180 standards. The criteria, or standards, are policy development guidelines that represent a level of quality service delivery. The standards are developed by the ILEAP Accreditation Council, which include law enforcement, risk management, and legal professionals.

The self-assessment is complete when all pertinent policies have been revised to meet ILEAP standards. When the agency reaches this point, the Accreditation Manager creates paper files to host the written directives or uses Power DMS, a partner of the Illinois Chiefs, to manage the accreditation work electronically. CLC used paper files for the initial assessment but will migrate to Power DMS at a later date. Power DMS reduces the amount of time spent managing and working with the files. Power DMS also makes assessing the files more accurate while saving money on shipping files to assessors.

### Step 2: Review of Files by Assessors

After the self-assessment is complete, the agency grants assessors access to the files in order to complete a file review. The file review is done off site and gives the assessors the ability to verify many of the standards before the on-site assessment. This saves the host agency time and money during the assessment. Most assessments can be done in about two days with two assessors depending on the size of the department.

### Step 3: On-Site Assessment

The assessment consists of two days of department tours, vehicle inspection, staff interviews, ride-alongs, and an exit interview. Two



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or more assessors will be assigned and they will work with the Accreditation Manager to have all aspects of the on-site assessment scheduled over a two-day time period. There is a two-hour public opinion phone-in session, but no public hearing. The exit interview is conducted at the conclusion of the on-site. The AM functions as host and leads the assessors on tours and to the vital areas of operations, evidence / property, investigations, community policing, and any other areas of interest within the department.



The assessment is the capstone to months of preparation and hard work by the agency. A successful assessment incorporates vehicle inspections of marked and unmarked patrol units and inspection of special use vehicles like SWAT trucks, side by side UTVs, or K9 squads. This inspection permits assessors to observe standards specific to patrol operations like use of camera, lights, and sirens. The assessors also interview patrol officers about standard specific patrol behavior such as searching the prisoner compartment, use of seat belts, and MDTs.

The department tour consists of a static display and visit to relevant areas of the department. The static display collects the agency's rules and regulations, policy manual, training manuals, and collective bargaining agreements and puts them in the assessor's workspace. Specialized gear is also on display at points during the tour. Specialized gear examples are mass arrest bags, less than lethal tools, SWAT apparatus, or K9 equipment. The ILEAP files, or access to a computer if using Power DMS, are made available to the assessors for review during the assessment.

The tour should highlight standard specific areas like Records, Investigations, Evidence / Property, Communications, and any other area where ILEAP standards could be observed. Most notably,

the Evidence Room would be inspected for standards in place. Often assessors will look for an entry log, extra security measures for valuable evidence, and removal of evidence that has been dispositioned as no longer evidence worthy. Assessors will also participate in an evidence audit. This audit is designed to test the function of evidence room procedures.



Property custodians can expect Assessors to inspect evidence for proper packaging, storage, and the ability to locate evidence based on case number or other factors.

During the tour at the on-site, assessors will interview people, usually those who operationalize what is in the ILEAP standards: patrol officers, records clerks, detectives, supervisors, CSOs, telecommunicators, IT support, and many more. Assessors engage the sworn and civilian personnel in small talk, and also ask questions designed to review their understanding of the standards and their work flow. Assessors are not trying to play "gotcha" with anyone and they don't expect people to quote standards by chapter and verse. The assessors are trying to gauge how accreditation has impacted the worker or how the standards are put into action by the different workers with which



The Assessment Team met with the college president, Dr. Lori Suddik, to discuss how accreditation helps CLC PD. From left are Officer Harry Bekiaris, Accreditation Manager Sgt. John Lawson, Dr. Suddick, Assessor Jeff Hamer and Assessor Sara Balmes.



Assessor Lt. Jeff Hamer answers a call during the public call-in session.

we have contact. Assessors frequently try to identify what makes the agency unique. Assessors ask about future issues facing the department as well as what the agency excels at in the scope of policing.

Assessors participate in ride-alongs with officers. The intent of the ride along is to see the standards in practice. Many times, this is done through interviews with the officers. During ride alongs, assessors ask about accreditation as a whole, work experience, knowledge of policies and standards in ILEAP. Assessors are looking for an appropriate level of understanding about standards specific to the person's position in the agency.

The assessment sets aside time for a public call-in session. This call-in session allows the community to add input about the department's pursuit of accreditation. The host department is expected to publicize the event through traditional and social media outlets.



Assessors Jeff Hamer and Sara Balmes discuss the high points of the CLC PD Assessment during the Exit Interview with Chief Tom Guenther.

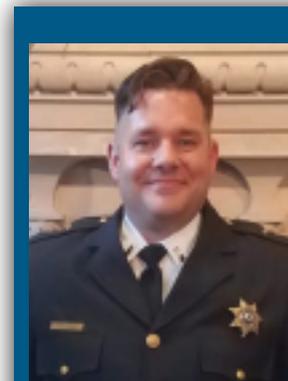
The exit interview is the final part of the assessment. During this phase the chief, or CEO, and AM and any other staff members vital to the accreditation project are present for a summary of findings. The assessors brief the team on the strengths of the department. The assessors also recommend any cost saving plans or more efficient ways to handle procedures. Lastly, the assessors give a clear recommendation on accreditation status. As an assessor and ILEAP coordinator, I always stress the theme of helping agencies through the process. If something during the assessment was not quite meeting a standard, we will devise an action plan to follow to get the problem ironed out before leaving the assessment.

The CLC PD did an amazing job with their ILEAP on-site. The work their team put in was evident. CLC PD's commitment to excellence and education is evident.

#### Step 4: Assessor's Report and Accreditation

After we left, we prepared a detailed report of the process undertaken by the CLC PD, and we submitted it to the association's Professional Regulation Committee and then the ILEAP Accreditation Council, which is chaired by David Bradford, the director of the Center for Public Safety at Northwestern University. Bradford understands municipal law enforcement, as he retired as the Glen Carbon police chief and served as the ILACP President in 2008. He was instrumental in creating the ILEAP program and writing the original standards in his leadership role in Illinois law enforcement.

The Accreditation Council reviewed our report and sent word to the department and ILACP office that the college police department had earned Tier 1 accreditation. The association recognized this achievement by going to the college and presenting the Accreditation plaque to the chief and his department. ■



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