CNA

Final Report

FIELD TRAINING PROGRAMS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Though effective training is an important part of all professions, it is especially crucial for those that include high levels of stress and life-or-death situations—like law enforcement. Accordingly, law enforcement agencies spend considerable time and resources on training—paying recruits to attend police academies, managing field-training programs, ensuring the resources and equipment needed to conduct in-service trainings along with sending staff or soliciting experts for external trainings. Field training is often described as the most important stage in an officer's career;[1] Time spent with a field training officer (FTO) is vital to a trainee's career development and helps shapes the culture of an agency.

Recently, American policing has seen a shift in its public perception as a result of highly publicized officer-involved use of force incidents. Some of the involved officers have been field training officers. Research shows that trainees' behavior is directly correlated to the field training they receive, with FTOs having a statistically significant effect on subsequent allegations of misconduct brought against trainees.[2] Further, a gap in research exists surrounding the effectiveness of field training practices, the impact of a field training officer on the recruit's retention of academy knowledge, and the processes by which departments select and recruit FTOs. This gap has led to a lack of standardization among law enforcement agencies on these topics. Despite the importance of police officer training, a common saying that trainees hear is "forget what you learned in the academy—the real learning begins now," signifying the disconnect between classroom lessons and the real-world setting.

CNA's Center for Justice Research and Innovation seeks to further explore police field training programs around the country in an effort to highlight promising practices, identify areas for improvement, and promote information sharing. The research team recruited six agencies for a case study to answer the following questions:

- Are participating law enforcement agencies using similar processes and procedures for their field training programs?

- Are there common qualifications and standards across participating law enforcement agencies that an officer must meet in order to become a field training officer?

- Are there common qualifications, experiences, performance standards, and accountability measures that officers must demonstrate in order to remain a field training officer in participating agencies?

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[1] Ronald. H. Warners, "The Field Training Experience: Perspectives of Field Training Officers and Trainees.," Police Chief Magazine, Nov. 2010.

[2] Ryan M. Getty, John L. Worrall, and Robert G. Morris, "How Far From the Tree Does the Apple Fall? Field Training Officers, Their Trainees, and Allegations of Misconduct," Crime & Delinquency. DOI 62, no. 6 (2016), doi: 10.1177/0011128714545829.

- What incentives are participating law enforcement agencies offering to field training officers?

- Does the participating agency's organizational culture provide an opportunity for open and honest feedback from the trainee to the trainer?

CNA conducted six to ten semi structured interviews with various members of each department, including officers in the field training program, officers post-field training, current field training officers, and former field training officers. We also reviewed written documents from each agency, including position postings for field training officers, written policies and procedures pertaining to the field training program, and training materials and curriculum pertaining to the field training program.

The research team identified themes that were important to address within each of the field training programs: Trainer Requirements, Preparation, and Incentives; Pairing of Trainers and Trainees; and Trainer Evaluation and Trainee Communication. We also felt it was important to highlight the perceptions about the field training programs from the perspectives of both the FTOs and the trainees.

Our research found a lack of standardization among these practices across agencies. Agencies required various levels of experience for trainers, trained FTOs using different philosophies, and motivated trainers using several methods. The majority of participating departments also did not use a formal method to match trainees and trainers. However, many agencies did strive to ensure each trainee was paired with only one trainer for each phase. When done correctly, this structure allowed trainees to experience different policing and teaching styles so the trainee could adapt and develop their own. Agencies required FTOs to document the training process and communicate with trainees using formal and informal methods. In some agencies, trainers also received formal evaluations from supervisors and trainees and in others, these feedback mechanisms were less formal or did not exist at all.

Trainers in the majority of participating agencies felt a tremendous amount of responsibility and pressure to successfully train the next generation of law enforcement. This pressure, coupled with an insufficient number of available trainers in the cadres, contributed to a consistent pattern of burnout in the position. However, there were trainers who felt that their agency provided enough support for them to remain in the role, despite their fatigue. There were also both positive and negative perceptions of field training from a trainee point of view. Although all trainees recognized the importance of field training, many felt unprepared for the shift from academy learning to hands-on learning. Those trainees with the most positive views of field training shared that their agencies clearly stated expectations for the program, supported the trainers and the trainees, and encouraged open and honest feedback.

Further research should explore standardization of field training programs, career outcomes of trainees as a result of their trainer, effective incentives for trainers, and methods of pairing trainers and trainees. It is our hope that this study will provide helpful information to the law enforcement field regarding FTO programs. We also hope that it will serve as a stepping stone to further analysis that will aid law enforcement agencies in improving FTO programs, thus improving the communities they serve.

INTRODUCTION

Though effective training is an important part of all professions, it is especially crucial for those that include high levels of stress and life-or-death situations—like law enforcement. Accordingly, law enforcement agencies spend considerable time and resources on training—paying recruits to attend police academies, managing field-training programs, ensuring the resources and equipment needed to conduct in-service trainings along with sending staff or soliciting experts for external trainings. Field training is often described as the most important stage in an officer's career;[3] Time spent with a field training officer (FTO) is vital to a trainee's career development and helps shapes the culture of an agency, as field training programs are a requirement for law enforcement agencies to become accredited.[4] Further, professional organizations such as the National Association of Field Training Officers[5] exist to develop and provide resources for field training officers and programs. Police departments across the country generally use two methods of field training: the San Jose Model and the Reno Model. The San Jose Model, which uses a form of behavior modification as a learning strategy, was developed in 1971.[6] The Reno Model, or the Police Training Officer (PTO) model was developed by the US Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS);[7] PTO incorporates problem-based learning into the program.[8]

Recently, American policing has seen a shift in its public perception as a result of highly publicized officer-involved use of force incidents. Some of the officers involved in these incidents have been field training officers: the Minneapolis police officer who killed George Floyd; one of the officers present when Tamir Rice was killed in Cleveland in 2014;[9] and the officer driving Freddie Gray, who died in the back of a Baltimore Police Department van while in police custody in 2015.[10] Research shows that trainees' behavior is directly correlated to the field training they receive, with FTOs having a statistically significant effect on subsequent allegations of misconduct brought against trainees.[11] Despite the importance of police officer training, a common saying that trainees hear is "forget what you learned in the academy—the real learning begins now," signifying the disconnect between classroom lessons and the real-world setting.

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[3] Ronald. H. Warners, "The Field Training Experience: Perspectives of Field Training Officers and Trainees.," Police Chief Magazine, Nov. 2010.

[4] The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, "Law Enforcement - Standards Titles," *https://www.calea.org/node/11406*

[5] National Association of Field Training Officers, *https://www.nafto.org/*

[6] Police Executive Research Forum, PTO: An Overview and Introduction, 2001, *https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-w0150-pub.pdf*.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Margaret A. Fischer, Best Practices Guide: Field Training for Today's Recruits, International Association of Chiefs of Police, Smaller Police Departments Technical Assistance Program, US Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Accessed 2021, *https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files /2018-08/BPFieldTrainingforTodaysRecruits.pdf*.

[9] Simone Weichselbaum, "One Roadblock to Police Reform: Veteran Officers Who Train Recruits.," The Marshall Project, Jul. 22, 2020, *https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/07/22/one-roadblock-to-police-reform-veteran-officers-who-train-recruits*.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ryan M. Getty, John L. Worrall, and Robert G. Morris, "How Far From the Tree Does the Apple Fall? Field Training Officers, Their Trainees, and Allegations of Misconduct," Crime & Delinquency. DOI 62, no. 6 (2016), doi: 10.1177/0011128714545829.

A gap in research exists surrounding the effectiveness of field training practices, the impact of a field training officer on the recruit's retention of academy knowledge, and the processes by which departments select and recruit FTOs. This gap has led to a lack of standardization among law enforcement agencies on these topics. CNA's Center for Justice Research and Innovation sought to further explore police field training programs around the country in an effort to highlight promising practices, identify areas for improvement, and promote information sharing.

Goals and objectives

The research team recruited six agencies to participate in a case study to learn more about the inner workings, dynamics, and practices of field training approaches. We selected agencies with several criteria in mind. The research team sought to select participating agencies from diverse locations to learn about field training practices institutionalized across a variety of regions. We also considered agencies that have already worked with CNA or have direct working relationships with our subject matter experts. Finally, we looked for agencies of varying size (large, small, urban, or rural) and jurisdiction (sheriff's office, police department, tribal agency, or state patrol) to capture different training practices across a range of law enforcement agencies. Through interviews and data review, this case study provides answers to the following questions:

- Are participating law enforcement agencies using similar processes and procedures for their field training programs?

- Are there common qualifications and standards across participating law enforcement agencies that an officer must meet in order to become a field training officer?

- Are there common qualifications, experiences, performance standards, and accountability measures that officers must demonstrate in order to remain a field training officer in participating agencies?

- How are participating law enforcement agencies incentivizing field training officers?

- Does the agency organization culture allow for an open and honest opportunity for feedback from the trainee to the trainer in included case study agencies?

Methodology and approach

Interviews

The study team interviewed officers in six agencies that are involved in various stages of the training process, including officers in the field training program, officers who have completed field training, current field training officers, and former field training officers. We made an effort to ensure that the officers interviewed are appropriately representative of each agency's racial, ethnic, and gender makeup.

The research team conducted between six and ten interviews for each case study, administering informed consent and obtaining formal consent from all interview subjects. We used a semi structured interview procedure, wherein interviewers adopted a conversational tone and pursued productive lines of questioning based on subject responses. Interviewers did not necessarily read questions verbatim, in order, or ask all questions. The research team customized the interview questions based on the role and position of the interview subject. Appendix A contains the complete list of possible questions.

For the purpose of this report, which has the potential to reveal sensitive information, we have excluded the names of the participating agencies. In our experience, anonymity encourages open and honest responses, leading to more accurate data collection. We did, however, provide each participating agency with a specialized, confidential report with relevant information, considerations, and recommendations.

Site data

The research team requested and reviewed available written documents about the field training program that a participating agency circulates internally and externally. We also requested other information relevant to the field training program in the agency. These documents included the following:

- Past or current position postings for field training officers.

- Flyers, pamphlets, or bulletins that provide information about the field training program.

- Written policies and procedures related to the field training program.

- Training materials and curriculum related to the field training program.

Overview of the report

This report contains three sections:

- Background information for each of the participating agencies and their field training programs.

- An exploration of general impressions, promising practices, and areas for improvement for the following identified themes:

    - Trainer Requirements, Preparation, and Incentives

    - Pairing of Trainers and Trainees

    - Trainer Evaluation and Trainee Communication

- An overview of impressions from both the trainer and trainee perspectives.

The report concludes with future research opportunities on this important topic.

AGENCY A

Background

Agency A is a sheriff's office in an upper Midwestern area of the United States with a population of over one million. It has a sworn strength of over 300 deputies and graduates three academy classes annually with an average of 6 entering into field training. Each prospective licensed officer completes an academy conducted by the department, which lasts for approximately three months. To become a certified officer eligible for field training, prospective officers must pass a test following academy completion.

Training structure and content

Agency A uses a two-track training program for its licensed deputies. Deputies in the agency typically begin in a corrections detention or court system assignment and may eventually transition to patrol. Thus, the training is differentiated by these two roles. After graduating from the academy, the trainees will complete a week of firearms training followed by a week of patrol operations training. The trainee will then undergo field training in either the court or the jail. The vast majority of the officers (95 percent) are assigned to the latter, and they will then complete six weeks of training on basic jail procedures. A five-week field training program follows, composed of two weeks on the day shift with housing, two weeks on the night shift with intake, and a shadow phase. A trainee begins and ends the program with the same FTO to effectively gauge their growth.

Figure 1. Daily Training Notes

The field trainers in Agency A use a new deputy orientation manual that includes training modules for which there is a section on suggested discussion questions and practical exercises. The trainers also use a standardized checklist ("Daily Training Notes," see figure 1) to provide daily feedback to the trainees. If the field trainers mark any areas as unsatisfactory, they provide comments, explanations, and training improvement considerations on a separate page. Additionally, they can note any recommended areas of training and the FTO tasks

completed that day. At the end of each phase—housing and intake—the FTOs evaluate trainees on 10 core functions: appearance, professional demeanor, radio use, incarcerated individual management, problem solving, safety, self-initiated activity, jail geography, documentation, and searches.

Throughout the training, the trainees are required to have weekly meetings with the training sergeants to discuss their progress.

AGENCY B

Background

Agency B is a police department in an urban, midwestern area of the United States with a city population of over 150,000. The police department itself has a sworn strength of over 330 officers. Agency B graduates about two academy classes annually with an average of 15 entering into field training. Each prospective officer completes an academy conducted by the department, which lasts for approximately four and a half months. Following this, they are required to pass a licensing exam to become a certified officer eligible to begin field training.

Training structure and content

Agency B uses a six-phase training structure with four separate FTOs trainers for each recruit officer. During the first two phases, each lasting six weeks, one trainer assesses the trainee, also called a probationary officer, on various skills and requirements. Upon completion, a second training officer assesses the trainee for one week during a midterm phase. A third trainer then instructs the trainee for two additional phases, each lasting six weeks. Following this fifth phase, a fourth and final training officer evaluates the probationary officer for one week during the final phase.

Figure 2. FTO Trainee Assessment

Agency B uses a digital software program for all trainer-to-trainee and trainee-to-trainer feedback and evaluations. In addition to the standard completion of incident reporting, at the end of each day, both the probationary officer and training officer fill out a journal entry. These daily journals memorialize the calls for service that the trainee responded to and identify strengths, areas for improvement, trainings provided, and other core topics and objectives. The trainer and trainee also complete a Coaching and Training Report (CTR) on a weekly basis. This report is a more thorough reflection on the events of the week and addresses topics such as cultural diversity, officer safety, ethics, and lifestyle stressors. Those interviewed from Agency B shared that the agency did not hesitate to support allocating overtime if needed in order to complete either the journals or CTRs thoroughly.

AGENCY C

Background

Agency C is an urban police department in the northeastern area of the United States with a population of around 75,000. The police department itself has a sworn strength of about 300 officers. Agency C graduates three to four academy classes annually with an average of 25-50 entering into field training. Each prospective officer completes an academy conducted by the department, which lasts for just over five months. Following this, the trainees participate in two weeks of agency-specific training prior to beginning their field training process.

Training structure and content

Agency C uses a three-phase field training program for its officers, each of which lasts 20 days. Trainees in the agency are assigned to walking a beat, which consists of citizen contacts and focuses on making the officers a presence in the community, and a proactive policing patrol, which focuses on weapons and narcotics enforcement. A trainee may work with different FTOs throughout each phase. In their final phase, the trainees are assigned to a patrol unit, where they learn how to handle calls for service and fine tune report writing skills. The trainees are provided with task lists specific to each phase to complete and track specific training areas that are covered. These lists provide documentation of the training that the trainee received and ensures accountability for both the probationary officer and the FTO.

Agency C uses a digital software system for all trainer-to-trainee and trainee-to-trainer feed-back and evaluations. At the end of each day, the trainees and trainer complete a daily observation report (DOR; see figure 3) in the electronic management system. This program focuses on behavior

Figure 3. DOR

anchors. The trainers rate the trainees on a scale of 1 to 7. Scores of 1 to 3 are unsatisfactory, 4 to 5 are acceptable, and 6 to 7 are superior. Scores lower than 4 and higher than 6 require an explanation from the trainer. The electronic chart that the trainees and trainers can view in their profile shows the trainees' behavior progression.

AGENCY D

Background

Agency D is a state police agency in a Midwestern US state with a population of nearly ten million. The police department has a sworn strength of over 1900 troopers. Over the past 3 years, Agency D graduates one academy class annually with an average of 75 troopers entering into field training. Each prospective officer completes a training academy conducted by the department, which lasts for just over 5 months.

Training structure and content

Agency D uses a four-phase training structure with three separate FTOs for each officer. Each of the first three phases lasts for five weeks. However, the first week of these phases is nonrated training, and trainees are assessed only on their performance for the remaining four weeks. The final phase is a shadow phase, which lasts for two weeks, and the entirety of which is intended for the recruit officer to cover all calls without assistance unless for safety or policy concerns. The recruit officer is evaluated by the trainer in this final phase. The department provides a "Rook Book" to the trainees, which outlines expectations for the program. The document also provides a timeline for the calls for service that the trainee should encounter throughout their field training experience. A "Skills Mastery Checklist" is included to aid trainees in tracking their accomplishments. Agency D uses a digital software program for formal trainer-to-trainee feedback and evaluations. The training officer completes a DOR and weekly report. The FTO sergeant, who meets with the trainee at the conclusion of each phase to discuss progress, reviews each of these reports and completes an end-of-phase report. Further, the FTO develops monthly reports after the probationary trooper completes the FTO program until the conclusion of their 18-month probationary period.

Figure 4. Final Phase Report

AGENCY E

Background

Agency E is an urban police department in the northeastern area of the United States with a population of around 70,000. The police department itself has a sworn strength of about 320 officers. Agency E graduates one class every 18-24 months academy classes annually with an average of 20-25 entering into field training. Each prospective officer completes an academy conducted by the department, which lasts for four and a half months.

Training structure and content

The training program in Agency E includes three phases, lasting eighteen months total. The first phase is the academy training, which lasts for 22 weeks; the second phase is a structured field training evaluation, which lasts for 88 working days; and the third phase is an advanced field training, which encompasses the remaining portion of the eighteen month period. During the second phase, the trainee is paired with and evaluated by three trainers. These trainers use two reports to evaluate the performance of the trainee: the police officer evaluation report and the field task performance checklist. At the end of the second phase, the FTO manager will determine whether the trainee will move on to the third phase after examining these reports and reviewing input from the sector lieutenant, squad sergeants, and field training officers. During the third phase, the squad sergeant evaluates the trainee on a monthly basis through the use of the supervisor's monthly probationary officer report.

Figure 5. Training Evaluation

Agency E uses a non-digital form of reporting and record keeping for all trainer-to-trainee and trainee-to-trainer feedback and evaluations. At the end of each day, the trainees and trainers fill out the DOR in the electronic management system. The program is based on behavior anchors. The trainers rate the trainees on a scale of 1 to 7. Scores of 1 to 2 are not acceptable, 3 to 5 are acceptable, and 6 to 7 are outstanding. Trainers can mark "N.O." to signify the behavior was "not observed" or "N.R.T." to signify the trainee is "not responding to training."

AGENCY F

Background

Agency F is an urban police department in the southern central area of the United States with a population of nearly 400,000. The police department itself has a sworn strength of about 675 officers. Agency F graduates one to two academy classes annually with an average of thirty entering into field training. Each prospective officer completes an academy conducted by the department, which lasts for eight months.

Training structure and content

Agency F uses a four-phase approach to its training program, lasting 16 weeks. Trainees spend three weeks in phases A, Non-Emergency Response, and B, Emergency Response, with their first field training officer. They then undergo a midterm evaluation for two weeks with a different second training officer, who determines whether that trainee should be advanced to the next phase. Trainees who pass are paired with a third training officer for phases C, Patrol Activities, and D, Criminal Investigations, each of which lasts three weeks. A fourth trainer conducts the final two-week evaluation. The trainee must also complete a Neighborhood Portfolio Exercise, which is essentially a written report on the profile of an area that they work in over the course of their training program. The department requires trainers to complete various formal evaluations throughout the field training process using a digital software program. Daily journals completed by the trainer assess the trainee on various core competencies for the respective phase. Trainees are also encouraged to reflect on their own experiences each day in a journal that they

Figure 6. FTO Program

use for their own reference. At the end of each of the four phases, the trainer also completes a Coaching and Training Report that analyzes the trainee's response to a specific call for service in a more detailed manner. During the midterm and final evaluations, the trainers complete an evaluation report for the entire period.

THEMES

Through the interviews and data analysis, the research team identified themes that were important to address within each of the field training programs. Trainer Requirements, Preparation, and Incentives focuses on the process by which trainers are chosen by agencies, the training that they themselves are provided, and any incentives present to become and remain an FTO. Pairing of Trainers and Trainees reflects on how agencies match FTOs and recruits, along with the effectiveness and perception of that process. Trainer Evaluation and Trainee Communication discusses various agency feedback loops: from the agency level to the trainers, from the trainee to the trainer, and from the trainer to the trainee.

Trainer requirements, preparation, and incentives

Overall findings

In Agency A, the sole requirement to become a field trainer is to have completed the probationary period. When recruiting FTOs, the agency will release a job posting and then evaluate the pool of applicants to determine who is in good standing and free from disciplinary action. After qualifying to become an FTO in Agency A, potential trainers are required to attend an eight-hour FTO orientation class which teaches various adult learning and communication skills and best practices. The department also educates the officers about DORs, the agency's field training manual, and evaluation and grading guidelines, as well as how to handle officer safety infractions.

To become a training officer in Agency B, applicants must first submit their interest in writing, participate in an interview with a commander, and receive positive supervisor and peer evaluations. Next, a panel interview occurs during which potential field trainers are asked about topics such as policy and procedures, community issues, conflict resolution, and leadership. The captain in command of the field training division stated that candidates must "embody the core values of the department: service, honor, integrity, and professionalism." To further ensure that candidates are a good fit, the department reviews disciplinary and complaint records.

In Agency C, officers are selected to be FTOs by supervisors, and there is no time-related requirement that an officer has to meet. The agency experiences challenges with retaining trainers, which impacts the ability to require experience levels for trainers. Interview respondents from the agency expressed that they strive to select field trainers who have at least two years on the force and who demonstrate impromptu leadership, exhibit good report writing skills, are vetted through their internal affairs, and do not have a record of excessive unexcused absences. However, the trainers we spoke with shared that they were unaware of how they qualified to become a trainer. FTOs in this department serve as back-up before formally serving as an FTO.

To become an FTO in Agency D, an applicant must have spent three and a half years in total service as a trooper They must also submit a cover letter declaring their interest in the position and demonstrating their experience training, mentoring, or coaching. A resume and cover letter, along with a written

endorsement from the applicant's post and district commanders are also required. Further, the trooper must not have received any disciplinary action resulting from policy violations during the previous two years. The department conducts a four-day training for new trainers with courses including Generational Differences and Similarities, Testing and Evaluation, Adult Learning, and Effective Communication.

In Agency E, officers must have at least three years on the force to become selected by their supervisor as a field training officer. An officer also must have a good reputation and disciplinary record, as well as a good driving record. FTOs attend orientation and training, which cover what the program looks for, the evaluation sheet, and what to teach the new trainees.

In Agency F, an officer must have spent three years with the department as a sworn officer and two years in patrol to become a field training officer. They must submit an application, receive a recommendation from their supervisor, and interview with the training center. Applicants cannot currently be involved in an administrative investigation. Trainers attend a weeklong training course that teaches officers about the field training program, adult learning, and effective training skills.

Table 1. Trainer Application Requirements

	Written Statement of Interest	Experience	Interview	Supervisor Recommendation	Discipline Consideration
Agency A	X				X
Agency B	X		X	X	X
Agency C					X
Agency D	X	X		X	X
Agency E		X		X	X
Agency F	X	X	X	X	X

Areas for improvement

Trainer requirements

In half of the participating agencies, there were no rigorous time-related requirements. For example, in one agency, officers could become field trainers as soon as they complete their probationary period[12]. In others, only one to two years were required. The use of trainers with little experience as guides for new officers does not contribute well to developing high performing law enforcement members. Trainees we spoke with agreed that seniority should be a strong consideration for agencies when selecting FTOs. In addition, several noted that productivity on the job should be a metric for potential trainers. Some trainers themselves mentioned feeling unprepared due to a lack of experience. Another trainer noted that the agency seems to pick FTOs "because there are no more officers," forcing the role to become more of an obligated rotation rather than an active choice.

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[12] A probationary period is an interval of time following being sworn in where an agency determines whether an individual is fit to serve as a member of law enforcement. These periods typically last 18 months or longer.

Preparation

Several trainers mentioned their desire for more preparation before becoming an FTO. In some agencies, very little training is required of FTOs or the timeline for undergoing more in-depth training is inconsistent. A trainer from one such agency noted becoming an FTO with a year and a half of experience after being asked to replace another FTO who was struggling with a trainee. The trainer was directed to get the officer up to speed but received no other initial training or instruction. Later, the FTO received an hour-long training session facilitated by the training academy staff that discussed expectations and the FTO manual. One suggestion from a trainer was to receive lessons from current FTOs on how they engage in teaching, evaluation, and communication. Such training could combat inconsistency, which trainers from multiple agencies mentioned as an issue. One trainer shared, "I would get recruits that were trained one way and then I would do it differently or a sergeant would set a different expectation, so we would have to address that." Trainers from another agency repeatedly heard from trainees that they are taught to handle felony car stops differently in the academy than during field training.

Incentives

In two of the participating agencies, there are no financial incentives, extra vacation days, or "comp time" for an officer to be a field trainer. Furthermore, because one of these agencies is a "civil service department," acting as a field trainer does not provide any advancement considerations toward promotions, as it would in a non–civil service agency. A trainer interviewed from the other department mentioned that the agency was lacking veteran trainers because those with 15 to 20 years on the force are not motivated to do so.

Promising practices

Trainer requirements

All agencies review potential FTOs' disciplinary records, and the majority require a supervisor recommendation and a written statement of interest from the FTO candidate. The agency with the strictest time-related requirement necessitates that a potential FTO have been on the force for three years, spending at least two of those in patrol. The assignment qualifier is essential to ensuring that trainers have experience that will be most beneficial to their trainees. Departments with time-in-service expressed that more experienced trainers enhance the quality of training in the short term and the quality of the law enforcement officer in the long term.

Preparation

Training officers from three of the participating agencies participate in multiple days of training to become FTOs. The training encompasses software use, trainee evaluation, proper documentation, and agency expectations. These agencies also incorporate a session on adult learning principles and stress those concepts in other trainings. One agency also has a position called a "mentor" or a "monitor", which exists outside of the FTO program. An agency requires monitoring if an officer consistently demonstrates a propensity to use force or does not de-escalate when appropriate. One of the trainers interviewed also

acted as a monitor and stated that they "incorporate the de-escalation training into the FTO program so [the trainees] don't have issues of demeanor complaints." Although monitors at this agency focus on one area (use of force), the role may serve as a good stepping stone into field training.

Incentives

The level of incentives varied among the four agencies with them in place. However, they all provided additional compensation for being a training officer. Trainers from one agency received pins to designate their status as an FTO and another agency provided corporal stripes to their trainers. FTOs from the third agency conducted any new department-wide trainings with FTOs first, which trainers viewed as an incentive because they were always equipped with the most current information. The final agency allowed officer "comp time" at the end of each day for paper work and provided points toward promotion for the role.

Table 2. Field Trainer Incentives

	Amount	Stipulations
Agency A	$20 per day	While training
Agency B	$3,000 annually	None
Agency D	5% shift differential	While training
Agency F	5% shift differential	While training

Recommendations

- Establish and reinforce a departmental culture where the field trainer position is valued and supported. Incentives are one strategy to accomplish this and can include:

    - Monetary compensation and/or paid time off

    - Promotional process considerations/points for being an FTO

    - Specialized insignias identifying FTOs

    - Recognition through formal commendations or informal acknowledgment of outstanding work done by FTOs

- Detail specific qualifications, criteria, and expectations to become a field trainer considering:

    - Minimum time on as an officer (recommend at least three years of service in the field)

    - Previous assignment requirements relevant to the training that new recruits receive (e.g., patrol, jail)

    - Passing an initial background review that includes prior complaints, remedial training, and discipline

    - Peer and supervisor recommendations

- Properly prepare trainers for the role to ensure training is consistent, effective, and beneficial to trainees by developing, conducting, and requiring:

    - FTO training that outlines the agency expectations for the trainers, provides information about the program, and allows for interaction with current trainers

    - Annual refresher trainings for the FTO cadre

Pairing of trainers and trainees

Overall findings

The trainers and trainees in Agency A are paired by a centralized unit focused on employee development and continuing education, based on an informal assessment and estimation that includes personality styles, compatibility, and any specific training needs or strengths that have been identified. This unit works to pair trainees and trainers with the intention that they will connect well through shared mentalities or traits.

Due to shortage of training officers in Agency B,[13] trainers and trainees are paired primarily by availability. If a pairing is particularly incompatible, the training director, a captain, can consider alternate arrangements. However, this is a last resort and the emphasis is for the trainees to stay with their original placements due to the strain that rearrangements would pose on the department.

Table 3. Trainer and Trainee Matching

	Availability of Trainers	Agency Assessment	Trainee Self-Assessment
Agency A	X	X	
Agency B	X		
Agency C	X		
Agency D	X	X	
Agency E	X	X	
Agency F	X	X	X

The trainers and trainees in Agency C are paired by availability. They normally do not assign by observed personality traits, but sometimes the lieutenant will give specific assignments. A trainee interviewed mentioned they were unaware of the pairing process and would have liked to know how they were paired with their trainer. An interviewee in Agency C mentioned liking having more than one field training officer because "every officer has a different way of handling jobs… [the trainee] was able to adopt a way of doing things that [they think] is best."

As a statewide agency, trainees from Agency D are able to choose their local post upon graduation at the academy. They are then paired with trainers based on multiple factors, including availability, learning styles, and the personalities of the trainers and trainees, as judged by the lieutenant and sergeant.

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[13] The department is currently recruiting additional training officers.

In Agency E, the academy staff pair the trainees and trainers by attempting to gauge the personality of the trainees in the academy, and place them with platoons accordingly. A trainer interviewed mentioned that an average of four or five trainees would be placed with a platoon, and rotate per trainer throughout that phase. The trainer viewed the trainees moving around to different trainers as a benefit because it increased exposure to different learning styles and personalities.

Agency F assigns trainees and trainers based upon availability, shift, and personality. The agency has also recently developed a questionnaire for the trainees, which collects personal and professional information about the trainee.

Areas for improvement

Pairing

In all agencies we spoke with, there was no standardization of the pairing process. In one agency, a trainer admitted, "Sometimes [the pairing process] falls through the cracks and when trials or other big events happen, the trainees get stuck with people they don't get along with." Agencies may also place a trainee with an officer who is not a formal trainer for various reasons. Due to the short staffing in one agency, they have improvised and used officers who have not been trained or certified as FTOs for field training. In another, a trainer shared that this may be the case if a trainee is having a difficult time grasping certain skills. They stated, "It seems like when someone is struggling with something, they are put with an officer from that department even if they are not a trainer. Someone was struggling with traffic stops and so they put them with a traffic officer." While pairing trainees with officers in specific positions who can help to develop the trainee's skills is ideal, this practice could be potentially harmful. Without the trainers standardized and properly prepared for training positions, the department could inadvertently place a trainee with an unqualified officer.

Continuity of trainers

All agencies rotate trainees through various trainers so that the trainee can experience different styles and to combat trainer fatigue. Typically, the number varies from three to five trainers for the entire training program. However, there are instances where the number of trainers far exceeds what is reasonable. A trainer in one agency mentioned that they act as a senior officer and, if another trainee is experiencing issues, their trainee will be assigned to another trainer temporarily. Once the struggling trainee is making progress again, the senior officer will be re-assigned their original trainee. This may lead to the trainer having dozens of trainees in one class, some for a day or two, and some for a week or two. A trainee in this agency expressed dissatisfaction at experiencing eight FTOs in a period of 38 days due to variety of factors such as trainers leaving the agency and their trainer serving as a senior officer, in addition to switching phases. In another agency, a trainee mentioned that their FTO was absent for a few days, so they rotated through more than the three standard FTOs. While the trainee enjoyed switching after each phase and recognized the benefit, they expressed dissatisfaction with switching from their assigned FTOs to the alternate FTOs.

Promising practices

Pairing

In one agency, trainees are paired with three different FTOs who are assigned to different areas within the city, giving the trainees an opportunity to learn the geography of the city during their training period. The trainees found this helpful, as orientation and geography were consistently highlighted as the most challenging aspect of the field training process. Another agency has developed an optional, confidential questionnaire for trainees to complete, which aids in their pairing with a trainer. This questionnaire asks for information, such as educational background, self-perceived strengths and weaknesses, learning style, and how the trainee is best supported. While the questionnaire has only been in use for one academy class, the trainees that we spoke with expressed satisfaction with having an opportunity to participate in the matching process.

Continuity of trainers

There was consensus among the agencies that limiting the number of trainers with a trainee was important for effective evaluation and information retention. While some trainees and trainers reported having multiple assignments during one phase, the majority of the trainees' expressed that, they preferred learning with the same trainer, unless there were personality conflicts. One trainee shared, "I think I align more with my second FTO, but I have learned a lot from the others. It gives you the opportunity to develop your own style." During another interview, one FTO mentioned, "I used to have a different trainee every day, but had issues with continuity of communication for strengths and deficiencies regarding the trainee, so they moved to having one trainee with one officer in the program."

Another important consideration in this process is the determination of who evaluates the trainees in their final phase. In four of the agencies, trainees begin their first phase and end their final phase with the same trainer. In the majority of interviews, trainees were satisfied with this, as it provides an opportunity for an evaluation of their growth. However, in the other two agencies, trainees have a new trainer for their final phase. Interviewees from those agencies shared that this approach provides an accurate and unbiased assessment of whether or not a trainee has met the requirements to graduate from field training and be advanced to solo duties, as opposed to how they have improved over time.

Recommendations

- During the academy, the training staff and instructors for practical training should observe the personality and learning styles of recruits. At the end of the academy or practical training, agencies can inquire with these instructors about the most appropriate type of FTO for specific trainees. The FTO coordinator can then consider the personality and learning style of the trainee and FTOs they have available.

- As a phase ends, training staff should incorporate the FTO's feedback as they assign trainers for the next phase, also keeping in mind the academy staff's experiences and observations.

- When pairing, agencies should be sure to assess how much time an FTO can commit to the upcoming training period for continuity and overtaxing considerations of the trainers. Agencies can also encourage or require FTOs to schedule vacation time when they are not actively training.

- Agencies can consider creating an additional cadre of field trainers that work on the same shift and schedule as the training squads. While not assigned to the training squads, these properly trained FTOs can fill in for other FTOs that may need to be absent from work.

Trainer evaluation and trainee communication

Overall findings

Most trainers in Agency A mentioned taking a trainee aside or waiting until a situation or the shift finished to provide constructive feedback, unless an immediate intervention was absolutely necessary because of officer or citizen safety. In such a case, one trainer shared that they would pull the trainee aside to address it and, if the trainee was resistant to the feedback, tell the trainee to "go to a different area and return when they are ready." The trainers interviewed were unaware of any formal FTO evaluation aside from the opportunities for trainees to submit feedback to the sergeants about their experiences.

In Agency B, trainees receive written feedback on a daily basis and verbal feedback immediately after calls. The trainee can view all written feedback from the training officer. However, the trainer cannot read what the probationary officer writes about the day. The goal of this structure is to encourage honesty and transparency from the trainee about the training process. Trainees and trainers are also required to meet with a captain separately throughout the duration of the field training program to discuss their progress and experiences and provide an opportunity for the trainees to share any feedback or concerns they may have.

In Agency C, trainees receive feedback from the trainers, and the coordinators conduct evaluations at different points throughout their training process. One FTO noted they "love when trainees ask questions...[they] tell the trainee that if they make an arrest, write a ticket, or take pictures with the community, to ask questions." At the end of each phase, the trainee submits an FTO critique that only the supervisors and FTO coordinator can view. If an FTO has a negative evaluation, the supervisor is notified and the FTO will either be re-trained or not receive a new trainee. The FTO coordinator will also advise the FTO if they have identified areas for improvement in their training style.

Agency D uses a digital software program for formal trainer-to-trainee feedback and evaluations. The training officer is required to complete a DOR, a weekly report, and an end-of-phase report. On nonrated days, DORs include information about noteworthy calls for service. On rated days, the trainer includes the aforementioned information and scores the trainee on core competencies such as driving skill, officer safety, policies and procedures, and field performance. Trainees will receive either a failing score of "1 – Needs Improvement" or a passing score of "4 – Meets Expectations." The trainer and trainee complete the weekly report jointly, providing both a self-reflection and trainer evaluation of the progress for the week. The end-of-phase report allows the FTO sergeant to identify strengths and weaknesses of the probationary officer and share additional training needs, if necessary.

In Agency E, trainees are evaluated on a daily basis using a worksheet completed by their assigned FTO and signed by both the trainee and trainer. In addition, a supervisor evaluates the trainees every four weeks. During the first phase of training, the trainees are shadowing. They have some responsibility with simple calls for service, but for calls that are more complicated and serious, the FTO takes lead. Once the trainee moves to the second phase, the trainee starts engaging in more proactive policing and decision-making with FTO input. In the last phase, the trainee is driving, leading calls, and communicating with the public with the FTO present in case anything goes astray. The philosophy is that trainees learn the basics and build confidence, and they will eventually able to use their own discretion.

In Agency F, the department expects trainers to complete various formal evaluations along with immediate verbal feedback. Throughout the field training process, trainers use daily journals to assess trainees on various core competencies for the respective phase. At the end of each of the four phases, the trainer also completes a Coaching and Training Report that analyzes the trainee's response to a specific call for service in a more detailed manner. During the midterm and final evaluations, the trainers complete an evaluation report for the entire period.

Areas for improvement

Evaluation

The evaluation of trainers is not standardized across agencies. It varies in formality and process, but trainers in all agencies expressed interest in and recognized the importance of receiving open and honest feedback. One agency shared only negative feedback, if any, from the trainees. While this was done in an attempt to aid the correction of any poor behaviors, a trainer noted they would also like to receive positive feedback to better understand the practices that were effective. A trainer from another agency suggested, "An anonymous review from the trainees could aid in future training." Trainers consistently expressed that this feedback is critical for their own development and necessary for the advancement of their programs.

Communication

Effective communication among training staff and the recruits is integral for a field training program's success. However, several factors can detrimentally affect this process. One such factor is agency culture. In one department, a trainee stated that their agency's lack of an environment where open, honest, and transparent feedback is encouraged had impacted their the ability to feel safe and comfortable sharing. This trainee expressed a desire to have a suggestion box that would allow them to break the chain of command to discuss issues.

In another agency, when prompted about their comfort level speaking up about something they disagreed with, a trainee mentioned that "as a rookie, brand new in training, I couldn't have spoken with [the supervisors]...they would have listened, but it would have not been good for me." A similar sentiment was expressed by trainees in several agencies. When further probed, many shared that although they believed supervisors would help, they would rather "just get through the phase and move to the next FTO."

In addition, although communication is important, it cannot combat inconsistency. In one agency, a trainee shared, "The FTOs have been very open about how they are grading and why. However, I get a little frustrated being graded on the perspective of your FTO. One might grade you down on something that another would not, so more consistency would be helpful."

Promising practices

Evaluation

Three of the participating agencies provided formal opportunities for trainees to evaluate their field trainers. These were important and helpful to both parties. In one agency, trainees share feedback about their trainers in an exit interview. One trainer expressed that it helped him to improve in his role, sharing, "I use a lot of sarcasm and some of my recruits did not appreciate that, but I did not realize it until I received the feedback." Another agency allows trainees to write an anonymous letter sharing their opinions on the field training and, if anything of concern is noted, the training sergeants speak to the FTOs about it.

Some agencies engage in practices that promote open and honest feedback. One agency allows trainees to provide feedback on a daily basis that their trainer cannot view. The ability for trainees to share their feedback without attribution increased their comfort in discussing their experiences explicitly.

Communication

Trainers need to communicate with trainees respectfully and effectively. A trainer in one agency shared that they spend fifteen to twenty minutes at the end of each shift discussing what the trainee viewed as their most satisfactory and least satisfactory behavior of the day. This trainer is working with the other FTOs to memorialize the practice in their agency because "when a trainee talks about themselves, they improve."

Trainers also noted the importance of tailoring communication to their current trainee. One shared, "You have to be versatile as an FTO—you cannot provide feedback in just one way. Different trainees need different styles. Some need to watch, some need to do things, and some need to hear things." Further, trainers highlighted the need to reinforce feedback throughout the shift, week, and phase. One noted that if a trainee did something positive or negative, they would tell the trainee right after the incident so it is fresh in their memory. Then, at the end of the day, the trainer would speak with their trainee about their feedback and discuss any areas for improvement.

Another important part of the communication process is also consistent and standardized documentation. All agencies required trainers to provide supporting information with their evaluations. In one agency, trainers are required to provide a written explanation in their software system if they assign a score to a trainee below a 4 or above a 6 (on a scale from 1 to 7). One trainer viewed this as an important practice because it provides important context if a trainee requires remedial training rather than immediately passing their training.

Recommendations

- Agencies should establish a check-in meeting between the FTO supervisor/coordinator and the FTO at various points throughout the phases to discuss any emerging or existing issues or needs.

- Agencies should conduct an assessment review for each FTO upon completion of every field training cycle. These evaluations should provide written documentation of strengths and identified areas of improvement.

- Agencies should establish a schedule for the FTO supervisor/coordinator to meet with trainees periodically throughout the field training cycle.

- Agencies should organize a process by which trainees can provide anonymous feedback to the FTO supervisor/coordinator about their trainers and the program as a whole.

- Agencies should consider identifying and assigning "mentor officers" for trainees to turn to and confide in at the start of the academy and throughout field training.

- Agencies should consider encouraging trainees to complete a daily journal that documents their field training experience and perspectives. This journal is designed to assist the trainees in capturing their thoughts and experiences, but would remain confidential unless the trainees chose to share the information.

FIELD TRAINING PROGRAM FEEDBACK

The last two sections of the report highlight information provided from interviews about each of the agency's programs. Trainer Impressions and Wellness addresses how trainers perceive the training process, workload, and support from their agencies. Trainee Impressions provides direct insights from the trainees on the field training process.

Trainer program impressions and wellness

Areas for improvement

Pressure to succeed:

Trainers across all agencies shared that there is tremendous pressure on FTOs to succeed in their role. The current recruitment and retention issues that the field of law enforcement is facing may amplify this. An FTO from one agency stated, "Some people don't like the vicarious liability. Some trainers that get the challenging trainees repeatedly can feel defeated from a morale perspective. If a trainee screws up while you're managing them, it's also your screw up." Multiple agencies observed that trainers are dropping out or not reapplying because of a sense that the entire responsibility for the trainees' success is falling on them. These individuals expressed that, from their perspective, the agency's position is "the academy taught the trainees what they need to know, so now it's on you." Another mentioned the added stress, and compared training a new officer to having a child, citing the need to teach them, monitor them, pay them constant attention, ensure their safety, and evaluate their decision-making.

Constant training and burnout

The size of an agency's trainer cadre determines the frequency with which agencies are using the same trainers. An agency's average academy class size is also an important factor to consider. In the majority of agencies, trainers expressed the need for more FTOs to provide breaks and prevent burnout. One trainer mentioned, "Trying to talk and run a show eight days in a row is hard and exhausting." Another trainer said, "Burnout is an issue as well. FTOs do not want to do it because they are used every class and they did not sign up for that. Over the past couple of years, there have been four classes every year… you only have a couple weeks by yourself." In another agency, a trainee shared that many of the trainers did not want to serve as FTOs because of the burdensome additional paperwork.

Even in agencies that view trainers positively, problems arise. One trainer highlighted that FTOs are more likely to get specialty assignments and promoted, so their cadre fluctuates. They shared, "It is not uncommon for me to have a recruit in three of the four phases. It is a tremendous amount of energy and mental capacity." In another, trainers viewed the pause in academy classes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic as a welcome break. One shared, "For a couple of years it was overwhelming. We were putting classes through every six months. You could not take time off and you did not have a lot of personal time. Due to COVID, we had a break; it was nice to take that time."

Promising practices

It is important for agencies to support FTOs and aid in their success as a strategy to prevent fatigue and burnout. A trainer from one agency shared, "If we have a recruit who is struggling, we have up to 80 hours of nonrated time that we can use to improve their training before the shadow phase. We work with the FTO sergeants and coordinator to create quality training plans." In another agency, academies are less frequent, so trainers noted that there was an adequate number of FTOs. They might finish and have a break of a year or 18 months before they serve as an FTO again, keeping them fresh. Furthermore, trainers from one agency shared that there was a strong sense of accountability for FTOs, explaining that if they were no longer effective, they would be removed from the cadre. Although this may not address a shortage of trainers, it does help to combat inequity in workload among the trainers that are present.

Recommendations

Agencies should provide support for the FTO cadre by recognizing that the position often contributes to additional stress and sacrifice. Agencies can consider the following:

- Establishing a processes to obtain open and honest feedback from the trainers on what needs or challenges they may have.

- Establishing procedures that limit the number of trainees that any one FTO can be assigned within a given and reasonable time frame.

- Reinforcing the purpose (a great need for professional well-trained officers for the positive future of the agency and the profession) in recurring FTO refresher trainings to boost trainer morale.

- Placing proper emphasis on trainee self-evaluation in daily and weekly observation reports to share the responsibility of the additional paperwork between the trainee and trainer.

- Creating thorough explanatory standards for each score and adding examples of score behaviors to assist trainers in paperwork completion.

Trainee program impressions

Areas for improvement

In each of the participating agencies, trainees noted the stark contrast between academy training and field training, with one saying, "Transition should be more comfortable and customized to the trainees." Another shared, "The academy just cannot prepare you for people," acknowledging that, although there was scenario-based training in the academy, it should be more realistic to what officers may face in the field. Additionally, trainees shared that having the opportunity to do more ride-alongs throughout the academy could be very helpful with preparing preparation them for the volume and types of calls, situations and challenges that officers will likely encounter when they transition to solo patrol after field training. One stated, "I didn't expect to have to tell a kid that they have to go to school."

Trainers identified other specific gaps in their training. The majority of trainees expressed a desire to understand the city's geography better in the academy. One stated, "I didn't even know how to get to the hospital...if I got shot or someone else does, I would have to pull up GPS." Another trainee mentioned they would have liked to learn more about radio etiquette in the academy. They recalled their FTO handing the radio to them and having no idea what they were doing.

Trainees also generally expressed that they would prefer trainers with more experience. Some trainees paired with newer officers felt they learned together, as opposed to it being a teaching environment.

Further, in some instances, female trainees expressed being treated differently than their male counterparts did. One female trainee shared, "I feel the need to pry things out of my trainer, but they talk to other officers like they are best friends. The trainer acts annoyed like they don't want to be there to teach, but I don't know if it is just because they don't want to teach women." Another female trainee felt she had to do more to prove herself, stating, "As a trainee – I was looked at like I wouldn't be able to do the job. After I got into my first foot chase and kept up, my FTO realized, but it took time."

Promising practices

Many trainees who expressed having positive experiences attributed them to the teaching style of their FTO. One shared, "I am a hands-on learner and don't learn well from being told stuff and so during phase 1, the FTO let me take the reins and critiqued me along the way. It helped to learn the ways of doing things."

Another important distinguishing factor for trainees with positive experiences was the knowledge of agency expectations for the program. Multiple agencies spent time in the academy discussing the field training program and how the agency evaluates trainees. One agency provides a packet to trainees with common general orders and penal codes for each phase, which they found to be extremely helpful.

Field training is an experience that involves criticism and critique. However, when this is delivered effectively, trainees were appreciative. One shared, "the trainers will yell at you, but they will also have softer moments when they explain to you that they want you to succeed." Another trainee was required to extend their field training, but instead of viewing this negatively, they stated, "I felt much supported, especially at the end. They made sure I had all of the tools I needed to pass."

Finally, trainees shared that the ability to provide feedback about the program and have that feedback applied in earnest was important. Trainees in one department highlighted a questionnaire developed by the FTO sergeant to aid in their pairing with a trainer. One trainee shared that they were glad to be matched with a trainer who was a former narcotics officer because that is where their interests lie. Another expressed to the training sergeant that they would like to be challenged in the field training process and that request was honored.

Although their experiences varied, all trainees recognized the importance of field training programs. One shared, "The FTO program was not perfect, but I feel fortunate for structure that we do have. I think one of the issues plaguing law enforcement is a lack of training, and our agency has a strong level of structure and training."

Recommendations

- Agencies should seek feedback from previous trainees about gaps in academy training that would be helpful for field training.

- Agencies should spend time throughout the academy clearly outlining the expectations for the field training program to prepare trainees.

- Agencies should emphasize agency support mechanisms in place for trainees and department members in general.

CONCLUSION

These case studies serve to provide new information about field training programs in law enforcement. However, there is more to be explored. It is apparent from the differences among the six agencies reviewed in this research that very little standardization exists across programs. Further coordination is necessary to achieve a realistic level of uniformity.

As stated in the introduction, field training officers have been involved in several high-profile use of force incidents. Although all of the agencies we spoke with consider discipline and open investigations when initially choosing a training officer, none shared that they continued to track these aspects throughout a trainer's career. In addition, there is little information about how discipline frequency among trainers may affect a trainee's career trajectory. A possible next step would be to conduct a longitudinal study that compares career outcomes for trainees who are paired with trainers with various levels of experience and discipline. A better understanding of these issues would aid in the development of standardization characteristics for field trainers. For example, if research were to show a correlation between lower levels of experience with high risk incidents and improved career outcomes, agencies can use this as best practice in the selection of trainers.

In addition, the law enforcement field has been facing difficulties and challenges in recruitment and retention, which are reflected in the field training programs. The participating agencies shared that their trainers were getting younger because of attrition, and they are experiencing difficulty, in many cases, recruiting new trainers. This situation provides an opportunity for agencies to respond in innovative ways. Further research on how to motivate trainers using methods that increase interest among officers with altruistic motives could prove helpful.

Finally, agencies used a variety of methods to pair trainers and trainees, the majority of which relied on the opinions of department members, increasing the possibility for human biases. Additional research should look to identify effective, impartial, and efficient tools to assist departments with this process.

It is our hope that this study will provide helpful information to the law enforcement field regarding FTO programs. We also hope that it will serve as a stepping stone to further analysis that will aid law enforcement agencies in improving FTO programs, thus improving the communities they serve.

If you are interested learning more about this research, please contact Monique Jenkins (jenkinsm@cna.org).

APPENDIX A: ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
COPS	US Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
CTR	Coaching and Training Report
DOR	Daily Observation Report
FTO	Field Training Officer
PTO	Police Training Officer

APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATIONS

Trainer requirements, preparation, and incentives

1. Establish and reinforce a departmental culture where the field trainer position is valued and supported. Incentives are one strategy to accomplish this and can include:

   a. Monetary compensation and/or paid time off

   b. Promotional process considerations/points for being an FTO

   c. Specialized insignias identifying FTOs

   d. Recognition through formal commendations or informal acknowledgment of outstanding work done by FTOs

2. Detail specific qualifications, criteria, and expectations to become a field trainer considering:

   a. Minimum time on as an officer (recommend at least three years of service in the field)

   b. Previous assignment requirements relevant to the training that new recruits receive (e.g., patrol, jail)

   c. Passing an initial background review that includes prior complaints, remedial training, and discipline

   d. Peer and supervisor recommendations

3. Properly prepare trainers for the role to ensure training is consistent, effective, and beneficial to trainees by developing, conducting, and requiring:

   a. FTO training that outlines the agency expectations for the trainers, provides information about the program, and allows for interaction with current trainers

   b. Annual refresher trainings for the FTO cadre

Pairing of trainers and trainees

1. During the academy, the training staff and instructors for practical training should observe the personality and learning styles of recruits. At the end of the academy or practical training, agencies can inquire with these instructors about the most appropriate type of FTO for specific trainees. The FTO coordinator can then consider the personality and learning style of the trainee and FTOs they have available.

2. As a phase ends, training staff should incorporate the FTO's feedback as they assign trainers for the next phase, also keeping in mind the academy staff's experiences and observations.

3. When pairing, agencies should be sure to assess how much time an FTO can commit to the upcoming training period for continuity and overtaxing considerations of the trainers. Agencies can also encourage or require FTOs to schedule vacation time when they are not actively training.

Trainer evaluation and trainee communication

1. Agencies can consider creating an additional cadre of field trainers that work on the same shift and schedule as the training squads. While not assigned to the training squads, these properly trained FTOs can fill in for other FTOs that may need to be absent from work.

2. Agencies should establish a check-in meeting between the FTO supervisor/coordinator and the FTO at various points throughout the phases to discuss any emerging or existing issues or needs.

3. Agencies should conduct an assessment review for each FTO upon completion of every field training cycle. These evaluations should provide written documentation of strengths and identified areas of improvement.

4. Agencies should establish a schedule for the FTO supervisor/coordinator to meet with trainees periodically throughout the field training cycle.

5. Agencies should organize a process by which trainees can provide anonymous feedback to the FTO supervisor/coordinator about their trainers and the program as a whole.

6. Agencies should consider identifying and assigning "mentor officers" for trainees to turn to and confide in at the start of the academy and throughout field training.

7. Agencies should consider encouraging trainees to complete a daily journal that documents their field training experience and perspectives. This journal is designed to assist the trainees in capturing their thoughts and experiences, but would remain confidential unless the trainees chose to share the information.

Trainer program impressions and wellness

1. Establishing a processes to obtain open and honest feedback from the trainers on what needs or challenges they may have.

2. Establishing procedures that limit the number of trainees that any one FTO can be assigned within a given and reasonable time frame.

3. Reinforcing the purpose (a great need for professional well-trained officers for the positive future of the agency and the profession) in recurring FTO refresher trainings to boost trainer morale.

4. Placing proper emphasis on trainee self-evaluation in daily and weekly observation reports to share the responsibility of the additional paperwork between the trainee and trainer.

5. Creating thorough explanatory standards for each score and adding examples of score behaviors to assist trainers in paperwork completion.

Trainee program impressions

1. Agencies should seek feedback from previous trainees about gaps in academy training that would be helpful for field training.

2. Agencies should spend time throughout the academy clearly outlining the expectations for the field training program to prepare trainees.

3. Agencies should emphasize agency support mechanisms in place for trainees and department members in general.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Type A: Field Trainee

I. **Participant involvement with training**

    a. Please begin by explaining your position here at (name of department)

        i.   Title

        ii.   Primary responsibilities

        iii.   Length of time in position

    b. How did you learn of this position?

    c. Where did you receive academy training?

    d. Describe your academy experience.

    e. How long have you been at this department?

    f. Did you hold a law enforcement officer position in a previous agency?

        i.   If yes, did your previous experience in field training differ from your current experience?

    g. What motivated you to become a law enforcement officer?

II. **Field training experience**

    a. Can you please provide us with some general information about the time you've spent in your field training program so far, such as:

        i.   In general what the experience has been like for you?

        ii.   What have you learned thus far?

    b. Did the department clearly explain to you the time and guidelines for which you would be spending in your field training program? If so, when?

    c. How was your field training officer assigned to you?

    d. Have you worked with more than one field training officer?

    e. What are the ways in which you expect your field training officer to support you?

    f. Do you currently feel you are being supported by your field training officer? Why or why not?

g. Have you observed or experienced anything that is contradictory to the academy training you received?

　　i.　Did you communicate with your FTO about this?

　　ii.　If not, how do you think you might handle it?

h. Are you aware of what you must do to pass your field training period?

　　i.　Who determines whether you pass your field training period?

i. Is your experience in this field training program different than what your expectations for it were? If yes, please explain.

j. In your perspective, what has been the most daunting part of field training thus far? Has your field training officer assisted you with this? If so, how?

k. If your field training program went perfectly and according to plan, what would that look like in your eyes?

l. Is there anything else regarding the training process that you have experienced thus far which you would like to tell us?

Interview Type B: Post Field Training

I.　Participant involvement with training:

a. Please begin by explaining your position here at (name of department)

　　i.　Title

　　ii.　Primary responsibilities

b. How did you learn of this position?

c. How long have you been at this department?

d. Did you hold a law enforcement officer position in a previous agency?

　　i.　If yes, did your experience in that agency's field training differ than at your current agency?

e. What motivated you to become a law enforcement officer?

II.　Field training experience

a. Can you please provide us with some general information about the time you spent in your field training program, such as:

　　i.　In general what was the experience like for you?

      ii.   What were your major takeaways from the time spent in field training?

b. Did the department clearly explain to you the time and guidelines for which you would be spending in your field training program?

      i.   If yes, at what point did they explain this?

      ii.   If not, how could they have been clearer and what advice would you give for next time?

c. How was your field training officer assigned to you?

d. Did you work with more than one field training officer?

      i.   If yes, would you have preferred working with one throughout your field training program? Why or why not?

e. Did you observe or experience anything that was contradictory to the academy training you received?

      i.   Did you communicate with your FTO about this?

      ii.   If not, why?

f. Were you aware of what you must do to pass your field training period?

      i.   Who determined whether you passed your field training period?

g. Was your experience in this field training program different than what your expectations for it were? If yes, please explain.

h. In your perspective, what was the most daunting part of field training? Did your field training officer assist you with this? If so, how?

i. What were the ways in which you expected your field training officer to support you? Did this occur? If not, how could it have been better?

j. If your field training program went perfectly and according to plan, what would that look like in your eyes?

k. Is there anything else regarding the training process that you have experienced thus far which you would like to tell us?

Interview Type C: Field Training Officer

I.   **Participant involvement with training:**

a. Please begin by explaining your position here at (name of department)

          i.   Title

          ii.   Primary responsibilities

b. How long have you been at this department?

c. How did you learn of this position?

d. What motivated you to become a law enforcement officer?

e. What work did you do before you took your current position in the department?

f. How long have you been a field training officer?

g. What motivated you to become a field training officer?

          i.   Does the agency provide incentives, financial or related to status, for FTOs?

h. Can you describe the process to become an FTO?

          i.   Did the department provide you expectations for your conduct as an FTO?

          ii.   Did you receive any specific training or orientation to become an FTO?

          iii. Did you have to meet specific standards to qualify to be an FTO?

i. Did you hold a law enforcement officer position in a previous agency?

          i.   If yes, have you acted as a field training officer at a previous agency?

II.   **Field training experience as a trainee**

a. Before we begin to discuss your time as a field trainer, can you please provide us with some information about the time you spent in field training as a trainee, such as:

          i.   In general what was the experience like for you?

          ii.   Do you feel like you were provided with support and training when you started as a recruit entering the field training program?

          iii. How has the field training program changed since you've started at this agency?

III.   **Field training experience as a trainer**

a. Do you believe that your department has an adequate number of FTO's?

b. How are recruit officers assigned to FTOs?

c. How many recruit officers are you assigned to per Academy class? Do you feel this is an appropriate workload?

d. Does your agency have formal performance measures to evaluate the recruit officers in your FTO program?

     i.   If no, how are the guidelines communicated to the trainees?

     ii.   Are you the sole determiner of whether a trainee passes or fails the field training program?

e. How do you deliver feedback to trainees?

f. Has a trainee ever communicated to you that observations or experiences during their field training were contradictory to the academy training they received?

     i.   What was that conversation like?

     ii.   If not, how would you handle a conversation like this in the future?

g. Does your agency provide a mechanism for trainees to deliver feedback to the trainer?

     i.   If yes, what is this process like?

     ii.   If no, do you think this would prove beneficial?

h. What do you see as the most challenging aspect of being an FTO?

i. Do you have performance measures and evaluations as an FTO?

     i.   How and who provides you feedback on your performance?

j. Is there anything else regarding the field training process and your experiences that you would like to share?

Interview Type D: Former Field Training Officer

I.   **Participant involvement with training:**

a. Please begin by explaining your position here at (name of department)

     i.   Title

     ii.   Primary responsibilities

b. How long have you been at this department?

c. Did you hold a law enforcement officer position in a previous agency?

     i.   If yes, have you acted as a field training officer at a previous agency?

d. What motivated you to become a law enforcement officer?

e. Can you describe your career history at the law enforcement agency?

f. How long did you serve as a field training officer?

g. What motivated you to become a field training officer?

     i. Does the agency provide incentives, financial or related to status, for FTOs?

h. When did you move from a field training officer to your current position? Why did you change positions?

i. Can you describe the process to become an FTO? What did you think of this process? Did it adequately prepare you?

     i. Did the department provide you expectations for your conduct as an FTO?

     ii. Did you receive any specific training or orientation to become an FTO?

     iii. Did you have to meet specific standards to qualify to be an FTO?

II.   Field training experience as a trainee

a. Before we begin to discuss your time as a field trainer, can you please provide us with some information about the time you spent in field training as a trainee, such as:

     i. In general, what was the experience like for you?

     ii. Do you feel like you were provided with support and training when you started as a recruit entering the field training program?

     iii. How has the field training program changed since you've started at this agency?

III.   Field training experience as a trainer

a. Do you believe that your department has an adequate number of FTO's?

b. How are recruit officers assigned to FTOs?

c. How many recruit officers are you assigned to per Academy class? Do you feel this is an appropriate workload?

d. Does your agency have formal performance measures to evaluate the recruit officers in your FTO program?

     i. If no, how are the guidelines communicated to the trainees?

     ii. Are you the sole determiner of whether a trainee passes or fails the field training program?

e. How do you deliver feedback to trainees?

f. Has a trainee ever communicated to you that observations or experiences during their field training were contradictory to the academy training they received?

    i. What was that conversation like?

    ii. If not, how would you handle a conversation like this in the future?

g. Does your agency provide a mechanism for trainees to deliver feedback to the trainer?

    i. If yes, what is this process like?

    ii. If no, do you think this would prove beneficial?

h. What do you see as the most challenging aspect of being an FTO?

i. Do you have performance measures and evaluations as an FTO?

    i. How and who provides you feedback on your performance?

j. Is there anything else regarding the field training process and your experiences that you would like to share?

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