



**BETTER TOGETHER
PUBLIC SAFETY STUDY
POLICE REPORT #2**

POLICE OFFICER CERTIFICATION & REQUIREMENTS

As part of its examination of how policing is provided to the residents of St. Louis City and St. Louis County, Better Together compiled data related to police officer certification and requirements. All data is publicly available and obtained via Sunshine Requests. The compiled data shows the following.

Seventy-five percent of the police departments in St. Louis City and St. Louis County are not accredited. The State of Missouri does not require departments to be accredited. So, perhaps not surprisingly, of the 60 police departments in our St. Louis City and St. Louis County, only 15 are accredited by one of the two accrediting bodies, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and the Missouri Police Chiefs Charitable Foundation (MPCCF). While the State of Missouri has requirements that must be met or exceeded for individual officers to be licensed, no such requirements exist for the departments that employ them.

Of the 15 accredited departments, 10 have international accreditation from CALEA. These are: Chesterfield, Clayton, Creve Coeur, Florissant, Maplewood, Richmond Heights, Shrewsbury, St. Louis County, the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, and Webster Groves.

CALEA was first established in 1983 to establish a body of professional standards and an accreditation process, which requires a department to develop a set of comprehensive written directives, implement a preparedness program in the event of a crisis, and strengthen accountability both within the department and within the community, among other requirements. (A detailed and exhaustive list of CALEA standards can be found online at: <http://www.calea.org/content/standards-titles>.)

CALEA is governed by a 21-member board. Eleven members are law enforcement practitioners while the remaining ten members are representatives from the local/state/international law enforcement communities, business, the judiciary, and academia. The process for obtaining accreditation consists of five general phases, including enrollment, self-assessment, on-site assessment, commission review and decision, and the maintenance of compliance and reaccreditation.

The MPCCF is a not-for-profit formed in 1996 to provide assistance and service to citizens and law enforcement. The MPCCF established its accreditation process in 2008 to establish a cost effective way to improve and enhance law enforcement as a profession in Missouri. Specifically, it offers a program similar to CALEA, but with modified standards and at a reduced cost.

The phases of the MPCCF Law Enforcement Agency Certification process, which will take several years, are similar to those of CALEA and include application and enrollment, mock assessment, final assessment, oversight committee review and disposition, and annual compliancy reporting (as with CALEA standards, a detailed list of MPCCF requirements and processes can be found in our full report).

There are currently four police departments in St. Louis County that are fully accredited through MPCCF: Bellefontaine Neighbors, Maryland Heights, Olivette, and St. John. The fifth, Normandy, is currently certified on a one-year review as the department recently updated several policies that will be further reviewed after full implementation. Twelve municipal departments from St. Louis County are in one of the stages of the accreditation process, with the majority in the early stages. Those departments include Ballwin, Bridgeton, Des Peres, Ellisville, Eureka, Ferguson (status on hold), Manchester, Overland, Rock Hill (status on hold), St. Ann, Town & Country, and Vinita Park.

Accreditation is not cost-prohibitive and, in fact, carries financial benefits to certified departments. Accreditation is not a panacea for departments; the standards required for accreditation stipulate *what* should be accomplished but not *how* to accomplish it. However, it is evident that both practical and financial benefits follow from the process of accreditation and the accreditation itself. Based on the reduced rates that insurance companies offer accredited departments, it's clear that these companies believe accreditation improves outcomes and reduces risk.

MPCCF Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation offers accredited agencies a reimbursement of \$2,500 from Missouri Intergovernmental Risk Management Association (MIRMA) upon completion of their certification and each three-year renewal, making the MPCCF process even more affordable, at \$2,500 total for a three-year accreditation.

Additionally, accredited agencies can also receive a 10% rebate on the annual Law Enforcement Liability premium the entity pays to the Missouri Public Entity Risk Management Fund (MOPERM) for each year the agency is certified under MPCCF.

Significant disparities exist among the training requirements of St. Louis City and St. Louis County's 60 police departments. Missouri state statute provides that the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission (a division of the Missouri Department of Public Safety) can require no less than 470 hours of training but no more than 600 hours of training for licensure as a police officer.

Although Missouri statute prevents the POST Commission from exceeding a 600-hour training requirement, statute also provides that a political subdivision or law enforcement agency may require more stringent standards for training hours and other requirements. In compiling the data for this report, Better Together found disparate requirements among the departments, based on records the departments themselves provided. The full report includes a table detailing requirements for all 60 agencies, the differences among which include:

- Inconsistent standards for psychological evaluation. While some departments require full screening by a department-appointed psychiatrist or psychologist, others have no written standard or did not provide the information, while still others offer a vague requirement such as "good emotional health."

- Background checks range from highly detailed in some departments (e.g. checking police records, education records, employment history, military history, credit history, and driving records, as well as using lie detection), while others rely on much more simple screenings (e.g., drug tests only). Still others do not provide information regarding their background-check process.

Standards concerning licensure, continuing education, and discipline are intended to be uniform across all departments based on direction from the Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST). To be eligible for a peace officer license, an individual must be 21 years of age and a U.S. citizen, hold a valid high school diploma or its equivalent, be a graduate of a Basic Law Enforcement Training Center, pass the Missouri Peace Officer License Exam (the requirements of which are in the appendix of our full report), and have no criminal history as outlined in RSMo 590.080.1 and 590.100.1 (found in the appendix of the full report).

Additionally, each officer with the authority to enforce motor vehicle or traffic laws is required to receive three hours of training within a three-year reporting period concerning the prohibition against racial profiling. This training will focus on promoting understanding and respect for racial and cultural differences, as well as the use of “effective, noncombative methods for carrying out law enforcement duties in a racially and culturally diverse environment.”

Each of these continuing education courses must come from a POST Approved Provider, or alternatively be obtained through a college or university, military training, or by serving as an instructor for a POST certified course. Officers are required to report their continuing education hours to POST for each reporting period.

Under Missouri law, there are grounds for disciplining a peace officer explicitly provided to the Director of the Department of Public Safety. In accordance with Missouri Revised Statute 590.080.1, the Director of Public Safety has cause to discipline a police officer who is unable to perform the functions of a peace officer with reasonable competency or reasonable safety as a result of a mental condition, including alcohol or substance abuse; has committed any criminal offense, whether or not a criminal charge has been filed; or has committed any act while on active duty or under color of law that involves moral turpitude or a reckless disregard for the safety of the public or any person. (The complete list of infractions can be found in our full report.)

All data used for each section of the Better Together Police Report #2 came directly from the departments themselves. The full report, as well as a table comparing standards and training for the 60 departments, may be viewed at www.bettertogether.com/police-study.