



Law Enforcement Training: Identifying What Works for Officers and Communities

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Milton Marks Commission on California State
Government Organization and Economy

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The Little Hoover Commission, formally known as the Milton Marks "Little Hoover" Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy, is an independent state oversight agency.

By statute, the Commission is a bipartisan board composed of five public members appointed by the governor, four public members appointed by the Legislature, two senators and two assemblymembers.

In creating the Commission in 1962, the Legislature declared its purpose:

...to secure assistance for the Governor and itself in promoting economy, efficiency and improved services in the transaction of the public business in the various departments, agencies and instrumentalities of the executive branch of the state government, and in making the operation of all state departments, agencies and instrumentalities, and all expenditures of public funds, more directly responsive to the wishes of the people as expressed by their elected representatives...

The Commission fulfills this charge by listening to the public, consulting with the experts and conferring with the wise. In the course of its investigations, the Commission typically empanels advisory committees, conducts public hearings and visits government operations in action.

Its conclusions are submitted to the Governor and the Legislature for their consideration. Recommendations often take the form of legislation, which the Commission supports through the legislative process.

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Letter from the Chair

November 30, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Speaker pro Tempore of the Senate
and members of the Senate

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
and members of the Assembly

The Honorable Scott Wilk
Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Marie Waldron
Assembly Minority Leader

DEAR GOVERNOR AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE:

In the fall of 2020, the Little Hoover Commission launched a study to examine the role of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) in shaping training standards for California's law enforcement officers. The following report details our findings and recommendations for helping the state better assess and improve law enforcement training.

California spends millions of dollars on training each year and has certified thousands of hours of courses for police officers. However, the Commission learned that there is little evidence to demonstrate which types of training actually achieve intended goals and positively impact police behavior—and which do not.

To strategically improve California's approach to law enforcement training, the Commission recommends that the state empower POST to research and assess the success and relevancy of its training programs. This thoughtful evaluation of law enforcement training must focus on the structure and content of basic training and field training for entry level officers but should also include an assessment of the training offered to more seasoned officers. California must ensure that all officers—regardless of their role or tenure—are receiving adequate and appropriate training throughout the lifetime of their service. Lastly, the Commission calls on California to create a more representative POST—one that is more reflective and inclusive of both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve.

The Commission respectfully submits this work and standards prepared to help you take on this challenge.

Sincerely,

Pedro Nava, Chair
Little Hoover Commission

■ Executive Summary

California must assess and improve training for its nearly 700 law enforcement agencies and more than 87,000 full-time sworn and reserve peace officers. Such action would be an essential step toward meaningful law enforcement reform.

In the wake of deadly police encounters involving Black Americans and excessive use of force, lawmakers have looked to police training as one means to implement reform. In Fall 2020, the Little Hoover Commission launched a study to examine the role of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) in shaping law enforcement training standards for California's peace officers.

As part of its review, the Commission issued a series of Issue Briefs that provide critical context and insight into law enforcement training in California without making policy recommendations. The first, [California Law Enforcement Survey](#), details findings from the Commission's anonymous survey of active-duty California peace officers about the training they receive. The second, [Comparing Law Enforcement Basic Training Academies](#), reviews various models for law enforcement basic training academies across the nation and within California.

In this report, the Commission identifies ways in which the state can address current training deficiencies and enhance the training that officers receive.

Incorporating Research

California spends millions of dollars on law enforcement training each year yet does not require serious or thorough evaluation of how that training affects officers' behavior on the job. The state must take greater action to incorporate academic research into training curriculum to help identify effective practices and highlight deficiencies.

Recommendation 1: Lawmakers should temporarily refrain from amending or adding new law

enforcement training requirements and instead provide POST funding to assess how well existing officer training is working in the field and adjust training mandates as needed.

Recommendation 2: POST should revise its process for evaluating law enforcement training to include additional course certification criteria that incorporate training outcomes.

Recommendation 3: To encourage more rigorous analysis of officer training programs, POST should establish a process to collect and secure data for research purposes in order to improve training.

Recommendation 4: To foster collaboration with academic researchers, POST should establish a permanent academic review board to ensure training standards are aligned with the latest scientific research and advise POST on how to incorporate research findings into new and existing standards and training.

Assessing Academies

No overall assessment of the state's 41 basic training academies has been conducted to compare how effective each model is in preparing individuals to become peace officers. California must learn more about the structure of these academies to determine what kind of training works best for our officers, our communities, and our state.

Recommendation 5: Lawmakers should provide funding for POST to compare and evaluate California's 41 basic training academies and identify best practices. POST should report its findings to the Legislature in a report no later than one year after funding is appropriated for this purpose.

Rightsizing Entry Level Officer Training

The early training officers receive does not always line up with knowledge and skills they need in the field. California should reassess its approach to entry level training to promote knowledge retention and ensure that curriculum introduced to new officers best supports the needs of their duties and functions.

Recommendation 6: POST should review and evaluate the current basic academy training curriculum to, among other things, review the effectiveness and relevancy of courses for today's community needs and identify gaps in foundational training necessary to prepare new officers. POST should redesign the regular basic course based on its findings.

Recommendation 7: POST should assess and evaluate the content and structure of the field training program to determine how it could be more complimentary to the basic academy program.

Developing Robust Ongoing Education

California falls short of ensuring that officers receive adequate and appropriate training throughout the lifetime of their service. The state must rethink its current approach to ongoing training and create opportunities to bolster learning for officers throughout their careers – not just in the early years.

Recommendation 8: POST should establish a new advanced academy experience, required for officers with between two to five years of experience, to reinforce entry level training and incorporate the more advanced concepts currently embedded in the basic academy.

Recommendation 9: POST should assess the existing continuing professional training

requirements to determine whether curricula remain relevant and necessary and make adjustments as needed.

Recommendation 10: POST should identify and implement ways to improve officer access to continuing education.

Creating a More Representative POST

With the power to influence training standards for a profession that requires a high level of public confidence, the composition of the POST Commission matters. While maintaining a majority of peace officers who can speak to the often-changing realities of the job, the balance of the POST Commission must shift to better incorporate a variety of civilian voices.

Recommendation 11: Lawmakers should modify the POST Commission to add additional public members and ensure broad representation that includes members of vulnerable communities, health and mental health professionals who serve vulnerable communities, and experts in adult education and scientific research.

■ Introduction

The state plays a critical role in setting the minimum training standards for the nearly 700 law enforcement agencies and more than 87,000 full-time sworn and reserve peace officers in California.¹ This function, among others, is carried out by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, or POST.

We launched this review in fall 2020 to examine POST's role and review existing training requirements of California peace officers. At the time, momentum for police reform was building throughout the state and across the country in the wake of devastating and deadly police encounters involving Black Americans and excessive use of force. As in the past, lawmakers turned to police training as one instrument of reform – a tool to shape evolving values and expectations for the profession.

We learned that peace officer training can be a powerful tool for setting the tone for an officer's career and shaping how individual officers view their role. Yet, despite ongoing reliance on law enforcement training as an instrument of change, we found very little evidence to demonstrate which types of training actually achieve intended goals and positively impact police behavior – and which do not.

Assessing and improving training for the state's peace officers is an essential step toward meaningful reform. Doing so will require a financial investment. But the cost of inaction is too great. It is a cost that officers will pay when they are faced with a split-second decision for which they are unprepared, that communities will pay when an officer makes the wrong decision, that departments will pay in legal bills and settlement costs.

Additional Resources on Police Training

The Commission recently produced two Issue Briefs related to this study on California law enforcement training.

The first, [Issue Brief: California Law Enforcement Survey](#), presents findings from a May 2021 survey of active-duty peace officers about the training they receive. More than 300 officers responded to the survey, affirming the value of the training they receive and identifying pressing challenges that could be addressed to improve their training experience.

The second, [Issue Brief: Comparing Law Enforcement Basic Training Academies](#), presents a nationwide comparison of law enforcement basic training academy models using data gathered from a survey of state law enforcement leaders. This Brief also presents a preliminary examination of California's basic training academies to examine differences in training hours and formats, attendance, and passing and hiring rates.

Both Issue Briefs are available on the Commission's website at www.lhc.ca.gov/report-library.

SECTION 1: WE'RE SPENDING MILLIONS ON LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING. FOR WHAT?

California spends millions on law enforcement training each year and has certified thousands of courses for police officers. Yet, the state does not require serious or thorough evaluation of how that training affects officer behavior on the job. Without research and assessment, it is impossible to know that this investment has produced, or is likely to produce, the results Californians want to see.

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATES MANY ASPECTS OF TRAINING

The Legislature often sets the topics of law enforcement training and requires a certain number of instructional hours but has yet to require an assessment of how training impacts officer behavior on the job.

Often, this legislation is intended to bring attention to laws already in place or to respond to accounts in the media or events highlighted by stakeholders or public interest groups.² Over the last decade, lawmakers introduced approximately 65 bills that addressed peace officer training, more than half of which became law. Among their changes, these bills required pre-employment training in principled policing, mental health, domestic violence, and gun violence restraining orders; added hours to on-the-job training for current officers; and mandated specialized training for maritime, campus, or tribal officers.

In recent years, the pace with which lawmakers have weighed in has significantly increased. During the five-year period between 2015-2020, lawmakers introduced an average of more than nine bills related to officer training each year – almost double the average between 2010 and 2014.

This model leaves little room for thoughtful priority setting and evaluation. The Legislature does not require after-the fact assessment of training, nor does it provide POST the resources to do so. Thus, the state fails to look back and consider whether the training addressed the problems it intended to solve, whether it resulted in any unintended consequences in officer behavior, or if it remains relevant for the realities of the job today.

EXISTING POST TRAINING EVALUATION FALL SHORT

POST certifies all 4,600 law enforcement training courses within its portfolio, including courses in the basic training program, mandated in-service officer training, as well as optional continuing education courses for officers. Yet, neither the course certification process nor the regular course assessments measure the effectiveness of officer training.

California spends millions on law enforcement training each year and has certified thousands of courses for police officers. Yet, the state does not require serious or thorough evaluation of how that training affects officer behavior on the job.

The criteria for evaluating law enforcement courses for certification are delineated in the California Code of Regulations and generally require POST to consider what the course will teach and whether it will fulfill an unmet training need, how the students will learn, and how the course will be administered.³ For course certification, POST reviews course administrative information, instructors, outlines,

hourly distribution schedule, safety policy, student to instructor ratio, and checks that the course material is current and complies with state laws. Every two years, POST requires presenters to re-submit the course content for evaluation in order to maintain certification.⁴

The current certification process, however, does not include important questions that could help law enforcement officials understand what outcomes the training might produce or how it may impact officer behavior. For example, POST's certification process does not consider:

- Was the training developed based on or informed by academic research and does it align with research evidence?
- Will the training teach skills that will prevent and reduce policing harm in marginalized groups?
- How does this training align – or not – with what officers actually do on-the-job and how will it be useful in their day-to-day work?
- Is the training current and fresh or does it repeat lessons and examples officers were exposed to in prior years?
- How will the training improve officer job performance?

POST also tends to evaluate existing courses based on the number of training hours, or the course outcomes from an instructor's point-of-view – such as whether students retained the information they were presented or if they were satisfied with the course. These evaluations fall short in helping POST and others understand if the training is effective in changing officer behavior or can support desired policy outcomes, such as police reform or crime reduction. For example, monitoring the hours of training only ensures that officers are physically – but not cognitively – present for the lessons. Similarly, tracking student satisfaction may measure how engaged participants are in a class, but is not a good

proxy for the quality and relevancy of the training to the job.

Without more rigorous evaluation of the impacts of law enforcement training on officer behavior, California risks inadvertently prolonging use of training techniques that are useless or, even worse, erode community trust and result in other unintended consequences.

RESEARCH CAN HELP DEMONSTRATE WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T

In the past, little rigorous research was available to say with certainty how law enforcement training translates into actions in the field. Too often training is developed like a craft, based on intuition, best practices from colleagues, or an officer's own individual experience. It is not generally based on research evidence, nor is it tested to see how it influences officer behavior on the job. A growing body of academic work is beginning to look at ways to incorporate research findings into police training techniques and assess the outcomes of training.⁵ California should take advantage of that work.

Research could help identify effective training practices. Most of this work has been done in partnership with research institutions to design scientific studies, collect necessary data, and systematically evaluate findings, often for specific training programs. Some examples include:

A team of researchers from across the country partnered with the Seattle Police Department in 2018 to evaluate a procedural justice program designed to slow police officers' thought processes during citizen encounters. Researchers found that officers who participated in the training were less likely to resolve incidents with arrests or use of force.⁶ More recently, a team of researchers evaluated implementation of procedural justice training in the Chicago Police Department as a strategy for reducing negative police interactions with the communities they serve. Researchers found that the training reduced civilian

complaints and use of force and suggested this sort of training is viable for decreasing harmful policing practices.⁷

Researchers with the University of Cincinnati partnered with the Louisville Metro Police Department in 2019 to test the impact of a new de-escalation program which teaches officers to think about using time, space, dialogue, and critical thinking – not force – to diffuse situations. Using surveys and a randomized control trial, researchers found officers self-reported a reduction in use of force by 28 percent, a reduction in citizen injuries by 26 percent and a reduction in officer injuries by 36 percent.⁸ Supplemental research of the de-escalation program conducted in 2020 found that receptivity to the training and officer views on police use of force varied by officer characteristics and that supervisor activities to reinforce de-escalation principles impacted officer attitudes on use of force.⁹

Without more rigorous evaluation of the impacts of law enforcement training on officer behavior, California risks inadvertently prolonging use of training techniques that are useless or, even worse, erode community trust and result in other unintended consequences.

Researchers at the University of Washington are currently working with the Sacramento Police Department to evaluate and compare the efficacy of traditional classroom-based implicit bias training with an interactive simulation-based bias training. For this study, researchers are tracking body camera footage

from 300 officers over a 12-month period and coding their behavior while interacting with community members. The goal is to understand whether the training changed behavior in the field, which type of training was more effective, and how long the training effect lasted.¹⁰

Research can also highlight training deficiencies.

Research is equally valuable in validating training that is not useful or that leads to unintended consequences. Some examples:

Though de-escalation training is widely promoted as a way to improve police interactions with the public, with the exception of the study noted above, there is little research linking de-escalation training to police officer behavior. Researchers in 2020 conducted a multidisciplinary literature review of 64 de-escalation training evaluations conducted over a 40-year period, primarily in the fields of nursing and psychiatry. Researchers found that de-escalation trainings lead to slight-to-moderate individual and organizational improvements but noted that the quality of nearly all of these evaluations was questionable and few included evidence on the impact of de-escalation training for police.¹¹

Implicit bias training is touted as a way to reduce disparities in police enforcement activities, but there is still little scientific evaluation of these training programs on police actions. In one study, a team of researchers partnered with the New York City Police Department to evaluate the effects of a one-day in-service implicit bias training program on patrol officers. Researchers found that 70 percent of officers initially regarded the training as beneficial, and two-thirds reported learning new skills they expected to use on-the-job. Follow-up surveys conducted between two to 13 months after the training found that 42 percent of officers said they had not applied the training in their duties over the last month and only a quarter reported frequently attempting to use the skills. Researchers

concluded that while the training increased officers' understanding of what implicit bias is, it did little to impact enforcement behaviors.¹²

Some researchers also suggest that use of force training is overly geared toward mitigating threats to officers. They suggest training scenarios over-represent situations that are potentially fatal for officers and possibly create a distorted perception of risk that may give rise to excessive force in the field. Drawing on ethnographic observations and interviews in three U.S. police departments, one researcher found that police are both informally and formally socialized to perceive police work as dangerous and these threats – and the need for officer safety – are emphasized in officer training. The researcher observed that use-of-force training exercises emphasize various scenarios where officers are confronted with armed suspects or possible threats of violence and must decide whether or not to engage with force.¹³ Reform advocates suggest that training emphasis on low probability/high-stakes scenarios may actually give officers a disproportionate sense that they must prepare for violence and can skew officers behavior toward use of force.¹⁴

Facilitating research on training effectiveness will require overcoming a number of barriers.

Though data on police behavior while in training and on the job is critical for analysis, state law only requires limited public reporting of law enforcement data. Since 2017, agencies have been required to collect and report data on use of force incidents that result in serious bodily injury, death, or involve the discharge of a firearm to the Department of Justice.¹⁵

Several barriers limit the practicality of conducting more outcome-based research:

- Use of force data currently collected by the Department of Justice does not represent all use of force incidents, nor does it capture lesser behaviors that make up the majority of officers

interactions with the public.¹⁶

- Collecting additional data on police behavior would be both expensive and time consuming. And without the assistance of artificial intelligence technology to automate the process, behavior analysis of behavioral data likely would have to be conducted through labor-intensive manual reviews.¹⁷
- Police agencies may be resistant to collecting additional data for fear that sharing findings with the public could increase a department's risk of litigation. One concern would be that behaviors recorded in training were used against officers when something bad happened in the field.¹⁸
- And finally, though there are many academic researchers across the country who focus on criminal justice practices, few academics focus specifically on law enforcement training and whether it produces discernable change in an officer's behavior.¹⁹

INCORPORATING RESEARCH TO IMPROVE CALIFORNIA'S LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

POST must be given resources to assess the success and relevancy of existing training programs. POST must also augment its process for evaluating law enforcement training to include metrics that evaluate training outcomes. The focus of course evaluations must shift away from hours in training or officer satisfaction to better understanding training outcomes and impacts to officer actions and behavior in the field.

More research is needed, but POST is well-positioned to help develop a body of research around police training effectiveness. To do this, it must foster and facilitate partnerships between academic researchers and police departments. To date, POST's work with academic researchers has largely been project based. While POST routinely brings in non-law enforcement experts, including researchers, to help create training curriculum, student workbooks, and guidelines on

Wide Support for Broader Evaluation of Existing Training Programs

After decades of legislative and regulatory build-up and state investment, both peace officers and reform advocates agree that an evaluation of officer training is long overdue in order to better understand how training has actually impacted officer performance in the real world. Without this kind of assessment, it is impossible to know with certainty how driving training has improved, or if courses intended to reduce an officer's bias or improve communication with the public actually produce those results.

Though cops generally perceive existing training to be effective,²⁰ some acknowledged that there are gaps between what officers are taught and what they experience on the job. Indeed, the majority of officers we surveyed (almost 70 percent) agreed that POST should incorporate academic research on training effectiveness to its standards and curricula, and even more (80 percent) agreed POST needed to do more to improve training by monitoring training outcomes and adjusting standards and curricula accordingly.

Some law enforcement officials further explained that it would be helpful to evaluate how training prepares them for the realities of the job and better understand how it influences their behavior on the streets. "As a state, we are not going back and looking at the results [of training]," Los Angeles Police Department Training and Education Director Dr. Luann Pannell told Commissioners. She said we don't ask, "why was this [training] implemented, did we reach our goal, what are our goals now?"²¹

Community and police reform advocates, too, support evaluation of peace officer training as a way to measure change in policing and demonstrate that training actually addresses priority issues. They observe that training is often seen as a solution to various problems identified in law enforcement, but say that many times, the problems persist despite investment in training. When the efficacy and effectiveness of those trainings remains unmeasured and unknown, there can be little trust that change actually occurred or that the training actually made a difference.²² Hans Menos with the Center for Policing Equity explained without evaluation we cannot know whether training leaves officers unprepared to meet the needs of the communities in which they serve. He observed that significant and ongoing investment in training, without knowing the results, can lead to continued harm done to communities, delegitimization of police, and misallocation of funds that could be spent on more effective training.²³

specific topics,²⁴ these efforts will not result in the type of global and systematic review that is needed. POST must be empowered to lead efforts that drive training reform and do more to regularly engage with academic researchers – in California and across the

nation – on ways to inform training through rigorous, scientific research. Findings from these research activities should be used to inform state training standards and curricula and shared with lawmakers to drive policy changes.

No formal, permanent body exists to connect POST with researchers on an ongoing basis. The organization's only permanent advisory body is comprised of rank-and-file law enforcement officials and is charged with advising the commission on contemporary and evolving issues in law enforcement.²⁵ POST should establish a permanent advisory body to continually scan research for evidence about which types of training are most or least effective and advise commissioners and policymakers on any necessary updates to training requirements, standards, or curriculum. This advisory body should incorporate research in police science, but also in other relevant fields such as psychology, communications, medicine, education, and economics.

Californians deserve to know that investments made to officers in their communities will result in the changes they want to see. And officers deserve to receive training that will help them carry out their responsibilities effectively, and with minimal harm to themselves and the communities in which they serve.

Recommendation 1: Lawmakers should temporarily refrain from amending or adding new law enforcement training requirements and instead provide POST funding to:

- Partner with academic researchers to conduct an assessment of existing officer training requirements and determine how well it is working for officers in the field. Report findings to the Legislature within two years.
- Adjust training mandates as needed based on its findings, including reducing or eliminating training because it is not effective or no longer meets the needs of the workforce today.
- Continually assess new mandated training requirements and report findings to the Legislature.

Recommendation 2: POST should revise its process for evaluating law enforcement training to include additional course certification criteria that incorporates training outcomes. Additionally, POST should require presenters to develop evaluation plans for all POST-certified courses. These evaluation plans should incorporate training outcomes and include guidelines for how instructors will measure outcomes.

Recommendation 3: To encourage more rigorous analysis of officer training programs, POST should establish a process to collect and secure data for research purposes in order to improve training. This data should largely be kept confidential and made available only to POST or research institutions for analysis.

Recommendation 4: To foster collaboration with academic researchers, POST should establish a permanent academic review board to:

- Regularly review and update POST's training standards and curriculum to ensure alignment with the latest scientific research;
- Survey current research on police training and other relevant topics and advise POST on how to incorporate findings into new and existing standards and training;
- Advise POST on strategies to define and test training outcomes; and,
- Advise POST on procedures to address data confidentiality issues that may arise from sharing data for research purposes.

SECTION 2: ASSESSING CALIFORNIA'S BASIC TRAINING ACADEMIES

Forty-one basic training academies are currently certified to operate in California and provide all of the curriculum and testing necessary for an individual to

become a law enforcement officer in the state. POST certifies each of these academies to ensure their curriculum meets the minimum content and hourly requirement for training and testing in 41 separate instructional topics, or “learning domains,” and provides oversight through auditing enforcement.

As outlined in [Issue Brief: Comparing Law Enforcement Basic Training Academies](#), released by the Commission earlier this year, the nature of the academies differs in substantial ways.²⁶ For example, most are administered by community colleges, while others are operated by a single law enforcement agency or even, in one case, as a regional consortium. Other differences include the structure and amount of instruction offered, the experience of the instructors, the total size and rates of graduation, and the rates at which graduates are hired.

Yet, despite these many differences among the state’s basic training academies, no overall assessment has been conducted to compare how effective each model is in preparing individuals to become peace officers. A comprehensive evaluation is overdue.

Such an evaluation could compare many aspects of the organization and operation of academies. Three examples of the many kinds of issues that would benefit from rigorous analysis, include:

Stress vs. Non-Stress Training. Some academies use high-stress or paramilitary style training that emphasizes reality-based scenarios and can be important for trainees to practice what it will be like to interact in communities under pressure situations. Other academies promote low-stress training, which may resemble a more academic, classroom-based environment.

Both models have proponents within the law enforcement community: Most officers who responded to the Commission’s survey said that stress-based academies provide essential training

for law enforcement. Some emphasized the benefit of this type of training for practicing how to de-escalate high-stress situations or problem solve and determine when it is or is not appropriate to use force. About 20 percent said that non-stress academies are just as effective, or more effective than, stress-based academies in preparing officers for the realities of the job. Some said too great an emphasis on high-stress scenarios during basic training does not prepare officers for the day-to-day realities of the job, such as interacting with community.²⁷ Chiefs testified they would like to see training structures that are less militaristic and more conducive for higher learning.²⁸

Training Delivery. Academies differ in the way training is delivered or in their instructional emphasis beyond the minimum POST requirements. For example, some academies deliver training through lengthy classroom sessions and long blocks of repetitive skills building, often one subject at a time. Research suggests this siloed approach is less effective than a more holistic approach that staggers and integrates skills building throughout the training experience. Academies also vary in the amount they rely on lecture format learning, which has been found to be less effective for developing certain types of skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.²⁹

Experience and Quality of Instructors. POST sets certain requirements for basic training instructors and offers courses for them.³⁰ Yet despite these standards, the experience and quality of instructors can vary across academies. Some instructors are retired law enforcement officers, while others are actively involved in the profession as sworn officers assigned temporarily to an academy. Others, such as off-duty sworn officers, may work as part-time academy instructors. Academies may also bring in individuals without prior experience in law enforcement to serve as instructors for components of the curriculum. Some instructors may hold

advanced degrees, while others are certified as experts through completion of specialized training or experience in their field.

Law enforcement officials told the Commission an instructor's background and approach to teaching can influence how receptive officers are to the training. For example, they explained long-retired officers may be too far removed from the current realities of the profession or may be dismissive of new techniques that were not in practice during their tenure. Officers said these instructors can then undermine the effectiveness of lessons.³¹ Some reflected that not all instructors regularly update their curriculum so that students may receive the same content year-after-year despite changes to the complexity of the job.³²

Yet, despite these many differences among the state's basic training academies, no overall assessment has been conducted to compare how effective each model is in preparing individuals to become peace officers. A comprehensive evaluation is overdue.

In each of these three areas – and in many others – a rigorous evaluation of academies and a comparison of their results is needed. Law enforcement leaders, rank-and-file officers, and California's civilians all deserve to know what kind of training works best, and how it ultimately affects officer behavior on the job.

COMPARISON TO OTHER STATES

Our Issue Brief entitled [Comparing Law Enforcement](#)

[Basic Training Academies](#), released earlier this year, included a preliminary comparison of California's academy structure to that of other states. But there has been no more thorough analysis to consider how California's system compares to that of other states and whether there are lessons to be learned regarding the effectiveness of one model over others.

Washington State, at the direction of its Legislature, in 2019 commissioned an evaluation of its single Basic Law Enforcement Academy. This evaluation included a national scan of basic law enforcement training and considered the feasibility of introducing alternative academy models into Washington's training scheme.³³ A similar evaluation of California's basic training model could help guide POST in future decisions about the need to certify additional academies or to consider whether redundancies are created by operating the existing academies.

CALIFORNIA MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT WORKS

The existing variation in academies may or may not be beneficial. The Commission heard from many officers that there needs to be greater consistency in training,³⁴ but it is also possible that different law enforcement agencies – with varying sizes, locations, and missions – benefit from different training methods. For now, the Commission takes no position on whether greater uniformity of training is good or bad. But we are strong advocates that the state must learn more. The variation among California's existing academies provides a natural research experiment – and we must take advantage of this opportunity to compare and measure different types of law enforcement training, and decide what works best for our officers, our communities, and our state.

Recommendation 5: Lawmakers should provide funding for POST to compare and evaluate California's 41 basic training academies. In this evaluation, POST should consider how well each is preparing recruits and identify, if possible, any best practices given the different academy models

currently operating in the state. In conducting this research POST should also consider whether California needs 41 different academies or if there are opportunities for consolidation. POST should report its findings to the Legislature in a report no later than one year after funding is appropriated for this purpose.

SECTION 3: RIGHTSIZING ENTRY LEVEL OFFICER TRAINING

Front-line officers – those working in the field in our communities – are often young and fairly inexperienced. Many come to the profession straight out of high school. Once on the job, these new officers often have the most latitude and least supervision during their day-to-day work. Many also have had the least time and experience to develop and hone their skillset. Because this employment model places so much responsibility on new officers, entry level training is critically important to provide foundational skills and prepare recruits for the realities and obligations of the job. Given the high-level of responsibility recruits receive once they become full-fledged officers, equipped with a badge and a firearm, it is critical that this training successfully convey the knowledge, skills, and abilities appropriate for the job.

While many officers say their entry level training is relevant to their day-to-day work,³⁵ some suggest that this early training doesn't always line up with the knowledge and skills new officers need. Officers described an at-times rigid training scheme that locks in training on certain topics, in specified amounts of time. Challenges compound as lawmakers and others add new topics into the required basic curriculum, cramming existing curriculum into an already limited training scheme. One official likened this learning approach to drinking from the fire hose, where the pace and volume of subjects covered has accelerated to the point that knowledge retention becomes a challenge.

Training Focus: Basic and Field Training

Between the basic academy and field training programs, California mandates a minimum of about six and a half months of training to become a peace officer:

Basic Academy: The basic academy program covers subjects in 41 different learning domains that span the requirements of the profession: weapons, defensive tactics, and use of force; general operations; vehicle operations; victims and crimes operations; community policing and communications; self-improvement; and legal education. Officers must complete a minimum number of instructional hours in each domain and pass required tests to graduate from the basic academy and enter into the field training program, as shown in Appendix A.³⁶

Field Training: The field training program offers localized training to recruits, consisting of one-on-one training and mentoring with a Field Training Officer. POST provides guidelines for 18 core competencies to be covered in field training. Topics include ethics, traffic, report writing, community relations, and policing in the community, among others, as shown in Appendix B. New officers must successfully complete this probationary training before they can work alone as uniformed officers.³⁷

It is time California reassess how it deploys entry level officer training. The structure and content of both the basic training and field training programs should be reevaluated to ensure that all new officers are given sufficient time and exposure to develop

and practice the basic skills necessary for the job. Our work identified a number of challenges to be addressed:

Insufficient time in the academy to adequately cover topics critical to job. Today, most of the basic training curriculum focuses on teaching officers the “nuts and bolts” of the profession – skills like how to write a report, drive a car, shoot a firearm. While appropriate and necessary basic skills for the job, officers said there is not enough time to develop other softer skills necessary for day-to-day police work. One officer explained, basic training does a good job at teaching a recruit to hit a target, but that a recruit’s decision to use that force is equally important. Key subjects may be mentioned in the academy, but more than half of surveyed officers identified topics that could benefit from additional emphasis, such as communication, problem solving, decision-making, critical thinking, officer wellness, de-escalation, use of force, media relations. Police chiefs reiterated these concerns, and also called for more training in several additional areas, including interpersonal communications, crisis intervention, and professionalism.³⁸

Academy curriculum sometimes outdated. Some officers expressed frustration that the basic functions and duties required of the job have changed immensely over the years, requiring front-line officers to adapt to evolving technologies, changing laws, new cultural norms, and complex societal issues such as homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, and a variety of other health and mental health issues. Yet, the training they receive has not kept pace with these changes.³⁹ Police chiefs specifically observed that often the more rigid requirements set in statute can lag behind contemporary needs and do not include problem solving, communications, and community policing philosophy – topics that could help officers respond to various complex situations.⁴⁰ Some officers suggested the academy experience should include training and instruction with mental health

and social work professionals, so officers are better prepared when interacting with at-risk members in the community.⁴¹

The flow of entry level training could be improved. Field experience can help officers absorb and apply lessons from the academy and reinforce their training. But in California, entry level training generally is not structured to allow officers to go back and forth between the classroom and field environment. Officers said this gap can make it difficult, at times, for a recruit to understand the breadth of what they are expected to learn at the academy without having the benefit of exposure to real world scenarios.

Some suggested law enforcement training could improve under a different model that blends field work and classroom education, like nursing programs that interweave internships and clinical rotations over a period of up to two years.⁴² This approach would allow trainees to experience in and out phases of the academy that move from the classroom to the field and back and provide context for some of the more complex issues raised during the academy.⁴³ Early training in this community context could help officers better relate to and understand challenges facing the communities in which they will serve.

The Los Angeles Police Department’s Basic Training Academy, for example, brings all academy recruits back into the classroom setting for an additional 80-hour, or two-week training experience at the end of their probationary period, at about 11 months on the job. The first week goes beyond the minimum required basic curriculum to address a range of topics including fair and impartial policing, purposeful communication, investigations, care of victims and witnesses, procedural justice, use of force, community relationship development, and building public trust. During this period, officers are asked to consider a number of important issues, now informed by their experience in the field: how

their bias works and how they can mitigate negative outcomes, how empathy in policing improves safety for officers and the public, what procedural justice looks like in a real-world experience, how officers can engage in the community to make a difference in peoples' lives. The second week is devoted to exposing recruits to additional mental health intervention training – something that previously new officers had to wait years to undergo.⁴⁴

More time is needed to practice learned skills.

Some officers commented that field training should be longer in order to give recruits more opportunity to practice and reinforce skills in a hands-on learning environment.⁴⁵ Some chiefs envisioned the field training program bolstered by more internship programs that expose recruits to social workers, mental health professionals, staff in the district attorney's office and public defender's office, and other professional staff with whom they would interact in the community. This exposure, they said, would create a more holistic understanding of the criminal justice system and the community in which a new officer would work.⁴⁶

ENTRY LEVEL OFFICER TRAINING MUST BE DEPLOYED USING A THOUGHTFUL, PLANNED APPROACH

To promote knowledge retention and ensure that curriculum introduced to new officers best supports the needs of their duties and functions, California should rethink its approach to entry level training. Officer trainees need to be given appropriate time to learn, absorb, and practice the skills necessary to serve and protect their communities.

It is clear that what police officers need to know has evolved over time. And while POST has adjusted the basic academy curriculum to incorporate additional content, it is not clear that equal consideration has been given to how much time is required to appropriately address these needs or whether all of the curriculum remains relevant. Currently, all of California's basic academies exceed the minimum

number of required teaching hours.⁴⁷ Some in the profession suggest that far more time is needed, including the president of the Peace Officers Research Association of California, who testified that the academy should expand to a full two-years in order to include more academic instruction.⁴⁸

...while POST has adjusted the basic academy curriculum to incorporate additional content, it is not clear that equal consideration has been given to how much time is required to appropriately address these needs or whether all of the curriculum remains relevant.

Basic training should start with the basics. Instead of cramming an ever-changing list of required topics into an allotted set of hours, POST should be given authority to assess and restructure the content of the basic academy to ensure that appropriate emphasis is placed on the skills new officers will need, when they need them. While the Commission does not take a position on how much additional time is needed for the basic academy and in what specific topics – that determination requires rigorous examination by POST, along with academic experts and others – it is clear that state standards are not in line with the needs of the profession. Similarly, POST should reconsider the flow of entry level training to ensure that officers have sufficient time and opportunity to practice those skills most critical to the job before being asked to take on the full responsibilities of the job. Again, a rigorous evaluation – and potential course correction – are needed.

Recommendation 6: POST should review and evaluate the current basic academy training curriculum to:

- Review the effectiveness and relevancy of courses for today's community needs.
- Identify concepts that are obsolete or, conversely, more appropriate for experienced officers. These should be removed from the regular basic course to allow more time to reinforce the basic skills and concepts that are fundamental for all officers.
- Identify gaps in foundational training necessary to prepare new officers. These topics should be incorporated into or expanded upon in regular basic course.
- Based on findings, redesign the regular basic course to ensure recruits receive appropriate and effective training before their probationary period ends. The hours allotted to the basic academy program and the scheduling of the academy program should reflect these training needs.

Recommendation 7: POST should assess and evaluate the content and structure of the field training program to determine how it could be more complimentary to the basic academy program. POST should consider expanding the field training program as well as segmenting supervised field work with academy curriculum.

SECTION 4: INSUFFICIENT OPPORTUNITY FOR ROBUST, ONGOING EDUCATION

In-service training offers an avenue for officers to stay current with ever-evolving laws, policies, trends, and societal demands, as well as practice certain skills specific to their role or “perishable” skills that are less durable and require consistent repetition to maintain proficiency. However, California requires – and invests in – few ongoing educational opportunities for peace officers throughout their careers.

California Requires a Patchwork of Continuing Officer Training

POST regulations require all officers to complete a continuing professional training program every two years. Currently, this consists of a minimum of 24 hours of POST-certified training, including 12 hours of psychomotor training (which includes tactical firearms, driver training and awareness, and arrest and control), two hours of communications training, and four hours of use of force training.⁴⁹

Both POST and the Legislature require some additional ongoing, or in-service, training for career officers. For example, lawmakers require vehicle high speed pursuit training for all officers every year, arrest and firearms training every three years, and racial profiling training every five years.⁵⁰ Certain officers also are required to complete additional training based on their position or function.⁵¹ For example, POST requires all new Sergeants to complete an 80-hour POST supervisory course within one year of their appointment, while new Lieutenants and Commanders must complete a 120-hour POST management course. All school district and community college officers are required by state law to attend a 40-hour POST campus law enforcement course within two years of their appointment.⁵²

POST regulations require all officers to complete a continuing professional training program every two years. To supplement these requirements, POST's course catalogue includes approximately 4,600 certified courses which officers may enroll in voluntarily.⁵³ Many officers avail themselves of these courses and annually complete significantly more training than required. Indeed, POST estimates peace officers average 88 hours of training every two-year cycle, compared to the required 24-hour minimum.⁵⁴

This demand is not surprising given feedback the Commission received from California officers. Many view in-service training as an avenue for lifelong learning and said they would welcome additional refresher courses on topics that may have been touched on during their entry level training, such as critical thinking skills, principled policing, procedural justice, communication, de-escalation, crisis intervention and culture as well as officer wellness and resiliency.⁵⁵ Officers also said they would benefit from in-depth courses on new topics as a way to stay up-to-date on trends in the profession, such as updates on case law and legislative changes that impact the criminal justice system.⁵⁶

California must rethink its current approach to ongoing training and create opportunities to bolster learning for officers throughout their careers – not just in the early years. As it stands, there has been little evaluation to determine if courses focus on topically appropriate issues and in areas officers most need. Worse, the state's current approach to continuing education can result in training inequities across law enforcement departments and regions of the state, can create cultural challenges within individual police departments, and can leave veteran officers underprepared for the realities of the job.

TRAINING NEEDS VARY, REQUIREMENTS ARE ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL

Law enforcement experts emphasized the importance of training early in officers' careers

– some noting that new officers need a different sort of support than their more seasoned colleagues. One officer explained that it can take around five years for an officer to be proficient and capable of approaching the calls that come in and understanding how to approach different situations.⁵⁷ Yet, California's current training regimen emphasizes just the first one to two years of apprenticeship training and does not support new officers through this journeyman level.

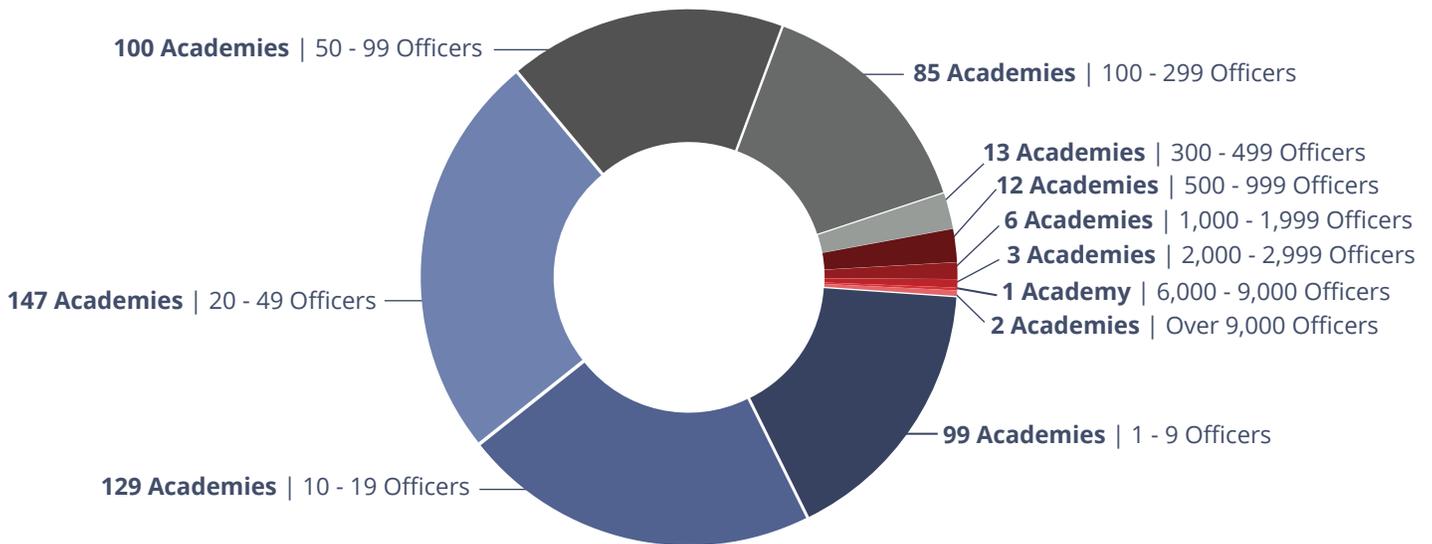
California must rethink its current approach to ongoing training and create opportunities to bolster learning for officers throughout their careers – not just in the early years.

"We put our youngest and newest officers out on the front lines," Dr. Luann Pannell, Director of Police Training and Education at the Los Angeles Police Department told Commissioners. She explained that in most departments, frontline officers have to put in time and "earn" advanced training opportunities even though they are responsible for doing most of the frontline work. A better paradigm would be to figure out how to support officers through their first five years on the job and then institute mandatory milestones throughout an officer's career.⁵⁸

Additionally, ongoing training requirements generally are standardized and do not account for an officer's experience, time on the job, or role. For example, there are no set expectations for what officers should know once they reach five – or seven or 10 – years of service, nor expectations that officers should be fluent in defined skillsets or have achieved certain proficiencies after a set amount of time on the job.⁵⁹

Nearly Two-thirds of California Law Enforcement Agencies Employ Less Than 50 Full-time Sworn Officers

California law enforcement agencies by the number of full-time sworn officers they employ



Note: An additional 11 law enforcement agencies employ only dispatch or reserve officers, but not full-time sworn officers.

Source: Manny Alvarez, Executive Director, Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. June 23, 2021. Personal communication with Commission staff.

The lack of such a structured training scheme can be problematic for various reasons. When, for example, new concepts or expectations are built into basic training academies, veteran officers may not be exposed to those same concepts unless their department offers similar supplemental training. Officers may be enrolled same ongoing refresher courses year after year despite some already having a mastery of the skills. Officers may also be lumped into the same courses, even though some may have job duties that may require specialized or advanced training on certain topics. Patrol officers, for example, likely need different ongoing training than investigative officers.

TRAINING AVAILABILITY OFTEN DETERMINED BY DEPARTMENT SIZE, RESOURCES

Once officers complete mandated training, the

availability of educational opportunities often depends on a department's resources. With limited state funds available to reimburse departments for training, some departments only provide the two-year mandated minimum.

Officers said a department's size or resources can dramatically impact how it prioritizes training. Departments in higher socio-economic communities are more likely to have adequately funded police departments that can choose to prioritize training, while those operating in less resourced communities have little room to budget beyond minimum requirements.

Smaller operations – which account for most departments in the state – may lack in-house training resources such as instructors, classroom facilities, or easy access to firing ranges or driving tracks. Smaller

departments, too, often have less staffing flexibility to backfill officers' shifts for particular assignments or less resources for overtime pay in order to maintain coverage during the training period. These staffing challenges can be compounded in smaller departments when there are vacancies or absences due to illness or personal leave.⁶⁰ This means that while larger departments may supplement mandated training with additional exposure to mental health training, de-escalation techniques, or communication skills, for example, smaller departments are not equally able to train beyond the minimum.⁶¹ The Los Angeles Police Department, one of the largest departments in the state, already brings back each basic academy cohort for additional training before completing their probationary period. The department currently is designing an additional training regimen to bring back academy cohorts at the three-year mark to focus on refresher training around community building, tactical emergency first-aid and trauma care, command and control, and field operations.⁶²

Some officers also noted that an individual department's culture and willingness to embrace new and ongoing training – not undermine it – also can impact how much ongoing training officers receive. Of the officers who responded to our survey, one-fifth said department culture and lack of support from superior officers are almost always or often barriers to continuing training.⁶³

OPTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Improve training intervals with a second academy experience. Several experts envisioned a second, more advanced academy for journeyman officers with less than five years of experience. Some emphasized the approach as an opportunity to reinforce new and relevant topics and build resiliency so officers could better acclimate to the trauma they encounter on the job. Others suggested it could be used to refresh essential skills, such as communication and interviewing, or to build up

“emotional fitness” alongside the physical fitness required of officers through teaching coping skills, like how to destress or recognize bad behaviors in themselves.⁶⁴ We believe all of these arguments have merit. Experts noted an advanced academy could be completed in a number of weeks, not the months that the basic training academy requires.

Establish lifelong learning pathways. With the exception of obtaining a POST basic training certificate before entering the profession, California does not require peace officers to obtain professional certification in order to advance through their careers. However, POST does offer several professional peace officer certificates – at the intermediate, advanced, supervisory, management, and executive levels – all of which are voluntary.⁶⁵ To qualify for this training, officers must complete an increasing level of higher education units or degrees, years of law enforcement experience, and verifiable hours of law enforcement training.⁶⁶ Some departments may incentivize this training through salary increases or by making completion mandatory for advancement into certain roles, but these requirements are not standardized across the state.

Some officers suggested this program should be strengthened to build officers' competencies more consistently across the profession. This could be done by making such certificates mandatory for promotion through peace officer ranks and/or expanding the training content to reinforce critical skillsets deemed necessary at each various level. This training also could be used to expose seasoned officers to experts outside of law enforcement, such as mental health specialists, social services professionals, psychologists, and others.⁶⁷

Expand options for online learning. Some officers suggested POST make it easier for officers to access training by making more courses available online, both for students to take at their own pace or for instructors to facilitate in live classroom settings.

Officers described several potential benefits to virtual training: It could expand access to formal, professor-led courses, particularly for officers in departments that lack designated in-house trainers. It could facilitate peer learning and idea sharing across regions and departments, allowing officers to gain new insights and perspectives on ways to better engage in their own communities. It could facilitate consistent learning across the state, particularly if developed to address topics of universal interest to all departments, such as updates to state laws or how to use social media. Instead of waiting for in-person annual conferences or other periodic training opportunities, it could improve the frequency with which officers are exposed to certain topics and reduce time waiting for classes to become available especially for in-demand courses. It also could potentially reduce travel time and expenses for departments, making additional training more affordable.⁶⁸

Create testing and evaluation materials to support education. Typically, POST does not develop curriculum or provide lesson plans or testing materials. Instead, POST typically relies on instructors who are deemed subject matter experts to create their own educational content which is then approved by POST. However, if POST worked with curriculum designers and test creators to develop standardized educational content, some experts suggested it could help ensure the lessons were tied to established learning expectations and outcomes.⁶⁹

Send POST instructors to departments to lead training sessions. Officers suggested POST could develop a team of in-house instructors to bring the training directly to departments, rather than having departments send officers to various training courses. For small departments with limited resources, such a change could help ensure timely completion of mandated training, particularly on topics for which there are no in-house trainers. Experts envisioned organizing training to include

participants from several local agencies, similar to how the Governor's Office of Emergency Services facilitates emergency preparedness training for regional organizations.⁷⁰

CALIFORNIA MUST DEVELOP ROBUST ONGOING EDUCATION FOR ALL PEACE OFFICERS

California falls short of ensuring that officers receive adequate and appropriate training throughout the lifetime of their service. Too often, additional training is a budgetary decision, where those departments with resources are able to reinforce and refresh critical skills and those without resources are not. These inequities play out in our communities when officers go out onto the streets.

Ramping up training for California's peace officers will cost money. But the cost of inaction is too great.

California must invest in a thoughtful, robust ongoing education program that is tailored to state expectations for officers, whatever their role or tenure. To help ensure the safety of our communities, the state must do more to ensure officers receive effective, timely, relevant training throughout their careers.

Recommendation 8: POST should establish in a new advanced academy experience, required for officers with between two to five years of experience. This advanced academy should be designed to reinforce entry level training and incorporate the more advanced concepts currently embedded in the basic academy so that officers can better apply them within the context of on-the-job experience. The second academy should include sufficient time to reinforce critical skills that are not yet adequately covered in required training.

Recommendation 9: POST should assess the existing continuing professional training requirements to determine whether curricula remain relevant and necessary and make adjustments as needed. Specifically, POST should:

- Partner with researchers to develop new curriculum that addresses knowledge gaps identified by law enforcement.
- Update in-service training programs to incorporate research knowledge.
- Evaluate whether classroom-based training or some other delivery mechanism – in-person practical exercises, or online discussions – would best promote knowledge retention.
- To facilitate this effort, lawmakers should increase the amount of funding available to support in-service training so that all officers have access to continuing education and support.

Recommendation 10: POST should identify and implement ways to improve officer access to continuing education, such as producing more live

or self-paced online courses, developing training and evaluation course materials for use by departments, or by hiring instructors to bring classroom/in-person instruction directly to departments.

SECTION 5: ASSESSING POST LEADERSHIP

At a time when law enforcement and community relations are often tense and community trust in policing is low, POST is a powerful body for providing leadership particularly, through its authority to steer law enforcement training standards statewide. Yet, since its formation in 1959, the commission’s membership has been dominated by law enforcement officials. While maintaining a majority of law enforcement members will be important to ensure this body is representative of the profession it must also reflect community voices.

COMPOSITION OF THE POST COMMISSION

By statute, the 18-member commission currently is composed of sheriffs and police chiefs, rank and file peace officers, city and county elected officials,

Number of Members	Experience/Qualifications	Appointing Body
5	Sheriffs; chiefs; peace officers	Governor
4	Rank and file peace officer; sergeant or below as a deputy sheriff, city police officer, marshal, or state-employed peace officer	Governor
1	Rank and file peace officer; sergeant or below, with leadership in a California-based law enforcement association	Governor
2	Elected officer; county chief administrative officer	Governor
1	Educator or trainer in the field of criminal justice	Governor
2	Public member, not peace officer	Governor
2	Public member, not peace officer, with experience in implicit and explicit bias, cultural competency, mental health and policing, work with vulnerable populations	President pro Tempore of the Senate and Speaker of the Assembly
1	California Attorney General	Ex officio member

Source: California Penal Code, Section 13500.

public members, an educator, and the state Attorney General.⁷¹ In its current configuration, as many as three-quarters of the members come from a law enforcement or criminal justice background.

Recent legislation, authored by Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins in 2019, doubled the number of public members serving on the commission by adding two non-peace officers explicitly to bring in experience around issues challenging the profession: implicit and explicit bias, cultural competency, mental health and policing, vulnerable populations.⁷² (Previous legislation in 2007 and 1999, had increased by two the number of peace officers serving on the commission.⁷³)

EVALUATING DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS AT THE TABLE

With the power to influence training standards for profession that requires a high level of public confidence, the composition of the POST Commission matters. Yet, as currently configured, the membership is not balanced between individuals with and without law enforcement experience.

Throughout its study, the Commission heard from experts, both within and outside of law enforcement, who suggested POST needs to reconfigure its membership. As currently configured, with the larger balance of membership falling to law enforcement professionals, experts said it is incumbent on members to reflect the needs of their broader communities and not just represent the law enforcement perspective. But a better way to incorporate these perspectives would be to formally bring in them into the conversation. They advocated creating room for:

- Members of vulnerable communities, such as formerly incarcerated people, impacted family members, people of color who come from communities that traditionally have had a poor relationship with police, people with mental or developmental disabilities. These populations

could help POST reflect on how peace officers are trained to engage with community members.

- Mental health, health, social service professionals who regularly engage with underserved communities and can inform training based on their own expertise.
- Individuals with expertise in educating and training adults and who understand the science of learning and how to apply that to police curriculum.
- Informed academics and researchers who actively study issues relevant to the law enforcement profession and can help monitor training and look at ways to improve or change the training based on research.

Experts argued that a shuffling of seats to add more civilian voices could create more inclusive decision-making around issues related to the type, quality, and quantity of training law enforcement officials receive in California. Ultimately, some suggested such a change also could help improve the general credibility of the POST Commission and ultimately strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and communities statewide.

Yet, as currently configured, the membership is not balanced between individuals with and without law enforcement experience.

A PRECEDENT FOR CHANGE

There is some precedent for diversifying the composition of professional state boards. Compared to some other regulatory bodies, the POST Commission has far less public representation. For example, the California Board of Medicine has eight doctors and seven public members.⁷⁴ POST, by

contrast, has roughly 14 members who are – or may be – affiliated with law enforcement and just four public members who are not peace officers.

A bill recently vetoed by the Governor would have required diversity appointments to California’s governmental volunteer boards, including POST. If enacted, the legislation would have required POST include at least one member or commissioner from an underrepresented community, defined as individuals who identify as Black, African American, Hispanic, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Native Hawaiian, or Alaska Native; who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; who has served in the US military; or who has a physical or mental disability.⁷⁵ Such a change could help ensure representation on POST for members of vulnerable communities, as advocates suggest is needed.

Other states too, have considered ways to expand civilian participation on law enforcement oversight boards. In one recent example, Washington State increased membership of the Criminal Justice Training Commission, the state’s POST equivalent, from 16 to 21 members.⁷⁶ Now, 11 of the 21 appointees are civilians without law enforcement experience. Previously, the overwhelming majority of members were law enforcement professionals. This change was part of a comprehensive police reform package that also amended the commission’s purpose to “strive to promote public trust and confidence in every aspect of the criminal justice system,” and to “enhance the integrity, effectiveness, and professionalism of officers” through its training and programs.

CREATING A MORE REPRESENTATIVE POST

At 18 members, the POST Commission is large enough. Still, the composition of the commission must be reflective and inclusive of both officers and the communities in which they serve. While maintaining a majority of peace officers – those who

can speak to the often-changing realities of the job – the balance of the POST Commission must shift to better incorporate a variety of civilian voices. After all, the role of the Commission is to set the training standards and ensure officers are effectively trained to exercise their powers in the public’s protection.

Recommendation 11: Lawmakers should modify the POST Commission to add additional public members and ensure broad representation that includes members of vulnerable communities, health and mental health professionals who serve vulnerable communities, and experts in adult education and scientific research. In filling these positions, the appointing authorities should bear in mind critical nature of ethnic and racial diversity and strive to ensure that POST leadership is reflective of California’s diverse population.

Appendix A

POST Regular Basic Course Curriculum: Minimum Instructional Hours by Topic

Learning Domain	Subject	Minimum Instructional Hours (Percent of Total Instructional Hours)
Operations - General		118 hours (20%)
18	Investigative Report Writing	48
16	Search and Seizure	12
17	Presentation of Evidence	6
23	Crimes in Progress	20
26	Critical Incidents	8
30	Crime Scenes, Evidence, and Forensics	12
31	Custody	2
36	Information Systems	2
40	Weapons Violations	4
43	Terrorism Awareness	4
Operations - Community Policing, Communications		59 hours (10%)
3	Principled Policing in the Community	26
37	People with Disabilities	15
38	Gang Awareness	2
42	Cultural Diversity/Discrimination	16
Operations - Vehicle		94 hours (16%)
19	Vehicle Operations	40
21	Patrol Techniques	12
22	Vehicle Pullovers	14
28	Traffic Enforcement	16
29	Traffic Accident Investigation	12
Operations - Victims/Crimes		77 hours (13%)
4	Victimology/Crisis Intervention	6
6	Property Crimes	6
7	Crimes Against Persons	6
9	Crimes Against Children	4
10	Sex Crimes	4
12	Controlled Substances	12
25	Domestic Violence	10
27	Missing Persons	4
34	First Aid and CPR	21
39	Crimes Against the Justice System	4
Weapons/Defensive Tactics/Use of Force		156 hours (27%)
20	Use of Force/De-escalation	16
24	Handling Disputes/Crowd Control	8
33	Arrest and Control	60
35	Firearms/Chemical Agents	72

Appendix A: Continued

Learning Domain	Subject	Minimum Instructional Hours (Percent of Total Instructional Hours)
Self-Improvement		52 hours (9%)
1	Leadership, Professionalism and Ethics	8
32	Lifetime Fitness	44
Legal Education		25 hours (4%)
2	Criminal Justice System	2
5	Introduction to Criminal Law	4
8	General Criminal Statutes	2
11	Juvenile Law and Procedure	3
13	ABC Law	2
15	Laws of Arrest	12
Learning Domains No Longer in Use		
14		
41		
Total Minimum Instructional Hours:		581 hours (100%)

Note: POST requires additional hours dedicated to instruction and testing, scenario tests, and POST-constructed comprehensive tests.

Source: CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). Regular Basic Course Training Specifications. <https://post.ca.gov/regular-basic-course-training-specifications>. Accessed October 26, 2021. Also, Meagan Poulos, Legislative Liaison/Public Information Officer, POST. September 22, 2021. Personal communication with Commission staff.

■ Appendix B

POST Field Training Program Topics

- Agency Orientation/Department Policies
- Officer Safety Procedures
- Ethics
- Use of Force
- Patrol Vehicle Operations
- Community Relations/Professional Demeanor
- Radio Communication Systems
- Leadership
- California Codes and Laws
- Search and Seizure
- Report Writing
- Control of Persons/Prisoners/Mentally Ill
- Patrol Procedures
- Investigations/Evidence
- Tactical Communication/Conflict Resolution
- Traffic
- Self-Initiated Activities
- Agency-Specific Activities

Source: CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). Field Training Program. <https://post.ca.gov/field-training-program>. Accessed October 26, 2021.

Notes

1. Note: The Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training also develops and oversees training standards for the nearly 8,000 dispatchers employed by law enforcement agencies across the state.
2. David Billingsley, Committee Counsel, Assembly Committee on Public Safety. February 11, 2021. Written testimony to the Commission.
3. California Code of Regulations § 1059. Requirements for Basic Course Certification. Also, California Code of Regulations § 1052. Requirements for Course Certification.
4. Manny Alvarez, Executive Director, Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. February 11, 2021. Written testimony to the Commission.
5. Note: For more information see, Cynthia Lum and Christopher Koper. "Evidence-Based Policing: Translating Research Into Practice." 2017. Oxford University Press.
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44. Luann Pannell, Ph.D, Director of Police Training and Education, Los Angeles Police Department. August 3, 2021. Personal communication with Commission staff. Also, Damian Velasco, Sergeant II, Police Training and Education, Los Angeles Police Department. August 26, 2021. PSL1 Course Outline. On file.
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59. Joseph Cortez, Lieutenant, Santa Monica Police Department and Co-chair, IACP Research Advisory Committee. January 27, 2021. Personal communication with Commission staff.
60. Cory Salzillo, Legislative Director, California Sheriff's Association. April 23, 2021. Personal communication with Commission staff. Also, Ingrid Braun, Sheriff, Mono County. June 29, 2021. Personal communication with Commission staff.

61. Lai Lai Bui, Sergeant, Sacramento Police Department. May 24, 2021. Personal communication with Commission staff.
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64. Joyce Dudley, Santa Barbara County District Attorney and chair, POST. May 25, 2021. Personal communication with Commission staff. Also, Ingrid Braun, see endnote 60.
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72. SB 399 (Atkins). Chapter 594, Statutes of 2019.
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■ Little Hoover Commission Members

CHAIRMAN PEDRO NAVA | Santa Barbara

Appointed to the Commission by Speaker of the Assembly John Pérez in April 2013 and reappointed by Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon in 2017 and again in 2021. Government relations advisor. Former State Assemblymember from 2004 to 2010, civil litigator, deputy district attorney and member of the state Coastal Commission. Elected chair of the Commission in March 2014.

VICE CHAIRMAN SEAN VARNER | Riverside

Appointed to the Commission by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in April 2016 and reappointed in January 2018. Managing partner at Varner & Brandt LLP where he practices as a transactional attorney focusing on mergers and acquisitions, finance, real estate, and general counsel work. Elected vice chair of the Commission in March 2017.

DION ARONER | Berkeley

Appointed to the Commission by the Senate Rules Committee in April 2019. Partner for Aroner, Jewel, and Ellis. Former State Assemblymember from 1996 to 2002, chief of staff for Assemblymember Tom Bates, social worker for Alameda County, and the first female president of Service Employees International Union 535.

DAVID BEIER | San Francisco

Appointed to the Commission by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in June 2014 and reappointed in January 2018. Managing director of Bay City Capital. Former senior officer of Genentech and Amgen, and counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary.

ASM. TASHA BOERNER HORVATH | Encinitas

Appointed to the Commission by Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon in October 2021. Elected in November 2018 to represent the 76th Assembly District. Represents Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, Vista, Carlsbad, and Encinitas.

CYNTHIA BUIZA | Los Angeles

Appointed to the Commission by Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon in October 2018. Executive director of the California Immigrant Policy Center. Former policy director for the American Civil Liberties Union, San Diego, and policy and advocacy director at the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles.

ASM. PHILLIP CHEN | Yorba Linda

Appointed to the Commission by Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon in October 2021. Elected in November 2016 to represent 55th District. Represents portions of Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino counties and the cities of Brea, Chino Hills, Diamond Bar, La Habra, Industry, Placentia, Rowland Heights, Walnut, West Covina and Yorba Linda.

BILL EMMERSON | Redlands

Appointed to the Commission by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in December 2018. Former senior vice president of state relations and advocacy at the California Hospital Association, State Senator from 2010 to 2013, State Assemblymember from 2004 to 2010, and orthodontist.

SEN. DAVE MIN | Irvine

Appointed to the Commission by the Senate Rules Committee in September 2021. Elected in November 2020 to represent the 37th Senate District. Represents Anaheim Hills, Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach, Irvine, Laguna Beach, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, Newport Beach, Orange, Tustin, and Villa Park.

SEN. JIM NIELSEN | Gerber

Appointed to the Commission by the Senate Rules Committee in March 2019. Elected in January 2013 to represent the 4th Senate District. Represents Chico, Oroville, Paradise, Red Bluff, Yuba City, and surrounding areas.

CATHY SCHWAMBERGER | Calistoga

Appointed to the Commission by the Senate Rules Committee in April 2018 and reappointed in January 2019. Retired associate general counsel for State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company. Former board member of the Civil Justice Association of California and the Capital Political Action Committee.

JANNA SIDLEY | Los Angeles

Appointed to the Commission by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in April 2016 and reappointed in February 2020. General counsel at the Port of Los Angeles since 2013. Former deputy city attorney at the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office from 2003 to 2013.

Full biographies are available on the Commission's website at www.lhc.ca.gov.

“DEMOCRACY ITSELF IS A PROCESS OF CHANGE, AND SATISFACTION AND COMPLACENCY ARE ENEMIES OF GOOD GOVERNMENT.”

By Governor Edmund G. “Pat” Brown,
addressing the inaugural meeting of the Little Hoover Commission,
April 24, 1962, Sacramento, California



Milton Marks Commission on California State
Government Organization and Economy

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