

# Future Planning Strategies: In-Service Training Methods

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## *Abstract*

*Consolidation of police services is a topic that continues to gain momentum throughout Pinellas County. Recent discussions by the media concerning consolidation have raised questions regarding small agency personnel. Allegations that these officers are undertrained, unprofessional, and unqualified have plagued smaller agencies for many years. This research evaluates and compares the current training methods of various agencies. The similarities and differences are examined. Common goals and objectives were revealed and are discussed for future implications that can enhance all of law enforcement.*

## Introduction

The focus of this research was limited to training provided after recruit academy training. The law enforcement community, as a whole, agrees to the importance of this in-service training. Administrators agree that a structured training program can assist in avoiding unfavorable lawsuit litigation. A continuous training program will keep personnel up to date with high liability issues and can prevent avoidable injuries. Officers that are trained in the needs of the community they serve will gain their support. In-service training can be developed to assist personnel with their personal career goals and will have a positive impact on the officer, as well as, the department and the community.

This research finds that there are many similarities between agencies regardless of size as it relates to training. Some of the findings are quite encouraging. The resultant material was analyzed in an attempt to develop future in-service training strategies based on common issues.

## Methods

A review of available research reference material regarding in-service training was minimal. The available publications emphasized the importance of state mandated minimum requirements and the importance of a college education.

Agency representatives were interviewed within Pinellas County. These representatives were considered the designated training officers of their respective departments. Open ended questions were used to facilitate a broad spectrum of material for analysis. Agencies were defined by size, (number of sworn personnel), training budget, training selection, and implementation. Research questions were open ended to provide responses that were agency specific.

## Overview

There are 18 individual law enforcement agencies within Pinellas County including the Sheriff's Office. Half of the agencies in Pinellas County have less than 20 full time sworn personnel. Five agencies range from 25 to 70 sworn personnel and the remaining four agencies range from 120 to 680. Six agencies have divisions and/or personnel assigned

exclusively to training for their respective agency. The remaining agencies have officers assigned as training officers in addition to their normal duties. This is usually an officer at the supervisory level or an officer that is assigned to a more permanent shift (such as a detective). These officers generally work closely with the chief administrators in selecting the training to be administered and the officers that will receive the designated training.

Officers in all departments want to be trained. These officers want to be educated with current laws, defensive techniques, community issues, and any other training that is up to date. The chief administrators agree with the importance and need for training in all agencies. With these factors in mind, one would assume that having well trained personnel would be an easier assignment to accomplish.

### Training Programs

The mind set of the smaller agencies is to find training outside the organization for it to be valid. This is due to the lack of certified training officers. With this mind set, there is little emphasis placed on in-house training. The larger agencies do provide a variety of in-house training. Training is provided by qualified but not necessarily certified training instructors.

The training provided outside the agency includes any training that is provided by criminal justice institutions and/or any law enforcement sponsored training. When asked if there was roll call training or a form of roll call training, it was learned that some agencies have no formal roll call at all.

The agencies that do provide a form of roll call training use current event issues in law enforcement. Material ranges from discussion of recent court rulings to officer safety issues. This form of training is rarely documented and does not consist of any follow up.

Written training policies are very limited. Most agencies do not have specific policies regarding training. The written policies that do address training are broad and generally relate to state mandated training requirements.

### Community Specific Training

The smaller agencies were found to have little or no training on specific community issues. Training on these topics is passed down from senior officers in an informal setting, usually at roll call. The larger departments do provide community specific training. More specifically, community oriented policing programs have been the catalyst for the increase in community specific training.

### The Selection Process

The selection process of who is to receive training appears to be similar for all agencies. Any officer can request training. The request is reviewed for the following criteria: departmental need, cost, personnel allocation, and officer interest and ability to provide the services he/she will learn from the training. Officers performing above average in their assignment will usually receive favorable recommendations to attend training.

In the smaller agencies it appears to be easier to select those officers that show a potential to become an asset when provided certain training opportunities. Larger agencies are more formalized and structured because of the volume of personnel. Some officers with potential can be overlooked. Officers with an interest in certain training may not be eligible for years while waiting for the next training opportunity.

### Specialized Training

Specialized training among smaller agencies is generally contained to equipment operators, such as intoxilyzer and radar machine operators, etc. This training is also required by larger agencies and sometimes presents a conflict for the smaller agencies as classroom availability diminishes quickly. Smaller agencies rely on the expertise of officers and technicians from the larger agencies in the handling of major cases.

The criminal investigation officers from all agencies receive most of the specialized training. Training curriculum has been developed to enhance the skills of these officers and is provided on a regular basis by the training institutions.

### Criminal Justice Institute

The most encouraging findings of this research was the recent discussions between small agency administrators and the Criminal Justice Institute. A course of action is being developed to provide 40 hour blocks of training specifically designed to address the needs of small agencies. The 40 hour training blocks will consist of five 8-hour training topics. An agency can send an officer to one or all of the 8-hour training blocks dependent on the individual agency need.

### Record Keeping

Record keeping varied among all agencies interviewed. There is no "standard" accounting among the agencies to record training obtained by their officers. The training records are maintained in different ways. Most are logged in some fashion, either computerized or hand written, and placed in the respective officer personnel file. The training is listed in the form of the title of the course and hours attended. Training that was provided by criminal justice institutions have supporting curriculum while other training curriculum may be nonexistent. The training curriculum is essential, as the title of a training course does not necessarily reflect all of the various details of the training provided. While some agencies can provide what training was taken, there is little backup information regarding the curriculum.

### Funding

Funding is allocated for training within each department's yearly budget and is usually classified into two separate categories: 1) travel and training; and 2) second dollar travel and training. Budget information was available for 13 of the Pinellas County agencies (Table 1).

Information on the chart is listed by size of agency and dollar amount allocated. This chart reveals, on average, there is less than 1 percent of the total budget spent on

training for all agencies. The difference between second dollar funding and the training amount provided by the respective agencies varied greatly. One agency relied solely on second dollar funding for all of its training requirements. One agency did not incorporate second dollar funding as part of its yearly budget.

Table 1.  
 Survey of Area Police Departments  
 Budget Amounts for Travel and Training Expenses

Agency	Number of Sworn Personnel	Total Budget	Travel & Training	2nd \$ - Travel & Training	TOTAL TRAINING DOLLARS	% of TOTAL BUDGET
#1	502	\$46,422,710	\$50,910	\$72,000	\$122,910	0.26%
#2	227	\$20,697,750	\$162,670	\$32,500	\$195,170	0.94%
#3	70	\$6,287,029	\$42,700	\$25,000	\$67,700	1.08%
#4	51	\$4,374,242	\$35,995	\$35,000	\$70,995	1.62%
#5	30	\$2,485,537	\$6,675	\$12,372	\$19,047	0.77%
#6	24	\$1,809,430	\$17,000	\$4,000	\$21,000	1.16%
#7	16	\$1,151,880	\$7,000	\$15,360	\$22,360	1.94%
#8	15	\$970,850	\$3,000	not part of budget	\$3,000	0.31%
#9	11	\$1,619,050	\$800	\$13,704	\$14,504	0.90%
#10	11	\$634,480	\$750	\$4,500	\$5,250	0.83%
#11	10	\$725,635	\$6,400	\$2,600	\$9,000	1.24%
#12	7	\$459,318	no budget for training	\$3,000	\$3,000	0.65%
#13	5	\$316,889	\$500	\$3,000	\$3,500	1.10%
Averagee	75	\$6,765,754	\$25,723	\$17,157	\$42,880	0.99%

### Evaluation

While training is evaluated on a regular basis by the providers, there appears to be a need for individual agencies to evaluate their training with more regularity. Training procedures will come under close scrutiny when law suits are leveled or by police unions representing disciplined officers. Only when something goes wrong are the training issues discussed and reviewed to provide a current status. Training issues must be evaluated on a consistent basis by all agencies regardless of size.

## Discussion

All agencies realize the importance of training. This support needs to carry over to the people responsible for budget approval. Training requires continuous discussion and commitment throughout the year and not just at budget time. A heightened awareness of the training requirements of a department regardless of size may open the eyes of some critics.

Any department can and should develop in-house training based on specific community needs. Training can be provided by shift supervisors during regular working shifts. Any and all training should be documented and maintained. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement maintains the Automated Management Training System which is an accessible computer database of officer training throughout the state. In addition, there are numerous off the shelf database programs that can be easily maintained to store training information for any size agency.

Training information should become a part of updates provided to the city managers, commissioners, and/or mayors of communities. When these individuals realize the importance of supplying additional training, it will become much easier to gain increased funding.

As we approach the year 2000, there needs to be increased discussion between all agencies. Size does not matter as the same basic goals are shared. The larger departments, for the most part, are leading the way for future training. Smaller agencies sometimes use their size as an excuse. There are alternatives. The Criminal Justice Institute and progressive, small agency chiefs are headed in the right direction.

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