Appendix I

Appendix Documents can be found at:
www.saratogacountyny.gov/departments/sheriffs-office/executive-order-203-advisory-group

NYSLEAP Accreditation Standards Summary

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY ACCREDITATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Basics

The **New York State Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation Program** was established as a voluntary program that would provide law enforcement agencies with a mechanism to evaluate and improve the overall effectiveness of their agency and the performance of their staff. Accreditation is formal recognition that an agency's policies and practices meet or exceed the standards established by the council in the areas of administration, training, and operations.

Article 36, § 846-h of the New York State Executive Law establishes the *Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation Council* (the council). The council is the authoritative body responsible for guiding the direction of the program; developing model standards designed to promote excellence and professionalism in the field of law enforcement; and developing policy to establish program rules and expectations. The council meets quarterly to conduct business, including awarding accreditation to agencies that have demonstrated that they meet the program requirements and are compliant with the standards.

The Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Office of Public Safety (OPS) administers the program in accordance with the council policies. Accreditation Unit staff members provide training to members of agencies seeking to become accredited; and to assessors, who are independent contractors assigned to verify an agency's compliance with program standards. In addition, OPS program staff members develop resource materials; provide technical assistance to both applicant and accredited agencies to assist them in meeting their goals; conduct site visits of accredited agencies; and provide support-staff services to the council.

The program is made up of 110 different standards, as outlined in this **Standards and Compliance Verification Manual.** Of the 110 total standards, there are 51 Administration, 12 Training, and 47 Operations standards, as described below:

- **Administration** standards encompass such areas as general management, personnel, and relationships with other agencies. They also address organizational issues such as the agency's mission, the delineation of responsibility, and delegation of authority.

- **Training** standards incorporate many requirements that have already been established by the State's Municipal Training Council. The standards are divided into four categories: Basic, In-service, Supervisory, and Records.

- **Operations** standards impact the ways in which agencies conduct the bulk of their crime fighting responsibilities. Major topics include patrol, traffic, criminal investigations, and unusual occurrences.

The standards can be found in this manual, beginning on page 20.

Composition of the Standards

- **Standard** - the actual **Standard** is always in bold font. Agencies are required to meet <u>every</u> component of each standard to be considered in compliance.

- *Commentary* - many of the standards are accompanied by an italicized *Commentary* which offers background information, clarifies the intent of the standard, and provides guidance on implementing the standard in some instances. For more information, please see the Council Policy, *The Role of Commentaries in Establishing the Intent of Program Standards.*

- Compliance Verification Strategies - each standard is accompanied by Compliance Verification Strategies, the section below the box. Compliance Verification Strategies provide agencies (and assessors) with examples of what can be provided or reviewed to demonstrate compliance with the standard. Agency staff should use these strategies as a guide when determining what to include in the file folder or have available when the agency is assessed.

Participating agencies are expected to implement all standards in place during their period of accreditation. Please refer to the Council Policy, *Program Standards that Do Not Apply to Every Agency* for information on exceptions.

It is important to note that while the standards generally indicate <u>what</u> must be done to earn accreditation, the chief law enforcement officer has considerable flexibility in determining <u>how</u> the agency will implement the specific requirements needed to comply with the standards. Program assessors have been advised to expect variation in agency policies and procedures when conducting assessments.

Becoming an Accredited Law Enforcement Agency

APPLICATION: The accreditation process begins when an agency submits a formal application which must be signed by both the agency's chief law enforcement officer and the municipality's chief elected official. The chief law enforcement officer must also sign and submit the 'Agency Participation Agreement' which outlines the responsibilities of the agency and the Accreditation Council.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: A program manager must be appointed to oversee development and then maintenance of the program. Generally, Program Manager Training is held at least once or twice per year, and it's important that any newly appointed program manager attend so they are familiar with the program requirements. Chief law enforcement officers and other command staff are also encouraged to attend since their involvement is crucial to the success of the program.

The program manager is responsible for ensuring the agency has in place policies or procedures to meet every standard. They may begin by identifying standards that are already met by existing policies/practices within the agency and then work toward developing policies for those standards that are not met through existing policy. In general, agency staff can expect three levels of policy development:

1. If a current policy or practice meets a standard(s), preparation may be as simple as the chief law enforcement officer signing off on the policy to verify it is still in effect.

2. If a current policy or practice is in place that addresses portions of a standard(s) but not every component, adjustments to the current policy/practice will need to be made to meet the standard.

3. Many times, brand new policies and/or procedures need to be developed and implemented to meet the standards.

All policies related to accreditation standards must be fully implemented and distributed to affected staff no less than 90 days prior to an agency undergoing an on-site assessment. (See the Council Policy, *Dissemination of Written Directives* for more information.)

Finally, file folders for each standard must be developed, as they are the mechanism by which the program manager can organize the standards, policies, and documentation; and they serve as the main method by which the assessors will verify compliance with the standards. 'Hardcopy' file folders and electronic files are both acceptable means of documenting program compliance.

ASSESSMENT: Once an agency has developed and implemented policies and procedures that are aligned with the program standards and created file folders that contain proof of compliance, OPS program staff will coordinate an 'on-site' assessment. The assessments are conducted by independent assessors that have significant experience with the accreditation program. Each assessor that DCJS contracts with is required to meet minimum qualifications; be approved by the council; undergo training by DCJS; and follow specific guidelines to ensure that every agency is assessed objectively and equally.

Agencies are evaluated on their policies and practices **as they pertain to the standards**. The methods that will be used to determine compliance are:

- **Evaluating Written Directives for Compliance with Standard.** Written directives can include general or special orders, standard operating procedures, policies, procedures, or rules and regulations.

- **Documentation of Compliance.** Assessors will look for proof in the file folders that the written directives are up-to-date and are being properly implemented by agency personnel. Proof may include, but not be limited to, reports, files, logs, lesson plans, incident reports, personnel files, and performance evaluations.

- **Interviews with Agency Staff.** Assessors will interview department members – some that are identified in advance by the chief law enforcement officer and others at random - to evaluate their familiarity with written directives for particular standards. Staff members identified by the agency head prior to the on-site assessment are expected to be available to the assessors.

- **General Observations.** This involves verification of standard compliance through direct observation by the assessors (for example, the evidence storage facility.)

Prior to the on-site assessment, a *Standard Compliance Report* (page 18 of this manual) must be completed for every standard. This form is intended for use by both agency staff and the assessors, enabling both parties to quickly determine how compliance is being met.

Assessments are not intended to be adversarial. The assessment team may at times have to work a bit harder to help an agency correct minor errors in their policies and/or documentation, and they will likely use this as an opportunity to provide agency program staff with additional training on program requirements. This is intended to be helpful and give a new agency a better understanding of the program. Minor deficiencies that can be easily corrected on-site generally won't keep the team from recommending accreditation to the council. However, agencies that require a great deal of additional work to bring them into compliance could face having to delay achieving their status of accreditation until they have more time to spend preparing their policies and files. OPS program staff members can assist in determining an agency's readiness for assessment. Also, most assessors cite that agencies that have had a mock assessment conducted prior to their assessment are better prepared, so the council strongly encourages this as a final task in the preparation process.

Before the assessment team concludes their on-site assessment, they will meet with the agency head and program manager to discuss their team's findings. If compliance is a concern, the assessors will make them aware of any reluctance to recommend accreditation to the council. The agency, assessment team, and OPS program staff can then determine the best course of action prior to the report being forwarded to the council.

ACCREDITATION: The Law Enforcement Accreditation Council meets quarterly (in the months of

March, June, September and December.) Agencies that are recommended for accreditation will be invited to attend the next scheduled meeting to receive their Certificate of Accreditation upon a vote of approval by the council. Agencies are accredited for a period of five years.

PROGRAM MAINTENANCE: To remain in good standing, agencies must maintain compliance with all program standards throughout the period of accreditation. The key to successfully maintaining accreditation hinges on the commitment that the agency makes to the program. It's imperative that the accredited agency program staff work to keep its files, policies, and records up-to-date. Accredited agencies must submit the Annual Compliance Survey each year to document areas of compliance and notify OPS program staff of any areas of non-compliance that would require corrective action.

Becoming accredited may seem overwhelming at times, but OPS program staff is available to offer technical assistance throughout the process. In addition, a variety of useful tools and publications are available on our website at http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/ops/docs/index.htm. Under 'Forms', the Master Plan and the Log Sheet can be very useful in keeping agency program staff organized and the development of the program on track.

For more in-depth information about the Law Enforcement Accreditation Program, from the website above click on 'Publications'. There you will find the **Blueprint for Effective Law Enforcement**, which provides overall program information; and the **Implementation Guide**, which covers the process f or implementing a program within an agency.