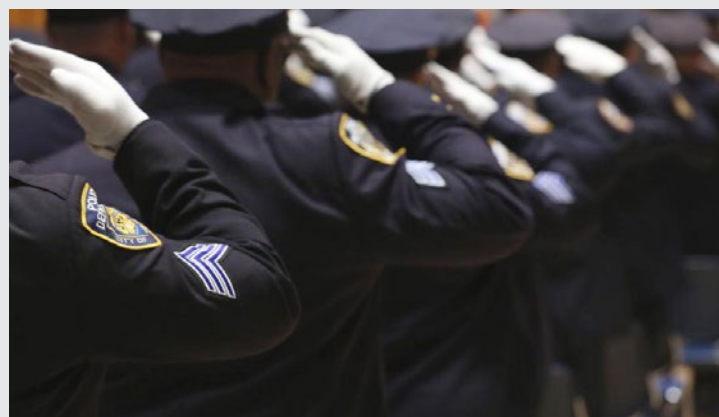


Promoting Excellence in First-Line Supervision:

New Approaches to Selection, Training, and Leadership Development



CRITICAL ISSUES IN POLICING SERIES

**Promoting Excellence in
First-Line Supervision:**
*New Approaches to Selection,
Training, and Leadership Development*

October 2018



POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM

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Acknowledgments

WHEN PERF DECIDED TO HOLD A NATIONAL conference on first-line supervision in police agencies, we asked PERF members to bring one of their top sergeants to the conference—a first-line supervisor who exemplifies the qualities that agencies need to take on the challenges of modern-day policing.

Fifty chiefs and sheriffs responded to our request. The sergeants and mid-level supervisors they brought to Washington, D.C. for our *Critical Issues in Policing* conference on April 3, 2018, were knowledgeable, articulate, and attuned to the important role they play in their agencies. They helped us understand how the role of first-line supervisors is changing, and what police and sheriffs' departments need to do to keep pace with those changes.

I am grateful to all these participants who shared their insights, which form the foundation of this report. (All 175 participants at the meeting are listed in Appendix A on page 74.)

People familiar with PERF's *Critical Issues* series know that it is made possible by the generous and steadfast support of the Motorola Solutions Foundation. For two decades, Motorola has supported PERF in our examination of the most pressing issues facing the policing profession—violent crime, new technologies, police use of force, homelessness, and dozens of other topics. This is our 35th *Critical Issues* report. All of these reports spotlight Motorola's strong relationship with the law enforcement profession, and the value Motorola places on important and timely research.

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Carrying out these *Critical Issues* projects requires a great deal of work, including background research, meeting planning and logistics, and writing and producing a final report. Once again, PERF's staff executed these jobs with skill, precision, and teamwork.

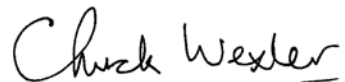
Kevin Morison, PERF's Chief Operations Officer, led the project team. Kevin combines a thorough mastery of the subject matter with great leadership skills and a close eye for the hundreds of details involved in such a project. Kevin, Research Associate Rachael Arietti, and Project Assistant Nora Coyne were the lead authors of this report. Senior Research Assistant Allison Heider contributed a sidebar on training in the Tucson Police Department, following a site visit there. Rachael also designed and executed audio-visuals and graphics used at the meeting. Several staff members conducted pre-meeting interviews and completed other research: Senior Associate Dan Alioto; Research Associates Jason Cheney, Sarah Mostyn, and Arietti; Senior Research Assistant Heider; and Project Assistant Coyne. Sarah and Nora oversaw meeting planning and logistics. Meeting registration and communications were led by Membership Coordinator Balinda Cockrell and Assistant Communications Director James McGinty.

Communications Director Craig Fischer authored part of the report, edited the entire document, and oversaw production. Dave Williams meticulously designed and laid out the publication. Charlotte Lansinger, PERF's executive search expert,

offered important insights into the topic. Executive Assistant Soline Simenauer helped to keep the entire project team on track. And Chief Strategy Officer Andrea Morrozoff continues to provide leadership and direction to the *Critical Issues* initiative.

It is our hope that this report will help to refocus

the spotlight on the importance of first-line supervisors to achieving effective, constitutional policing. We also hope our findings will spur agencies to re-examine and, where necessary, improve their testing, selection, training, and leadership development approaches for first-line supervisors.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Wexler". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chuck Wexler
Executive Director
Police Executive Research Forum
Washington, D.C.

Sergeants Are Key to Effective Policing, But Systems for Selecting and Training Sergeants Are Outdated and Weak

By Chuck Wexler

IF YOU ASK A GROUP OF POLICE CHIEFS TO name the one key position in their department, most chiefs would say, “My sergeants.”

Sergeants and other first-line supervisors ensure that the vision and goals of a police chief or sheriff are put into effect at the street level. Sergeants are the ones who explain new policies to officers, and who translate the big-picture goals into the daily tasks that officers must understand and implement.

Sergeants manage the patrol officers who are the critically important “face of the department” for most community members. Sergeants hold officers accountable, and at the same time, sergeants look after the safety and welfare of their officers. Sergeants play a key role in creating the culture of a police department. They serve as the two-way conduit of information between agency leaders and rank-and-file officers. Sergeants must spend time on the streets with their officers, to see how they perform. Sergeants often respond to critical incidents, to ensure the most effective response. And sergeants handle a wide range of administrative duties such as scheduling shifts, writing reports, and handling minor disciplinary matters.

Furthermore, we keep piling new duties on sergeants every year. For example, many police agencies are deploying body-worn cameras, and the sergeants have to ensure that the officers turn the cameras on when they should, and download the video at the end of a shift. Police departments also are beginning to adopt new communications systems like Next Generation 911 and FirstNet broadband services, and sergeants will have a key role in making sure the



“As police executives, we tend to overly focus on the details of policy. But we only succeed if our changes are properly trained, implemented and actuated by the front line. That means accountability starts with the sergeants.”

— **Scott Thomson, Chief of Police, Camden County, NJ and PERF President**

systems actually provide useful information to officers when and where they need it.

And yet, despite the critically important roles that sergeants play, our systems for selecting new sergeants, training them, and developing them as leaders have never been very good, and in most places, they have not changed much in decades. In many locations, civil service regulations or union agreements severely limit police agencies’ flexibility to promote the most qualified officers with the skills and aptitudes to be strong 21st century leaders. Some departments rely entirely on a written test to choose

new sergeants, and the tests often measure little more than short-term memorization skills. In some cities, eligible officers have to wait years before they can even apply to be a sergeant, because the testing process is conducted infrequently.

And when new sergeants are finally chosen, there is no uniform system for training them. In many cases, they are thrown into the deep end of the pool and told to swim. Some states mandate a training program for new sergeants, but the amount and quality of this training varies. In many cases, new sergeants are on the job for months before they even receive this basic training. Some police agencies are large and prosperous enough to supplement the state training with their own training that is customized to their mission and policies, but this may consist only of classroom training, not scenario-based specific training. And in most cases, sergeants do not receive continuing training every year to reinforce lessons or address the new issues that are always emerging.

Good things are happening in some locations:

Despite the problems cited above, progress is being made in many departments. Individual police and sheriffs' departments are showing initiative and creativity in launching new systems for selecting, training, and developing first-line supervisors. PERF conducted research into many departments' new approaches, and held a national conference of police executives, sergeants, and other experts on April 3, 2018 in Washington, DC, where they described the challenges they have faced and the programs they are testing.

This report provides details on many of these ideas.

If You Can Get Sergeants on Board, You Can Change Organizations

To consider the importance of first-line supervisors, let's look at the example of the Palm Beach County, FL Sheriff's Office (PBSO). In 2013-14, PBSO was facing growing public scrutiny over its deputies' use of deadly force. The number of deputy-involved

shootings had risen in recent years. Many of the subjects were either unarmed or armed with a weapon other than a firearm. And there were several instances in which deputies shot at or from moving vehicles.

Sheriff Ric Bradshaw recognized that in many cases, deputies were unnecessarily rushing into scenes and placing themselves in positions that increased the risks of having to deploy lethal force. He began discussing with his leadership team the need to tactically slow down the response to certain critical incidents, especially those involving people in a mental health crisis and barricaded subjects.

From these discussions emerged the concept of the "tactical pause"—field supervisors and deputies taking the time, when appropriate, to huddle up and consider their options before engaging a potentially threatening subject. For example, on a suspicious person call where the caller indicates that the subject is armed with a knife but no immediate threat is present, a sergeant might meet with deputies near the scene, but away from the subject, to discuss the known information about the situation and possible options. (This concept of the tactical pause was incorporated in de-escalation strategies set out in PERF's *Guiding Principles on Use of Force*.¹)

The tactical pause was a new and potentially controversial change in agency philosophy and practice. Sheriff Bradshaw knew it was imperative that deputies understand and embrace what was being asked of them. So when he began the rollout of the "tactical pause" in his agency, he started the conversation with one group of employees: his first-line supervisors.

The Sheriff brought in groups of about 40 sergeants at a time and personally explained the tactical pause concept. He walked the sergeants through his expectations of what they were supposed to do, and how they were to hold their deputies accountable for implementing the new practice. Sheriff Bradshaw held similar sessions with other supervisory ranks, but he started the discussions with his sergeants.

The results from the tactical pause and other changes in use-of-force policies and practices in Palm Beach County have been significant, as PERF documented in its review of the department's policies and

1. *Guiding Principles on Use of Force*. Police Executive Research Forum. Page 55. <http://www.policeforum.org/assets/guidingprinciples1.pdf>

procedures.² Deputy-involved shootings plummeted in subsequent years, especially those involving subjects without a firearm and instances in which deputies previously shot at moving vehicles.

One major reason for this success was that the Sheriff clearly communicated his expectations to first-line supervisors, who in turn brought the message to the agency's deputies and other front-line personnel.

Systems for Selecting, Training, and Developing Sergeants Do Not Reflect the Importance of the Position

The PBSO example demonstrates the key role that first-line supervisors play in changing individual employees' performance, and in shaping the overall culture of an organization as well.

In recent years, the policing profession has been highly scrutinized and criticized, especially about its handling of use-of-force issues. In response, police departments and sheriffs' offices across the country have begun implementing new policies, procedures, training, and equipment for using force.

But just how do reform-minded police executives actually change an agency? How do they successfully improve policies and practices, as well as the customs and attitudes that make up the culture of their organizations? We often hear that in law enforcement agencies, sergeants are the key to success. Yet there has been only limited research and little focus among practitioners on the role played by these first-line supervisors.

As policing has become more complex and the role of sergeants has changed, many agencies still rely on the same testing and selection processes for sergeants they have used for decades. In some agencies, it can be five, seven, even 10 years between sergeants' exams. This can diminish the quality of promotional candidates over time and demoralize officers who

just missed a cutoff date and have to wait years for the next promotional opportunity.

Furthermore, the systems and criteria for testing and selecting sergeants in many departments are crude and antiquated.

There are similar issues with training. Some agencies offer new sergeants little, if any additional training beyond what is mandated by their states. Because of staffing pressures and scheduling issues, some agencies put sergeants out in the field before they have completed even basic first-line supervision instruction. And very few agencies have focused on the long-term career guidance and leadership development of their sergeants and mid-level supervisors.

The Most Critical Position in the Agency

Sergeants are crucial to police organizations in a number of ways:

Sergeants directly supervise 85% of agency personnel: From a numerical perspective, sergeants directly supervise the vast majority of an agency's personnel. According to the 2013 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey, overseen by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, approximately 6.6% of all sworn personnel are sergeants or equivalents. They are the first-line supervisors to an estimated 85% of the law enforcement workforce who are line personnel.³

Using national estimates of officer counts provided in another national survey, the 2008 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies,⁴ these percentages translate to an estimated 50,000 sergeants directly supervising more than 650,000 officers, deputies, and detectives nationwide.

Uniformed patrol is the backbone of American police agencies, and sergeants are the supervisors on whom agency leaders rely to direct their patrol operations and ensure that strategies are effective.

2. Internal Affairs Review of the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum. March 2016. Available at <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/2764854/Perf-Report.pdf>. Implementation of the tactical pause is discussed on page 21.

3. See <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=248> for summary reports and <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/92> for raw data for LEMAS. Percentage estimates are based on examination of the raw data.

4. See <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=249> for more information on the CSLLEA.

“The reality is that at some point, everybody works for a sergeant, and that is why it is so critical that we get our sergeants on board with everything we’re doing.”

— Denver Police Chief Robert C. White

“Eyes and ears” on the officers: Sergeants play many pivotal roles. They see and hear first-hand what “the troops” are feeling and talking about. In this capacity, they serve as an agency’s early warning system to detect organizational issues and problems that may be percolating below the surface.

As the “tactical pause” example from Palm Beach County demonstrates, sergeants play a critical role in agency communications. They help ensure that policies, procedures, and other information from top leaders get relayed to line personnel, and that information from the field is forwarded back up through the chain of command. Officers get much of their official information at roll calls, which are often led by sergeants. How accurately and effectively sergeants carry out this communications responsibility can directly influence the information that line personnel receive and how faithfully they act upon it.

Sergeants train and mentor officers: At our meeting, several sergeants noted that one of their most important roles is to train and mentor their subordinates. Sergeants provide leadership and direction to officers not just in the classroom or during roll calls, but importantly, in the field as well. Managing personnel on the scene of critical incidents and debriefing with officers after the event are key responsibilities of today’s sergeants.

Sergeants can make or break new policies: First-line supervisors have an enormous impact on the culture of law enforcement agencies. Sergeants act as a critical bridge between the top levels of the organization and the people on the ground. Sergeants’ words and actions—perhaps more than those of any other individual in the organization, including the chief executive—can shape the attitudes of the vast majority of agency personnel. In many ways, sergeants are the employees who most directly influence whether the organizational priorities of the

chief or sheriff are accepted and implemented by the officers or deputies.

Research on the role of sergeants is almost nonexistent: Unfortunately, the research literature on sergeants is limited and dated. Some research does suggest that officers tend to model the behavior and style of their sergeants.⁵ That is why it is so important for agencies to select, train, and develop high-quality first-line supervisors who can provide the type of guidance, supervision, and leadership that promote organizational cohesion and operational success.

How the Role of Sergeant Is Changing

On April 3, 2018, as part of our *Critical Issues in Policing* conference series, PERF brought together approximately 175 police chiefs, sheriffs, other police personnel, researchers, and subject matter experts to shine a light on first-line supervision. This national meeting examined the role of first-line supervisors in policing today, and explored what agencies must do to strengthen this crucial position in the future.

About one-quarter of the participants at this meeting were first-line supervisors. These sergeants (and lieutenants and other mid-level supervisors in attendance) brought insight and first-hand knowledge to the discussion. And because the chiefs and other agency leaders in attendance were themselves sergeants at one time, we heard important historical perspectives about how the job of sergeants has changed over time.

We learned that the role of sergeants in policing is changing dramatically. In the not-too-distant past, the sergeant’s role was often seen as a largely administrative position. Sergeants ran roll calls, but then they spent much of the rest of their shift in the station house, tending to organizational duties such as scheduling, time-keeping, and minor disciplinary

5. Engel, Robin Shepherd (2000). The Effects of Supervisory Styles on Patrol Officer Behavior. *Police Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 3, 262-293. https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ccjr/docs/articles/engel_articles/Effects_Supervisory_Styles.pdf.

“When I was coming up 20-plus years ago, the unwritten rule was you never called your sergeant. The sergeant was largely an administrative position—a paper-pusher—and wasn’t a visible presence on the street. Now, sergeants are the key position in our agency. They still have a number of administrative tasks, and that list is growing. But sergeants today are expected to be much more hands-on in the field.”

— **Sergeant Raphael Thornton**
Camden County, NJ Police Department

matters. Sergeants had little presence on the street. When they did show up at a scene, it was mostly to serve as a technical expert, directing officers where to put crime scene tape and how to make appropriate notifications.

Today’s sergeants are expected to spend most of their time on the street: Contrast that with the expectations in most policing agencies today. Sergeants still must execute their administrative tasks. And in some respects, those duties have become more complex. For example, the use of early intervention systems and other accountability measures are adding to the administrative workloads of sergeants and may tend to keep them off the streets.

But sergeants today also are expected to be actively engaged with the community and leading their officers on the street. Police executives at the *Critical Issues* meeting said they want their sergeants to closely monitor the police radio, to stay on top of what their officers are doing, and to respond quickly to certain calls, especially critical incidents where the chances of conflict or public attention are high.

And when they are out on the street, sergeants are expected to be much more than just technical experts on managing crime scenes or other incidents. They are meant to be decision-makers, problem-solvers, and motivators of the people they are supervising.

In other words, sergeants are expected to direct the work of their officers from the front, not from the station house. While the specific percentages may vary, most agency executives today expect their sergeants to spend the majority of their time out on the street.

Sergeants Play a Critical Role in Managing Police Use of Force

Police chiefs and sheriffs recognize that it is especially important for sergeants to be able to quickly respond to and manage incidents in which there is potential for police use of force.

When he was chief of the San Diego Police Department, Bill Lansdowne (now retired) examined incidents in which his officers used deadly force. He discovered that it typically took about 15 minutes from the time a call for service was received until the first shots were fired. Chief Lansdowne found that if a sergeant or other supervisor could get to the scene within that 15-minute window, the chances of an officer-involved shooting were reduced by about 80 percent.

Managing teams at critical incidents: Having a sergeant on the scene promotes teamwork by helping to ensure that every responding officer has a role, knows what that role is, and is held accountable for carrying out that role. For example, sergeants can help determine which personnel should be the “contact” officer (who initiates and maintains communication with the subject) and which officers should be “cover” (who protect the contact officer and help to prevent the suspect from fleeing or acting more aggressively).

Sergeants also are responsible for ensuring that other tasks such as crowd control, notifications, and resource coordination are carried out. Having sergeants on the scene of critical incidents improves decision-making and reduces the chances of so-called “sympathetic fire,” in which one officer’s decision to discharge a weapon influences the entire team’s response.

The fatal officer-involved shooting of Mario Woods by San Francisco police officers in 2015 illustrates what can happen when a first-line supervisor is *not* present during a critical incident. Coordination and teamwork among responding officers can quickly break down without a leader on the scene.

In this case, Woods matched the description of a suspect who had committed a non-fatal stabbing earlier in the day. When officers approached him at a bus stop near the location of the stabbing, Woods pulled out a small knife and said something to the effect of, “You’re not taking me today.”

Approximately a dozen officers, all with their firearms drawn, surrounded Woods. Several of them simultaneously began shouting commands. The incident was captured on cell-phone video by multiple bystanders, who remained close to the scene.⁶ Woods ignored commands to drop the knife, said “kill me,” and began walking down the sidewalk. Officers used a bean bag shotgun and OC spray, which had no effect, before several of the officers discharged their firearms, striking Woods more than 20 times.⁷

A supervisor was just arriving on scene when the shooting started.

Sergeants’ responsibilities at the scene of a critical incident or complex investigation: Getting a sergeant to the scene is important. Ensuring that the sergeant knows how to manage the situation is another challenge for law enforcement agencies.

In PERF’s work on use of force, we have identified specific roles and responsibilities that sergeants must assume in situations that appear to have a significant potential for use of force by police, including the following:

- Using a “tactical pause,” when appropriate, before arriving at the scene, in which the sergeant and officers take a moment to assess the situation, consider their options, and decide on a plan;
- Ensuring that decisions are made thoughtfully, considering the nature of the situation, potential

risks, and available strategies (using a tool such as the Critical Decision-Making Model, or CDM)⁸;

- “Slowing the situation down” and de-escalating tensions, when possible;
- Managing resources on the scene;
- Developing a Plan B (for example, if electronic control weapons or other less-lethal options don’t have the desired effect); and
- Intervening with officers who may be overreacting to the situation or exhibiting troubling behavior.

Identifying, promoting, and training the right people to carry out these vitally important responsibilities of sergeants are essential for every law enforcement agency.

Need to Look for Leaders, Not Super-Technicians

In their promotional processes, are police agencies testing for the right mix of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by today’s sergeants? Are agencies selecting people who are prepared to handle the challenges that sergeants face today, and the new challenges that will emerge in coming years? Are agencies adequately training sergeants to carry out the complex mix of roles and responsibilities, especially those related to high-risk encounters? What do sergeants need to know, and how should agencies be delivering training that is on-point and impactful?

These were among the key questions that participants at the *Critical Issues* conference explored.

New challenges, old methods: What we discovered, at the meeting and in the pre-conference research conducted by PERF staff, is this: **Although the roles and responsibilities of sergeants are changing, the methods used to test, select, train, and evaluate first-line supervisors have remained largely the same for decades.**

6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0ju6RQkNs8>

7. San Francisco Police officers were not authorized to carry electronic control weapons at the time of the Mario Woods incident.

8. ICAT Module 2: The Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM). Police Executive Research Forum. <http://www.policeforum.org/icat-module-2>

“We promote technicians, and then we put technicians out in the field and expect them to lead. Police agencies need to focus more on selecting the right people for advancement, and that means people who are actually interested in leading. Not a super technician, not a super cop, but someone who is interested in leading and supporting the officers who are going out there on the front line every day.”

— **Dr. Patrina Clark**
Human Resources Executive

Many jurisdictions are locked into rigid civil service systems that dictate or severely restrict options for testing and selecting first-line supervisors. Even in agencies not constrained by civil service, there is often a tendency to fall back on traditional approaches to promotion, training, and employee development. For example, many agencies test and promote first-line supervisors largely on technical skills—in other words, mastery of tasks they completed as officers. Many testing processes focus on rote memorization of policies, procedures, and laws, as opposed to analytical skills, decision-making, and leadership potential.

Traditional approaches to training and evaluation of supervisors are lacking: The training and evaluation of new sergeants are not keeping pace with the changing roles of first-line supervisors. In many agencies, there is a focus on “basic training” around technical matters—for example, how to complete reports, make notifications, etc.—and little emphasis on how to manage people and set priorities in the field.

Many departments rely on state agencies or state-accredited training facilities to provide the bulk of their training for new sergeants. When training slots are not immediately available (as is often the case), newly promoted sergeants may be sent into the field without the benefit of basic training. That is unfair to newly promoted sergeants, to the officers they are charged with leading, and to the communities they serve.

And while almost all agencies have evaluation systems for newly promoted sergeants that include probationary periods, there is often a “check the box” feeling to evaluation and leadership development. Very few of the attendees at the *Critical Issues* meeting reported that sergeants ever fail their

probationary period, and many agencies do not have a rigorous and specialized evaluation system for new sergeants.

New Approaches to Testing, Selection, Training, and Evaluation

When Robert di Grazia was Commissioner of the Boston Police Department in the early 1970s, he recognized that the traditional system of promoting sergeants was holding back talented individuals and stifling new thinking within the agency. So he made fundamental changes to the promotional process.

For example, instead of requiring candidates to memorize laws, as had been done for years, Commissioner di Grazia focused on assessing management and leadership skills. He also introduced oral boards to give candidates the opportunity to better demonstrate their abilities. Under the old system, longevity in the department was rewarded in the selection process. The Commissioner mandated that candidates’ educational achievements be given equal consideration.

These and other changes brought fresh thinking into the Boston Police Department and helped to usher in a new crop of young leaders. Some of them, including William Bratton and Kathleen O’Toole, would rise to the highest leadership roles in police agencies around the country.

Today, many agencies are following Commissioner di Grazia’s lead, implementing creative reforms that improve first-line supervision. Our *Critical Issues* conference uncovered examples of agencies that are changing how they test, select, train, and evaluate their first-line supervisors.

For example:

- **Critical thinking skills, not rote memorization:** Agencies are revising their written exams to

move away from rote memorization of materials such as departmental directives (which, in many cases, may not directly relate to a sergeant's performance). Instead, agencies are emphasizing skills such as critical thinking and decision-making that sergeants will need every day.

- **Going beyond written examinations:** In law enforcement agencies that are not subject to strict civil service regulations or other limitations, there is a trend toward de-emphasizing written exams as part of the testing process. In their place, agencies are moving toward assessment centers,⁹ oral boards, and other approaches that better measure management skills and leadership potential.
- **Wider range of materials in reading lists:** Agencies are expanding their promotional reading lists, moving beyond traditional materials such as laws and departmental directives, and testing candidates on a range of books about management and leadership in policing, the business world, and other disciplines.
- **More flexible selection processes:** Some agencies are adding flexibility to their selection process. Rather than having to automatically promote the candidate at the top of the promotional list, agencies are using a process that allows them to pick from among a small group of top performers. The Chicago Police Department's merit selection process has taken this concept a step further. It sets aside a certain percentage of promotions to be based on candidates' work history and on-the-job performance.
- **Expanding training of new sergeants:** Agencies are revising their training curricula for new sergeants. Many are going beyond the state-mandated training, which tends to focus on basic tasks, and are placing a greater emphasis on the skills needed to manage people and handle high-priority situations in the field.
- **Beginning training earlier:** More agencies are training new sergeants *before* they hit the streets as first-line supervisors, instead of promoting them and waiting for a training slot to open. And some agencies, such as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Frisco, TX police departments, are offering training opportunities to officers who may be interested in promotion, but haven't started the formal promotional process.
- **Scenario-based training:** Some agencies are using scenario-based training for sergeants, with a focus on potential use-of-force encounters and other high-risk situations that first-line supervisors must know how to manage. In the Seattle Police Department, sergeants and officers train together, allowing sergeants to hone their team-leader role and allowing officers to develop "informal leader" skills.
- **More pertinent evaluations of sergeants:** Some agencies are expanding their evaluation processes for new sergeants beyond the routine system used for employees in general. They are placing greater emphasis on evaluating particular traits and skill sets that first-line supervisors need to be effective.
- **Giving sergeants feedback and evaluation on the job:** Other agencies are providing their new sergeants with more frequent and robust feedback. The Tucson Police Department, for example, requires new sergeants to keep a journal of their experiences, which is reviewed by a supervisor and is part of the evaluation process.
- **Helping sergeants to advance their careers:** Some agencies are paying more attention to the career development needs of their sergeants. The Career Pathing and Preparedness Program in the Clearwater, FL Police Department is a good example of that.

9. An assessment center is a series of individual and group exercises designed to evaluate candidates' leadership, communications abilities, and interpersonal, management, and analytical skills in a mock work environment. It is typically facilitated by a consultant who uses trained observers or "assessors." In this type of process, candidates participate in a series of exercises designed to simulate actual duties and responsibilities of the target job. Examples include counseling a subordinate, prioritizing and acting on items in an in-basket, writing a report on a given subject, and making a presentation.

Steps that Agencies Can Take to Improve First-Line Supervision

This report concludes by listing concrete steps that agencies can take immediately to improve first-line supervision (see pages 69–71). These recommendations focus on the key areas of testing, selection, training, and evaluation of sergeants.

Some of the recommendations—such as offering promotional exams on a reasonably frequent basis and giving newly promoted sergeants training before they hit the streets—should be fairly straightforward to implement. Others—such as “right-sizing” the number of officers who are supervised by one sergeant and creating leadership development programs for first-line supervisors—will require greater investments in people and support services. All of these approaches should be considered investments

in the individual sergeants, the personnel they lead, the communities they serve, and the agencies they work for.

Our *Critical Issues* meeting confirmed that the role of sergeant in police agencies is changing, with a greater focus on sergeants providing hands-on leadership and managing critical incidents in the field. Our meeting also revealed that the sergeants themselves are changing. In many agencies, today’s sergeants are younger and better educated, but often less experienced than their predecessors.

Getting the processes right for selecting, training, and developing this new cohort of first-line supervisors is critically important for today’s police departments and sheriffs’ offices. This report provides guidance to agencies that want to address this challenge.

The Role of Sergeants, as Seen by Chiefs— and by Sergeants

SERGEANTS (AND OTHER FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS) occupy one of the most important positions in a law enforcement agency.

Patrol officers most directly impact the community's perception of the agency, because patrol officers come into contact with community members more often the higher ranks do. And sergeants are the ones who manage and direct those daily contacts between officers and community members. Sergeants also serve as a two-way conduit of information between agency leaders and rank-and-file officers.

Sergeants play a critical role in creating the “culture” of a police agency—the customs, traditions, attitudes, and overall approach of officers toward the agency's goals and mission. Sergeants also mentor their officers and help them learn how to make decisions. Sergeants are responsible for ensuring accountability of their officers, and for knowing their officers and detecting any problems in their behavior.

In addition, sergeants play an essential role in providing hands-on management of critical incidents in the field. The sergeants' role is particularly important in those situations in which the potential for the use of force is high. Sergeants are counted on to promote the coordination, teamwork, and decision-making that are important to the safe and effective resolution of high-profile, high-stress encounters.

Today, it is more important than ever for police and sheriffs' departments to think carefully about the role of their first-line supervisors, because those roles are changing in many ways. Community members expect more responsiveness from their police agencies, and they expect the actions of local police

to reflect community values and priorities. It is the job of sergeants to teach officers how to respond to a wide variety of situations in ways that meet community expectations. Furthermore, new technologies are being introduced at a faster pace, which are creating new demands on sergeants to keep up with the most efficient ways of managing officers.

These and other developments were discussed at PERF's *Critical Issues* meeting on the role of first-line supervisors:

Denver Chief Robert C. White:

If Sergeants Understand What You Want From Them, It's Easier to Reach Your Goals

I think we would all agree that of all the ranks in policing, probably the most important rank is sergeant. What your sergeants think about the police department, what they think about the city, what they think philosophically about what we're doing—all of that impacts 80 or 90 percent of the troops. At some point, everybody works for a sergeant, and that is why it is so critical that we get our sergeants on board with everything we're doing.



Denver Police Chief Robert C. White (LEFT), NYPD Chief of Patrol Rodney Harrison (MIDDLE), and NYPD Sergeant Timothy Cecchini (RIGHT)

NYPD Chief of Patrol Rodney Harrison:

Implementing Cultural Change Is Difficult; Everyone Has To Buy Into It

Wexler: Rodney Harrison, you're Chief of Patrol at NYPD, and often you want to get certain messages to your 30,000 cops. For example, you're in the midst of introducing the NYPD's new Neighborhood Policing program.¹⁰ How do you ensure that your cops are with the program?

Chief Harrison: First, whether you're in a big department or not so big, there are many different things that officers and supervisors have to deal with on a daily basis. So it can be difficult trying to get a new message down to the cops with their boots on the ground, because there are so many things we already ask them to do.

It's difficult whenever you try to implement a big cultural change. Our new philosophy of Neighborhood Policing is about trying to make sure we resolve the problems in our neighborhoods, preferably without putting handcuffs on somebody. In the past, we were all about trying to make arrests and issue summonses. It was about generating numbers. So it's a huge lift to make such a fundamental change, especially for the officers who have been in the organization a long time and are used to generating numbers.

Right now we're asking our front-line supervisors to tell the officers that that's not the route we want to go anymore. The directives go from my office down to the borough commanders, down to the commanding officers in the precincts. The use of social media, traditional news, and attending community meetings have been vital tools to help get the message out to the men and women on the front line. Everybody has to buy into it along the way. If everyone doesn't talk about what's important and prioritize what the mission is, it's going to get diluted by the time it gets down to the cop.

Wexler: Sergeant Timothy Cecchini, how do you get that message and convey it to your officers?

NYPD Sergeant Timothy Cecchini: For me personally, I think that the foundation of what we're doing hasn't changed, in the sense that we came on this job to protect and serve. That mission hasn't changed. If we as supervisors keep to our own personal moral compass that we developed throughout our entire life, and then use the principles that the commanders are giving us, we can meld those two together.

I try to set the standards. I don't supervise 30,000 cops. I supervise 12 officers. So it's about getting to know those people and expecting the

10. According to the NYPD, "Neighborhood Policing divides precincts into four or five fully-staffed sectors that correspond, as much as possible, to the boundaries of actual established neighborhoods. The same officers work in the same neighborhoods on the same shifts, increasing their familiarity with local residents and local problems." More details are available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/bureaus/patrol/neighborhood-coordination-officers.page>



Los Angeles Assistant Chief of Police
Jorge Villegas

best from them, and holding each officer to a standard. I think that's possible with eight or 10 or 12 officers, because you can get to know them. As a supervisor, that's our job.

Los Angeles Assistant Chief Jorge Villegas:

Supervisors Are the Heart of Our Organizations

As we talk about supervisors, I think we should understand that the supervisors are the heartbeat of the organizational culture. It's important for us to make sure we train and orient the supervisors on the mission, vision, and values of the organization. We need to inculcate everything we do—the training, audits, inspections, all the systems—so they're all consistent with the values and mission of the organization.

How Sergeants See Their Role

One of the most enlightening aspects of the *Critical Issues* meeting on first-line supervision was hearing directly from sergeants. They provided valuable insights into how they view their roles, and on how those roles are changing.

Among the key matters they raised: mentoring and debriefing with their officers; holding officers—and themselves—accountable; preparing officers for high-stress critical incidents and helping them remain calm and focused when those events take place; and providing moral support and direction to officers.

Tucson Sergeant Christopher Andreacola:

The One Job That Sergeants Can't Delegate Is Ensuring that Everyone Is Accountable

I've been doing this job now 23 years as a supervisor, so I've seen all kinds of things out there, and the word that sticks with me the most is the word "accountability." Certainly sergeants have the job of mentoring, coaching, and training officers. I would argue that a lot of that, including tactical decision-making, can be delegated. I may not be the best coach for a given person. I may not be the best mentor. I may not be the best trainer. There may be other people in the department who are better than I could be in training officers on a particular issue.

But one thing that sergeants cannot delegate is accountability—holding our officers accountable.

I think that happens in three ways:

- First is holding myself accountable. If I'm not doing my job and holding myself to a certain standard, my officers are never going to do it.
- The second is holding the officers accountable. I believe most of them want that and expect that—to be held accountable to do the job that they've been called to do.
- The last thing, and I do this for the officers, is to hold my command staff accountable. The officers who work for me need to know that I'm going to try my best to hold my command staff accountable to our values and our mission as a department.

Accountability is one job I can't give away to anybody else to do. If I don't do it, it's really not going to happen.

We talked about how it's important for sergeants to get to a scene fast and slow things down sometimes. I appreciate that, but if I am supervising 8, 10, 12 people, I can't get to every scene. So to me, part of accountability is the work I do before that scene ever happens, so that when my officers are there, they are already making the

Tucson Sergeant Christopher Andreacola (RIGHT) and San Diego Sergeant Cory Mapston (FAR RIGHT)



proper decisions, because I've already invested time and effort in them.

I've told my officers flat out that if I show up at a scene and I have to correct you, we're going to have a conversation about it later, because that means that you weren't doing the job that you were called to do. And part of that may be my fault, but we're going to fix that so it never happens again. That's part of that accountability.

Wexler: That's a great point. Tell us more about how you actually achieve accountability. What does it look like?

Sergeant Andreacola: My best time for working on accountability is our debriefing at the end of every day. And you can debrief at a scene. I invest so much in debriefings every day, and we debrief everything, whether it's just our squads or other squads we worked with.

Everything is open. It certainly isn't, "Hey, everybody did a good job because we all went home safely today." Frankly, no, everybody doesn't always do a good job. So we need to talk about the things that didn't go well.

To me, that's the best time for investing in them and having them learn.

San Diego Sergeant Cory Mapston:

Sergeants Need To Instill Confidence in Their Officers

Good sergeants must be "hands on." Your job is to instill confidence in your officers. The most important thing is that they work as a team, which

gives them confidence. A confident officer is a calm officer, and a calm officer can de-escalate critical incidents and provide much better protection for the public.

Wexler: Interesting that you mention de-escalation. San Diego's former Chief Bill Lansdowne said years ago that if police agencies can get a sergeant to the scene of a critical incident within eight minutes of the call being dispatched, there's a much better chance that the incident will end without use of lethal force, because the sergeant can slow the incident down and allow time for a more careful response. Is that still valid in San Diego?

Sergeant Mapston: Yes, in fact the new chief wants us there faster than that. Eight minutes is unacceptable. We want first-line supervisors at our critical incidents and our complicated investigations very early. We have a very youthful police department. Many of our officers lack skill sets and experience. We want our sergeants to help fill that role.

Wexler: When you arrive at a scene that has potential for ending with a use of force, what do you see your role as?

Sergeant Mapston: My immediate task when I get there is to slow my officers down, and calm them down. If they're on edge, I don't want that. I want a calm, peaceful, very smart police officer. Intuitively, I calm them down by building their skills on an hour-by-hour, day-to-day basis. I think that's my most important role.



Camden County, NJ Sergeant Raphael Thornton (FAR LEFT) and Portland, OR Sergeant Steve Wilbon (LEFT)

**Sergeant Timothy Roll,
Miami Beach, FL Police Department**

Officers Must Be Able to Depend on the Sergeant To Take Care of Them in the Field

First and foremost, I make sure the officers can depend on me to take care of them in the field. They know I care about them. The response that I get back from my officers is that they work hard for me because they know I take care of them. I make sure that they are out there doing their job, making sure that they're staying out of trouble. Stopping them before they do something that could get them in trouble.

Wexler: What do you mean by “stopping someone before they get in trouble”?

Sergeant Roll: Sometimes people get escalated on a call, and I show up and can see the officer is about to do something that's going to result in a complaint. So it means I pull that officer out of that call.

Camden County, NJ Sergeant Raphael Thornton:

Sergeants Teach Officers to Achieve The Police Department's Mission Every Day

First of all, I love being a sergeant. I view my role as a bridge between the community and the Police Department. My chief makes my job pretty simple. We key on the protection of life. So the questions we ask ourselves are “How do we protect our residents, and how do we keep our officers safe?”

And the answer is that sometimes we slow things down. We recalibrate our officers' moral compass. We look at supervision more as a mentorship.

We figure out what officers need to do their jobs better. Some officers need to be slowed down. Others need to be inspired and motivated to work harder.

We teach our officers to ask questions. Why are we here? What is our role here? Most of the time it's to protect life, so how do I protect life? It can mean slowing things down with an emotionally disturbed person, but in an active shooter situation, it can mean speeding up.

The key to our supervision is that it all revolves around morals and ethics, and the mission that our officers are going to achieve every day when they hit the street. Our chief wants us sergeants to be out there with our officers. Therefore, we try to keep our numbers low in how many subordinates each sergeant has. We are a “lead by example” agency.

Portland, OR Sergeant Steve Wilbon:

*I Ask My Officers to “Own Their Portion”
Of What They Do,
Even If Others Will Take Charge Later*

Wexler: Sergeant, you’re here with your new Chief, Danielle Outlaw, who was sworn in just a few months ago. Does the job of sergeants change much when a new chief comes in?

Sergeant Wilbon: You put me in the hot seat [laughter]. I’ve been a sergeant for almost four years, and I’ve had several chiefs and several different bosses. Chief Outlaw has made her direction clear. Policing has always been complex, and in 2018 it’s very complex. I have a couple of principles that I lay out for my officers. I try to make it simple for them.

The first principle is “Do what’s right, no matter what.” Don’t do something as a police officer just because you can, if it’s not the right thing to do morally. That’s the first thing I ask of my officers. Then I ask them to do what’s expected from the public. And finally I ask them to do what’s expected from your bosses—and then some.

I also tell the officers to “own their portion” of whatever they do. Patrol officers may be the first responders to an event, and later the event moves to an investigative stage, whether it’s detectives or a specialized unit. I ask my officers to own their portion. While that case is in your hands, maximize your effort to make sure you are

producing the best product, so that the case can move forward based on what you did.

In each incident, whether it’s large or small, do what you can with *your* involvement to raise the bar.

Richmond, CA Sergeant Timothy Gard:

*Trust Your Officers to Do Their Jobs Well,
And Try to Earn That Trust from Your Superiors*

A lot of great leaders in the world have written books about leadership styles. When I think about developing the subordinates that I supervise, I always talk about trust. I tell my officers that in order to be good at your job, you have to trust that those around you are good at their jobs.

For me to be a good sergeant, I have to trust that the women and the men underneath me are going to do their job well and successfully. In order to have that trust, I have to be able to instill the morals, the values, and the mission in them. And by the same token, I need to have the trust of my command staff when they promote me and put me in the roles that they do, that I’m going to do my job well.

If the trust flows like a waterfall from the source, from the chief all the way down to the sergeants, then it’s easy. My biggest philosophy is about developing the trust. I think if we focus on that, then the community is going to see that we’re sincere and real, and then they will trust us, and our mission is successful.



Richmond, CA Sergeant
Timothy Gard



Police Agencies Keep Adding New Duties for First-Line Supervisors

Many police officials at the *Critical Issues* conference said that the role of first-line supervisors has been expanding in recent years. For example:

- New technologies such as body-worn cameras are being deployed in many agencies, and much of the responsibility for managing the new systems falls on sergeants. In some agencies, for example, sergeants are responsible for conducting the initial review of body-worn camera footage following a critical incident.
- Similarly, public safety communications systems, such as Next Generation 911 and FirstNet wireless broadband systems, are being adopted, and sergeants must learn how the new systems work, and ensure that their officers understand and can benefit from the technology.
- New types of crime, particularly cybercrime, are being committed, and the public expects officers to know how to respond when people are victimized. As first-line supervisors, sergeants have a key role.
- Many police agencies are taking on new responsibilities for addressing the opioid epidemic, and for treating homeless persons more proactively and humanely.
- As police agencies become more transparent and accountable to the public, there are increasing demands for statistics and reports on department operations, and sergeants are often the ones who gather the information.

Meanwhile, sergeants continue to handle tasks they have long shouldered, such as scheduling, reviewing reports, and handling minor disciplinary issues. In addition, sergeants must be on the street, monitoring the radio, and directing resources.

While managing all these responsibilities, sergeants must try to balance their desk work with time in the field, interacting with their officers. It can be a difficult balance to maintain.

At the *Critical Issues* meeting, several chief executives and sergeants discussed how they are working to achieve that balance.

Portland, OR Chief Danielle Outlaw:

We Need to Give Sergeants Enough Time To Supervise Officers in the Field

When we talk about workload for officers, we also need to consider the workload of sergeants. Just as we want our officers to have discretionary time to be proactive, to get out and engage in the community, we also need our sergeants to have discretionary time to be proactive about supervising.

We have been putting new mechanisms in place to ensure accountability, but that sometimes keeps sergeants in the office, because they're doing more administrative work. Where sergeants are assigned also matters, because some parts of the city and some units are more active than others.

We need to give sergeants enough time to supervise, and to be out with the officers in the field, to see what's happening and develop their people.

San Diego Sergeant Cory Mapston:

*Sergeants Need To Be More than Technical Experts
On the Scene of Critical Incidents*

Sergeants used to be technical experts. You show up on scene; you make sure the yellow tape is up; you make sure the investigators are called; you notify people. Today our role is different. We still handle those technical aspects, but we also expect our sergeants to develop the talents of their officers. Because we don't have enough sergeants to do everything, we need officers who can do it themselves.

Wexler: How much time do you spend on operations as opposed to administration? Do your bosses want you inside handling paperwork, or out on the street?

Sergeant Mapston: My captain wants me on the street. I spent maybe 10 percent of my time on administrative tasks.

Wexler: But is that how you're evaluated? Do you get in a bind where your captain wants you on the street, but you also get asked why you haven't gotten paperwork done?

Sergeant Mapston: I get evaluated by how my team performs in the field. Fortunately, my lieutenant has my back on administrative tasks. How my troops perform in the field is how I get evaluated.

Don't Handicap Sergeants by Giving Them Too Many Officers to Supervise

To a large extent, basic arithmetic can be a determining factor in whether sergeants are able to balance their time between the street and the station house. How many officers (or detectives) one sergeant is supervising has a direct bearing on what they are able to do during their shifts and how effective they are. This has long been an issue in departments across the nation.

Prior to the *Critical Issues* meeting, PERF queried member agencies on their average ratios of officers to sergeant. The numbers ranged from a low of 4:1 to a high of 15:1. The average ratio was approximately 7 officers for each sergeant.

PERF also asked what members thought the ideal ratio of officers to sergeants would be. Among agencies that responded, the average "ideal" ratio was 6 officers for one sergeant.

Administrative work vs. supporting officers in the field: As the role of sergeants shifts from largely administrative to a more hands-on approach, these numbers take on added importance. Sergeants who supervise large numbers of officers must spend more of their time on administrative tasks (scheduling, timekeeping, and other human resource issues). Sergeants with fewer officers are free to devote more of their time to being in the field and providing direct supervision and guidance to their officers.

Technology can help: If agencies are to be successful in effectively managing the types of incidents that "keep chiefs up at night"— potential use-of-force situations, police pursuits, active shooters, and other critical incidents — they need to ensure that sergeants have time to be in the field.

For some agencies, that means increasing their cadre of sergeants. It can also mean implementing new technologies that allow sergeants to complete administrative tasks more efficiently, and to handle paperwork electronically while they are on the street.

Several participants at the *Critical Issues* conference discussed officer-to-sergeant ratios and how span of control has a significant impact on the performance of first-line supervisors and their ability to fulfill the range of their duties effectively.

Ronald D. Vitiello, Acting Deputy Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection:

*We Provide More Supervisors
In Situations That Can Be Difficult or High-Profile*

Wexler: Ron, you've got a big job as chief of the Border Patrol. In policing we talk about span of control, which is the number of officers that one sergeant supervises. Is there a similar concept in the Border Patrol? Do you know what your average ratio is of Border Patrol agents to supervisors?

Commissioner Vitiello: Across the workforce, there are some units where it's 4 to 1. At the other extreme, it's 12 to 1 in other units. The



Ronald D. Vitiello, Acting Deputy Commissioner,
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

quality of the individuals and their capability to supervise matter. You also think about what you want as the command group. As a command leader, you want your supervisors to show up in certain situations.

So for example, on the low end, 4 to 1, it might be at a check point where we're stopping people on the highway, asking them specific questions about their travel, their immigration history, etc. When those routine interactions turn into an incident, where people refuse to answer, or if it turns into an arrest, you want to have a supervisor there, guiding those agents, because it's a higher-profile exposure to the public.



Houston Sergeant
Charles Corgey

Houston Sergeant Charles Corgey:

Sergeants Need to Be in the Field to Make Sure Officers Understand What You Want Them to Do

We talk about getting the message from the chief down to the officers. Sometimes the officers get a message in the roll call. You read it, you make the announcement, but they're not fully understanding it. I think the sergeant has to get out there in the field and check on the officers to see what they're actually doing. If you see that they're going off course, you have to correct them and say "Hey, that's not what the chief wants. That's not what this new policy is."

If you spend too much time in the office, you can't do that. We all have administrative functions. Sometimes the span of control gets too far out of proportion. I've handled six, eight, 10 officers before. With 10, I hardly spent any time on the street. Give me six officers and I can get my paperwork done but also spend time with the officers. I can mentor them, and my team can perform if I can be there with them. I think if the numbers get too high, you can't do that.

Seattle Lieutenant Shanon Anderson:

*Span of Control Is Important
To Let Sergeants Spend Time in the Field*

Wexler: Lieutenant Anderson, are there things that you want to do but can't do, because you're spending so much time on documentation?

Lieutenant Anderson: It depends on span of control. If you have enough sergeants to oversee your officers, and your span of control is reasonable for the workload, your sergeants can be out on the street. Your sergeants and your first-line supervisors are like on-field coaches. They're your base coaches. They're the ones telling the officers when they need to run, when they need to slow down, and when they need to take risks now and then. They're vital to the efforts on the street.

Oakland, CA Sergeant
Bryan Hubbard



Consent Decrees Can Increase The Responsibilities of Sergeants

The role of sergeants can be more complicated in agencies that are operating under federal or state consent decrees or settlement agreements. These types of agreements typically require a police agency to undertake various reforms, to document those changes, and to measure in specified metrics the results of the reforms.

Sergeants are responsible for handling much of the additional work generated by consent decrees. Officials from three agencies operating under such agreements—in Oakland, CA; Portland, OR; and Seattle—commented on these issues at the *Critical Issues* conference.

Oakland, CA Sergeant Bryan Hubbard:

*Few Officers Test for Sergeant in Oakland,
Because They Don't Want
The Administrative Workload*

Wexler: Bryan, as a sergeant in the Oakland Police Department, you've been under a Justice Department consent decree for 15 years. Is your role as sergeant different because of that consent decree?

Sergeant Hubbard: Yes, and here's an example of the impact. We have 750 sworn personnel, about 500 of whom are at the rank of police officer. The last sergeants' test we had, only 27 officers took the test—27 out of 500.

We did an informal poll to find out why, and they all said it's because of the administrative workload. Our officers have no problem with the prospect of leading a squad, they have no problem taking responsibility. It's just that they do not want to spend their days sitting behind a computer and typing up division-level investigations, which average about 20 to 30 pages, just for one rudeness complaint. Supervisors want to be, and should be, in the field leading.

Wexler: How many people used to take the exam?

Sergeant Hubbard: An average of 75–100.

Wexler: And the paperwork burden is a big part of why they don't want to be promoted to sergeant.

Sergeant Hubbard: It is. The district attorney's office is sometimes annoyed with us, because we often spend more time articulating why we did things in accordance to our policy and procedure, and forget to articulate what we did to investigate the crime.

Wexler: So that's a huge issue if you have a lot of officers who don't want to be bosses.

Sergeant Hubbard: They don't like the imbalance of administrative work. We took an informal poll, and no one said that it was the process of the test that was holding them back. It was more the current role of the sergeant, where he or she is not in the field leading. Rather they are handling the heavy administrative workload. As it stands now that's discouraging them from even taking the test.

Wexler: So you must be torn about how you divide your time, between being out in the field and being in the station house.

Sergeant Hubbard: Yes, absolutely, and while I'm here among a lot of police chiefs, let me say that it's a good investment to equip your sergeants with a digital platform, so they can go out in the field and do administrative work when they are in the field with their teams.

Portland, OR Chief Danielle Outlaw:

Tasks to Provide Accountability and Oversight Fall on the Shoulders of Sergeants

Wexler: Danielle, you were Deputy Chief in Oakland, which had a consent decree, and now you're Chief in Portland, which also has a consent decree. What's your perspective on how these settlement agreements affect sergeants?

Chief Outlaw: The agreements increase the work sergeants must do. One of the things we did to address this issue is create "administrative sergeant" positions. But that still did not lessen the workload of the sergeants in the field. That's why I talk about span of control being extremely important, because the sergeants' workload increases as our expectations for accountability and oversight are getting pushed down to the sergeants. Today, these expectations aren't just for the command staff, they really stand on the shoulders of the sergeants as well.

Now that I'm in Portland, the advantage of coming from Oakland and having dealt with the settlement agreement there is that a lot of these issues aren't new to me. So it's easier for me to see some things that can be implemented in Portland to expedite the administrative workload and to avoid pitfalls. I can come into Portland and say, "Look, this is an important outcome, but let's not make it so difficult for ourselves that we can't sustain it in the future."

I also don't want anyone in the room to think that settlement agreements are terrible, because there's a lot of good that comes from them. A great deal of progress wouldn't happen if it weren't for the consent decrees.

Seattle Lieutenant Shanon Anderson:

Our Consent Decree Has Introduced More Administrative Responsibilities

Wexler: Lieutenant Anderson, the Seattle Police Department is in the process of finishing a consent decree, and if I'm not mistaken, you're entering a final phase...

Lieutenant Anderson: We're essentially being monitored while we monitor ourselves.

Wexler: Yes, that's it. Looking back at it, have your first-line supervisors changed how they do their job in Seattle because of the DOJ consent decree?

Lieutenant Anderson: Absolutely. The administrative costs are huge. For example, on the Early Intervention System triggers, if there's a complaint of pain at any point when a suspect is handcuffed, it is a Type One use of force, and an entire packet is completed. In regards to administrative costs, we now have administrative lieutenants who assist with the completion of the use-of-force packets, to make sure that we don't have to send them back to the officers and the sergeants repeatedly, to get all of the proper information and to make sure the investigation is thorough and complete. There are a lot of daily administrative tasks.



Seattle Lieutenant Shanon Anderson

Richmond, CA Assistant Chief of Police Bisa French (RIGHT) and Lansing, MI Chief Michael Yankowski (FAR RIGHT)



In Some Agencies, Today's Sergeants Are Younger

Some agencies have reduced the time-in-grade requirement for officers or detectives to become sergeants. As a result, many of today's sergeants are younger and less experienced than in the past.

How many years of experience do officers need before they can become sergeants? For this project, PERF asked conference participants how many years of experience their agencies require officers to have before they can be promoted to sergeant. The most common answer was five years, cited by 40% of the respondents. More than one-quarter of agencies required three years of experience or less.

(Several agencies reported that officers can take the sergeants' exam after three years but cannot be promoted until they have five years of experience.)

Six years of experience or more –	9% of respondents
Five years –	40%
Four years –	23%
Three years –	15%
Two years –	11%

Richmond, CA Assistant Chief Bisa French:

Today's Sergeants Are Younger Because the Police Force Overall Is Younger

Wexler: Chief, in Richmond, officers used to have at least 10 years of experience before they could

make sergeant. Today, you're promoting people with five years or less. Why is that?

Chief French: The change is because our workforce is just younger now. Today, many people in the department have less than 10 years of experience.

So when we're looking at promoting, we're looking at who's available. Right now we are promoting people between the three- and five-year marks.

Lansing, MI Chief Michael Yankowski:

70% of Our Patrol Officers Have Less than 5 Years of Experience

I think we're in the same situation as many other agencies. We lost 33 percent of our workforce over the last five years, so the average age dropped. Seventy percent of our road patrol has less than five years on. We are lacking officers with experience. It's not just with our front-line supervisors, but we see it with our field training officers too.

Everywhere we're seeing younger people in the organization, and we're trying to work with the union to get people with the best skill sets in key positions.

We hear all the time about leadership in our profession, and that across the country, law enforcement agencies at times are lacking leadership. So we try to develop our young officers in leadership roles.

What the Research Says about How First-Line Supervisors Influence Their Officers

As PERF studied the issue of first-line supervision, it became clear that there is a lack of recent research on the role of sergeants. Some of the most thorough studies of sergeants were published in the early 2000s by Dr. Robin Engel, who now serves as Vice President for Safety and Reform at the University of Cincinnati and is the administrator in charge of the university's police department.

Dr. Engel participated in the *Critical Issues* meeting and provided a summary of her research findings on how sergeants influence the attitudes and behavior of the patrol officers they supervise.



Dr. Robin Engel
University of Cincinnati

Dr. Robin Engel, University of Cincinnati:

*Officers Often Misunderstand
What Their Sergeants Want from Them*

In the late 1990s, I was conducting research about the role of first-line supervisors, and spent two summers riding with sergeants and lieutenants, in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg, Florida. I learned more about policing in those two summers than at any other time in my entire career, when I was riding with those sergeants and lieutenants. I learned that there are different styles of supervision. Of course, this is not something new to the police practitioners in this room; you all know that there are different kinds of supervisors and leaders.

Officers' behavior mirrors that of their sergeants: The most important thing that we learned through our research was that certain styles of supervision have more of an impact on subordinates than other styles. We talk about

the role of sergeants in high-risk situations, but I submit to you that the role of sergeants in everyday, routine situations guides what happens in the field. The high-risk situations are just an extension of what subordinates are learning from their sergeants every single day.

We learned that active supervisors who are out in the field had the largest impact on the behavior of their subordinates, both good and bad. If you're a sergeant who is out in the field

behaving aggressively and using a lot of force, your subordinates will model that behavior. If you're out there interacting with citizens in a different way, your officers will model that behavior instead.

Often there's a communications gap between sergeants and officers: The other important thing that we learned is that there's often a communication gap between what sergeants want and what subordinates are producing.

If you ask the officers, "What are the priorities of your sergeant?" they'll tell you what they think those priorities are. And if you ask them, "Do you do those things?" they'll tell you, "Yes, we do what our sergeants ask." And if you ask the sergeants, "What are your priorities?" they'll tell you.

But often there's a mismatch between what the sergeants want and what the subordinates think the sergeant wants.

Those are the findings that came out of the research in the 1990s. It's unfortunate that there hasn't been systematic study of sergeants and lieutenants since then. We have looked all around the world and found

research in the UK that was very good. But in the United States, most of our evidence is anecdotal at best. We know that there are great examples of leadership out there and there is great training that's available, but it hasn't been systematically tested, and it hasn't been routinely shared.

We know that things often get stuck in the middle, somewhere between what the police chief is trying to implement and what the officers are doing. We don't know how to systematically make that better. The problem is in the translation—how chiefs communicate

their mission and vision and the changes and reforms they want to make, and how that funnels down through the organization. That's where things get lost.

But the more we invest in our first-line supervisors, the more we communicate with them from the top of the organization through the middle, the more we invest in their educational development and their training, so that they can communicate well to the line level, I think we will have stronger organizations.

How Supervisory Styles Influence Officer Behavior

Note: Dr. Engel's research is detailed in "How Police Supervisory Styles Influence Patrol Officer Behavior," published by the National Institute of Justice in 2003. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/194078.pdf>. Following is a summary of her findings:

Dr. Robin Engel and her team studied police patrol in Indianapolis, Indiana, and St. Petersburg, Florida, observing over 5,700 hours of patrol work. The team also interviewed patrol officers and supervisors on topics such as personal characteristics, attitudes towards policing, and perceptions of their beat.

Engel identified 10 dimensions that shape a supervisor's style of leadership:

- How supervisors make decisions,
- How they distribute power,
- The extent to which they attempt to exert leadership,
- How they prioritize patrol enforcement,
- How they prioritize community policing and problem-solving,
- How they view subordinates,
- Whether they engage in inspirational motivation,

- How task-oriented they are,
- Whether they focus on building friendships and mutual trust with subordinates, and
- Whether they focus on protecting subordinates from unfair criticism and punishment.

Dr. Engel's research identified four kinds of supervisory styles:

Traditional supervisors are highly task-oriented and prioritize aggressive enforcement over community policing. They focus on providing instruction, enforcing rules, and abiding by the chain of command.

Innovative supervisors are more open to new philosophies of policing and encourage community policing efforts. Instead of trying to control their subordinates, innovative supervisors delegate decision-making and have a positive view of their officers.

Supportive supervisors are often seen as protectors of their officers. They shield their officers from criticism from management, and try to allow their officers to focus on their job without worry of punishment.

Active supervisors try to balance their supervisory role with being engaged in patrol work. They are more likely than the other types of supervisor roles to respond to an incident that their officers are handling, and they believe in leading by example.

Summary: The Role of Sergeants, as Seen by Chiefs— and by Sergeants

Police chiefs often say that sergeants have one of the most important positions in law enforcement agencies, because:

- Sergeants manage patrol officers, who often come into contact with community members and are “the face of the department” for many residents.
- Sergeants serve as a conduit of information between agency leaders and rank-and-file officers.
- Sergeants play a key role in creating the culture of a police agency.
- Sergeants are responsible for holding officers accountable and detecting any problems in their behavior.
- Sergeants provide hands-on management of critical incidents, including situations where there is a high potential for police use of force.
- Sergeants instill confidence in the officers they supervise, and teach them to work as a team.
- Sergeants look after the safety and welfare of their officers. Sergeants often know details of the personal lives of officers, and help them with family issues or other needs.

Furthermore, the range of duties of first-line supervisors has expanded in recent years:

- Agencies are deploying new technologies such as body-worn cameras, and responsibility for managing the new systems falls on sergeants.
- New types of crime, particularly cybercrime, are being committed, and sergeants have a

role in identifying what officers need to know to respond to victims and investigate these crimes.

- Many police agencies are taking on new responsibilities for addressing the opioid epidemic and for treating homeless persons more proactively and humanely, and sergeants are at the front lines of managing the new police roles.
- The role of sergeants can be even more complicated in agencies that are operating under federal or state consent decrees or settlement agreements. These agreements typically require a police agency to undertake various reforms, to document the changes, and to measure the results of the reforms. Sergeants take key roles in meeting these requirements.

A sergeant’s span of control matters: How many officers a sergeant supervises has a direct bearing on the sergeant’s job. Sergeants who supervise large numbers of officers tend to have less time available to be out in the field, working directly with their officers and engaging with the community, because they need more time to manage their administrative duties.

PERF queried police agencies on their average ratios of officers to sergeants. The numbers ranged from a low of 4:1 to a high of 15:1. The average ratio was approximately seven officers for each sergeant.

PERF also asked police officials to suggest an ideal ratio of sergeants to officers. Among agencies that responded, the average ideal ratio was six officers for one sergeant.

Testing and Selection of New First-Line Supervisors

IN TODAY'S POLICE ORGANIZATIONS, FIRST-LINE supervisors have an increasingly important and complex job, especially as they try to balance the traditional administrative requirements of the position with the need to be on street, actively managing their officers and overseeing critical incidents. To meet those demands, agencies must ensure that they are identifying and promoting the most effective sergeants possible. These supervisors need to have both the skills to handle the job as it exists today and the potential to adapt to future changes, especially as they consider higher leadership positions in their agencies.

Overview of Testing

Based on the information PERF gathered in interviewing police agency officials, no single “best practice” has emerged for testing and selecting first-line supervisors:

- Some agencies use only **written examinations**, which typically have a multiple-choice format.
- Other agencies use various combinations of **written exams, oral exams, and assessment centers**.
- Many agencies are governed by **civil service requirements**, which severely limit flexibility in the testing process. One drawback of statewide civil service processes is that they fail to account for the unique needs of individual communities.
- To the extent that they can, agencies are revamping their written tests to include content areas that are **directly related to the role of the sergeant**. Other agencies are using assessment centers and other techniques to test the decision-making, management, and leadership skills that are crucial for first-line supervisors.
- Some agencies provide candidates with **reading lists** to help prepare for the promotions examinations. The reading list may include texts of state and local laws and police agency policies on key issues, as well as other documents such as the department's mission statement or strategic plan.
- Some agencies also include a number of **books on leadership and other topics** that candidates should read prior to the testing process. The candidates are then asked questions about one or more of the books, in order to test their analytical skills, intelligence, and ability to process information and form a “big picture” view of complex issues.
- Only a few of the agencies interviewed by PERF have a formal process for factoring **past job performance** into the decision to promote officers to sergeants.



Clearwater, FL Chief
Dan Slaughter

Dr. Robin Engel, University of Cincinnati:

*Police Agencies Must Evaluate
Their Testing and Training Systems for Sergeants*

Think about how much emphasis we place on the role of first-line supervisors in an organization, and how these supervisors are the ones who implement changes in policing at the street level. As the role of first-line supervisors is changing, are we testing appropriately to ensure we promote the best candidates? And are we training new supervisors to handle the changes in their role?

Unfortunately, we don't know the answers to those questions. As a profession, we haven't taken the time or made the effort to systematically test whether our testing processes and our training programs work.

This is something that the police chiefs in this room can do something about. I think that in each organization, the police chiefs know what they want. So it's just a matter of articulating what they want and defining it in terms of outcomes that we can measure over time. There's a way forward, but it's going to take the effort of chiefs to ask those questions.

Clearwater, FL Chief Dan Slaughter:

*It's Important to Take a Broad View
And Evaluate an Employee's Entire Work History*

Wexler: Dan, is our system for promoting sergeants archaic, or is the policing profession making some good changes?

Chief Slaughter: I don't think there's any one silver bullet with this. The different components are each important, and how they all come together is how the selection process really gets its value.

In Clearwater, we have a reading list, and we have implemented a career path program that gives people some guidance on what they need to do to develop. We start out with a written test that officers have to pass in order to compete, but there is also an oral component that rests on my shoulders, and I try to be a good judge of talent.

Talent isn't something that's always easy to quantify or articulate. There are a lot of people working in an organization who can dupe a checklist process. So I think we have to be cognizant of that, and look at the employee's entire work history and what they've contributed to the organization over time.

Impact of Civil Service Rules and Union Contracts

Police officials in many jurisdictions told PERF that civil service requirements for statewide testing of officers prevent them from using customized questions, tailored to the conditions, mission, and priorities of their own departments. New York, New Jersey, and California are among the states governed by a civil service process in their testing.

Other officials described how union contracts can influence how the promotional process is conducted.

Camden County, NJ Chief Scott Thomson:

*I Was Given One Year to Select Supervisors,
But Now Our Department Is Back to Civil Service*

Wexler: Scott, when the Camden County Police Department was established in 2013 to replace the police department for the city of Camden, you created this new police agency. And you were given latitude to develop a department culture, including the kind of supervisors you wanted. Can you tell us about how your system changed and what happened?

Chief Thomson: We were given a one-year pilot program that relaxed the civil service rules and gave flexibility to promote based upon a meritocracy. But after that one-year exception, we were required to go back to the archaic, rigid, ineffective system again.

That system is a testing process that does not examine intangible leadership qualities. It only tests you on how well one can memorize the study books, *verbatim*. It doesn't even test the application of the theory described in the book. It's more like, "In this certain paragraph of a particular chapter, what was the word the author used?" There has been a great deal of litigation over promotional testing, so the State tried to create a test that is "appeal-proof."

This is a statewide civil service test. It must be used by the more than 300 civil service police departments in the state of New Jersey, with 33,000 police officers. Every police organization within civil service takes the same exact test, so it has nothing to do with our organization in Camden, our ideals, our policies, our procedures, our culture.

Ironically, even though New Jersey tried to create this appeal-proof test, the test results were disparate along racial lines. Because of this discrimination and inequity, a federal consent decree was brought upon the state. Since then not much has changed.

During the one-year window of the pilot program for promotions, the criteria limiting our selections were based upon years of service

in grade. For example, we could only promote officers who had at least three years of experience to sergeant; we could promote to lieutenant candidates with at least one year of experience as a sergeant; we could promote to captain candidates with two years of supervision; and so on. When we started the new organization, Ralph Thornton was a patrolman, and the highest rank he was eligible for was a sergeant. Kevin Lutz was previously a sergeant for just one year, and the highest I could make him was a lieutenant.

However, with the flexibility that was given, we were able to build a command staff that went from one-third minority and less than 5 percent female to one that was two-thirds minority and 24 percent female. Camden is 96 percent minority and the poorest in the country with a per capita income of less than \$13,000, so representation and opportunity are extremely important for legitimacy within the community. We've made some great progress and were visited by President Obama in 2015, in large part because of the great work of the new command staff. But now I'm back to the civil service system that is telling me I have to hire people who are not reflective of my community, who live 50–60 miles away, and who leave at the first job opportunity closer to their home. Also, I have to promote off a list that weights memorization over leadership, character, emotional intelligence, and grit.

Wexler: That must be very frustrating. What is your guidance for us on this?

Chief Thomson: Well, the *Good to Great* analogy¹¹ is that to be a great leader, you need to get the right people on your bus and put them in the right seats. But in a civil service organization, you've got assigned seating. You're very limited in what you can do.

I understand that the goal of civil service is to ensure against the politicization of a police organization, which is important. But when you consider the protections that are now offered through union contracts, the Fair Labor Standards Act law, case law, arbitration decisions

11. See "Good to Great" Policing: *Application of Business Management Principles in the Public Sector*. Police Executive Research Forum, 2007, pp. 20-31. <http://www.policeforum.org/free-online-documents>.

and civil lawsuits, today's civil service offers no enhanced protections and is a redundant bureaucracy that significantly limits the ability for leaders to effectuate the necessary changes that the people demand. In many cities, the chief of police is accountable and responsible but doesn't possess the actual authority to implement progressive reform.

I think this is especially problematic given that 21st century policing is not about maintaining the status quo. It's about evolving in a direction that strengthens the public's confidence in the police so we can maintain their consent. I believe that to apply civil service's broad standard to every organization is a failed policy. It limits our ability to build an organization that's reflective of our neighborhoods and responsive to the community it serves.

The Greenville, SC Police Department's Professional History Portfolio

The Greenville, SC Police Department recently instituted a "Professional History Portfolio," which allows employees to address, in writing, their performance and achievements in three categories of behavior. The portfolio is intended to provide a more robust picture of a promotional candidate's work history, personal integrity, and impact on the organization.

"Each candidate responds to a series of questions and prepares a history of their work," said Greenville Chief Ken Miller. "This includes their work experience and accomplishments; how they've helped the organization to achieve its goals; how they have advanced teamwork; how well they work with others and encourage their progress; building morale in their unit; and reliability and discipline. I believe these qualities are important to consider."

More specifically, candidates are asked to include information about the following elements in their Professional History Portfolio:

- **Significant Work Experience/Accomplishments:** Experience that has provided notable and verifiable improvement in the attainment of operational or managerial goals and objectives. This may include the use of innovative methods to improve procedures in past or current assignments. Job assignments, experience, and accomplishments that contributed to the task or work performed can be used to provide examples of process and completion.

Accomplishments may involve volunteer work or community activities in which a candidate has been involved, both on and off the job, that demonstrate his or her qualifications for the targeted rank.

- **Teamwork and Cooperation:** The officer supports team decisions, shares relevant information with other team members, and does the following:
 - Understands the impact of working well within the group to reach departmental goals;
 - Actively solicits input from others and values their opinions;
 - Publicly credits others who have performed well or have made special efforts for the team;
 - Acts to promote a supportive and congenial atmosphere and takes initiative to resolve team conflict.
- **Reliability and Discipline:** The officer demonstrates compliance with department policies and procedures regarding attendance. Evaluators consider all sustained disciplinary actions which resulted in a reprimand (verbal or written), reduction in grade, and/or suspension that have been taken against the employee in the last three years.

The Limitations of Written Exams

A concern expressed by many participants in the *Critical Issues* conference is that traditional written exams focus on candidates' ability to memorize material and recall that information on a multiple-choice test. In some cases, the material they are memorizing bears little relationship to the knowledge, skills, and abilities need by first-line supervisors. And rote memorization does not adequately measure a person's ability or potential to lead, according to many police leaders.

NYPD Chief of Patrol Rodney Harrison:

*I'm Not Sure the Written Exam
Helps Produce the Best Candidates for Sergeant*

In the NYPD, the only thing we use is a written exam. It's pretty much based on operational, day-to-day functions for the front-line supervisors. The one thing I would like to change would be to add an interview process, to find out if we could put somebody's familiarity with police procedures through an interview process. Currently, if you do well on the written exam, you're going to find yourself being a supervisor. I'm not sure that helps us get the best people for the job.



San Diego Assistant Chief of Police
Chris McGrath

San Diego Assistant Chief Chris McGrath:

*We Try to Test Candidates for Ability
To Handle the Most Important Aspects of the Job*

We've made some changes to our process. We still use consultants for our testing processes, but we no longer leave it up to the consultants to write our department tests. Now we bring subject matter experts from our department into the process, so we can write the questions and test for what we think is practically important for supervisors to know when they get out in the field.

For example, when consultants wrote the test, they would ask questions like, "After how many days can a bicycle that has been impounded and unclaimed be legally destroyed?" Now we're asking, "What are some of the steps you would take when you're the first supervisor on the scene of a shooting?" So it's a lot more directed toward the job. We test your skills, your ability to think on your feet, to get out in the field and do the things we need you to do, and do it competently, rather than just testing your ability to memorize department procedures on impounding.

San Diego Sergeant Cory Mapston:

*We Should Avoid Tests that Only Measure
Memorization of Facts
That Can Be Learned on the Job*

Wexler: Cory, think back to the process that you went through when you became sergeant. Do you think the process reflected what the job of sergeant is? If not, how would you change it?

Sergeant Mapston: There's a significant oral interview, which is given much greater weight than the written test. And that's a good thing, because I felt that the written test was a waste of time. It was just an exercise in memorization. It covered things that sergeants need to know, but not things that *candidates* for sergeant need to know. The test was all about things you can easily learn on the job, without risk to the officers.

Seattle Lieutenant Shanon Anderson:

We Should Consider Whether Our Tests for Sergeant Work Against Officers Having Balance in Their Lives

We can talk a lot about the testing process and extensive reading lists and identifying the policies and procedures and laws that our supervisors need to know. But I think we should take a step back and ask, who are we getting to take the tests? Are the right people coming to the table to even compete for these first-line supervisor jobs? Some of the best sergeants I know keep a balance between their work, their community, and their family. If you're trying to balance those three priorities, you may not have a lot of time to study for a test.

We talk about diversity in leadership. When I was promoting to sergeant, many of my male counterparts had a significant other at home. For the six months it took to study for that test, they were able to put other priorities aside, because they had their partners to pick up the slack. It can be difficult to find time to study if you're a single parent, or frankly as we look at gender roles, if you're a married woman and you come home and still have to do your share of the chores and caring for your children. It's worth looking at.

Growing Interest in Assessment Centers and Oral Boards

PERF's interviews of police officials nationwide revealed that many agencies are moving toward assessment centers and oral boards, as a way to obtain a more comprehensive view of candidates. Integrating assessment centers with written tests and other forms of testing is becoming an important consideration for many agencies.

For example, some departments begin with a written exam, and only candidates who pass that exam can advance to the next stages. But some participants at PERF's conference said it is beneficial to give all candidates a chance to compete in all phases of testing, because that can provide a more complete view of candidates' administrative, management, and leadership potential.

The Basics on Assessment Centers

For many years, police departments have used assessment centers in promotional processes at various mid-level ranks. This assessment method is also employed by some cities to evaluate candidates for police chief. An assessment center is a series of individual and group exercises designed to evaluate candidates' leadership, communications abilities, and interpersonal, management, and analytical skills in a mock work environment. It is typically facilitated by a consultant who uses trained observers or "assessors."

In this type of process, candidates participate in a series of exercises designed to simulate actual duties and responsibilities of the target job. Examples include counseling a subordinate, prioritizing and acting on items

in an in-basket, writing a report on a given subject, making a presentation, or interacting with your peers (other candidates) in a leadership exercise.

Agencies that use assessment centers appreciate the opportunity to observe candidates in mock situations to see how well they might perform in the given job. Each exercise typically involves a problem that the candidate must resolve in a defined period of time, using defined resources. Assessors meet at the conclusion of the process and come to a consensus rating on each candidate.

Source: Lansinger, Charlotte. Command Performance: A Career Guide for Police Executives. Second Edition. Police Executive Research Forum, 2015. <http://www.policeforum.org/perf-bookstore#c3>

Prince William County, VA Sergeant Sarah Rolle (RIGHT) and Fort Worth, TX Assistant Chief Edwin Kraus (FAR RIGHT)



Dr. Patrina Clark, President of Pivotal Practices Consulting, LLC:

There Are Assessment Tools That Measure Whether Candidates Are Interested in Being Leaders

If testing is the way that you identify your leaders, there are many assessment tools that get at whether candidates are interested in becoming leaders, and whether they are ready and capable of showing leadership. So police agencies should consider introducing one of these personality-based assessments that measure the people-centered skills that supervisors need so they can support officers in all types of situations, but especially these critical situations where we're looking for skills like de-escalation and engaging with the community.

I think the two parts each take a role. The first part, the written test, provides a weeding-out process. The people who just didn't study or who don't have the technical knowledge that they need as a sergeant are weeded out because their total score for the entire process is so low. Then you're left with those who are exemplary and those who are average, and I think the assessment center does a great job of selecting those who have leadership qualities, management qualities, followership qualities, and the technical skill that is necessary.

We just don't test technical skills during the assessment center. We've given an issue that we have to manage through. It may be a personnel issue, or management issue, or a tactical scenario.

Prince William County, VA Sergeant Sarah Rolle:

Our Written Test Weeds Out the Unqualified, And the Assessment Finds the Exemplary

Wexler: Sergeant, did the process you went through to become a sergeant actually measure the work that you do now?

Sergeant Rolle: I think the way that we do our sergeant's test pretty well assesses the skills I need as a patrol sergeant. We have a written test, which is multiple-choice questions. The readings we're given on that are from the Virginia code, the county code, personnel policy, and our general orders. Then we go from the written test to the assessment center.

Fort Worth, TX Assistant Chief Edwin Kraus:

We Use an Assessment Center For Promotion to Captain, But I Would Prefer It for All Promotions

Wexler: Chief Kraus, in Fort Worth, your promotion to sergeant is 100 percent written exam. Are you happy with that?

Chief Kraus: No, we're not. Five years ago we reached an agreement with our police officers' association to allow an assessment center to be part of the captain's rank. If we were only going to do an assessment center at one rank, I would have preferred it to be at the sergeant rank, because then at least everyone from sergeant

above will have been assessed at one point in their career.

Ideally, we would like to add that component to every promotional exam. However, at this point the police officers' association has not agreed to that, and state law says that we're supposed to be limited to a multiple-choice civil service exam.

Virginia Beach, VA Human Resources Coordinator Miriam Bryant:

*We Added an Assessment Center,
And More Officers Applied for Sergeant*

Wexler: Ms. Bryant, in Virginia Beach you have reduced the emphasis on the written exam to 25 percent, and 75 percent is on an assessment center. Why did you do that, and is it working for you?

Miriam Bryant: A series of things happened. Back in 2004, we were under a Department of Justice inquiry for our entry-level testing, and

that actually helped us, because our city council became interested in how we were developing testing, and paid for an extensive job analysis study by a consultant.

Then in 2009, the Supreme Court handed down the Ricci decision,¹² and we interpreted that ruling to mean we should be measuring a broad domain before we establish a cutoff in our promotional processes. Previously, you would take the written test and only the top 30 candidates would proceed to the other steps of the process. After Ricci and the job analysis study, we created a process where all candidates complete all steps, which diminished the weight of the written exam.

Wexler: So you have assessment center now. Do you use assessors from Virginia Beach or outside?

Miriam Bryant: For sergeant, we use exclusively external assessors. We work with a consultant in developing both the written

How Fayetteville, NC Is Involving the Community In Its Assessment Process

When designing and executing an assessment center process, agencies face the issue of whether to use assessors from inside or outside the organization. Some agencies use outside assessors, with the goal of maintaining objectivity in their assessment process. Other agencies use internal assessors, who are more familiar with the local department's values and culture.

The Fayetteville, NC Police Department has developed a hybrid approach that combines both external and internal input during the testing process for sergeants and includes the community as well. The department's process includes a written exam, an "in-basket"

assessment, and a scenario where candidates must respond to a potential critical incident, such as an active shooter situation. Although the department uses external assessors, the chief and executive level staff members provide input and help shape the assessment process.

Fayetteville police also include members of the community in the assessment process, such as clergy members, business owners, local university students, and people from surrounding police agencies. These volunteers are used in the critical incident scenarios and are able to provide feedback on how the candidates interacted with them in these situations.

12. *Ricci v. DeStafano*, U.S. Supreme Court. June 29, 2009. <https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/08pdf/07-1428.pdf>. In the Ricci case, the Supreme Court ruled that the City of New Haven, CT discriminated against a group of white firefighters when it failed to use the results of a promotions test because it feared lawsuits alleging discrimination against members of racial minority groups. The court held that an employer must show "a strong basis in evidence" of disparate impact liability, and that New Haven had not made such a showing.



Virginia Beach, VA Human Resources Coordinator Miriam Bryant (FAR LEFT) and Greenville, SC Chief Ken Miller (LEFT)

test and the assessment center. We instituted this approach in 2013, and in 2014 we had seven EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] charges, three of which related to the sergeants' process. We were upheld by the EEOC in all three cases, but there was a lot of controversy. It was such a significant change.

However, what was interesting was that the participation rate increased dramatically. Previously we had had 50 or 55 officers applying for sergeant, and it increased to 80 who participated that first year.

Greenville, SC Chief Ken Miller:

We Use a Practical Assessment Center, Where Candidates Perform and Demonstrate Their Skills

Wexler: Ken, you've served as Deputy Chief in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC, and then as chief in Greensboro, NC, and now Greenville, SC. How do those cities compare in promoting officers to sergeant?

Chief Miller: I've been through more of the processes in Charlotte, because I spent the lion's share of my career there, and we went from a simple test for sergeant to a test and assessment center as well. In Greensboro, we had tests and assessment centers for each of the ranks that we promoted for.

In Greenville, we changed the process just last year. People actually perform and demonstrate skills through a practical assessment center. They're demonstrating administrative skills

and operational skills before a group of outside assessors.

Wexler: When you bring in outside assessors, how do you know they will understand the culture and the values that you're trying to instill in your organization?

Chief Miller: You explain to the outside assessors exactly what you're doing, how you want them to evaluate candidates, and what the criteria for evaluation are. And any bias is tempered because you have multiple people who are reviewing, and if they get too far askew from one another, you have to resolve those conflicts, and it's all built into your testing process.

Los Angeles Assistant Chief Jorge Villegas:

I Would Prefer More Emphasis in Testing On Leadership and Policy, Not Procedures

In Los Angeles, once you pass the written test, which is pass/fail at 70%, you're qualified to interview for the rank of sergeant, and you get placed on a promotional list.

To answer your question, "Do we get the types of candidates we want?"—I say yes and no. Sometimes the testing process identifies individuals who are sharp and smart, but it doesn't identify people who have the experience that we need.

If I could change something, I'd have more management-oriented, leadership-oriented, and supervisory-oriented books in our reading list, and I'd try to test to policy but not procedures,

Chicago Deputy Chief
George Devereux



because you can learn procedures later. Policy is important, and so are leadership and managerial skills, because you need to know them as you assume the role of a supervisor.

How Frequently Are Tests Offered?

Another critical issue is how frequently and regularly agencies offer promotional exams. While there is no established standard for when promotional exams for sergeants are offered, in general officials at the *Critical Issues* meeting said that every 3-4 years was an appropriate time frame. The Los Angeles Police Department offers test for sergeants every two years. Meeting participants stressed that holding the exams on a regular, predictable schedule was important in helping both the agency and individual candidates better prepare for the process.

Offering promotional exams less frequently can have two major negative impacts on police agencies. First, if promotional lists are left open for too long, they can become stale. As a result, agencies may end up sacrificing quality if they continue to promote deeper into the list of candidates.

Second, failing to offer promotional exams on a regular, frequent basis can be discouraging for the individual candidates who are seeking promotion. This is especially true for those officers who, because of minimum time-in-grade requirements, just miss the cut-off for taking the sergeants exam. Knowing that they may need to wait several more years to take the next exam—and even more time to actually be promoted—may lead some highly qualified candidates to alter their career plans or leave the agency altogether for a department that offers better, more predictable promotional opportunities.

Chicago Deputy Chief George Devereux:

We Have Older Sergeants Because We Can't Do Sergeants' Exams Often Enough

Wexler: George, many people don't know that the Chicago Police Department is one of the best-educated departments in the country, because you have a tuition reimbursement program. You have officers with undergraduate degrees, master's degrees, law degrees, Ph.Ds.

However, on the other hand, you also have a tough challenge in Chicago, because in years past, the police department was able to offer a sergeants' exam only about once every 10 years. How do you deal with that?

Chief Devareux: It is a challenge. We've tried to cut that significantly, to get it down to five years, but even at five years, if you miss a promotional exam, you can have 10 or 12 years as an officer before you get an opportunity to be promoted. That is a challenge. We've also seen our promotional exams get tied up in court, so that can delay them a couple years.

The result is that we're getting older people applying for promotions, who sometimes don't have the same level of enthusiasm as younger officers. We need sergeants who will be fully engaged and enthusiastic, and we'd like to get some of those younger officers.

Flexibility in the Selection Process

In addition to exploring the various testing processes, the *Critical Issues* meeting also looked at the different ways that agencies go about selecting those who will be promoted.

While it is standard practice in most agencies to develop a “rank order” list of officers eligible for promotion to sergeant, not every agency actually promotes in strict rank order. Some agencies have the flexibility to choose the next candidate for promotion from among the top three or five individuals on the rank-order list. Others, such as Prince William County, VA, consider all candidates who have passed the exam to be equal. Department leaders then choose new sergeants from among an alphabetical list of eligible individuals.

The Chicago Police Department has inserted even greater flexibility into its selection process. The department reserves a set percentage of its promotions—typically about one-third—for so-called “merit promotions.” These are individuals who have successfully completed the initial phases of the promotional process and who are recommended by a command staff member for a merit promotion, based not just on their examination results but also on their work history and character.

First Deputy Superintendent Anthony Riccio, Chicago Police Department:

*Merit Selection Has Provided
Some of our Finest Supervisors*

Wexler: Superintendent Riccio, in Chicago you have merit appointments. Tell us how that works, and is it helping you get the kind of candidates who meet today’s needs?

Deputy Superintendent Riccio: One of the things we had to be careful about with the whole merit process, and it’s still relatively new, was to avoid the perception that you’re picking your buddy, or you’re getting a call from a politician. So our testing procedure has several parts, starting with a

written exam, which most of the candidates pass. It’s around 80 percent, sometimes even higher.

The second phase is an in-basket type of exercise. That phase results in a list, with the candidates ranked numerically. Anyone who has gone through phase one and phase two is eligible for a merit promotion. The way our merit promotion system works is that all Exempt employees in the department¹³ are allowed to submit recommendations of people within their command. The merit process involves a rather detailed application, a resume, and a merit board that conducts an oral interview of all these candidates.

Like many departments, we were finding that we were promoting people who were good at taking tests, but who were not necessarily going to excel at the position. But we’ve been getting nearly a third of our promotions from this merit process, and they are some of the finest supervisors we have.

13. “Exempt” employees are the higher-ranking, command-level employees who are salaried and are exempt from overtime pay requirements. In Chicago, commanders and above, and their civilian equivalents make up the Exempt ranks.

What Makes a Good Reading List For a Sergeants' Promotional Exam?

Almost all promotional exams include a list of reading materials that candidates are expected to study and be tested on as part of the process.

Traditionally, the reading lists for sergeants' exams have been task-oriented, focusing on documents such as department directives, policy and procedure manuals, and state and local laws. In some cases, civil service rules and union contracts limit the materials that can be included on promotional exam reading lists to these types of documents.

In recent years, however, many agencies have begun to expand their required reading lists to include management and leadership texts from the business world, government, academia, the media and other disciplines.

Following are examples of some of the readings selected by police agencies:

Richmond, CA Police Department

- Police policies, personnel rules, case law guidebook, relevant MOUs (e.g., with the Police Officers Association)
- *Guiding Principles on Use of Force*, Police Executive Research Forum
- *Success with the Media: Everything You Need to Survive Reporters and Your Organization*, by Leonard Adam Sipes Jr. and Donna Ledbetter
- *Toward a Profession of Police Leadership*, by Edward A. Flynn and Victoria Herrington, New Perspectives in Policing Series, Harvard Kennedy School and National Institute of Justice
- *Racial Reconciliation, Truth-Telling, and Police Legitimacy*, by Zoe Mentel, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, DOJ
- *Walking with the Devil: The Police Code of Silence – What Bad Cops Don't Want You to Know and Good Cops Won't Tell You*, by Michael W. Quinn

Seattle Police Department

- *Legitimacy and Procedural Justice: A New Element of Police Leadership*, Police Executive Research Forum
- *COMPSTAT: Its Origins, Evolution, and Future in Law Enforcement Agencies*, Bureau of Justice Assistance and Police Executive Research Forum
- *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, by John C. Maxwell
- *The New One Minute Manager*, by Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson
- Seattle Police Officers Guild Contract

Baltimore County, MD Police Department

- Maryland Criminal Digest
- Baltimore County Police Department Administrative Manual, Field Manual
- Baltimore County Sexual Harassment Handbook
- *The Respect Effect: Using the Science of Neuroleadership to Inspire a More Loyal and Productive Workplace*, by Paul Meshanko
- *Management and Supervision of Law Enforcement Personnel*, by Donald Schroeder, Frank Lombardo and Jerry Strollo
- *Criminal Procedure for the Criminal Justice Professional*, by John N. Ferdico, Henry F. Fradella and Christopher D. Totten

Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Department

- *Building Trust in a Diverse Nation*, by Caitlin Gokey and Susan Shah (Police Perspectives Guidebook Series: Vera Institute of Justice)
- *The First-Time Manager*, by Loren Belker, Jim McCormick, and Gary S. Topchick
- *Briefs of Leading Cases in Law Enforcement*, by Rolando V. del Carmen and Jeffery T. Walker
- *Law Enforcement Interpersonal Communication and Conflict Management: The IMPACT Model*, by Brian D. Fitch

Metropolitan Nashville Police Department

- *Advice from Police Chiefs and Community Leaders on Building Trust*, Police Executive Research Forum
- *Constitutional Policing as a Cornerstone of Community Policing*, Police Executive Research Forum
- “Good to Great” Policing: Application of Business Management Principles in the Public Sector, COPS Office and Police Executive Research Forum
- *Stop and Frisk – Balancing Crime Control with Community Relations*, COPS Office and the Urban Institute

Boston Police Department

- *Community Policing: A Contemporary Perspective*, by Victor E. Kappeler and Larry K. Gaines
- *Criminal Investigation*, by Charles Swanson, Neil Chamelin, Leonard Territo and Robert W. Taylor
- *Police Administration: Structures, Processes, and Behaviors*, by Charles Swanson, Leonard Territo and Robert W. Taylor
- *Supervision of Police Personnel*, by Nathan F. Iannone, Marvin D. Iannone and Jeff Bernstein

Denver Police Department

- *Leadership, Ethics, and Policing: Challenges for the 21st Century*, by P.J. Ortmeier and Edwin Meese III
- *Supervising Police Personnel: Strengths-Based Leadership*, by Paul M. Whisenand and E. Doug McCain

Tucson Police Department

- Police Department and city directives
- *Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing*
- *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don’t*, by Jim Collins
- *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, by Malcolm Gladwell
- *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Change*, by Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky
- *Hug Your Haters: How to Embrace Complaints and Keep Your Customers*, by Jay Baer

Tucson, AZ Assistant Chief Kevin Hall:

We Are Pushing Our New Sergeants To Be Better than the Previous Generation

Wexler: Kevin, you have made some changes in Tucson.

Chief Hall: Yes, we are sort of confined by civil service with respect to testing. But we added a reading list, including some books for the candidates to read, as opposed to just straight procedure.

Wexler: If you must have a written test, at least you can change what’s on the test?

Chief Hall: Exactly.

Wexler: Who picked these books, and why did you pick them?

Chief Hall: It was a collaboration between our executive leadership and some folks at our academy. We went

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Tucson, AZ Assistant Chief Kevin Hall

through a lot of the good books that we liked. *Leadership on the Line* is something that our chief felt very strongly about. He met the authors, and asked all of his executive leadership team to read it. We got a lot out of it and decided to pass it on to the rest of the department through these promotion processes.

These books are all a part of the entire process. There may not be material from *all* the books on the written exam for sergeants, but there will be material from one of the books. One of the books will be discussed in the assessment center, and then in the chief's oral board there will be questions related to at least one.

Wexler: How is this working out for you?

Chief Hall: Well, you always have to be careful about confirmation bias, but right now, anecdotally, this is our first process where we really changed some things around, and we're extremely happy. Our first crop of new sergeants are exceptional performers, in terms of our expectations of engaging the community and other criteria.

It's easy for sergeants to identify officers who are poor performers, and it's easy for them to identify high performers. It's not so easy to identify and address mediocre

performers. But these new sergeants are addressing the mediocre performers, and they're pushing and challenging them to become high performers.

Charles County, MD Sheriff's Office— Proposed New Reading List

- Mandatory
 - *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, by Stephen R. Covey
- Optional (pick 3)
 - *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World*, by General Stanley McChrystal
 - *The Mentor Leader*, by Tony Dungy
 - *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't*, by Simon Sinek
 - *Lincoln on Leadership: Executive Strategies for Tough Times*, by Donald T. Phillips
 - *The Turnaround: How America's Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic*, by William Bratton with Peter Knobler
 - *Effective Police Leadership: Moving Beyond Management*, by Thomas E. Baker

Lieutenant Jason Stoddard, Charles County, MD Sheriff's Dept.:

*We Aim to Develop Lifelong Learners
With Strong Critical Thinking Skills*

Wexler: Lieutenant Stoddard, your department has an interesting reading list. Who picked these books, and what were your goals?

Lieutenant Stoddard: We came up with a test based on the reading list, and applicants have to pass that test just to become eligible to compete in the promotional process.

Our plan recognizes that leadership is something that is learned over a period of time, and it can be learned through trial-and-error and through experience. We started with the



Lieutenant Jason Stoddard, Charles County, MD Sheriff's Dept.

reading list for those who want to be promoted from corporal to sergeant. They all have to read *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and then they can select additional books from a longer list. And they can take tests on the books during the 24 months in between the testing cycles. They have to pass the test at an 80-percent level.

The idea was to create lifelong learners. There are many studies out there that tell us the average CEO in the United States reads about 60 books a year. I'd argue that most people have trouble reading one book a month. So our reading list is about encouraging our supervisors and aspiring leaders to read as much as they can. That's why you see a broad mix of books there, from sports books to military books to history books, that all teach basically similar concepts.

Wexler: Do you think that a different kind of person will undertake the promotions process?

Lieutenant Stoddard: The theory at this point is the cream will rise to the top. Individuals who want to be promoted, and want to be promoted for the right reasons, will do what they need to do. We're trying to raise and build leaders inside our profession to face the complex challenges that we've never faced before. We're trying to develop critical thinking skills, rather than checking items off a checklist.

**Sergeant Jennifer Hall,
Melbourne, FL Police Department**

*Our Reading List Pertains to Issues
We Are Dealing With*

Our officers should absolutely be reading leadership and team-building books like *The 360 Degree Leader*, *Leaders Eat Last*, and *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* to engage their sense of leading through respect and cooperation, and to build their skills as people, not just police supervisors.

We consistently ask our officers to prepare for promotional processes by reading books pertaining to specific issues within our agency. *Inattentional Blindness* by Margaret Heffernan was the book our last promotional group was asked to read. It was an attempt to improve judgment and decision-making behaviors displayed by our supervisors, particularly those directed at subordinates.

Summary: Testing and Selection of New First-Line Supervisors

In today's police organizations, first-line supervisors have an increasingly important and complex job. To meet those demands, agencies must strive to identify and promote the most talented and effective officers to first-line supervisory positions. Today's supervisors need the skills to handle the job as it currently exists, as well as a talent for recognizing and adapting to changes in the future that will impact police agencies.

Unfortunately, participants at PERF's conference identified a number of impediments to effective promotions systems:

- In some cities, the processes for selecting new sergeants have seen little or no change in decades, and do not reflect the increasing complexity of the job.
 - Some agencies rely entirely on a written test to select candidates for sergeant, which may only test the candidates' short-term memorization skills.
 - In many locations, strict civil service rules or collective bargaining agreements severely limit police chiefs' flexibility to test and promote candidates with the skills and aptitudes needed to be an effective first-line supervisor.
 - Some cities do not offer opportunities to apply for first-line supervision positions often enough. Potential candidates may become discouraged when they have to wait years to even apply for a promotion.
 - Only a few of the agencies interviewed by PERF have a formal process for factoring past job performance into the decision to promote officers to sergeants.
- However, in jurisdictions that allow it, police agencies are demonstrating creativity as they seek to identify candidates who will become excellent first-line supervisors:**
- Many agencies use combinations of written exams, oral exams, and assessment centers to obtain a broader view of each candidate's skills and attributes.
 - Some agencies provide candidates with reading lists to help prepare for the promotions examinations. The reading list may include texts of state and local laws and police agency policies on key issues, as well as other documents such as the department's mission statement or strategic plan.
 - Some agencies also include a number of books on leadership and other topics that candidates should read prior to the testing process. The candidates are then asked questions about one or more of the books, in order to test their reading skills, critical thinking capabilities, and ability to form a "big picture" view of complex issues. Many departments' reading lists do not focus on technical police procedures, but rather are about principles of leadership, organizational principles, and strategies for advancing reform agendas.
 - The Greenville, SC Police Department recently instituted a "Professional History Portfolio," which enables an employee to address, in writing, their performance and achievements along three categories of behavior. The portfolio is intended to provide a more robust picture of a promotional candidate's work history, personal integrity, and impact on the organization.
 - The Chicago Police Department has a merit selection program that includes a multi-part application system, including oral interviews and an assessment exercise.

Training for First-Line Supervisors

“Police devote a lot of training resources to developing senior leaders, but there is much less attention to training first-line supervisors. Until police departments make a more significant investment in training sergeants, I think we’re going to see gaps in performance, because they just haven’t been given help in developing the leadership component. We promote technicians, put them out in the field, and expect them to lead, without having given them training on how to be a leader.”

— **Dr. Patrina Clark,**
Human Resources Executive

LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS DON’T ALWAYS have control over the process for testing and selecting first-line supervisors, especially in agencies with strong civil service rules. But police chiefs and sheriffs generally do have control over the training that new supervisors can receive. Many states mandate basic training for new sergeants, although the amount of required training varies from state to state. Most police agencies can go beyond state training requirements and provide additional training that is specific to priorities, policies, and mission of the particular agency.

For example, one area that is especially important in first-line supervisor training is management of high-risk or high-profile situations, such as incidents that may end with a use of force, vehicle or foot pursuits, encounters captured on officers’ body-worn cameras or community members’ cellphone cameras, active shooter incidents, and other dangerous, complex, or sensitive situations. Increasingly, police chiefs and sheriffs are placing tremendous responsibility on sergeants to handle these incidents.

Frisco, TX Chief John Bruce:

In-House Supervisors’ Training Program Augments State-Mandated Training

Wexler: Chief Bruce, you run a department in a city of 175,000 people. Are new supervisors in Frisco getting the training they need from the state system?

Chief Bruce: No, not from the state. The Texas state requirement for a new supervisor is just a 24-hour school, and it really just covers some human resources material. It’s no-nonsense stuff

Dr. Patrina Clark, Pivotal Practices Consulting (RIGHT) and Frisco, TX Chief John Bruce (FAR RIGHT)



that they ought to know, but it's not going to help them out in handling difficult incidents.

So we created an in-house supervisors' training program. And it's not only for people who are getting promoted, but also people we think have the potential to go through the promotional process next year. So they're learning what our expectations are.

We have to set our goals from the top, and every time we talk to our people, we're setting and reinforcing those expectations.

Oakland, CA Sergeant Bryan Hubbard:

We Combine Officer Training and Supervisor Training, So We Can Have Team-Based Scenario Training

It's the same in California as in Texas. Our state gives the 50,000-foot view of leadership, ethics, and vicarious liability, but we created a 40-hour class that's more Oakland-specific.

We get into the details of team-based training, how to manage a scene, and other things that supervisors need to know.

Wexler: How exactly do you do create your own training?

Sergeant Hubbard: We actually learn from what's going on in other departments. We read everything that PERF puts out, and we see your daily digest of news stories, and we watch those videos of incidents in other cities, and we recreate those scenarios for our people.

Another big change we have made is that we used to have officers go to their specific training, and supervisors went to their specific training. Now we merge those two together, so we really have team-based training when we reenact the scenarios.

Training for First-Line Supervisors in the Oakland Police Department

New sergeants in Oakland, CA, like those in other California cities, must complete a state-mandated 80-hour Supervisory Course¹⁴ developed by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). The course covers 19 topics areas, including communications, conflict management, decision-making models, leadership styles and behaviors, employee performance, and values.

However, many sergeants are not able to attend the POST training until weeks or months after they have been promoted. The state requires that the course be completed within 12 months of promotion.

The Oakland Police Department provides a 40-hour Sergeant Transition Course that focuses on Oakland-specific policies and procedures on a variety of topics, including use of force, data collection on stops, investigations, and peer support.

In addition, every 18 months after promotion, sergeants in the Oakland Police Department must attend 40 hours of Continual Police Training, which typically covers firearms and use-of-force options, electronic control weapons recertification, and updates on key issues such as crowd management, internal affairs, police pursuits, and new legislation.

To expand upon its 40-hour Transition Course, Oakland is developing a more in-depth transition program to ensure that newly promoted sergeants are more thoroughly introduced to their roles and responsibilities. This proposed course will focus on areas such as managing critical incidents and counseling and mentoring subordinates. It will be supplemented by a field-based training program in which newly promoted sergeants will work alongside an experienced sergeant for at least four weeks.

14. California POST, Supervisory Course. <https://post.ca.gov/Supervisory-Course>

Portland, OR Chief Danielle Outlaw:

As a New Chief, I See an Opportunity To Shape Our Training to What We Need

It's interesting to learn that Portland is not alone in having issues with providing the training and getting people ready to be promoted, and I'm taking away a lot of ideas about how to do better with that. Atlanta has a leadership development institute¹⁵ that provides training at different levels. I'm interested in learning more about programs like that, and about how larger agencies incorporate training in their scheduling, because the biggest challenge is how to pull people off the street in order to conduct training.

Second, there's an opportunity for us to work together and come up with a model of some sort. And third, everything that we are talking about today emphasizes the importance of training supervisors to implement the values of the organization. A lot of us don't have control over the testing process for promotions, but we can incorporate our values into what we're assessing for.

Wexler: You're the new chief in Portland, and you have your priorities to put forward your vision of what the department should be. How do you, as a new chief, have an impact on your next round of new supervisors?

Chief Outlaw: One of the first things that I realized when I got to Portland is that everyone, across classifications, attends the same in-service training. That is different from what we did in Oakland, where there's in-service training for sergeants, and there's separate in-service for lieutenants and commanders or above.

So I said, "I need my supervisors to learn how to supervise. I need my lieutenants and

above to learn how to lead. I need everyone to learn what's relevant to what they're doing, day in and day out."

There's a huge opportunity there, because I can shape the training and implement a program that is in line with my vision.

Use of Outside Trainers

Some agencies have looked to outside entities for first-line supervisor training beyond their state requirements.

For example, at the Amtrak Police Department, sergeants must attend an approved 40-hour FBI-Law Enforcement Executive Development Association (LEEDA) course upon promotion.¹⁶ They are also required to complete a six-week Sergeant's Field Training program. After a year, sergeants are eligible to receive additional training from the IACP Leadership in Police Organizations program (LPO).¹⁷ After three years, sergeants are eligible to attend the advanced LPO Course.

In the Dallas Independent School District Police Department, sergeants are required to attend a one-month supervisor course provided by the Institute for Law Enforcement Administration (ILEA), covering leadership, ethics, and other topics.¹⁸

When You Provide Training Is Key

One concern PERF heard from many agencies is that there is no standard process for providing training to newly promoted sergeants. Often, training for new sergeants is not available immediately. In many cases, newly promoted sergeants serve in the position for months before they receive extensive formal training to be a supervisor (although they are often paired with an experienced sergeant for field training). In other agencies, new sergeants receive

15. The Atlanta Police Leadership Institute was established by the Atlanta Police Foundation in partnership with Georgia State University. APLI offers a five-tier, leadership-focused curriculum to "develop a well-rounded understanding of Atlanta Police Department operations and prepare mid-level leaders to manage confidently and efficiently." <http://atlantapolicefoundation.org/programs/effective-leadership-initiatives/>

16. For more information on the FBI-LEEDA Supervisor Leadership Institute, visit <https://fbileeda.org/page/sli>.

17. For more information on this program, visit <http://www.theiacp.org/Leadership-in-Police-Organizations-LPO>.

18. For more information, visit <http://www.cailaw.org/institute-for-law-enforcement-administration/index.html>.

classroom instruction but there is no field training or mentoring component.

On the other hand, some agencies have adopted policies requiring officers to complete first-line supervisor training *before* being promoted, to ensure they understand and are adequately prepared for the role.

**Deputy Chief Timothy Tyler,
Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority:**

*Sergeants Should Be Prepared for the Role
Before They Put the Stripes On*

New sergeants must let go of what they were, and embrace what they are now becoming. It's a fine line, because as a supervisor, you're not "one of the guys," but you're not necessarily management either. You're in between, and you answer to two masters. And often it seems that no one is happy with what you tell them, either management or the troops.

When I look back at my time as a sergeant, no one told me what to expect when I moved up into that position. So my question is, what are we doing to prepare these young men and women for their new role? We want them to be a strong supervisor, but what have we done to prepare them for that? Once they put the stripes on, it's a little late to start training, because they're already expected to act in that role.

The training and development should happen before they put those stripes on, so that they can understand the responsibilities and obligation that come with their new job.

Deputy Chief Timothy Tyler, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

Chicago Deputy Chief George Devereux:

*Sergeants Get Six Weeks of Training
Before They Hit the Streets,
And I'd Like to Add a Mentoring Component*

Wexler: George, how many people do you promote in a year in Chicago?

Chief Devereux: Counting all the ranks, detective, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, about 300. It's higher in some years.

Wexler: Do you have your own in-service program, or do you have to go with the state?

Chief Devereux: We have our own. When we're ready to promote a class, we simply call the academy and tell them to fire up the promotional class for whatever rank it's going to be, and we let them know how many we're sending, and they prepare to train.

Chuck: How many hours is that training for first-line supervisor?

Chief Devereux: Six weeks of training in the academy. Before they hit the street for one minute, it's six weeks. They're actually not even sworn in until about the fifth week of that. They're still in their blue uniforms as patrol officers, and then we swear them in about the fifth week. And then the last week is a new CIT [Crisis Intervention Team] component we have added. We like all the sergeants to be trained in crisis intervention.



Chuck: You probably have one of the longer in-service programs in the country, with six weeks. New York City and Los Angeles have four.

Chief Devereux: Yes, but I should add that we have zero mentoring time where they're paired up with another sergeant once they hit the district. Once they hit the district, there's no additional FTO type of training, with a new sergeant pairing up with an experienced sergeant. That's something we're looking at now, because I think it's really worthwhile.

Montgomery County, MD Lieutenant Marc Erme:

We Have Our Own First-Line Supervisor Training, And We Train Candidates Before They Are Promoted

In Montgomery County, we were running into the same problems where supervisors were being promoted and going out on the road without formal training. They would do five weeks of mentoring with a senior sergeant, but as in other agencies, it could be six or seven months before they could go through the state-mandated supervisor school.

We were able to get over that hurdle a few years ago by getting the state to allow us to host our own first-line supervisor school at our Police Academy. It's a two-week program.

We go to Personnel, and they give us a list of candidates. Under our union contract, they can't tell us what order they're in, but they can

give us the names of, say, the next 20 who are on the list, and we'll put them through the first-line supervisor school, because the list is good for two years.

And then, while they're waiting to be promoted, we encourage them to use that time to proactively assist their supervisor, and get an informal mentoring. We have found that to be helpful, because while they're waiting for a promotion, they're learning, they're assisting their supervisors informally, and they've gone through the first-line supervisor school, so they're ready to go when they get promoted.

NYPD Chief of Patrol Rodney Harrison:

After Classroom and Field Training, New Sergeants Evaluate Their Experiences and Learn from One Another

Wexler: In New York, how many weeks is your training for new sergeants?

Chief Harrison: It's four weeks: two weeks of in-house training at the Academy, then they go to their assigned precinct for a week to work with their field training sergeant, and then they go back to the Academy to evaluate their experiences in the field. They tell their stories and learn from other people's experiences.

It's a good way of taking a situation and sharing it with your peers, and you may find a mechanism of how you could have resolved a situation a little bit better.



Montgomery County, MD
Lieutenant Marc Erme

Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC Major Lisa Goelz:

We Created a Sergeant's Career Path Program To Upgrade Our Promotional Process and Training

Over the last two years, we have implemented a sergeant's career path program. It's four eight-hour classes, and it includes discussion of tactical decision-making and mentoring. Within the first 12 months of becoming a supervisor, they must complete all four classes. Before our next promotional process, we want to change the requirements so they will complete the four classes *before* they participate in the promotional process.

Once candidates are promoted, there's a one-week, 40-hour training in the academy on operational issues, human resources, and legal issues. Then we turn them over to the five training sergeants in the department for about two weeks, to get the hands-on, field training supervision. Right now, that's somewhat informal, but we're trying to put together a curriculum so we can formalize it and continually improve it.



Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC Police Major Lisa Goelz

New Approaches to Field Training For Sergeants

Participants at the *Critical Issues* meeting stressed the importance of hands-on field training and mentoring programs for new sergeants. Many of the sergeants, in particular, said that these programs were valuable experiences that helped prepare them for the new role. While field training for sergeants typically comes after they have completed their classroom instruction, some agencies have adopted field training programs to help officers prepare for the role of sergeant *before* they complete formal training.

Roanoke County, VA Chief Howard Hall:

In Mid-Sized Agencies, Training for First-Line Supervisors Can Be Scarce, But We Get Some Benefit from Field Training

Wexler: Howard, when we asked for a show of hands, we found that most departments in the room here today promote people to sergeant and *then* give them training. And in some agencies, it takes many months before they can get the training. Is that any way to do things?

Chief Hall: We have that problem. We're a mid-size agency, with 142 officers, so we're not big enough to do our own in-house supervisor training.

To mitigate that somewhat, we developed a field training program for new sergeants. So even if they haven't gotten the formal training yet, at least they're spending a couple weeks with a senior sergeant, working through a checklist of things that a sergeant may need to do right away.

Some of this is about management—making a schedule, assigning officers to districts, handling personnel matters. And some of it is about issues like use-of-force policy and critical incidents.

It isn't perfect, but we think this has been helpful in giving new sergeants some on-the-job training to help them, pending their formal supervisor training.



Roanoke County, VA Chief
Howard Hall

Wexler: Does the state provide certified training?

Chief Hall: There's no requirement in Virginia for mandated supervisor training, so we look for the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police to provide training from time to time, or maybe IACP or other training vendors. We end up sending our new sergeants to different training programs, which to me is a little problematic, because it's not consistent.

Wexler: But if you're trying to make changes in an organization, does it make sense to have a system where the newly promoted sergeants learn how to do the job from veteran sergeants?

Chief Hall: Well, we're trying to use sergeants who have demonstrated good performance as mentors and role models, so I'm comfortable with that. Honestly, I'm blessed with the sergeants that we have. In fact, one of the hardest decisions I have is who to promote, because I've got more than enough qualified applicants, and sometimes I'm disappointing people who don't deserve to be disappointed.

So I don't think we have had any problem finding good sergeants to provide that mentoring. But I have a concern about consistency when we're using different vendors for the first-line supervisor training. I think the bigger departments have an advantage on the training side, because they can do their own training.

Richmond, CA Sergeant Timothy Gard:

Our New Field Training for Sergeants Benefits the Trainee and Trainer

Over the last two years, we have transitioned to a 30-day FTO program for new sergeants. Certain sergeants were selected to train the new sergeants.

We have a manual that covers leadership, mentoring, officer wellness, and peer support. It also addresses critical incident response. We use it as a training tool, and new sergeants can also use it as a kind of checklist. After an incident is over and the sergeant is getting back in his car, he can check and make sure, "Did I do everything I was supposed to do?"

An FTO sergeant is with a new sergeant for the first two weeks. As an FTO sergeant, every day I'm talking to the new sergeant; we're going to calls; we're seeing officers after use of force; we're taking citizen complaints together in the lobby. Out in the field we're constantly evaluating, we're having conversations about "What did you think was good about what just happened? What did you think was bad?"

This is not only beneficial for the new sergeant, it's also beneficial for me. Even though I've been doing it longer and I'm "teaching" the new sergeant, I'm learning from his or her perspectives and experiences as well. So it has become a very beneficial system.

Houston Assistant Chief Sheryl Victorian:

Sergeant Candidates Get 40 Hours Orientation, Then 5 Weeks of Field Training

All Houston Police Department sergeant candidates participate in a 40-hour sergeant's orientation prior to their promotion date. After that, new sergeants participate in a five-week Sergeant's Field Training Program, where they are trained for four weeks on various shifts, and evaluated for one week.



Houston Assistant Chief Sheryl Victorian (FAR LEFT) and St. Mary's County, MD Sheriff Timothy Cameron (LEFT)

St. Mary's County, MD Sheriff Timothy Cameron:

We Have a Combination of State Training And Our Own Training and Mentoring Program

Our training and mentoring program is supported by policy, but we are agile with it. Newly promoted sergeants in our agency spend 10 days in our Office of Professional Responsibilities, so they understand the need for them to act as a trainer of their officers, how to document the training, and how to handle minor disciplinary cases or administrative investigations. The new sergeant then spends 10 days assigned to a sergeant who's a field training officer or a mentor. They then attend the 42-hour first-line administrator's course mandated by the state.

The Importance of Scenario-Based Training

Getting a sergeant to the scene of potentially difficult calls is important. Ensuring that the sergeant knows how to manage the situation effectively is also necessary.

PERF has identified a number of specific roles and responsibilities of sergeants in potential use-of-force situations, including critical decision-making skills, generally aiming to “slow things down” when possible, managing resources on the scene, having

a “plan B” (for example, when an electronic control weapon fails to incapacitate a subject), and establishing a “duty to intervene” when an officer sees another officer who is about to use excessive or unnecessary force or is engaging in other misconduct. All personnel, and especially sergeants, should be trained in these skills.

Participants at PERF's conference discussed the importance of scenario-based training in preparing sergeants to respond to high-risk incidents.

Metropolitan Nashville Captain Keith Stephens:

Reality-Based Scenario Training Helps Our Supervisors Handle Situations

Reality-based training, I think everybody here would agree, is the best training you can give to officers. In Nashville, we've implemented ICAT,¹⁹ so our new trainees are receiving that. That has also been implemented in our new 40-hour school for supervisors. They have received modules of ICAT on slowing a situation down.

Our new trainees are put through our five-and-a-half-month academy with multiple scenarios, including suicide situations. And if we notice someone give a response that isn't good or isn't right, we stop them there and teach them how to think through it. We also have supervisors who monitor the

19. PERF's “Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics” training program provides first responding police officers with tools, skills, and options to safely defuse a range of critical incidents. <http://www.policeforum.org/icat-training-guide>

Metropolitan Nashville
Captain Keith Stephens



training, who make sure that we're doing it the way we should.

We've also taken another step and brought in other divisions like domestic violence, who are also trained in ICAT, and we put the trainees through domestic violence scenarios. We believe the Critical Decision-Making Model²⁰ can be used for various situations that they encounter.

San Diego Sergeant Cory Mapston:

*We Train Sergeants to Handle
Difficult, Tense Situations*

Wexler: Sergeant, let's talk about what happens when sergeants have to assert themselves in a way that may be difficult. For example, a sergeant arrives at a scene after a vehicle pursuit just happened, probably one of the most volatile situations, and the sergeant has to step in and calm things down. Can you train that skill?

Sergeant Mapston: You can absolutely train that skill. And as with any skill, you start with small skills first, and you do role-playing and lots of it.

Every San Diego police officer in the academy and onward gets annual training for crisis response, and that includes physical struggles and tactics for handling incidents with mentally ill persons. It also includes a scenario where you pull a police officer who's overreacting in the field out of the scene.

Wexler: What about a scene, for example, where a sergeant arrives and finds five officers with their guns drawn on a mentally ill person with a knife? Somehow the sergeant has to get control of that scene.

Sergeant Mapston: We are trained for that. It's a key point to training all of our sergeant

candidates—how to manage that team, organize the officers at the scene into a team, use your non-lethal tools, and give more space to a person if it's possible. We provide that training to every police officer, and when you become a sergeant or take other leadership roles, you get more instruction on how to do that, with role players who don't do what you want them to do, so the sergeant has to learn how to manage officers' actions.

Seattle Lieutenant Shanon Anderson:

*We Train Officers and Sergeants Together
To Ensure that Someone Will Be the Team Leader*

Wexler: Lieutenant, what does training look like for new sergeants to handle high-risk situations?

Lieutenant Anderson: We start this early on in an officer's training. All of our officers go through mandatory training, and we've been training our officers and our sergeants together. When we do reality-based training, we ask our sergeants to take on the role that they would during the incident, if that role is applicable to the scenario. They take on the team leader role, and they're getting practice and repetition, demonstrating in training what they would do out in the field.

We also ask our officers when they're on a scene to look around and see what job needs to be fulfilled. And if officers are on scene and

20. ICAT Module 2: The Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM). <http://www.policeforum.org/icat-module-2>

a sergeant hasn't arrived yet, the role of a team leader needs to be fulfilled. So an officer will look around and say, "It looks like I'm the one who needs to step in and take charge," until a sergeant is able to arrive and take command.

Miami Beach, FL Sergeant Timothy Roll:

Teach New Sergeants How to Maintain Calm And Inspire Confidence in a Crisis

I'm sure we've all seen times when a new supervisor shows up at a scene and it actually seems to make things worse, not better. I think that often, new sergeants don't make good decisions because they're not confident. One thing we need to instill in sergeants is that they should try to be that rock who shows up in any chaotic situation, and everyone thinks, "Okay, the Sarge is here. Everything is going to be all right."

It's important to reassure your people, even if on the inside you may be thinking, "Oh God, I have this to deal with, I have that and the other thing...."

Just say, "Hey, we got this. Officer X, you go over there and take care of this, and Officer Y, you do this other thing," and maintain your calm. And if you make a mistake at some point, don't be afraid to admit it. Just say, "Hey, that didn't work out, but we're going to go back and do something else now to fix it." Make sure you let everybody know that everything is going to be taken care of, and reassure everyone in a chaotic situation that everything is going to be all right.

Herndon, VA Chief Maggie DeBoard:

Training Can Be Powerful When Officers Tell Their Stories About What Can Go Wrong

Many years ago, when I was with a previous agency, we had an officer who was shot in the line of duty. He worked under my command at one of the district stations. Fortunately, the shooting was not fatal. One of the most powerful things that we were able to do from that situation was use it as a teachable moment. There were many mistakes made on that scene from a tactical standpoint. There were a lot of relationships on that squad, with some very senior police officers. The personal relationships and tunnel vision interfered with making good decisions on the scene despite their best efforts at resolving it peacefully.

The officer who was shot agreed to be a part of an eight-hour class that we put together on tactical decision-making. Over a two-month period, we taught every first-line supervisor in the department about how to make tactical decisions. And the most powerful part was the last two hours, when the officer spoke about the experience and how his tunnel vision had interfered with the response. It is not very common for officers to speak about their own experiences like this, because it's very difficult to do. But it left such an impact with everybody in the room.

So if you can use these types of situations where officers or supervisors are willing to talk about the things that they did, the mistakes they made, and how they came to those decisions, it truly helps others to avoid being in those positions in the future.



Miami Beach, FL Sergeant Timothy Roll (RIGHT) and Herndon, VA Chief Maggie DeBoard (FAR RIGHT)



Camden County, NJ Lieutenant Kevin Lutz (FAR LEFT) and Fayetteville, NC Major James Nolette (LEFT)

Camden County, NJ Lieutenant Kevin Lutz:

Critical Decision-Making Is at the Heart Of Training and Changes in Police Culture

I think the content of police training is important, and it's equally important for the chief of police to choose trainers who will deliver the message of change over time. Changes in training have to be sustained to truly create the cultural shift that you're looking for.

Beyond that, with our use-of-force training and de-escalation training, we focus everything on the Critical Decision-Making Model.²¹ If you break the CDM down to its core, it's about morals, values, ethics, and ensuring that officers are properly centered and focused on what's important.

So as officers are responding to a call, they need to be thinking about what they're going to encounter, why they are being called to the scene, and thinking through the CDM process, in order to make good decisions about what they're trying to accomplish, and what's the best plan to achieve it. The chief has to provide the sergeants with extensive training to ensure that they're shaping the desired outcomes that the agency is looking for.

Fayetteville, NC Major James Nolette:

We Cut Our Use of Force by 75% By Training Our Officers to Take Charge

Earlier we were talking about whether it's expected that a supervisor will go in and handle high-risk calls. In Fayetteville, it's not just expected, it's demanded. And that's the only way you're going to change the culture.

Chief Harold Medlock came into our agency at a time when we needed a change agent. He demanded that we control the scenes. And it took two years, but our uses of forces are dramatically down, with a 75% reduction in use of force.

And we don't wait for a supervisor to arrive and take command of the scene. We put it on every officer to manage the scene. Somebody has to be in charge. If nobody's in charge, then the situation is going to go sideways very quickly.

We teach our people how to be in charge by incorporating it into everything. For example, we spend a day on the firing range, and then we do a scenario in which we have to give medical aid to somebody who was shot. Or we do driver's training, and then we do a scenario where we have to call ourselves off of a vehicle pursuit, or a supervisor has to call us off.

We recently heard about an incident where a sheriff's deputy was in a vehicle pursuit, and two people died because a 15-year-old ran a red light. So we will take that scenario and make sure our officers are aware of why in our department we

21. See ICAT, Module 2, Critical Decision-Making Model. <http://www.policeforum.org/icat-module-2>

don't do vehicle pursuits for minor offenses. This is a real-life scenario showing why we don't do it.

You reinforce these points of training every day, and you honor the people who do the right thing. We often celebrate the big drug arrests or the big search warrant, but now we also celebrate people who save lives by using restraint. That's how we've been successful in Fayetteville. We demand that you take charge of the scene. Whether it's three people, five people, or one, somebody has to take charge.

**Deputy Director Josh Ederheimer,
Federal Protective Service, DHS:**

*Scenario-Based Training of Officers
And Supervisors Together Is a Key*

I don't think we should rely only on first-line supervisors as a panacea for resolving every use-of-force issue. It is clear that scenario-based training that leverages informal leaders as well as first-line supervisors is important. If you can include both first-line supervisors and officers who are considered informal leaders in scenario-based use-of-force training, that's key.

It means that both the supervisor and the officer will have had practice in de-escalating situations. Importantly, when informal-leader officers arrive on the scene of a critical incident and a supervisor hasn't arrived yet, they will understand what their supervisor would want them to do, because they trained together.



Deputy Director Josh Ederheimer,
Federal Protective Service, DHS

**Special Agent in Charge Thomas Chittum,
ATF Washington Field Division:**

*We Can't Wait Until People Become Supervisors
To Start Teaching Them to Handle Difficult Incidents*

We have a two-week training course for our new supervisors. It deals with a lot of administrative material, and there are some leadership components to it. But if we wait until people become supervisors to start instilling in them the skills they need to be in charge of operational situations, it's too late. I think an important part of managing these operational issues, the crisis moments, is through our on-the-job training program, and the ongoing tactical training that our agents go through every quarter.

Yakima, WA Chief Dominic Rizzi:

*Officers Must Be Trained to Know Their Jobs,
So They Don't Have to Wait for a Sergeant to Arrive*

When I took over in Yakima in 2012, I had spent 25 years in the Chicago Police Department. And I found that when a sergeant would show up at a scene, the officers would say, "What do you want me to do, Sergeant?" And when I would show up, the sergeants would turn to me and say, "Chief, what do you want me to do?"

And I would say, "I want you to do your job." It's similar to the National Incident Management System and the Incident Command System. It's your job, and you're in charge until someone relieves you. Our job is to make sure the officers know how to run the scene until a sergeant or lieutenant arrives and takes command of it.

So let your officers become leaders by just doing their job, and not stepping in every chance you get.



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:
Special Agent in Charge Thomas Chittum, ATF Washington Field Division; Yakima, WA Chief of Police Dominic Rizzi; and Minneapolis Lieutenant Katie Blackwell



our police department to start the networking process for new sergeants and lieutenants to begin building that confidence and the ability to make decisions. It's not just scenarios on active shooter situations and critical incidents. It is also interactive scenarios and table top exercises such as attending community meetings, handling problem employees and knowing what to say. Or having citizens or news media who put cameras in their face during an incident, and how you respond to that.

Minneapolis Lieutenant Katie Blackwell:

Our New Sergeants' Training Program Is Scenario-Based and Designed to Build Confidence

Having been in the military for 20 years, I think that training in the military is successful because they don't teach you every little detail you need to know; they teach you how to be leaders, how to build your confidence, and give you the support and resources needed. So when you finish a two-week, four-week or six-week leadership program in the military, you're walking out with confidence and the ability to make decisions. And you know that you always have mentors, one rank above, who can help you.

In Minneapolis, our new program is a two-week Police Leadership Course, modeled somewhat after the military approach. It's scenario-based and teaches newly promoted leaders a "Crawl, Walk, Run" method of learning how to handle different situations.

We're also involving community and business members, the mayor, the city council, the chief's office, and multiple parts within

Training and Experiences That Prepared Officers For the Role of Sergeant

Participants at the *Critical Issues* meeting were asked to discuss the experiences that helped to prepare them for the role of sergeant, or the types of training they wish they had received to prepare for their new rank.

Many expressed interest in leadership development opportunities, training on dealing with personal problems of officers, and help with the transition from being "one of the guys" to becoming a supervisor.

Other participants cited the value of previous military experience, and time serving as a detective, corporal, or field training officer, as experiences that helped to facilitate the transition to first-line supervisor.

>> *continued on page 57*

The Tucson Police Department Provides Scenario-Based Training to Rising Sergeants

When police officers in Tucson, AZ qualify for promotion to sergeant, the Police Department sends them through a 40-hour Sergeants Academy *prior to being promoted*. This course uses various teaching methods, including PowerPoint presentations, small group discussions, hands-on activities, and scenario-based training.

Lessons in the morning, scenarios in the afternoon: Each of the four days of training begins with lessons on topics such as leadership, team building, and tactical leadership. Briefings are provided by various Tucson Police Department units, including the Public Information Office and the Office of Professional Standards. The latter part of each day is spent on scenario-based training, in which the officers practice the skills that they learned that morning. As the week goes on, the scenarios become slightly more complicated, incorporating additional elements.

The scenarios span various types of situations that the officers may face as sergeants. These include:

- A man threatening to commit suicide with a knife, with two family members present;
- A hit-and-run traffic incident with a fleeing suspect;
- A suspected bomb in a car near an occupied office building;
- An unruly patron at a bar, refusing to leave;
- A roll call/briefing presentation to officers;
- Use of physical force by an officer in a bar;
- A community meeting; and
- An officer-involved shooting.

Evaluators provide feedback on officers' performance in each scenario: At any given time, multiple scenarios are being run in different locations, so officers can rotate

through multiple scenarios in different training stations. Only one officer participates in a single scenario at a time. Two to three evaluators are present at each station, watching the officers perform their duties in the scenario. The evaluators are sergeants and lieutenants from the Tucson Police Department, who have been specially trained to observe and critique officers' words and actions in the scenarios.

At the end of each scenario, the evaluators hold a debriefing with the officer, discussing aspects of the officer's performance that went well, as well as areas for improvement. Officers are asked to offer their views on how the scenario went, allowing for self-reflection.

News media scenario: Officers also participate in a news media scenario, in which they practice speaking to reporters in front of a camera. In this scenario, officers are quickly briefed on a mock scene. Each officer is given roughly 10 minutes to prepare. Once the officer is ready, police public information officers take the role of a news crew, interviewing the officer as if he or she is the sergeant in charge of the situation.

At the conclusion of the interview, the PIOs conduct a debriefing. The interviews are video-recorded, and the footage, with additional comments, is sent to the officers a few weeks later to allow them to review their performance.

Experienced officers and community members take roles in scenarios: A critical component of the training is the role players who participate in each scenario. Tucson police officers play uniformed officers, which adds to the realism of the scenes.

Additionally, the Police Department has built a relationship with local community members and created a pool of volunteer civilian role-players. More than 150 community members expressed interest when the agency originally asked for volunteers, and roughly

Roanoke County, VA Sergeant Ray Torres:

We Should Teach Officers to Think About Leadership And Whether They Want to Be a Leader

Wexler: Sergeant, what kind of training do you wish you had received? What could have made you a better sergeant, or helped you to hit the ground running?

Sergeant Torres: I think back to my military experience. When I was an officer in the military, they prepared us very well for what we were expected to do. There were no surprises. We were trained from the minute we woke up to the minute we went to sleep. We had extreme experiences and interactions with our supervisors, constantly. Mentorship was a constant thing.

When I became a police officer, I kind of expected the same thing to help prepare us for

taking on higher levels of responsibility. But it wasn't like that at all. They trained me very well to be a police officer. I knew exactly what to do when I went to a domestic call. I knew exactly what to do when I went to a mental health call. But when it came to being a supervisor, I had to lean back on my military experience. In law



Roanoke County, VA Sergeant Ray Torres

30 of those community members currently participate regularly in training exercises. Community member volunteers report that participating in the training has given them a deeper understanding and appreciation for what the police department does, which they share with other community members.

Tucson Sergeant Christopher Andreacola:

We Evaluate Actual Situations That Didn't End Well, And Train Officers on How to Make Them Better

We try to deal with issues of high-risk incidents in all our training. We started it at our POST basic training, then went to our basic academy with the same idea, and then moved it into our field training program, and then added it to our advanced officer training for officers and supervisors.

For example, our new supervisor academy is a week long, and about 70 percent of it is role-playing and scenarios. There's very little

lecturing. They are thrown right out there into multiple scenarios.

The scenario training requires the new supervisors to actually do an activity and not just hear a lecture. And it gives us the opportunity to see whether the new supervisors are absorbing the lessons, because they are being evaluated individually at each of these scenarios.

So there is no longer this idea that people can sit through an eight-hour training class, walk out of a classroom, and we just assume that they got something out of it.

We also get our scenarios from our own incidents that an officer or supervisor could have handled better. When we have an incident that didn't go well, we evaluate what happened, form conclusions about how it *should* have been handled, and then put the rest of the department through those same scenarios. It's about creating an environment, a culture where you're actually supporting moral courage. And that's what we're talking about here—moral courage.

Burlington, VT Lieutenant
Jason Lawson

enforcement, we're saying, "We want you to learn about doing all these tasks, but not about leadership, not about mentorship, not about management skills."

So I wish I had received training as an officer that would have encouraged me to think about leadership, and maybe spark an interest in it, or start a lifelong pattern of learning, of reading books on my own, and asking myself whether I'm even interested in being a leader, or is it something I could be good at.

Burlington, VT Lieutenant Jason Lawson:

*They Didn't Prepare Us
For Dealing with "Toxic" Officers*

One issue that should be addressed in training supervisors is how to address the toxic officer—the officer who is negative about everything. The problem is that it can be contagious; they affect the spirit of everyone around them. It's difficult to handle, especially if you've never been given any guidance about strategies for addressing it.



Mount Vernon, NY Police Commissioner
Shawn Harris



**Mount Vernon, NY Police Commissioner
Shawn Harris:**

*We Should Be Like the Military:
Always Developing People to Take Our Job*

I've had the privilege of having dual careers—one as a non-commissioned officer in the military, and then as a patrol sergeant. What really helped me in the military was the fact that as an NCO, your primary purpose is the personal and professional development of your people.

Here's a key difference I see between the military and policing. In policing, everybody's trying to *keep their position* until they get promoted. In the military, it's about *developing people to take your job*. And that's why mentoring is so important in the military.

I also think that to get the best from our people, we need to help them find what they're good at and what they like to do. We talk about how to deal with "the toxic employee." In some cases, people become toxic because they're stuck in an assignment they don't want. We need to learn our people's intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and to think of everybody as a resource.

I had an officer who was a problem—totally unmotivated, and a malcontent. But it turned out his niche was pulling over cars. I assigned him to traffic, and five years later, he's one of my best officers.



Tucson Sergeant
Dain Salisbury

So think of it this way: As a supervisor, develop your people to take your place. That's what will help you to find future leaders in the department, because if they're happy, they're going to emulate you, they're going to emulate the person they report to, and they will share your vision. And when it comes time to promote people, you'll have a good pool of people that you *want* to promote.

Tucson Sergeant Dain Salisbury:

The Training I Receive as a SWAT Sergeant Gives Me a Better View of the Big Picture

Wexler: What are the biggest differences between being a sergeant in SWAT versus a sergeant in patrol?

Sergeant Salisbury: As a new patrol sergeant, I only had a few weeks of training, while as a SWAT sergeant, it's several hundred hours a year. Being exposed to more training has increased my ability to see the big picture. That has helped me as a supervisor. Rather than running gung ho as a supervisor and being wrapped up in that operational momentum, it's more about standing back now, getting the bigger picture, and slowing things down or speeding things up when necessary.

Fort Worth Sergeant
Neil Harris

Fort Worth Sergeant Neil Harris:

Supervisors Need Training On How To Help Officers with Personal Problems

One thing that I definitely would have liked to have had more training on is how to help officers with their personal lives and problems. I really wasn't aware that once I became a Sergeant, I would have to take on a lot of these issues.

When someone has stress at home, a child who is sick, elderly parents in need of care, or if they have marital problems, the Sergeant is often the one they will turn to for help in their situations.

Arizona State University Police Sergeant Nate Deveney:

Sergeants Need Guidance on How to Supervise Officers You Worked With for Years

Coming from a smaller agency, I think one of the main issues I faced was working with fellow officers for five or six years, and then all of a sudden the Chief calls you in and says, "You're a sergeant now."

So you need to separate from them a bit and supervise people you were previously working with, and you're just that one step above them.

Wexler: How does that translate into training?

Sergeant Deveney: Well, it's personnel training. But I think it's also learning how to



Arizona State University Police Sergeant Nate Deveney (RIGHT) and Baltimore County, MD Sergeant Brian Rupp (BELOW RIGHT)

become comfortable and knowing the role that you're actually stepping into, as opposed to "Congratulations, you're a sergeant, and it's trial by fire now."



Baltimore County, MD Sergeant Brian Rupp:

My Time as a Corporal and an FTO Helped Me Transition to Sergeant

One of the things that helped when I became a sergeant was having been a corporal for four years, and a field training officer. I trained new officers coming out of the academy. I also had a very good sergeant who mentored me. So I didn't go from officer to sergeant in one day.

And because we're a larger department, we're able to arrange it so sergeants don't supervise the same people they previously worked with.



Clearwater, FL Chief Dan Slaughter:

In the Past, Being a Detective Was the Best Preparation for Becoming a Sergeant

Wexler: Dan, once you said that the best preparation you received for being a sergeant was being a detective. Why is that?

Chief Slaughter: Well, back then, being a detective was the one specialty in police departments. Becoming a detective was how you became responsible for managing a caseload, for managing other people's work, and you were responsible for the quality of your investigations

as a case agent. Detectives also interact with outside entities, like crime scene tech and forensic processing, the state attorney, and the courts.

So I think it raised the bar and gave us the opportunity to develop skills beyond regular patrol duties. You definitely learn how to manage major crime scenes and major incidents, and how to direct operations.

Today there's a lot more specialization in other areas, such as community policing officers and corporal programs. And today, crisis intervention training is probably a major component for becoming a patrol sergeant.

Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust For First-Line Supervisors

In 1999, the Anti-Defamation League, in partnership with United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, created a unique training program called *Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust*.²² Participants learn about the role of German police forces in facilitating Nazi atrocities in the 1930s and 1940s, and discuss the importance of building law enforcement agencies that understand their role in defending democratic principles.

More than 100,000 law enforcement officers from across the country have experienced this training over the past 20 years, including a large number of first-line supervisors.

Director Elise Jarvis, Anti-Defamation League, Law Enforcement Outreach and Community Security:

First-Line Supervisors Have a Duty To Uphold Core Values, And To Instill Those Values in the Next Generation

ADL runs a program in partnership with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum that many of you have probably participated in, *Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust*. It is a day-long training that we created in 1999, at the request of then-D.C. Metropolitan Police Chief Charles Ramsey, to look at the implications of the history of the Holocaust to law enforcement today. In addition to the program in Washington, D.C., there are eight other cities offering the program locally across the country.²³

It starts with learning about the history of the Holocaust, and the second part of the day is spent looking at both the role of police under the Nazis—how over several years they went from being neutral professionals to committing



Director Elise Jarvis, Law Enforcement Outreach and Community Security, Anti-Defamation League

acts of genocide—and at the safeguards that are necessary to prevent abuse of power among law enforcement in America today. The discussion topics include the core values of American law enforcement and law enforcement’s role as protectors of individual rights, our Constitution, and the values of our democracy.

With respect to first-line police supervisors, the training has to go beyond leaders upholding core values themselves. We discuss the importance of transferring those values to the next generation of officers. Several people here today have mentioned that officers tend to reflect their leadership, that they will aspire to be what they see in their immediate supervisors. Or on the flip side, if officers see their leaders “getting away with” something, they will assume that they can do the same.

A number of chiefs today have spoken about the importance of imparting the values of an organization to its officers. The rank you rise to, the number of cases you close, all become secondary to how you conduct yourselves, the values you hold, how those values and principles translate to actions and behaviors, and how you treat people, both within the police department and in your communities.

22. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust.” <https://www.ushmm.org/professionals-and-student-leaders/law-enforcement>

23. The eight other locations are Boston; Dallas; Houston; Los Angeles; Nassau County, NY; Seattle; St. Louis; and St. Petersburg, FL. <https://www.adl.org/who-we-are/our-organization/signature-programs/law-enforcement-trainings/law-enforcement-and-society>

Summary: Training for First-Line Supervisors

Police department leaders don't always have control over the process for testing and selecting first-line supervisors, especially in agencies with strong civil service rules. But chiefs generally have some control over the training that new supervisors receive, so training of sergeants can be a valuable tool for implementing the chief's priorities and agenda.

Like other aspects of policing, there is no uniform system for training new sergeants:

- Many states mandate basic training for new sergeants, but the amount and content of required training varies widely from state to state.
- Police agencies can go beyond state training requirements and provide additional training that is specific to the policies and mission of the particular agency, but many agencies are not large enough or do not have resources to undertake significant training programs of their own.
- Some agencies look to private organizations such as police associations or training centers for training opportunities.
- In many agencies, training for new sergeants is not available immediately. Newly promoted sergeants often serve in the position for months before they receive formal training to be a supervisor. But other agencies require officers to complete first-line supervisor training *before* being promoted, to ensure they are adequately prepared for the role.
- In some agencies, new sergeants receive classroom instruction, but there is no

field training or mentoring component.

Participants at the *Critical Issues* conference stressed the importance of hands-on field training or mentoring programs for new sergeants. Many sergeants said that these programs were valuable experiences that helped prepare them for the new role.

Participants at PERF's conference discussed the importance of scenario-based training in preparing sergeants to respond to high-risk incidents. Scenario-based training is especially beneficial when officers and sergeants train together.

Another excellent training practice is to use video footage or information from actual incidents, including incidents that were not necessarily handled well. In this way, supervisors and officers gain practical insights into successful strategies for handling high-risk situations, as well as pitfalls to avoid.

Few departments require continuing training of sergeants after they have completed the initial training for new supervisors. That is a weakness that should be remedied, particularly in light of the large responsibilities that are given to sergeants. Annual training programs can reinforce major lessons and also address new issues, such as the emergence of new technologies that sergeants and officers must learn about.

Police officials who also have experience in the military recommend that police should seek to model their training on the military model, in which members of a given rank see their role as constantly developing and mentoring their subordinates to someday take their job.

Evaluation and Career Development

“No one would expect an aspiring athlete or a chess player to improve their performance without the benefit of feedback and coaching. So why would we expect police sergeants to develop expertise without feedback and coaching?”

— **Dr. Mark Bowman, Methodist University**

MOST OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES that PERF researched for this report have formal evaluation systems and probationary periods for newly promoted sergeants. In many agencies, the evaluations are part of their overall evaluation systems and are not customized for the role of sergeants. There appears to be an expectation in most agencies that very few sergeants will fail to pass their probationary period.

Some agencies, however, have created more thorough evaluation systems that provide frequent feedback to new sergeants, on a monthly, weekly, or even daily basis. These programs focus on the key skills and attributes of the position (e.g., scene management, communications, leadership, policy, and administration), and give new sergeants opportunities to receive mentoring and coaching.

A PERF questionnaire disseminated to police agencies found that probationary periods for sergeants typically range between 90 days and one year. One year was the most common probationary period, cited by 40% of the 55 agencies that responded. Almost 30% had probationary periods of six months. Nine of the agencies (16%) reported that they do not have a probationary period for newly promoted sergeants.

Participants at PERF’s conference discussed the benefits of probationary periods and various processes for evaluation of newly promoted sergeants.

Evaluation Systems

**Metropolitan Nashville Deputy Chief
Brian Johnson:**

*We Have a Probationary Period,
With Evaluations Every Two Months*

In Nashville, all new hires have an initial probationary period, and then upon promotion, we have what we call a “work test period”

Dr. Mark Bowman, Methodist University
(RIGHT) and Metropolitan Nashville
Deputy Chief Brian Johnson (FAR RIGHT)



for six months. This applies across our city government agencies. The Police Department went before our civil service commission and received special permission to extend the work test period from six months to 12 months. Newly promoted sergeants, lieutenants, and captains are all placed on a 12-month work test period.

For a sergeant on a work test, his or her lieutenant completes a work test evaluation every two months for the entire year. So there's a total of six evaluations done on them for the year in which they're on work test. The same applies to newly promoted lieutenants and captains; the direct supervisor completes the "work test" evaluation every two months.

Chief Dan Purcell, Seminole County, FL Sheriff's Office:

Measuring the Intangible Qualities That Make Great Supervisors Is Difficult

I think we do a very good job in this business of measuring the competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the job of a supervisor, but I think we struggle with the qualities that you can't quite put your finger on.

When my sheriff speaks at leadership events, he often asks the audience, "Think of the supervisor who really impacted you the most, who helped you get where you are today. Now ask yourself, what was the unusual quality in that person?"

We all can probably think of that one person who invested in us or mentored us in a positive way, and we can remember what was special about that person. So the question becomes how to measure those important and unique

Three Departments' Approaches to Evaluations

The **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department** is revamping its performance evaluation procedures for the entire department. The previous performance measures were created more than 20 years ago and had not been updated.

New performance evaluations will consist of ratings based on specific goals and achievements, as well as competencies for 21st century policing, such as service excellence, problem solving, collaborating, communicating, and leadership.

The **Melbourne, FL Police Department** recently changed its evaluation system to include written (and signed) reviews at each stage of training, verbal feedback and coaching from the assigned training and shift commander, a memorandum to the chain of command from the training supervisor that indicates whether a new sergeant is ready for solo operations, and a memorandum at

the conclusion of the six-month probationary period indicating whether new sergeants have successfully completed their probationary period through adequate performance of supervisory duties.

The documentation is signed by the chain of command and stored with the new supervisor's training file.

In the **Houston Police Department**, newly promoted sergeants are required to participate in a five-week Sergeants Field Training program, where they are evaluated on skills related to administrative tasks, scene management, communication, leadership, and department policy. During this program, newly promoted sergeants are assessed on a daily basis by a senior sergeant.

Sergeants are trained on how to perform tasks during the first three weeks, and are evaluated on those tasks during the final two weeks of the program.

qualities? The intangibles are difficult to measure in a promotional process.

So over the last year and a half, as we look to make promotions, instead of just working off a list and pulling a Human Resources file, our sheriff has reached out to candidates' peers, to their sergeants, their lieutenants, the people who work with them daily. Getting raw feedback from the people who know the candidates well helps to identify those intangibles, but our testing processes must do more to reveal and measure those qualities.



Chief Dan Purcell, Seminole County, FL Sheriff's Office

Tucson Thoroughly Evaluates New Sergeants for One Year

The Tucson Police Department has a comprehensive evaluation process for sergeants that is used throughout their one-year probationary period. It is not taken for granted that all new sergeants will pass the rigorous probationary phase. Sergeants are evaluated monthly on 12 core competencies:

- Communication and responsiveness,
- Community engagement,
- Crime reduction/mitigation/traffic safety,
- Incident command,
- Job knowledge,
- Leadership,
- Management/direction,
- Organizational commitment,
- Problem solving,
- Self-awareness,
- Supervision, and
- The transition from officer to supervisor.

After 12 weeks of a Field Training Sergeant phase, sergeants are assigned to a patrol squad, where they continue probationary

training. They have reading and writing assignments, journaling requirements, community interactions, and weekly check-ins with their commander.

Tucson, AZ Assistant Chief Kevin Hall:

We Are Pushing Our New Sergeants To Be Better than the Previous Generation

Wexler: Kevin, sergeants are on probation for a year in Tucson, is that right?

Chief Hall: Yes, and it makes a difference, because it's a constant evaluation of performance through that year. We require them to keep a journal. There are writing assignments. It's almost like 12 months of college.

One of the weaknesses we've seen in our sergeants is their administrative skills and their ability to communicate. We want them to understand the messages that the executive leadership team provides, to disseminate that message internally and externally to the public, and do it in written formats as well as verbally.

We're challenging them. We're pushing them to be better than the previous generation of supervisors.

Mentoring and Career Development

Participants at PERF's conference discussed the importance of focusing on the career development of first-line supervisors after they are promoted. Many agencies provide continuing education opportunities, mentoring programs, and preparation for future leadership positions.

Clearwater's career path program: For example, the Clearwater, FL Police Department recently created a "Career Pathing and Preparedness Program," in response to employee requests for more training and professional development opportunities. The program aims to prepare employees for promotions by providing reading and study materials, online courses, and specific tasks that teach employees the skills and abilities needed for their next promotion.

Part of the program involves employees identifying a mentor to guide them throughout their promotional process. The Career Pathing and Preparedness Program has a section for each promotional stage. For sergeants, the program lists the requirements for the role, recommendations for readings, virtual courses, training opportunities, and job-specific experiences that will benefit a future sergeant. Chief Dan Slaughter explained that this pre-promotional training program saves the agency money, because it doesn't have to spend as much on tuition and travel expenses for external training courses.

Fairfax County has lunches for sergeants and senior leaders: As part of its employee development program, the Fairfax County, VA Police Department has a list of courses available for officers considering leadership positions. These courses can be taken prior to applying for a promotion. Some of the courses are provided through local universities and other organizations.

In addition, Fairfax County organizes brown-bag lunches with senior leaders (including the Chief of Police) and prospective and newly promoted sergeants. The lunches provide an informal venue for sergeants to discuss their new or desired rank and to develop rapport with executive level staff members.

Frisco, TX Chief John Bruce:

We Must Continue To Give Supervisors Good Leadership Training

After you conduct your selection process for first-line supervisors, and you give the new sergeants a little bit of training that satisfies your state requirement, it can't stop there. You have to continue to give your supervisors good leadership training. There are a lot of good training vendors out there, and PERF's Senior Management Institute for Police is a great program. It's great for first-line supervisors once they get some experience behind them.

We have to constantly reinforce the idea that training is paramount.

Associate Deputy Director Cornelia Sigworth, Bureau of Justice Assistance, DOJ:

Supervisors Should Receive Education About How to Find and Use Research in Policing

I think there's a distinction between training and educating, and we should educate our first-line supervisors about how they can find research and evidence-based practices and be active participants in the crime fight. They can also build those research and inquiry skills in the officers they're supervising, as they enhance their own skills and as they move up the ranks.



Associate Deputy Director Cornelia Sigworth, Bureau of Justice Assistance, DOJ

Tuition Reimbursement in Chicago Fosters a Culture of Life-Long Learning

The Chicago Police Department has one of the most extensive tuition reimbursement programs in the country. Employees working toward an undergraduate, graduate, or advanced degree can be reimbursed for up to two courses per school term at an accredited institution. The percentage of tuition reimbursed depends on the employee's final course grade, with a possible 100% reimbursement for students earning an A.

As long as classes do not interfere with shift schedules and job performance, there is no limit to how many advanced degrees an employee can earn. In fact, Chicago Police Sergeant Devinn Jones, who attended PERF's

Critical Issues conference, received both his bachelor's degree and two master's degrees with assistance from the tuition reimbursement program. Employees may also receive reimbursement for certificate and seminar programs, depending on how the program relates to the employee's current duties.

Not only does continuing education benefit the individual employees, it also advances the department as a whole, by training personnel at all ranks in subject areas that are not covered in traditional police in-service training. For sergeants and other supervisors, formal management education is a form of training that directly benefits them in the field.

Applying PERF's *Command Performance Guide to Career Development for First-Line Supervisors*

Command Performance: A Career Guide for Police Executives, published by PERF in 2015, covers many concepts that a potential police chief needs to understand before becoming chief. Topics include the changing role of police chiefs, the skills needed for the job, and how to prepare for the role.

The author of *Command Performance*, PERF Executive Search consultant Charlotte Lansinger, identified 20 steps that sergeants (as well as lieutenants, captains, and command personnel) can take to improve their skills as they contemplate additional promotions, and even prepare for a possible appointment to a police agency's highest position. These steps are based on Lansinger's more than 30 years of experience working with aspiring police executives as they advance their careers.

1. Gain a breadth of experience in many different aspects of a police department's operations.
2. Further your education and leadership training.
3. Seek out special assignments.
4. Work with the community.
5. Be accomplishment-oriented.
6. Distinguish yourself as a leader.
7. Get involved in regional and national activities.
8. Teach and do public speaking.
9. Develop a professional network.
10. Learn about the political environment affecting policing.
11. Gain experience with the news media.
12. Keep current on national issues facing the policing profession.
13. Find a mentor.
14. Observe the actions of others.
15. Develop a broad perspective.
16. Give credit to others.
17. Maintain a reputation for integrity.
18. Read about policing.
19. Keep written records about your work and accomplishments.
20. Be cognizant of your professional image.

Summary: Evaluation and Career Development

Most law enforcement agencies have evaluation systems and probationary periods for newly promoted sergeants, but in many agencies, the evaluations are not customized for the role of sergeants. There appears to be an expectation in most agencies that very few sergeants will fail to pass their probationary period. Probationary periods typically last between six months and one year.

Some agencies, however, have more thorough evaluation systems that provide frequent feedback to new sergeants, on a monthly, weekly, or even daily basis. These programs focus on the key skills and attributes

of the position and give new sergeants opportunities to receive mentoring and coaching. For example, the Tucson Police Department evaluates sergeants monthly for a year on 12 core competencies, such as community engagement and incident command.

Mentorship programs have proved popular in departments that have created them. Another important aspect of employee development is providing opportunities for first-line supervisors to further their formal education, for example through tuition reimbursement programs.

CONCLUSION:

11 Steps Agencies Can Take to Improve First-Line Supervision

AMERICAN POLICING NEEDS A WAKE-UP CALL with how it handles first-line supervision.

For years, police executives have noted that sergeants play critically important roles within their agencies. In many ways, no rank is more important than sergeants for advancing best practices in policing, implementing reforms, and putting into practice a new mission or set of priorities.

And yet, in many police agencies, there is a disconnection between the importance of sergeants and the antiquated, sometimes dysfunctional processes of promoting sergeants and training them for the job.

Too often, officers are promoted to sergeant merely because they passed a multiple-choice test consisting of questions that have little to do with the range of complex, important work that sergeants perform. Civil service regulations and collective bargaining agreements in many cities and states prevent law enforcement executives from adopting meaningful testing and selection processes for sergeants.

And once new sergeants are chosen, they often are expected to figure out how to do the job by simply doing it. They may be given some general training, in some cases by a state agency that does not customize the training for individual departments. A brief field training program may be the most significant assistance they receive before they are on their own.

Furthermore, continuing education and training of sergeants and career development initiatives are spotty at best.

Fortunately, there are bright spots in an otherwise dismal picture. Some departments are leading the way in developing modern systems for testing, selecting, training, and developing sergeants who can meet the demands of 21st century policing. Their initiatives are documented in this report.

Following is a set of 11 actions that police chiefs and sheriffs can take to improve their systems for developing first-line supervisors. These recommendations are based on PERF's research and the guidance offered by approximately 175 police chiefs, sergeants, and other law enforcement officials and experts at PERF's conference.

- 1. If civil service regulations or collective bargaining agreements limit your ability to conduct adequate testing of candidates for sergeant or to select the best candidates for these positions, look for ways to challenge these regulations or agreements.**

This may include working with other law enforcement executives to win passage of state civil service reform legislation, or working with local officials to amend collective bargaining agreements or carve out exceptions to civil service requirements.

Camden County, NJ Chief of Police and PERF President Scott Thomson, who has had experience operating under strict civil service regulations and under a more open system, explained the need for reforms:

“The Good to Great analogy²⁴ is that to be a great leader, you need to get the right people on your bus and put them in the right seats. But in a civil service organization, you’ve got assigned seating. You’re very limited in what you can do.

“I understand that the goal of civil service is to ensure against the politicization of a police organization, which is important. But when you consider the protections that are now offered through union contracts, the Fair Labor Standards Act law, case law, arbitration decisions and civil lawsuits, today’s civil service offers no enhanced protections and is a redundant bureaucracy that significantly limits the ability for leadership to effectuate the necessary change that the people demand. In many cities, the chief of police is accountable and responsible but doesn’t possess the actual authority to implement progressive reform.

“I think this is especially problematic given that 21st century policing is not about maintaining the status quo. It’s about evolving in a direction that strengthens the public’s confidence in the police so we can maintain their consent.”

2. Offer promotional tests on a regular schedule.

In many agencies, the time between promotional exams is too long, sometimes several years. This means that an officer who misses the minimum time-in-grade requirement to begin the promotional process may have to wait several years to get into the process. This can discourage strong candidates from staying in the agency and seeking promotion. It can also mean that promotional lists get stale, as agencies need to go deep into the lists to fill vacancies over the course of several years. Having a regular, predictable promotional schedule benefits the officers interested in promotion and the agency.

3. Use additional testing tools besides written tests. In many agencies, the promotional process is strictly defined by civil services requirements, which tend to rely heavily (or even exclusively) on written exams. Police leaders should call for reforms if they believe that civil service rules are hindering the improvement of their agencies.

Agencies should rely less on written exams (which in many cases only measure memorization skills) and utilize additional testing tools that do a better job of measuring critical thinking skills, decision-making, and management and leadership potential.

Assessment centers, oral boards, and work history reviews are among the tools that some agencies are using effectively.

4. Provide comprehensive training that goes beyond state mandates. Some states mandate specific levels of training for new sergeants and specific content that must be covered. These requirements, where they exist, vary widely from state to state. In general, agencies should tailor their new sergeants’ training to address their individual needs, and not just the minimum requirements dictated by the state.

5. Give sergeants training before they hit the streets. While some agencies are able to provide their new sergeants with training before they take on their new assignments, other agencies don’t have that luxury, because of training schedules or staffing pressures. This is problematic for the sergeants, their officers, and the communities they serve. Sergeants should receive at least basic first-line supervisory training before they step into their new positions.

6. Provide sergeants with scenario-based training, particularly on high-risk encounters. Increasingly, police and sheriffs’ departments expect sergeants to be on-scene and actively managing high-risk or high-profile incidents, especially those in which the potential for use

24. See “Good to Great” Policing: Application of Business Management Principles in the Public Sector. Police Executive Research Forum, 2007, pp. 20-31. <http://www.policeforum.org/free-online-documents>.

of force is high. To help ensure sergeants have the skills and confidence they need in these situations, agencies should provide sergeants with realistic, scenario-based training, just as many agencies do with their officers. In fact, training officers and sergeants together in scenario-based exercises is a good way to build teamwork skills.

7. Keep officer-to-sergeant ratios down, so sergeants have more time to spend on the street.

Managing their administrative tasks and field supervision duties has always been a difficult balancing act for sergeants. The more officers they supervise, the more time sergeants must spend on administrative tasks, usually in a station house. If agencies are to give sergeants the discretionary time they need to supervise officers in the field, they must strive to limit sergeants' administrative burdens. Promoting more sergeants or designating some as "administrative sergeants" are two ways to help keep officer-to-sergeant ratios manageable.

The appropriate ratio of officers to sergeants can vary, depending on the workload of a particular unit. But as a general matter, PERF asked police officials for an estimate of an ideal average "span of control" ratio, and among agencies that responded, the average "ideal" ratio was six officers for one sergeant.

8. Provide sergeants with mobile digital technology that allows them to complete more administrative tasks in the field.

Another way to keep sergeants on the street, and available for everyday supervision and management of critical incidents, is to enable them to complete administrative tasks in the field. Mobile digital technology allows sergeants to write reports and

conduct other administrative tasks in the field, thus making them more efficient and available to their officers.

9. Evaluate sergeants on the key aspects of their roles.

Evaluation systems for sergeants should be specifically tailored for their unique roles. Sergeants should be evaluated on such key elements as critical thinking, communications skills, scene management, leadership, and the ability to complete administrative tasks efficiently and accurately.

10. New sergeants should receive regular, detailed feedback.

In many agencies, the first formal evaluation of new sergeants comes at the end of their probationary period. This evaluation is often considered a cursory, "check-the-box" review. Because the shift to sergeant is so dramatic and important, newly promoted sergeants should be given regular, detailed feedback on their performance and the development of key skills. Some agencies are building monthly, weekly, and even daily feedback mechanisms to help develop their new sergeants.

11. Provide sergeants with opportunities to develop their careers before and after promotion.

Agencies should create leadership preparedness and development programs for sergeants (and other personnel) who aspire to higher, executive-level positions. These can include internal agency initiatives as well as external training classes. Mentorship opportunities, either formal or informal, can be another important element of career and leadership development.

About the Police Executive Research Forum

THE POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM (PERF) is an independent research organization that focuses on critical issues in policing. Since its founding in 1976, PERF has identified best practices on fundamental issues such as reducing police use of force; developing community policing and problem-oriented policing; using technologies to deliver police services to the community; and developing and assessing crime reduction strategies.

PERF strives to advance professionalism in policing and to improve the delivery of police services through the exercise of strong national leadership; public debate of police and criminal justice issues; and research and policy development.

The nature of PERF's work can be seen in the reports PERF has published over the years. Most of these reports are available without charge online at <http://www.policeforum.org/free-online-documents>. All of the titles in the *Critical Issues in Policing* series can be found on the back cover of this report.

In addition to conducting research and publishing reports on our findings, PERF conducts management studies of individual law enforcement agencies;

educates hundreds of police officials each year in the Senior Management Institute for Police, a three-week executive development program; and provides executive search services to governments that wish to conduct national searches for their next police chief.

All of PERF's work benefits from PERF's status as a membership organization of police officials, who share information and open their agencies to research and study. PERF members also include academics, federal government leaders, and others with an interest in policing and criminal justice.

All PERF members must have a four-year college degree and must subscribe to a set of founding principles, emphasizing the importance of research and public debate in policing, adherence to the Constitution and the highest standards of ethics and integrity, and accountability to the communities that police agencies serve.

PERF is governed by a member-elected President and Board of Directors and a Board-appointed Executive Director.

To learn more about PERF, visit www.policeforum.org.

About Motorola Solutions and the Motorola Solutions Foundation

MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS IS A LEADING PROVIDER of mission-critical communication products and services for enterprise and government customers. Through leading-edge innovation and communications technology, it is a global leader that enables its customers to be their best in the moments that matter.

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The Motorola Solutions Foundation is the charitable and philanthropic arm of Motorola Solutions. With employees located around the globe, Motorola Solutions seeks to benefit the communities where it operates. We achieve this by making strategic grants, forging strong community partnerships, and fostering innovation. The Motorola Solutions Foundation focuses its funding on public safety, disaster relief, employee programs and education, especially science, technology, engineering and math programming.

Motorola Solutions is a company of engineers and scientists, with employees who are eager to encourage the next generation of inventors. Hundreds of employees volunteer as robotics club mentors, science fair judges and math tutors. Our “Innovators” employee volunteer program pairs a Motorola Solutions employee with each of the nonprofits receiving Innovation Generation grants, providing ongoing support for grantees beyond simply funding their projects.

**For more information on Motorola Solutions Corporate and Foundation giving,
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For more information on Motorola Solutions, visit www.motorolasolutions.com.

APPENDIX:

Participants at the Critical Issues Meeting: Promoting Excellence in First-Line Supervision

April 3, 2018, Washington, DC

Participants' titles and affiliations are those at the time of the meeting.

Chief Nathaniel Allen

DECATUR (AL) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Lieutenant Shanon Anderson

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Christopher Andraecola

TUCSON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Senior Policy Analyst

Brenda Auterman

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, COPS OFFICE

Chief Troy Bacon

FRANKFORT (IN) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Steven Baginski

CLEARWATER (FL) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Barry Barnard

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY (VA)
POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy Analyst Julia Billings

POLICE FOUNDATION

Lieutenant Katie Blackwell

MINNEAPOLIS POLICE DEPARTMENT

Mandre Boggess

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON
AIRPORTS AUTHORITY

Chief Scott Booth

DANVILLE (VA) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Brian Bowman

FAIRFAX COUNTY (VA) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Dr. Mark Bowman

METHODIST UNIVERSITY

Sergeant Christopher Brady

TAUNTON (MA) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Director of Continuing Studies

Jessica Bress

METROPOLITAN (DC) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Director of Training Josh Bronson

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CAMPUS
LAW ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATORS

Chief John Bruce

FRISCO (TX) POLICE DEPARTMENT

HR Coordinator Miriam Bryant

CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH (VA)

Supervisory Policy Analyst

Helene Bushwick

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, COPS OFFICE

Sheriff Timothy Cameron

ST. MARY'S COUNTY (MD) SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Lieutenant Grant Carroll

METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE
POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Tabitha Carter

LITTLE ROCK (AR) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Timothy Cecchini

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Dr. Brett Chapman

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

Special Agent in Charge

Thomas Chittum

BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO,
FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES,
WASHINGTON FIELD DIVISION

Dr. Patrina Clark

PIVOTAL PRACTICES CONSULTING LLC

Lieutenant Michael Clark

VIRGINIA BEACH (VA) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Cody Cochran

VOLUSIA COUNTY (FL) SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Lieutenant John Coppedge

DENVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Charles Corgey

HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Daniel Costa

WESTON (MA) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Deputy Chief Joel Cranford

GREENSBORO (NC) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Patrick Daley

NORWICH (CT) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Maggie DeBoard

HERNDON (VA) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Christopher Delmonte

BRIDGEWATER (MA) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Nathaniel Deveney

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
POLICE DEPARTMENT

Deputy Chief George Devereux

CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Executive Officer Eldys Diaz

MIAMI (FL) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Lieutenant John Dunbar

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE (RI)
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Sergeant Bradford Dunn

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG (NC)
POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Justin Dyer

HERNDON (VA) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Deputy Director

Joshua Ederheimer

DHS, FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE

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Sergeant Cory Ellis

ST. MARY'S COUNTY (MD)
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Dr. Robin Engel

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Lieutenant Marc Erme

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