

Analysis of Law Enforcement Supervisory Rank Requirements

Position requirements for LE supervisory and command ranks (Sergeant through Major)

DTAC Series: Leadership

This document was produced by IDEA Analytics in support of DTAC Series: Leadership initiatives and change management practices. Permission to use with appropriate attribution.

Table of Contents

PURPOSE	2
METHODS	4
LIMITATIONS AND CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	4
KEY INSIGHTS.....	5
SERGEANT REPRESENTS THE CRITICAL FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORY TRANSITION	5
<i>Qualifications</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Pre-Promotion Training</i>	<i>5</i>
LIEUTENANT POSITIONS SHIFT TOWARD STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	6
<i>Qualifications</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Pre-Promotion Training</i>	<i>6</i>
CAPTAIN COMMANDS DIVISIONS WITH EXECUTIVE-LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY	7
<i>Qualifications</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Pre-Promotion Training</i>	<i>7</i>
MAJOR SERVES AS BUREAU COMMANDER IN SELECT AGENCIES.....	7
<i>Pre-Promotion Training</i>	<i>8</i>
ABOUT LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND TRAINING	8
STANDARDIZED TESTING INSTRUMENTS SUPPORT PROMOTIONAL DECISIONS	9
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE.....	10
CONCLUSION	10
APPENDIX A.....	11
ABOUT AGENCY SIZE AND RANKING.....	11
APPENDIX B.....	12
CALEA AND POST SYSTEMS PROVIDE THE PRIMARY CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORKS.....	12
APPENDIX C.....	13
POLICE EXECUTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS.....	13
<i>Program Selection Guidance</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Implications for Rank Structure Development</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Resource Contact Information.....</i>	<i>22</i>



PURPOSE

This technical report provides law enforcement agencies with summary of research and classification frameworks used to support strategic decisions regarding rank structure optimization, position redefinition, and organizational realignment. As agencies confront evolving operational demands, fiscal constraints, and accountability expectations, the evidence-based frameworks presented here enable leadership teams to make informed structural changes grounded in professional standards rather than institutional precedent alone.

Information within this document may be used for:

Organizational Restructuring Initiatives

Agencies undergoing reorganization—whether driven by consolidation, expansion, civilianization, or efficiency mandates—require validated position requirements and competency frameworks to justify structural changes to stakeholders. This report supplies the foundational documentation necessary to:

- Defend rank structure modifications to city councils, county boards, and oversight bodies by demonstrating alignment with CALEA standards, POST commission frameworks, and peer agency practices
- Right-size supervisory layers using research-based span of control ratios and workload analysis methodologies that account for agency size and service complexity
- Eliminate or consolidate ranks with evidence showing how comparable agencies successfully compress hierarchies while maintaining operational effectiveness
- Create new command positions supported by job task analysis data and competency models from professional associations

Position Classification and Compensation Studies

Human resources departments conducting classification reviews or compensation analyses require standardized position descriptions and minimum qualification statements. This research provides:

- Benchmark position requirements across the Sergeant through Major progression that enable equitable comparisons with regional and national labor markets
- Educational and experience standards documented across multiple jurisdictions to establish defensible qualification thresholds
- Competency progression models that distinguish first-line supervision from middle management and command-level positions, supporting appropriate compensation differentials
- FLSA classification guidance for exempt/non-exempt determinations at each supervisory level

Succession Planning and Career Development

Agencies implementing structured career pathways or succession planning programs need clearly defined progression milestones and development requirements. The report enables agencies to:



- Establish transparent promotion criteria based on validated time-in-grade requirements, education benchmarks, and training certifications documented across the profession
- Design targeted development programs using the competency models and training frameworks identified in national leadership initiatives
- Create career ladders that align with POST certificate progressions and professional development pathways used by peer agencies
- Identify promotion readiness indicators through assessment center methodologies and evaluation dimensions validated by industrial-organizational research

Collective Bargaining and Labor Relations

Labor negotiations involving supervisory classifications, assignment durations, or promotion procedures benefit from objective documentation of prevailing practices. This research supports:

- Data-driven position negotiations grounded in documented standards rather than purely positional bargaining
- Assignment duration discussions informed by research on rotational versus permanent IA assignments and specialized unit tenures across comparable agencies
- Promotional testing frameworks based on validated assessment methodologies and competency models recognized across the profession
- Classification grievance responses supported by authoritative job analysis documentation and professional standards citations



METHODS

The position requirements, competency frameworks, and organizational models presented in this report derive from authoritative sources including:

- Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) standards establishing baseline organizational requirements
- State Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) commission regulations mandating certification and training thresholds
- Bureau of Labor Statistics O*NET occupational classifications providing standardized job analysis frameworks
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), and Bureau of Justice Assistance leadership competency models
- Department of Justice consent decree provisions and technical assistance guidance
- Academic research on law enforcement organizational structures and promotional systems

This multi-source validation approach ensures that agencies can defend structural decisions against legal challenge, demonstrate adherence to professional standards during accreditation reviews, and maintain credibility with both internal stakeholders and external oversight bodies.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Users of this report should recognize several important limitations:

- Agency size fundamentally reshapes rank functions. The documented position requirements describe roles as they operate in agencies with sufficient size to support specialized functions and clear hierarchical separation. Smaller agencies necessarily compress responsibilities across fewer ranks, requiring position descriptions to be adapted rather than adopted wholesale.
- State and local legal frameworks create variance. Collective bargaining agreements, civil service rules, Peace Officer Bill of Rights statutes, and local charter provisions introduce jurisdiction-specific requirements that may supersede general professional standards. This report provides the baseline framework, but agencies must layer applicable legal requirements onto these foundations.
- Rank titles vary by agency tradition. While this report uses standard terminology (Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major), some agencies use military equivalents (Corporal, Commander), federal analogs (Senior Agent, Supervisory Special Agent), or unique local titles. The functional descriptions and competency requirements remain applicable regardless of nomenclature.
- Contemporary accountability demands are reshaping requirements. Consent decrees, civilian oversight mandates, and community expectations increasingly require supervisory personnel to demonstrate competencies in constitutional policing, bias recognition, de-escalation, and community engagement that extend beyond traditional command-and-control frameworks. Agencies should view the competency models presented here as minimum baselines rather than comprehensive specifications.



KEY INSIGHTS

Position requirements for law enforcement supervisory and command ranks (Sergeant through Major) follow established frameworks but vary significantly based on agency size, ***with smaller departments compressing six to eight ranks into three or four and requiring supervisors to perform multi-level responsibilities.*** CALEA and state POST commissions provide the most standardized classification systems, while the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Law Enforcement Leadership Initiative offers the primary national competency framework.

The following information synthesizes how positions and responsibilities of ranks sergeant and above are shaped across US law enforcement agencies.

SERGEANT REPRESENTS THE CRITICAL FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORY TRANSITION

The Police Sergeant serves as the essential link between patrol officers and upper management, combining operational supervision with continued police officer duties. According to O*NET's occupational classification (SOC 33-1012.00) and multiple state POST frameworks, sergeants typically supervise 6-12 officers directly and spend approximately ***60-70% of their time on operational duties versus 30-40% on administration.***

Essential duties include

- conducting roll call briefings,
- assigning beats and duties,
- reviewing police reports for accuracy and legal compliance,
- providing immediate feedback and coaching, and
- assuming command at crime scenes and emergencies.

Sergeants implement Police Incident Command protocols (e.g., NIMS ICS), investigate internal complaints, and serve as the primary liaison between officers and management.

Qualifications

Most jurisdictions require **4-5 years as a sworn officer** before promotion eligibility, with educational requirements typically set at 60-65 semester credits or an associate's degree.

Pre-Promotion Training

Preparation for this role is largely reliant on time-on-the-job, often resulting in overlooked skill gaps and/or management trainings that are critical for officers in this role. Many states require specific supervisor training that includes procedural and conceptual topics; however, this is still evolving for the field since promotion occurs via tenure first. Examples include:

- California POST mandates an **80-hour Supervisory Course** within 12 months of promotion, covering role identification, leadership principles, performance evaluation, conflict management, and ethical decision-making. The required Supervisory Certificate demands the Intermediate Certificate, 60 college units, and two years of permanent first-level supervisory experience.



- Texas TCOLE similarly requires a New Supervisor's Course (#3737) for supervisory certification, while most states have comparable mandates.

LIEUTENANT POSITIONS SHIFT TOWARD STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

The Lieutenant classification represents middle management, distinguished from Sergeant by broader scope in supervision, fiscal authority, and policy involvement. Lieutenants typically supervise **2-5 sergeants plus their teams**, totaling 15-50+ personnel, and spend approximately **50-60% of time on administrative functions including policy development, budget management, and committee work**.

Core responsibilities include:

- planning, organizing, and directing division or section operations;
- developing and revising departmental policies;
- preparing and managing budgets;
- serving as watch commander for entire shifts; and
- acting as Captain during absences.

Lieutenants serve as department liaisons to media and community organizations and coordinate with external law enforcement agencies on major operations.

The distinction between Sergeant and Lieutenant centers on decision-making authority: Sergeants make tactical field decisions and recommend personnel actions, while Lieutenants develop policy, allocate budgets and resources, and make final recommendations on promotions and discipline.

Qualifications

Minimum qualifications typically require 2-3 years as Sergeant with bachelor's degree completion required or mandated within a specified timeframe.

Pre-Promotion Training

Any existing supervisory training required during the Sergeant phases is expected to be completed prior to promotion to this rank. Additional trainings occur post-promotion and may be defined by the state POST¹, or include management training from associations such as IACP, Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) SMIP training, FBI LEEDA, or academic programs (e.g., University of Chicago, University of Texas, University of Arizona, NC State University).

Management trainings at this level should seek to expand key knowledge areas such as principal-based leadership, current law enforcement trends, community-oriented policing principles, disaster preparedness, and budget management.

¹ California POST's Management Certificate requires the Advanced Certificate, 60 semester units, completion of the 80-hour Management Course, and two years as a permanent middle manager.



CAPTAIN COMMANDS DIVISIONS WITH EXECUTIVE-LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY

The Police Captain serves as commanding officer of a division, precinct, station, or major organizational unit—the first true "command rank" in most department structures. Captains bear 24/7 responsibility for facility and section operations and typically represent the highest rank achieved through Civil Service promotion in many departments.

Command responsibilities encompass:

- directing all division activities,
- ensuring policy implementation,
- interviewing and hiring personnel,
- managing division budgets,
- conducting facility inspections, and
- responding to serious crimes including officer-involved shootings and homicides.

Captains set operational philosophies for their units, balance community needs with departmental requirements, and maintain relationships with county, state, and federal officials.

Qualifications

Experience requirements typically span 5-10+ years of progressively responsible law enforcement work including 3-5 years in supervisory capacity at Lieutenant level or higher. In addition to time in prior ranks, educational requirements have trended upward significantly. Most agencies now require a **bachelor's degree in criminal justice, public administration, or related field**, with master's degrees preferred.

California POST requires the Management Certificate, while Oregon's DPSST mandates obtaining the Management Certificate within two years and Executive Certificate within four years of promotion.

Pre-Promotion Training

Like other ranks, training required by prior ranks is expected to be completed at this stage. Additional participation in courses for formal education and/or leadership certification are highly dependent on periodic funding and/or participation by personnel. These trainings should include expanding the knowledge based of leaders on topics such as administrative principles encompassing goal setting, program development, and evaluation; collective bargaining agreement administration; Peace Officer Bill of Rights provisions; and comprehensive understanding of emergency response and disaster preparedness.

MAJOR SERVES AS BUREAU COMMANDER IN SELECT AGENCIES

The Police Major rank exists only in certain agency types—primarily state police and highway patrol organizations, some larger metropolitan departments (e.g., Atlanta PD, Baltimore PD), and many sheriff's offices, particularly in southern states. Departments like LAPD and NYPD use equivalent titles such as Commander or Inspector rather than Major.



Where utilized, Majors command entire bureaus comprising multiple divisions with multiple Captains reporting to them. Harris County Sheriff's Office policy defines the Major as responsible for establishing and enforcing bureau-level procedure manuals, planning programs to maintain competent performance levels, and advising the Sheriff on administrative matters and policy determination. Overland Park, Kansas requires 11 years as a commissioned officer, 3 years as Sergeant, and 2 years as Captain for Major eligibility.

A critical distinction from Captain involves the promotion mechanism: **Major is typically an appointed position** rather than achieved through Civil Service examination. Atlanta PD explicitly states that ranks of Captain, Major, Deputy Chief, and Assistant Chief are appointed by the Chief of Police. This reflects the executive nature of the position, where strategic decision-making and policy alignment with department leadership take precedence over competitive testing outcomes.

Pre-Promotion Training

Required training for Major-level positions includes FBI National Academy attendance, PERF Senior Management Institute for Police, or FBI-LEEDA Command School, plus ongoing annual supervisor and leadership training. California POST's Executive Certificate requires 60 semester units, the Executive Development Course, and two years as agency head or assistant head.

ABOUT LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND TRAINING²

The **Bureau of Justice Assistance Law Enforcement Leadership Initiative (LELI)** provides the national framework for leadership competencies, developed in partnership with IACP, FBI Academy, National Sheriffs' Association, PERF, and Major Cities Chiefs Association. Core values emphasize integrity and commitment to Constitutional principles, while core skills focus on effective communication, understanding social context, and problem solving in multi-cultural settings.

The **IACP First-Line Leadership program** identifies four essential skills: communication, self-awareness, empowerment, and accountability, with learning objectives spanning inspiration, rapport-building, conflict management, resilience-fostering, and leading with integrity.

Competency requirements escalate by rank level. All supervisors need communication excellence, integrity, problem analysis, and interpersonal relations. Sergeant-level additions include delegation, team development, performance management, and conflict resolution. Command-level positions require strategic planning, budget and resource management, policy development, and external stakeholder engagement capabilities.

Executive development programs serve as informal prerequisites for command advancement. The **FBI National Academy's** 10-week program at Quantico provides 18 semester hours through University of Virginia affiliation, covering intelligence theory, terrorism, management science, behavioral science, and law enforcement communication. Related programs include the National Executive Institute for large agency heads, Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar for

² The mention of resources here is not an endorsement on the efficacy nor effectiveness of tests nor training. This is provided as a resource for agencies to inquire.



mid-sized agencies, and National Command Course for agencies with fewer than 50 sworn personnel.

STANDARDIZED TESTING INSTRUMENTS SUPPORT PROMOTIONAL DECISIONS

Assessment center methodology, considered the "gold standard" for promotional testing, relies on validated dimensions derived from job task analysis. The most commonly evaluated competencies include:

- Cognitive dimensions—problem analysis, judgment, decisiveness, and planning/organization—test candidates' ability to identify issues, make sound decisions under pressure, and structure work effectively.
- Leadership dimensions—supervision, delegation, initiative, and team development—evaluate ability to guide and motivate others.
- Communication dimensions assess both oral presentation skills and written clarity. Interpersonal dimensions including sensitivity, conflict management, and relationship-building round out standard assessment batteries.

National First-Line Supervisor Test (NFLST) from [Stanard & Associates](#) was developed through nationwide job analysis with over 600 law enforcement professionals. The **National Second-Line Supervisor Test (NSLST)** serves lieutenant-level positions.

[IO Solutions](#) offers **Essentials of Law Enforcement Management** tests for First Line Supervisor, Middle Manager, and Upper Command levels, covering constitutional law, supervision/management/leadership, tactics/strategy, investigations/procedures, and modern policing topics.

The **IACP Testing and Assessment Center services** provide custom promotional examination systems using job analysis surveys and computer-based question selection from validated test banks. Assessment centers feature trained assessors evaluating candidates through job simulations. Custom examinations incorporate agency-specific materials including policy manuals, state law, and labor agreements.

Assessment validity depends on job analysis foundation. Content validation requires exercises simulating actual job conditions, questions based on agency-specific materials, and review by subject matter experts. Legal defensibility requires demonstrable job-relatedness for all testing components.



IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

Agencies applying this research to restructuring initiatives should:

1. Conduct thorough job task analysis using the frameworks identified but incorporating agency-specific operational realities, technology platforms, and geographic/demographic factors
2. Engage stakeholders early including supervisory associations, command staff, human resources, and legal counsel to ensure structural proposals address organizational, legal, and labor relations considerations simultaneously
3. Document decision rationale comprehensively by explicitly connecting proposed changes to cited standards, peer practices, and operational requirements, creating a defensible record for subsequent review
4. Pilot test structural changes where feasible, using temporary reassignments or limited-scope implementation to validate assumptions before permanent reorganization
5. Build in evaluation mechanisms that enable objective assessment of whether restructuring achieved intended outcomes (improved span of control, enhanced accountability, cost efficiencies, etc.)

CONCLUSION

Agency size remains the primary determinant of how supervisory roles function in practice. Small departments require generalist supervisors performing multi-level responsibilities, while large agencies support specialized command structures with clear role separation. The competency models universally emphasize communication, ethical judgment, and interpersonal relations, with strategic planning and policy development capabilities becoming essential at command levels.

Professional development resources from IACP, PERF, FBI National Academy, and state training academies provide pathways for building supervisory competencies, while validated assessment center methodologies offer legally defensible promotion processes grounded in job task analysis. Organizations seeking to establish or refine position requirements should reference CALEA Chapter 21 standards, their state POST certification frameworks, and O*NET occupational descriptions as foundational documents.

Law enforcement organizational structures should reflect evidence-based design principles rather than historical accident. This report equips agency leadership, human resources professionals, and labor relations specialists with initial documentation to evaluate the need to transform rank structures from inherited artifacts into purposefully designed systems that support modern policing. By grounding structural decisions in validated professional standards, agencies enhance both operational effectiveness and institutional legitimacy.



APPENDIX A

ABOUT AGENCY SIZE AND RANKING

Agency size fundamentally reshapes rank responsibilities. Bureau of Justice Statistics data reveals **17,541 state and local law enforcement agencies** in the United States, with 67% being local police departments. The IACP classifies smaller agencies as those with fewer than 50 sworn officers serving populations under 50,000—over 14,000 departments fall into this category. ***This distribution means most American law enforcement agencies operate with compressed rank structures that dramatically alter supervisory expectations.***

- **Small departments (1-25 sworn officers)** typically maintain only 3-4 ranks: Officer, Sergeant, and Chief. Sergeants in these agencies supervise entire watch shifts while handling scheduling, training, and administrative functions that Lieutenants and Captains perform in larger organizations. The Chief remains directly involved in day-to-day operations, and no specialized units exist. Anne Arundel County's (MD) policy suggests a maximum of 12 employees or 8 patrol beats per first-line supervisor as a benchmark, but small agency sergeants often exceed this span while also responding to calls.
- **Medium departments (25-100 sworn officers)** typically feature 4-6 ranks with more formal chains of command. Lieutenant positions emerge to oversee day-to-day operations, and beginning specialization (detectives, traffic units) becomes feasible. The Sergeant role becomes more clearly defined as first-line supervision rather than de facto middle management.
- **Large departments (100-1,000 sworn officers)** support 6-8 ranks with full specialization and multiple divisions. Captains manage entire divisions with clear distinctions between management and executive levels. The Major or Commander rank appears, creating separation between division-level and bureau-level command.
- **Very large metropolitan departments (1,000+ officers)** operate with 8+ distinct rank levels including multiple grades within ranks (Sergeant I/II, Detective I/II/III, Captain I/II/III). These agencies feature police commissioners or superintendents appointed by mayors, complex bureau structures, and highly specialized units.



APPENDIX B

CALEA AND POST SYSTEMS PROVIDE THE PRIMARY CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORKS

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), founded in 1979 by IACP, NOBLE, the National Sheriffs' Association, and PERF, establishes the most widely recognized voluntary standards framework. Over 800 agencies utilize CALEA standards, which include specific personnel requirements in Chapter 21:

- Standard 21.1.1 requires written job analysis for every class of employee
- Standard 21.2.1 mandates a written classification plan categorizing every job
- Standard 21.2.2 requires maintained and available job descriptions
- Standard 21.2.4 requires workload assessments for all organizational components at least every four years

CALEA organizational standards (Chapter 1) address supervisory accountability, employee accountability to one supervisor, and authority-responsibility alignment. Chapter 26 covers supervisory disciplinary authority and appeal procedures.

Additional information about classifications includes:

- *State POST commissions* provide the most formalized certification frameworks with mandated training. California POST's hierarchical certificate structure—Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, Supervisory, Management, Executive—establishes clear competency gates for each career stage. Texas TCOLE requires proficiency certificates based on years of service, training hours, and specific course completions, with 40 hours of continuing education every two years.
- The *Bureau of Labor Statistics O*NET database* (SOC 33-1012.00 for First-Line Supervisors of Police and Detectives) offers a standardized job task analysis framework identifying 13 core tasks, key work activities, and essential competencies including self-confidence, leadership orientation, perseverance, adaptability, stress tolerance, and integrity.
- *FLSA classification* creates important legal distinctions: lieutenants and above generally qualify as exempt executives under Section 13(a)(1) based on management as primary duty, supervision of two or more employees, and hiring/firing authority. Sergeants typically remain non-exempt and eligible for overtime under the Section 7(k) exemption's 28-day/171-hour threshold calculations.



APPENDIX C

POLICE EXECUTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Resources for Law Enforcement Leadership Development

The following executive training programs represent nationally and internationally recognized leadership development opportunities for law enforcement supervisors and command staff. These programs provide formal education in contemporary management practices, leadership theory, organizational behavior, and strategic decision-making. Agencies developing rank structures and position requirements should consider these programs as developmental pathways for personnel progression from first-line supervision through executive leadership.

National Executive-Level Programs

FBI National Academy

Provider: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Quantico, Virginia

Duration: 10 weeks (residential)

Target Audience: Mid-level managers from local, state, federal, and international agencies

Curriculum Focus: Intelligence theory, terrorism and terrorist mindsets, management science, law, behavioral science, law enforcement communication, and forensic science

Academic Credit: Undergraduate and/or graduate courses through University of Virginia partnership (18 semester hours available)

Graduates: Over 54,000 since 1935

Selection: Highly competitive; nominated by agency heads; generally requires 21+ years of law enforcement experience

Website: <https://www.fbi.gov/services/training-academy/national-academy>

Program Notes: The FBI National Academy is the largest and most widely known executive training program globally. Four sessions held annually, each accommodating approximately 220 officers. Graduates form an extensive international network through the FBI National Academy Associates (FBINAA). Often viewed as a career capstone achievement.

FBI National Executive Institute (NEI)

Provider: Federal Bureau of Investigation

Duration: Variable sessions (typically 2-3 weeks)

Target Audience: Chief executives and senior command staff of large law enforcement agencies

Curriculum Focus: No set curriculum; flexible programming addressing contemporary policing issues through expert presentations and facilitated discussions

Selection: Agency heads from the largest U.S. law enforcement agencies

Program Notes: Created for executives of the nation's largest departments. Emphasizes strategic thinking, leadership challenges at the executive level, and peer-to-peer learning among chiefs and sheriffs.

FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar (LEEDS)

Provider: Federal Bureau of Investigation

Duration: Two one-week cycles annually

Target Audience: Executives from mid-sized law enforcement agencies



Curriculum Focus: Subject matter expert presentations, facilitated discussions, problem-solving, leadership-related site visits

Program Notes: Created in 1981 to serve mid-sized agencies (typically 100-1,000 sworn officers). Complements the National Academy and NEI by addressing the specific challenges faced by agencies with fewer resources than large metropolitan departments.

FBI National Command Course

Provider: Federal Bureau of Investigation

Duration: Variable (typically 1 week)

Target Audience: Chief executives and senior command staff from smaller agencies

Curriculum Focus: Leadership development, contemporary policing issues, executive decision-making

Program Notes: Designed specifically for agencies with fewer than 50 sworn personnel—representing approximately 86% of U.S. law enforcement agencies. Addresses unique challenges of smaller agency leadership including limited resources, multi-role responsibilities, and community dynamics.

Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) Senior Management Institute for Police (SMIP)

Provider: Police Executive Research Forum, held at Boston University School of Law

Duration: 3 weeks (residential)

Sessions: Two sessions held twice annually (spring and fall)

Target Audience: Senior police executives, generally Lieutenant rank or above

Prerequisites:

- Bachelor's degree or accumulation of 120 credit hours from accredited institution
- Chief executive or senior manager with significant responsibility for major agency activities

Curriculum Focus: Latest management concepts and practices from business and government; organizational problem-solving; conceptual thinking about agency environment and operations

Academic Credit: University of San Diego offers 6 graduate credits for SMIP completion (applicable toward MS in Law Enforcement & Public Safety Leadership)

Graduates: Over 6,500 since 1980; approximately 400 annually

Tuition: \$9,250 (2015 rate; current rates available from PERF)

Program Notes: Highly conceptual rather than technical; requires critical thinking and problem-solving through readings and discussions. Brings together faculty from top universities, successful law enforcement executives, and private sector experts. Participants reside on campus for the full three-week session. In 2023, PERF created ten scholarships with funding from MacKenzie Scott for agencies that might not otherwise afford to send executives.

Website: <https://www.policeforum.org/smip>

Southern Police Institute (SPI) - Administrative Officers Course (AOC)

Provider: University of Louisville, Department of Criminal Justice

Duration: 12 weeks (480 hours, residential)

Target Audience: Mid-level to upper-level law enforcement managers; preference for command,



supervisory, or administrative positions

Prerequisites:

- High school diploma ordinarily required
- Placement test administered by University of Louisville Testing Service **Curriculum Focus:** Law enforcement issues, diagnostic problem solving, administrative law, leadership, police administration, legal issues, organizational performance and behavior

Academic Credit: Accredited college-level educational program

Graduates: Operating since 1951; currently graduating 153rd class

Program Notes: Consistently ranked among top three police executive educational programs in the United States. Participants from across U.S., Pacific Rim nations, and Europe. Emphasizes research-driven perspective and critical thinking. Fosters extensive professional network among graduates.

Website: <https://louisville.edu/spi/courses/aoc>

Southern Police Institute (SPI) - Command Officer Development Course (CODC)

Provider: University of Louisville (traditionally held off-campus at host agencies)

Duration: 400 hours continuing education (five 2-week sessions over five months)

Target Audience: Law enforcement managers

Curriculum Focus: Foundation for practical law enforcement administration; modern strategies in policing, leadership, and management with emphasis on practical application

Academic Credit: Organizational Management Certificate from Southern Police Institute (since October 2023)

Graduates: Currently graduating 100th class

Program Notes: Complements the AOC with more flexible scheduling. Evolves continuously with changing social, economic, and political environments. Graduates gain access to extensive SPI alumni network.

Website: <https://louisville.edu/spi/courses>

Northwestern University Center for Public Safety (NUCPS) - School of Police Staff & Command (SPSC)

Provider: Northwestern University School of Professional Studies

Duration: 2 weeks

Format: On-ground or online

Target Audience: Mid- and upper-level law enforcement personnel preparing for senior command positions

Curriculum Focus: Law enforcement management and leadership; intensive examination of trends and critical issues

Program Notes: Part of three-course series. Students completing all core management courses (Supervision of Police Personnel, School of Police Staff & Command, and Executive Management Program) eligible for NUCPS Executive Leadership Award.

Website: <https://sps.northwestern.edu/center-for-public-safety/management/>

Northwestern University Center for Public Safety - Supervision of Police Personnel (SPP)

Provider: Northwestern University School of Professional Studies

Duration: 2 weeks



Format: On-ground or online

Target Audience: Law enforcement supervisors

Curriculum Focus: Foundations for supervisory and managerial skills

Program Notes: Designed to benefit law enforcement supervisors throughout their careers. Part of Executive Leadership Award pathway.

Northwestern University Center for Public Safety - Executive Management Program

Provider: Northwestern University School of Professional Studies

Duration: 3 weeks

Target Audience: Chiefs, deputy chiefs, senior command officers, public safety managers

Curriculum Focus: Intensive examination of law enforcement trends; workshop critical issues shaping law enforcement

Program Notes: Third component of Executive Leadership Award pathway. Focus on executive-level strategic thinking and organizational leadership.

Regional and State-Level Programs

California Police Chiefs Association - Executive Leadership Certification Program (ELCP)

Provider: California Police Chiefs Association

Duration: Three-course series (must complete within 3 years)

Target Audience:

- Newly appointed chiefs
- Executives aspiring to become agency heads
- Tenured police chiefs and executives
- Management-level leaders supporting chief executives

- Courses:**
1. Fundamentals of Executive Leadership in Policing (FELP)
 2. Critical Considerations for the Police Executive (CCPE)
 3. Executive Strategies in Policing (ESP)

- Curriculum Focus:**
- Managing relationships with unions and city managers
 - Building healthy working environments
 - Strategic planning
 - Team vetting and building
 - Crisis communication
 - Navigating controversy
 - Developing innovative 21st century policing initiatives

- Contemporary legal issues
- Certification:** California Police Chiefs Association Executive Leadership Certificate

Program Notes: Open to all policing executives regardless of CPCA membership. Taught by instructors with successful leadership experience in policing. Provides networking with current and aspiring leaders.

Website: <https://www.californiapolicechiefs.org/executive-leadership-certification-program>

Arizona POST Executive Leadership Program (ELP)

Provider: Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board

Target Audience: Sworn employees holding rank of Lieutenant or higher

Curriculum Focus: Preparing for future promotion; influencing positive police culture; refining



leadership skills

Delivery: PowerPoint presentations, in-class exercises, discussions, scenario analyses

Guest Lecturers: Municipal government, private industry, law enforcement representatives

Topics: Local, national, and global trends in policing

Website: <https://post.az.gov/training/advanced-training/leadership-programs>

Arizona POST Front Line Leadership (formerly Basic Leadership Academy)

Provider: Arizona POST

Target Audience: Public safety professionals who have recently assumed supervisory roles

Curriculum Focus: Contemporary leadership principles and concepts for first-line supervisors

Program Notes: Entry-level leadership training for newly promoted sergeants and corporals.

Penn State Justice and Safety Institute - Police Executive Development (POLEX)

Provider: Penn State Justice and Safety Institute

Duration: 10 days

Target Audience: New and experienced police commanders

Prerequisites:

- 2 years of supervisory experience
 - Completion of at least one supervisory course (POSIT or High Impact Supervision recommended)
- Curriculum Focus:**
- Leadership (effective models for critical incidents, building high-performing teams)
 - Policy development and implementation
 - Internal Affairs command function and case law
 - Recruitment and retention
 - Public relations and social media management
 - Crisis management
- Approach:** Problem-based leadership development focusing on real-world challenges and practical solutions

Program Notes: Collaborative environment fosters shared learning and innovative solutions. Multiple sessions offered annually at various Pennsylvania locations and virtually.

Website: <https://jasi.psu.edu/cjpt/training-programs/police-executive-development/>

Ohio Police Executive Leadership Certification (PELC)

Provider: Law Enforcement Foundation of Ohio (in partnership with Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police)

Duration: 15 days spread over three weeks

Format: Intensive residential program

Graduates: 2,773 to date

Requirements:

- 105 class hours
- Weekly tests on learning modules
- 20 required readings
- 4 research papers
- 5 community interviews
- 3 team projects



- 3 speeches including capstone presentation
- 20 instructors/speakers **Vision:** Develop dynamic, visionary leaders to effectively serve and protect communities

Mission: Provide unique and innovative leadership education for today's demands and tomorrow's needs

Program Notes: One of the rare opportunities for law enforcement executives to practically apply leadership concepts. Focus on skills vital to long-term personal success and organizational change.

Contact: mallory.murphy@oacp.org or monica.miller@oacp.org

Website: <https://lef-oh.org/pelc-general-information/>

Federal Training Programs

Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) - Law Enforcement Supervisors Leadership Training Program (LESLTP)

Provider: Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers

Target Audience: Law enforcement professionals seeking to develop and refine leadership skills

Curriculum Focus:

- Human capital development disciplines
- Leadership skills through understanding human behaviors
- Communication skills
- Team building
- Conflict management
- Human resource management
- Legal responsibilities
- Stress management
- Workplace diversity
- Performance skills
- Public speaking
- Situational decision-making **Delivery:** Adult learning model employing lecture, practical exercises, case studies, self-directed learning

Program Notes: Focuses heavily on human capital development and its interaction with law enforcement mission and culture. Considers life and work experience in curriculum design.

Website: <https://www.fletc.gov/law-enforcement-supervisors-leadership-training-program>

Professional Association Programs

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) - Leadership in Police Organizations (LPO)

Provider: International Association of Chiefs of Police

Duration: 2 weeks

Target Audience: All levels of law enforcement (based on "dispersed leadership" model - "every officer a leader")

Curriculum Focus:

- Leadership at three organizational levels: leading individuals, leading groups, leading organizations
- Modern behavioral science concepts and theories tailored to law enforcement
- Translation of theory to practice **Delivery Methods:**



- Applied learning through small group case studies
- Videos
- Role-playing
- Class exercises **Program Notes:** IACP's flagship leadership development program. Highly interactive format. Incorporates human behavioral science in teaching leadership skills and applications. Practical theories applicable in real work situations.
Website: <https://www.theiacp.org/LPO>

FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Association (FBI-LEEDA)

Provider: FBI-LEEDA (independent nonprofit organization)

Programs: Trilogy Series

1. **Supervisor Leadership Institute** - First-line supervision development
2. **Command Leadership Institute** - Mid-level management development
3. **Executive Leadership Institute** - Senior executive development **Mission:** Advancing law enforcement leadership through premier training, education, and networking
Focus: Equipping members with cutting-edge leadership skills and management practices
Academic Credit: Earn college credit for completing Trilogy courses
Program Notes: Dedicated to enhancing community quality of life. Emphasizes practical application of leadership development. Extensive positive feedback from graduates on real-world applicability.
Website: <https://fbileeda.org/>

Graduate Degree Programs

Seton Hall University - Master of Arts in Law Enforcement Executive Leadership (LEEL)

Provider: Seton Hall University

Format: 100% online

Duration: 30 credit hours over six semesters

Target Audience:

- Law enforcement officers
 - Criminal justice professionals
 - Government employees
 - Armed Services members
- Core Curriculum:**
- Police leadership
 - Evidence-based policing
 - Crisis communication
 - Legal issues
 - Ethics in law enforcement
- Specialization Tracks:**
1. Applied Research and Organizational Development
 2. Emergency Management and Homeland Security
 3. Advanced Law Enforcement Leadership **Program Notes:** Operating for 25+ years. Designed specifically for working professionals in public safety. Flexible, rigorous curriculum. Faculty combine academic expertise with decades of real-world law enforcement and public policy leadership experience.
Website: <https://www.shu.edu/academics/online-ma-law-enforcement-executive-leadership.html>



University of San Diego - Master of Science in Law Enforcement & Public Safety Leadership (MS-LEPSL)

Provider: University of San Diego Professional & Continuing Education

Format: Online

Target Audience: Law enforcement professionals seeking advanced leadership development

Curriculum Focus:

- Communication
 - Technology
 - Change management
 - Community engagement
 - Data fluency
- Transfer Credit Opportunities:**
- PERF SMIP graduates: 6 units of transfer credit available
 - Credit validation service: \$79 per unit
- Graduates:** Over 1,000 law enforcement professionals served

Program Notes: Nationally ranked program. Leadership-focused curriculum develops practical skills. Partners with PERF to recognize SMIP completion as graduate-level academic achievement.

Website: <https://pce.sandiego.edu/>

Program Selection Guidance

By Rank and Experience Level

First-Line Supervisors (Sergeant, Corporal):

- FLETC Law Enforcement Supervisors Leadership Training Program
- FBI-LEEDA Supervisor Leadership Institute
- Arizona POST Front Line Leadership
- Northwestern SPP
- Penn State POSIT (prerequisite for POLEX)

Mid-Level Managers (Lieutenant, Captain):

- FBI National Academy
- FBI-LEEDA Command Leadership Institute
- Northwestern SPSC
- Penn State POLEX
- PERF SMIP (Lieutenant+)
- Southern Police Institute AOC
- Southern Police Institute CODC

Senior Command Staff (Captain, Major, Deputy Chief):

- FBI National Academy
- PERF SMIP
- Southern Police Institute AOC
- Northwestern Executive Management Program
- FBI-LEEDA Executive Leadership Institute
- California CPCA Executive Leadership Certification Program
- Ohio PELC

Chief Executives:



- FBI National Executive Institute
- FBI LEEDS
- FBI National Command Course (smaller agencies)
- Northwestern Executive Management Program
- California CPCA Executive Leadership Certification Program
- Graduate degree programs (Seton Hall LEEL, USD MS-LEPSL)

By Agency Size

Small Agencies (1-50 sworn):

- FBI National Command Course
- FBI-LEEDA Trilogy Series
- State/regional programs (lower cost, closer to home)
- Online graduate programs

Mid-Sized Agencies (50-500 sworn):

- FBI LEEDS
- PERF SMIP
- Southern Police Institute programs
- Northwestern programs
- FBI National Academy

Large Agencies (500+ sworn):

- FBI National Executive Institute
- FBI National Academy
- PERF SMIP
- Southern Police Institute programs
- Northwestern programs

By Development Focus

Strategic Leadership & Organizational Management:

- PERF SMIP
- Northwestern Executive Management Program
- FBI National Executive Institute

Practical Application & Problem Solving:

- Southern Police Institute AOC/CODC
- Penn State POLEX
- FBI-LEEDA programs

Behavioral Science & Human Relations:

- IACP Leadership in Police Organizations
- FLETC LESLTP
- FBI National Academy

Academic Credential Building:

- Seton Hall LEEL (master's degree)
- USD MS-LEPSL (master's degree)
- FBI National Academy (18 graduate credits)
- PERF SMIP (6 graduate credits toward USD degree)



Implications for Rank Structure Development

Agencies developing or revising position requirements should consider these executive training programs as:

1. **Professional development pathways** - Structure promotional requirements to include completion of appropriate training at each level
2. **Competency validation** - Use program curricula to identify leadership competencies expected at each rank
3. **Network building opportunities** - Recognize value of professional networks formed through these programs
4. **Succession planning tools** - Identify high-potential personnel for executive training as part of succession planning
5. **Evidence of commitment to professionalism** - Agency investment in executive education demonstrates organizational commitment to leadership development
6. **Recruitment and retention tools** - Access to prestigious training programs serves as recruitment incentive and retention strategy
7. **Academic credential pathways** - Partner with programs offering academic credit to create degree-completion pathways for command staff

Resource Contact Information

- **FBI Training Programs:**
Contact nearest FBI field office training coordinator or liaison specialist
 - **PERF SMIP:**
Police Executive Research Forum
1120 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 930
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-7820
<https://www.policeforum.org>
 - **Southern Police Institute:**
University of Louisville
Department of Criminal Justice
<https://louisville.edu/spi>
 - **Northwestern University NUCPS:**
<https://sps.northwestern.edu/center-for-public-safety>
 - **IACP:**
<https://www.theiacp.org>
 - **FBI-LEEDA:**
<https://fbileeda.org>
 - **State POST Agencies:**
Contact your state Peace Officer Standards and Training commission for state-specific leadership programs
-



***Contact IDEA Analytics for
questions or additional support for
your Leadership transitions***

IDEA Analytics



www.analyticsbyidea.com

Suggested Citation: Herbert, J. (2026). Analysis of Law Enforcement Supervisory Rank Requirements: Position requirements for LE supervisory and command ranks (Sergeant through Major). Version 2. DTAC Program: Leadership Series. IDEA Analytics, Phoenix AZ

