The Benefits of the Public Safety Accreditation Process

Description

The Process Benefits the Agency and the Community.

Public Safety accreditation is defined as the voluntary compliance with contemporary, internationally recognized standards for operation and administration. These professionally recognized and established standards are referred to as the “best practices” in public safety. Adherence to these standards not only benefit the agency and the manner in which they deliver services; adherence to these standards are a benefit to the community as well.

It is crucial to remember, however, that accreditation does not mandate “how” you, as an organization, must complete a task; rather, the accreditation standards mandate an outcome and it is up the department to figure out how to achieve that outcome. For those who take the stance, “no one can tell me what to do with my department”, you are right. Accrediting agencies are not going to tell you what to do, or how to do it – that’s up to you. The accrediting agencies are telling you what the end product needs to be. How you achieve that and what you do to meet that standard is up to the individual agency to determine.

The accreditation process demonstrates the strength of your agency. Embarking on this journey demonstrates that you are willing to ask the tough questions in order to enhance the service that you provide to your community. Accreditation is not easy and it is not a quick process. Anyone selling you a quick fix or an expedited accreditation should be viewed skeptically. This process forces you to look at every facet of your operation and ask the complex question, “Can we do this better?”. As you simply reflect upon the “can we do it better” question considering the multitude of aspects of your organization, you can begin to see how extensive this process is and how much time and effort it will take to truly embrace and institutionalize accreditation as an organization.

The accreditation process directs you as an organization to take an introspective look at your entire operation. The process will assist you in reviewing organizational structure and staffing needs, including how to recruit, select and retain the best candidates. The process will force you to look at your operations function and ensure that not only are you providing the best service, but that you are doing so following the “best practices” in public safety. The process will also force you to look at your ancillary and support services to ensure that they are functioning in a manner to support the public safety function.

The accreditation process will direct your entire team, from CEO to the line officer to civilian staff, to provide “proofs of compliance” in order to meet the accreditation standards. Accreditation is not a project for the Accreditation Manager and the CEO; it is a project that shows the results of the hard work of each and every member of your organization. It is crucial that the “buy-in” comes from the CEO and filters down to all levels of the agency. Without the officers and staff generating and providing adequate “proofs of compliance” the accreditation process cannot and will not succeed. The officers and staff of the organization need to be aware of the reasons for accreditation and their role and responsibilities within the process.

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Externally, the accreditation process will demonstrate to your community the agency's commitment to providing the highest quality service possible. It will demonstrate that you are voluntarily seeking ways to enhance the delivery of service and the professionalism of your organization. In the accreditation world we say, "You would never attend an unaccredited university, would you?". Well, the same is true for your public safety organizations, although the public cannot mandate that their public safety agencies be accredited, shouldn't they want and demand that their public safety agencies be accredited? While individuals don't necessarily have a choice when it comes to the public safety organization with whom they interact, the public should demand that their community's public safety departments strive to be the best and strive to provide the highest quality service to its community.

Remember that accrediting agencies are providing you with accreditation standards, not a policy manual. It is important to remember that these are a foundation, or a framework, and not an operations manual to which you can rely for day-to-day activities. Therefore, it is imperative that you take this foundation and expand upon it in order to achieve the ultimate goal of Constitutional Policing.

When you achieve your accreditation goals you must understand that the accreditation award is a symbol of honor for the department and its members. It is a big deal, so make it a big deal. As you now know, accreditation is not quick or easy and it takes the entire department's contributions to achieve accredited status. Make sure that each and every member of your organization is aware of the results of their efforts and that the community is aware of the accomplishments of their department.

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