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## City of Las Vegas Detention and Enforcement commission on accreditation of law enforcement accreditation program evaluation report

Karen Kelly  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Cecelia McNeely  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Sandy Seda  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

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City of Las Vegas Detention and Enforcement  
Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Accreditation  
Program Evaluation Report  
Spring 2009



Karen Kelly  
Cecelia McNeely  
Sandy Seda

University of Nevada Las Vegas  
PUA 791 Program Evaluation  
Dr. Christopher Stream  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Las Vegas Detention and Enforcement (CLVDE) is a highly efficient, professionally managed, unique law enforcement agency. The CLVDE has a multifaceted mission and is responsible for providing diverse law enforcement, patrol, code enforcement and support services for the City of Las Vegas. The agency is comprised of several operational divisions: A city Jail, an Animal Control division, Parking Enforcement and the Marshals (*police*). For many years, the CLVDE, has enjoyed the unique distinction of being a “*Triple Crown*” accredited agency<sup>1</sup>. The agency currently has attained accreditation status from several nationally recognized professional organizations such as: The American Correctional Association (ACA), The National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) and The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). This rarely obtained distinction provides many employees within the organization with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Here is the concern: By any measure, the status does not come cheap.

This program evaluation narrowly focused on the CALEA accreditation as it applies to the law enforcement division of the agency - - the Marshals. Administration conservative combined estimates put a value cost for time, effort, manpower, and expenses at nearly \$400,000.00 to \$500,000.00 thousand dollars for just the CALEA accreditation, which again, only applies to the law enforcement division<sup>2</sup>. This fact presents two questions:



1. Given the dramatic downward turn in the national economy and current fiscal shortfall that has negatively impacted municipal governments across the nation and especially here in Las Vegas:

***“Is it fiscally responsible to continue to maintain the CALEA status for the Marshals division?”***

2. The CALEA standards manual consisting of currently 460 standards was developed by police executives for a traditional municipal police agency. Given the highly specialized mission, unique organizational structure and diverse responsibilities of the CVLDE:

***“Is CALEA the appropriate barometer to use to measure the CLVDE?”***

In short, we are not convinced. The analysis of the data collected, staff interviews and personal observations lead us to the conclusion that the CALEA program standards are not appropriate and significant sections of the manual are not applicable because of the unique mission of the Marshals division. We would respectfully suggest that the time, effort, and expense could be better suited in obtaining additional resources such as officers or equipment for the department. This recommendation is provided for discussion purposes and is meant to ensure that the recommendation meet standards of cost effectiveness, reasonableness and feasibility based on operational mandates to the agency.

While some law enforcement executives claim many benefits derive from their participation in the CALEA program, the benefits are often intangible and at times abstract. There are significant areas of policy and standard interpretation that clearly

do not apply to The CLVDE because it is a highly specialized and unique law enforcement agency.

An organization's greatest strength comes from its personnel and in this case, we believe the current executive management team is this agency's greatest asset. Together, the executive team provides consistently superb leadership, timely communication, and clear direction. Collectively, this team knows where they came from, knows where they are, and knows where they want to be. They understand the importance of responsibility, standards and accountability. They have a keen understanding and appreciation of the applicable municipal administrative codes, policy and procedures, and State laws that govern law enforcement agencies. They recognized and embrace the importance of both professional and personal development at all ranks within the agency. This philosophy and leadership approach is demonstrated by example.

## **CALEA INTRODUCTION**

Providing law enforcement services in Clark County has become more challenging and complex with an ever-growing population. Police Officers face a myriad of societal problems and challenges that often require split second decisions. This kind of work environment requires city managers and police administrators to establish clear professional expectations and standards of performance by which to hold officers accountable. This is established through clearly articulated mission, vision, goals and administrative oversight.

Twenty years ago, several police executive law enforcement organizations came together to identify and publish industry best practices and standards by which to manage law enforcement agencies (Falzarano, R.J. 1999<sup>3</sup>). The purpose of this group was to come together in an attempt to reduce citizen complaints, vicarious litigation claims against departments and to establish law enforcement as a bona fide profession (Law Enforcement Bulletin, November 1999<sup>4</sup>). This group of public safety officials formed The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, (CALEA). Police agencies may volunteer to enter the auditing process, and those departments that meet the minimum rating criteria and established protocols, may attain "accredited status".

The benefits of pursuing accreditation, as explained by CALEA<sup>5</sup>, are greater accountability, reduced risk and liability exposure through workers compensation costs and vicarious liability, stronger defense against civil lawsuits, increased community advocacy, and support from government officials. If you are sold on that idea, the application process and subsequent phases of the audit procedure are



involved and lengthy. The process starts with \$250.00 fee that covers the application package, survey and agency questionnaire. The agency accreditation coordinator/manager serves as the single point of contact and is responsible for coordinating every aspect of the audit from, application, contract agreement, agency self-assessment pre-audit, CALEA pre-audit, final audit, final application payment (varies by agency size), agency accreditation confirmed.

The CALEA process starts by obtaining the audit manual. It is comprised of 40 chapters that encompass 460 performance standards that apply to specific administrative, operational, fiscal and organizational areas. It is the starting point for most police administrators to begin their self-assessment. Not all standards will apply to every police department. Agency size and mission will determine which standards apply.

The one function that is required of each police agency is a Written Directive System. This is a comprehensive system of communicating department rules, policy, procedures, memorandums, and special orders that is the backbone of the accreditation process. The Written Directive system allows the auditors to examine the: Department role, responsibility, relationships, prisoner and court-related activities, auxiliary and technical services.

The process is costly, time-consuming and can take from 12 to 18 months to complete although a few have attained the status in as little as six months (Lorena Signer). Periodic reports are prepared and submitted as dictated by CALEA, department policy and procedure directives are reviewed each year, subsequent

renewal applications are submitted to CALEA every two years for re-certification along with additional fees.

### **DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation group conducted several meetings with the police executive leadership team to outline the scope of evaluation, concerns, questions, ideas, proposed data collection, officer interviews, fiscal and political considerations. The police administration was very accommodating for every request made during the evaluation process. The original conversations and ideas for the program evaluation were broad and very ambitious. After several meetings with UNLV faculty advisors and the CLVDE administrators, it was determined that due to time constraints and scope of the evaluation that we would narrow the focus of the program evaluation.

#### **A. Staff Interviews:**

The evaluation group met with and interviewed the executive police group, the accreditation manager and members of the service (patrol officers and supervisors). While no one in the rank and file level staff had a full grasp or understanding regarding the details of the CALEA process, every member that we came across during the evaluation process, stated that CALEA provided their department with a level of prestige. They did, however, acknowledge that a lot of time and effort was spent in attaining the accredited status. One Marshal said, "That status set us apart and tells everyone we are not security guards." Another officer commented, "This is a great place to work. I don't know how much that status costs us, times are tough and I look at our accreditation like a dessert, it is

nice to have, but - - do we really need it? It would be nice to hire some additional officers with that money. ”

B. Field Observations:

The evaluation team set up a tour of jail and a ride-along with the officers. We attended roll call and tour briefing before we departed for patrol. We interviewed the members of the investigations unit and members assigned to various multi-jurisdictional law enforcement task forces. This allowed us to observe and interview the Marshals while on duty. The main objective of the ride-along was to observe and interview the marshals while on duty. We were able to compare the written job descriptions, and policies and procedures against the actual duties the marshals perform. Additionally, we were able to see the officers working and interacting with the public at the various city owned properties. This opportunity also helped to verify the unique role and law enforcement responsibility this agency has. The CLVDE is not a traditional municipal police department, however, to the public often does not see the distinction.

C. Comparison Analysis:

***Scope of Compliance***

A review of the written CALEA directives was performed and a summary of each directive was entered into a spreadsheet. The CLVDE administrative and departmental policies and procedures were analyzed to ascertain the degree to which the agency was currently meeting the CALEA standard. A numerical value was assigned to each standard based on the following four categories:

1 – Standard is met

2 – Standard is partially met

3 – Standard is not met

N/A – This standard does not apply to the CLVDE agency

It was determined that the CLVDE met 70% of the CALEA standards. 26% of the CALEA standards do not apply to the agency because of their unique role and mission. The remaining 4 % either were not met or only partially met.

### ***CALEA Standard Analysis***

During this phase, each standard was evaluated to determine its importance within the agency. Many of the standards were within the normal scope of the marshals' duties and were required to be met by the State of Nevada codes and statutes, and City of Las Vegas regulations, i.e. the Nevada Revised Statutes, Nevada Administrative Codes, and citywide policies. Each standard was analyzed to determine if it was performed in the normal scope of duties, and a letter grade was assigned to each standard.

A – This standard would be met during the normal scope of duties whether or not the agency was a member of CALEA

B – This standard is not part of the normal duties and was probably included to meet CALEA standards only

N/A – This standard does not apply to the CLVDE agency



It was determined that 66% of the CALEA standards were required for normal duty, i.e. the agency would be required to meet these standards whether or not they were a member of CALEA. 26% of the CALEA standards do not apply to the CLVDE. The remaining 8% of the standards appear to be included in the CLVDE policies and procedures to meet the CALEA standards only.

### ***Level of Compliance***

The levels of compliance indicated whether a given standard is mandatory, optional (other-than-mandatory), or N/A which excused the agency from complying with a standard. Mandatory standards require the agency to comply with 100 percent of that standard. Optional standards require that the agency comply with 80 percent of that standard. The level of compliance was an area we initially looked at, however, upon further analysis it became clear that it did not have a bearing on the outcome.

### **RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION**

The analysis of the data collected, staff interviews and personal observations led to the conclusion that the CALEA program standards are not appropriate and significant sections of the manual are not applicable because of the unique mission of the Marshals division. This is indicated in the results of the analysis that show 115 of the CALEA standards which is 26% do not apply to the agency. In some instances, program policy and procedure may have been stretched in order to meet the standard when it was clearly not within the mission scope of the CLVDE. The



analysis revealed this to be the case in approximately 8% of the standards. The agency has spent over \$405,000 and one third of the accreditation manager's time on 304 of a possible 460 standards, consequently, their money and time pays for only 66% of what CALEA has to offer.

While some law enforcement executives claim many benefits derive from their participation in the CALEA program, the benefits are often intangible and at times abstract. The reality is CALEA accreditation is a "badge of distinction" for the Chief of Police to display. The real honor comes from police managers who effectively manage the police agency. This is the case with the CLVDE.

An organizations greatest strength comes from it personnel and in this case, we believe the current executive management team is this agency's greatest asset. Together, the executive team, who came up from the rank and file, provides consistently superb leadership, timely communication, and clear direction.

Collectively, this team knows where they came from, knows where they are, and knows where they want to be. They understand the importance of responsibility, standards and accountability. They have a keen understanding and appreciation of the applicable municipal administrative codes, policy and procedures, and State laws that govern law enforcement agencies. They recognized and embrace the importance of both professional and personal development at all ranks within the agency. This philosophy and leadership approach is demonstrated by example.

The CLVDE has benefited by its participation in the CALEA program. Over the past several years, we believe the agency has gained valuable knowledge and

expertise from the administrative processes involved in preparation and maintenance of the CALEA status. This exercise has clearly helped to develop members of the service at all levels from the rank and file to the executive team. The written directive system embodies, instructs and provides for effective internal and external communication at all levels. It ensures that policy and procedure are systematically developed using best practices and provides for periodically updates in a responsible and comprehensive manner. The current administration recognizes, appreciates and understands the importance of that administrative function. It has served them well. The CLVDE is a well run law enforcement agency.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The evaluation team respectfully suggest that the police executive team consider the current economic conditions that the city is facing and maybe it is time to think about putting the time, effort, and expense into maintaining the CALEA status toward obtaining other resources, equipment and/or manpower for the agency.

During a time of very limited and diminishing resources, given the costs of maintaining the CALEA accredited status, (time effort, expense and manpower), one has to question the costs that are spread throughout the organizational to continue maintaining the CALEA status. We believe as one officer stated: "*It is like dessert.*"

At this time the CALEA status may be viewed more as: "a **want**, than a **need**." We would also suggest that the Accreditation Manager stays current on any changes, revisions, trends, and/or updates to the CALEA manual that may occur to

keep the Chief of Police updated for future consideration. The Chief may also want to consider bringing this issue before the Nevada Sheriffs' and Chiefs' committee for discussion purposes to establish State-wide accreditation standards for Nevada Law enforcement agencies.

This recommendation has been provided for discussion purposes and is meant to ensure that the recommendation meet standards of cost effectiveness, reasonableness and feasibility based on operational mandates to the agency.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Karen Coyne, Chief of CLVDE, interview March 27, 2009

<sup>2</sup>Karen Coyne, Chief of CLVDE, interview April 1, 2009

<sup>3</sup>Robert J. Falzarano, Chief of Police Long Hill Township, New Jersey, FBI

<sup>4</sup>Law Enforcement Bulletin, November 1999

<sup>5</sup>CALEA.ORG webpage;

[www.calea.org/Online/CALEAPrograms/LawEnforcment/lawenfbenefits.htm](http://www.calea.org/Online/CALEAPrograms/LawEnforcment/lawenfbenefits.htm)