

■ Executive Summary

California must assess and improve training for its nearly 700 law enforcement agencies and more than 87,000 full-time sworn and reserve peace officers. Such action would be an essential step toward meaningful law enforcement reform.

In the wake of deadly police encounters involving Black Americans and excessive use of force, lawmakers have looked to police training as one means to implement reform. In Fall 2020, the Little Hoover Commission launched a study to examine the role of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) in shaping law enforcement training standards for California's peace officers.

As part of its review, the Commission issued a series of Issue Briefs that provide critical context and insight into law enforcement training in California without making policy recommendations. The first, [California Law Enforcement Survey](#), details findings from the Commission's anonymous survey of active-duty California peace officers about the training they receive. The second, [Comparing Law Enforcement Basic Training Academies](#), reviews various models for law enforcement basic training academies across the nation and within California.

In this report, the Commission identifies ways in which the state can address current training deficiencies and enhance the training that officers receive.

Incorporating Research

California spends millions of dollars on law enforcement training each year yet does not require serious or thorough evaluation of how that training affects officers' behavior on the job. The state must take greater action to incorporate academic research into training curriculum to help identify effective practices and highlight deficiencies.

Recommendation 1: Lawmakers should temporarily refrain from amending or adding new law

enforcement training requirements and instead provide POST funding to assess how well existing officer training is working in the field and adjust training mandates as needed.

Recommendation 2: POST should revise its process for evaluating law enforcement training to include additional course certification criteria that incorporate training outcomes.

Recommendation 3: To encourage more rigorous analysis of officer training programs, POST should establish a process to collect and secure data for research purposes in order to improve training.

Recommendation 4: To foster collaboration with academic researchers, POST should establish a permanent academic review board to ensure training standards are aligned with the latest scientific research and advise POST on how to incorporate research findings into new and existing standards and training.

Assessing Academies

No overall assessment of the state's 41 basic training academies has been conducted to compare how effective each model is in preparing individuals to become peace officers. California must learn more about the structure of these academies to determine what kind of training works best for our officers, our communities, and our state.

Recommendation 5: Lawmakers should provide funding for POST to compare and evaluate California's 41 basic training academies and identify best practices. POST should report its findings to the Legislature in a report no later than one year after funding is appropriated for this purpose.

Rightsizing Entry Level Officer Training

The early training officers receive does not always line up with knowledge and skills they need in the field. California should reassess its approach to entry level training to promote knowledge retention and ensure that curriculum introduced to new officers best supports the needs of their duties and functions.

Recommendation 6: POST should review and evaluate the current basic academy training curriculum to, among other things, review the effectiveness and relevancy of courses for today's community needs and identify gaps in foundational training necessary to prepare new officers. POST should redesign the regular basic course based on its findings.

Recommendation 7: POST should assess and evaluate the content and structure of the field training program to determine how it could be more complimentary to the basic academy program.

Developing Robust Ongoing Education

California falls short of ensuring that officers receive adequate and appropriate training throughout the lifetime of their service. The state must rethink its current approach to ongoing training and create opportunities to bolster learning for officers throughout their careers – not just in the early years.

Recommendation 8: POST should establish a new advanced academy experience, required for officers with between two to five years of experience, to reinforce entry level training and incorporate the more advanced concepts currently embedded in the basic academy.

Recommendation 9: POST should assess the existing continuing professional training

requirements to determine whether curricula remain relevant and necessary and make adjustments as needed.

Recommendation 10: POST should identify and implement ways to improve officer access to continuing education.

Creating a More Representative POST

With the power to influence training standards for a profession that requires a high level of public confidence, the composition of the POST Commission matters. While maintaining a majority of peace officers who can speak to the often-changing realities of the job, the balance of the POST Commission must shift to better incorporate a variety of civilian voices.

Recommendation 11: Lawmakers should modify the POST Commission to add additional public members and ensure broad representation that includes members of vulnerable communities, health and mental health professionals who serve vulnerable communities, and experts in adult education and scientific research.