

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT ACCREDITATION (SHERIFF)**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Staff will be introduced to the New Mexico Law Enforcement Accreditation Program
- Staff will understand the significance of an accreditation program

The New Mexico Municipal League (NMML) developed professional standards and incorporated them into an accreditation program for New Mexico municipalities. This program has recently been expanded to include sheriff departments. Currently, the program includes 217 standards encompassing administration, operations, personnel, and training. These standards are consistent with national standards “Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies” (CALEA) but are less burdensome; they focus on professionalizing New Mexico law enforcement.

The standards developed are the basis of an accreditation program that affects every component of an agency. Through the dedication to service and professionalism evidenced by obtainment of accredited status, law enforcement agencies can greatly affect the communities they serve. Currently several municipalities and four county departments are seeking accreditation.

Accreditation is an on-going process whereby agencies evaluate policy and procedures against established criteria, and have compliance with that criteria verified by an independent and authoritative body. The criteria or standards are policy development guidelines that represent a professional level of quality service delivery. Being accredited will not prevent crime nor prevent you from being sued or civilly challenged, but it will greatly enhance your ability to cope with crime and the threat of successful litigation.

Generally, when an agency is challenged legally, department policies and practices come into question. If your policies and practices are not consistent with national or state standards, you have to justify how or why your actions were reasonable.

The cost of accreditation is very reasonable; it's based on the size of the department. Departments interested must submit an application to the New Mexico Law Enforcement Accreditation Board for approval. Once approved subject matter experts will assist the department in becoming accredited over the next two years.

### **CLOSING**

- *Encourage discussion about this presentation and the benefits of becoming an accredited agency.*