

The National Law Enforcement Disciplinary Research Project

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Without a lot of fanfare, the directors of Peace Officer Standards and Training Commissions and Councils throughout the nation have been creating more work for themselves. With an untiring commitment, they researched data concerning all the officers within their state who had been formally disciplined by the commission or council between 1990 and 1995. When the statistics were accumulated, they were forwarded to The National Institute of Ethics for nationwide analysis, conclusions and recommendations to be developed.

Every state, in some way or another, responded. Having a 100% response rate is virtually unheard of. The reason for such a sincere involvement? The research has the potential to yield priceless new knowledge that can lead to preventing the devastation associated with brutality, corruption and scandal. It is literally knowledge that has never been known.

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the National Law Enforcement Officer Disciplinary Research Project to identify ways to prevent officer misconduct within law enforcement, based upon an extensive, accurate needs assessment.

Research Goals

- I. Develop an effective survey instrument.
- II. Obtain a response from 100% of the states.
- III. Receive a written response of useable data from 50% of states.
- IV. Ensure validity and reliability of survey findings.
- V. Analyze the submitted data.
- VI. Develop leadership and training conclusions and recommendations.
- VII. Communicate findings throughout the nation.

Findings

Number of Officers Disciplined by Commission/Council

Findings

The total number of law enforcement officers having gone through the de-certification process from 1990 through 1995 is 3,884. Of this number 502 cases were dismissed, leaving 3,382 officers. Of the 3,382 officers, 2,296 officers were totally decertified.

When the number of cases dismissed (502) and cases still pending (278) are subtracted from the total number of 3,884 cases, we learn there have been 3,104 cases in which some form of discipline has been awarded.

<u>Discipline Action</u>	<u>Number of cases</u>	<u>Percentage of Cases</u>
Revocation	2,296	59.1%
Case Dismissed	502	12.9%
Suspension	320	8.2%
Cases Still Pending	278	7.2%
Initial Certification Denied	244	6.3%
Probation	203	5.2%
Reprimand	41	1.1%

Conclusions

The procedures that allow for the de-certification of officers varies tremendously throughout the nation. De-certification procedures should be standardized throughout the country. State and nation-wide systems for identifying officers who have been decertified should be developed and maintained.

Reasoning for Conclusions

Some people should never be hired as a law enforcement officer, because they have committed crimes or other unethical acts. Although the best solution is a hiring process effective enough that they are eliminated from consideration, the decertification process is next best solution.

Many problems exist with contemporary de-certification. Several states do not decertify officers. Many decertify for different reasons and in a variety of ways. Since there is no nationwide, standardized format used to track de-certification data, many states had only data related to particular sections of the survey. This caused the survey sampling size to vary from topic to topic.

Age

Findings

The average age of an officer who was the subject of this research was 32.

Conclusions

The majority of contemporary law enforcement ethics training focuses upon academy, FTO training or executive development. The fact that the average officer who has been decertified is 32 has reprioritized where the focus of ethics training should be, the officer with 5-10 years experience. Working within an organizational culture of disrespect and unfairness for several years can prompt officers to commit unethical acts.

Reasoning for Conclusions

Many administrators and trainers presume that new officers are the most likely to give in to the temptations of anger, lust, greed or peer pressure. As a result ethics training has focused upon new officers.

Sex

Findings

The study revealed that of those officers who were the subject of this research:

93% were male

7% were female.

Conclusions

The percentage of decertified officers who are male and female is generally consistent with the overall percentages of male and female officers within the entire law enforcement profession. Findings indicate the female officers are slightly less likely to commit misconduct.

Reasoning for Conclusions

According to The Source book of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1995, as of October 31, 1994, males comprised 90.5% of sworn, full-time officers throughout the nation. Females accounted for 9.5%

Race/Ethnicity

Findings

The study revealed that of those officers who were the subject of this research:

73 % were Caucasian

19% were African American

8% were Hispanic

Conclusions

The percentage of Caucasian officers who have been processed for de-certification throughout the nation is 8% less than the overall percentage of Caucasian officers within the workforce. The percentage of African-American officers who have been processed for decertification is 8% higher than the overall percentage of African-American officers within the workforce. The percentage of Hispanic officers who commit unethical acts is slightly less than the overall percentage of Hispanic officers within the workforce.

Reasoning for Conclusions

According to the *U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics*, 1996, the race and ethnicity of full-time officers in local police departments is White/80.9%, Black/11.3% and Hispanic/6.2%.

Education Level

Findings

The study revealed that of those officers who were the subject of this research:

70% had a high school degree

11% GED degree

10% A.A./A.S. degree

9% B.A./B.S. degree

Conclusions

The study concluded there were no substantial differences between officers who were the subject of this research and the national education levels of the overall population of law enforcement officers. This could not be verified by confirmed statistics, however.

Number of Employments

Findings

The study revealed that officers who were the subject of this research averaged 2.16 previous employments.

Conclusions

The number of previous employments of officers who have been processed for de-certification is not significantly different than the normal career changes of officers throughout the workforce. This could be verified by confirmed statistics, however.

Employment Status

Findings

The study determined that of those officers who were the subject of this research, 92% are full-time, sworn officers, 5% are part-time and 3% are auxiliary officers.

Type Of Officer

Findings

The study determined that the type of officers who were the subject of this research were comprised as follows:

56% were city officers, although they comprise 66% of the workforce.

33% were county deputies, although they comprise 25% of the workforce.

11% were state officers, although they comprise 8% of the workforce.

Conclusions

The percentage of municipal officers who have been processed for de-certification throughout the nation is 10% less than the overall percentage of municipal officers within the workforce. The percentage of sheriff deputies who have

been processed for de-certification throughout the nation is 8% greater than the overall percentage of municipal officers within the workforce. The percentage of state officers who have been processed for de-certification throughout the nation is 3% greater than the overall percentage of state officers within the workforce.

Reasoning for Conclusions

According to the *Bureau of Justice Statistics, Local Police Departments*, NCJ- 148822, Washington DC, 1996, **there are 622,913 city, county and state law enforcement officers in America.** Of this number:

**66%, or 415,224 are city police officers,
25%, or 155,815 are sheriff deputies, and
8%, or 51,874 are state police officers.**

Rank

Findings

The study determined 85% of officers who have been processed for de-certification between 1990 and 1995 were patrol officers, deputies or troopers.

Conclusions

From the perspective of ranks or positions within a law enforcement agency, the rank of patrol officer, deputy or trooper accounts for an un-proportionally high number of officers who commit unethical acts .In-service ethics training should set patrol officers as a high priority focus.

Reasoning for Conclusions

From the perspective of rank, the misconduct of officers ultimately processed for de-certification between 1990 and 1995, is presented below.

Patrolman	59%
Deputy	22%
Sergeant	5%
Trooper	4%
Detective	3%
Special Agent	3%
Captain, Chief, Sheriff, Lieutenant, all 1% for each group	
Assistant Chief, Major, Wildlife officer, each less than 1%	

Years Sworn

Findings

The study revealed officers who were processed for de-certification from 1990 through 1995 had an average of 7.2 years of sworn service when the de-certification was initiated.

Conclusions

Officers most likely to commit unethical acts are not rookies, but those with between 5 to 10 years of service.

Reasoning for Conclusions

The fact that officers processed for de-certification had an average of 7.2 years of sworn service is consistent with the fact that the average age of these officers is 32. This is a single, yet vital fact, from which ethics training can become more effective.

Offenses Charged

Findings

The four most frequent crimes committed by officers who have been processed for de-certification are making false statements/reports (19.92%), Larceny (12.12%), Sex offenses other than rape (9.48%), Battery

(9.15%). These four offenses comprise 51% of the crimes for which officers have been decertified. Other than filing false statements/reports, virtually all other offenses committed by the concerned officers can be grouped into four groups:

Greed (26.99%)

- Larceny (12.12%)
- Fraud/Forgery (5.03%)
- Sell of Cocaine (3.08%)
- Sell of Cannabis (1.36%)
- Robbery (1.19%)
- Bribery (1.19%)
- Stolen Property (1.10%)
- Gambling (.46%)

Anger (19.69%)

- Battery (9.15%)
- Excessive Use of Force (5.05%)
- Weapon Offense (4.02%)
- Family Offense (1.47%)

Lust (12.74%)

- Sexual Offenses Other Than Rape (9.48%)
- Sexual Battery/Rape (2.77%)
- Morals-Decency Crimes (.49%)

Peer Pressure (12.70%)

- Driving Under The Influence (5.08%)
- Drugs Other Than Cocaine & Cannabis (4.64%)
- Cocaine Drug Test (1.62%)
- Cannabis Drug Test (1.36%)

The Top Ten Offenses Officers Are Decertified For, Are:

1.	False Statements/Reports	19.92%
2.	Larceny	12.12%
3.	Sex Offenses Other Than Rape	9.48%
4.	Battery	9.15%
5.	Driving Under The Influence	5.08%
6.	Excessive Use of Force	5.05%
7.	Fraud/Forgery	5.03%
8.	Drugs Other Than Cannabis/Cocaine	4.64%
9.	Weapon Offenses	4.02%
10.	Cocaine-Possession or Sell	3.08%

Conclusions

Research should immediately begin, to determine the root causes for the excessive number of false statements and or reports that are committed. Individual agencies should conduct their own ethics training needs assessments, focusing upon the motivations of anger, lust, greed and peer pressure. Individual agencies should conduct their own leadership needs assessments, focusing upon the motivations of anger, lust, greed and peer pressure. Academies, FTO programs, In-service training, Leadership training, civilian training and job specific training should focus upon anger, lust, greed, peer pressure and falsifying records