

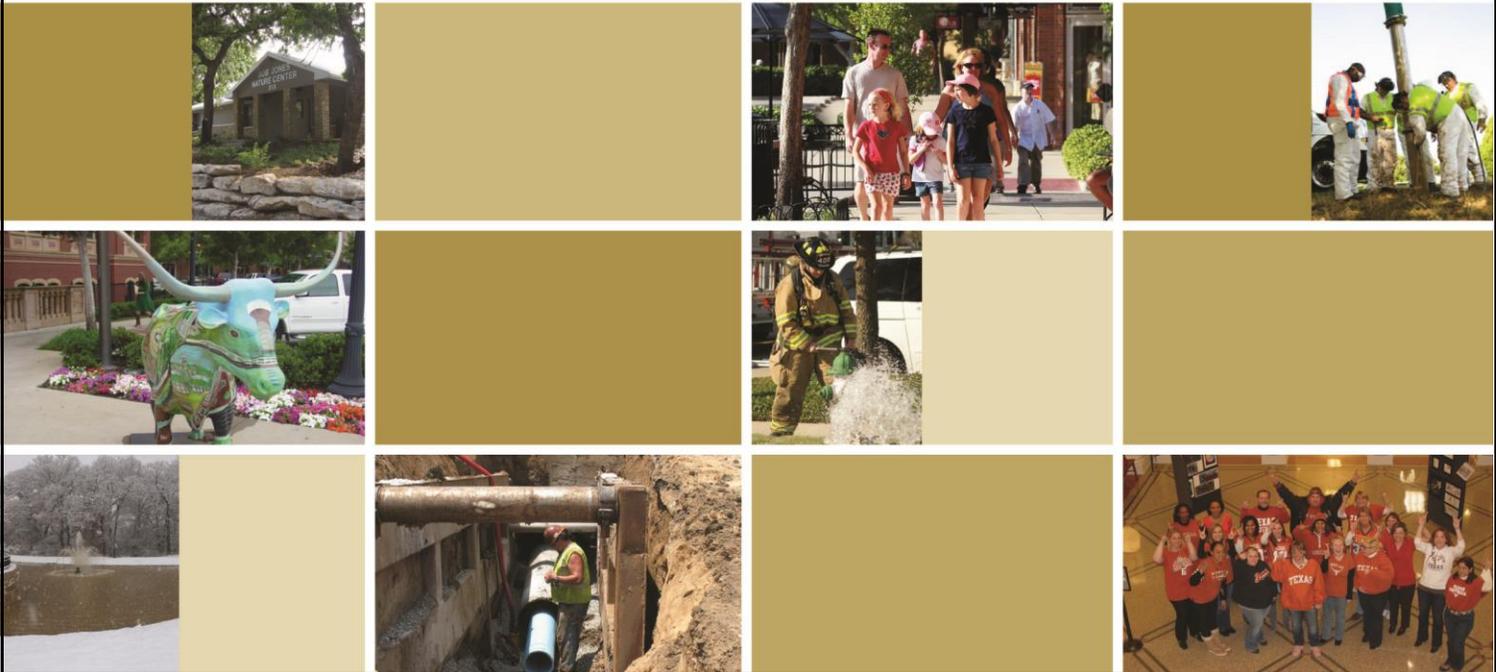
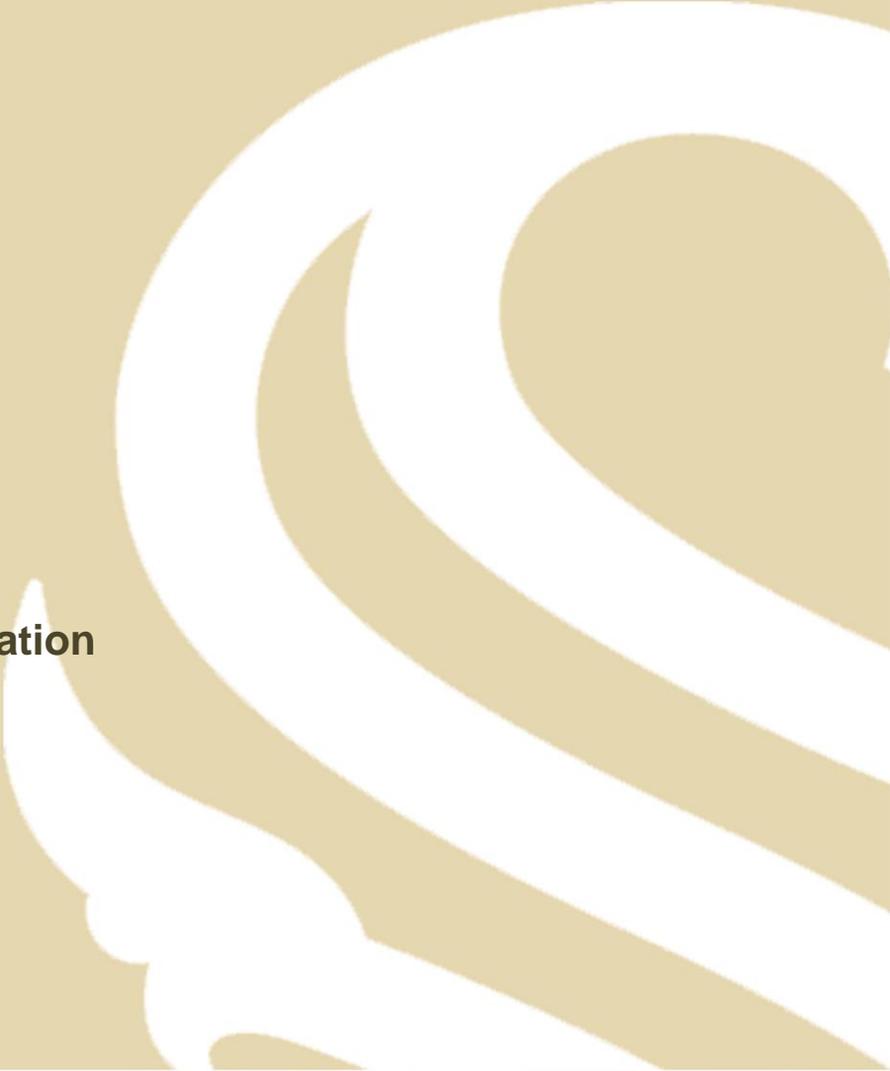
# A City of Southlake Project Briefing

1400 Main St  
Southlake, TX 76092  
[www.cityofsouthlake.com](http://www.cityofsouthlake.com)

## History of Police Accreditation

By: *Roland DeGrauw*

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### **Project Briefing Purpose**

Accreditation has been common practice for decades in a variety of professions such as legal, medical and higher education.

Accreditation in law enforcement services is very similar. The accreditation process provides a road map for the future which can often lead to immediate improvements and demonstrates to administrators and elected officials that the decisions being made are credible, and make the department a safer place to work.

Accreditation is important because not all police departments have the same capabilities and equipment which makes comparing one police department directly to another extremely difficult. Accreditation programs use years of research and development to identify key elements that apply to police departments in all shapes and sizes and ultimately defines the success for law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve.

These programs have taken the time and work to ensure that the information collected has been vetted with both academia and field operations. The academia element creates valid research through established methods identified by higher education, while the field operations element tests the academic theories to ensure the academic theories work from a practical standpoint. This results in standards that provide balance between

organized research and practical application. This development approach is paramount to the utility and credibility of the accreditation program. Simply put, accreditation removes the budgets and equipment of police departments and sets them all to an equal scale of measurement as defined by the standards of the program.

### **History**

The Southlake Police Department received their initial accreditation award in 2000. The department has been reassessed by a team of peer assessors from the CALEA Commission every 3 years since. There are currently 43 nationally accredited law enforcement agencies in the State of Texas. In 2011, the CALEA Commission introduced a new Assessment process titled the "Gold Standard" and agencies wishing to be assessed under this designation were required to be compliant with all mandatory standards and compliant with at least 90% of all other than mandatory standards. This new Assessment process focused more on personal interviews with numerous agency personnel (subject matter experts) from the patrol officer to the Chief of Police. All questions posed by the Peer Assessors are centered on various CALEA standards and the agency's ability to not only show or prove compliance but also show that accreditation was and continues to be a way of life in the department.

Since 2015, the Police Department has received the highest award of

re-accreditation – “Certificate of Advanced Meritorious Accreditation with Excellence” under the Gold Standard Assessment process. The Southlake Police Department received their last re-accreditation award on March 25, 2018, and will be up for another re-accreditation in 2021.

### **Current Considerations**

CALEA’s accreditation program can be divided into two parts:

- 1) The Standards – There are 459 standards and 1208 bullets attached to the standards which address nine major law enforcement subject areas. In total, there are a total of 37 chapters that cover national best practice standards in law enforcement operations from role & authority to property and evidence control. An agency must address and maintain ongoing compliance in order to have the designation of an accredited agency.
- 2) The Process – Consists of five different phases.

Phase 1 is the agency application. Phase 2 deals with the self-assessment. This involves an agencies’ internal review of their existing policies, procedures and rules as compared to what the requirements are under the CALEA best practices. Revisions, updates and even new policies may be required to comply with the set standards.

Phase 3 is the actual Onsite Assessment conducted by 2-3 Peer Assessors representing the Commission.

Phase 4 is the Commission Review. This involves the Chief of Police, the Professional Standards Lieutenant and the Accreditation Manager appearing before a sub panel of 3 Commissioners to discuss the results of the final report submitted by the team leader of the Assessment Team.

Phase 5 deals with repeating the cycle again and maintaining compliance until the next anticipated Assessment onsite.

### **Summary**

The Southlake Police Department works constantly to maintain accreditation because it is an ongoing process of constant improvement as reflected by the CALEA Commission. From the patrol officer to the administrative staff, personnel work together, as a team to maintain this quality of service on a daily basis. This hard work pays off as the benefits to accreditation are clear:

- 1) Accreditation assures the community that the department has definite missions and objectives that are appropriate for the jurisdiction it serves.
- 2) It promotes transparency by providing a detailed evaluation of the services the department provides to the community as well as creating methods and systems for addressing

- deficiencies while building organizational success.
- 3) The accreditation process is a management model that provides a blue print that promotes the efficient use of resources and improves service delivery to the community.
  - 4) The process also provides a framework of well-established practices in law enforcement and a system of accountability that is periodically tested through outside professionals.
  - 5) The accreditation process is important because it creates mechanisms for developing strategic and program goals, along with action plans which translate to the efficient use of taxpayer dollars, a well-managed organization and high-quality service delivery to the community.