

TRAINING DIRECTORS: A SURVEY TO DEVELOP GUIDANCE ON CORRECTIONAL TRAINING NEEDS

THE INITIATIVE The Moss Group, Inc. (TMG), in conjunction with BJA, is committed to supporting the development of essential skills and knowledge needed to reflect the unique and demanding challenges of training today's corrections workforce. Through the BJA initiative, *Improving Institutional Corrections Academy Training*, TMG is conducting a national scan consisting of on-site observations, surveys, and curriculum evaluations. TMG will examine training academies' focus, content, and quality and develop guidance for building and supporting correctional staff to increase public safety by improving outcomes across the corrections community.

THE SURVEY

TMG's Steering Committee of subject matter experts helped develop the training director survey. To ensure a comprehensive scan, we developed and delivered a targeted online survey to training academy directors in all 50 states through the Correctional Leadership Association (CLA), Association of Women Executives in Corrections (AWEC), and other stakeholder partners. The survey was designed to gather qualitative and quantitative responses from training leaders in the corrections field. It included questions to assess curriculum quality and resource availability, among other training-related topics. Responses were collected from August 2020 through September 2021.

The primary focus areas from the survey discussed herein include (1) academy funding, (2) training content and hours, and (3) training instructors. In total, 47 training directors from across the nation completed the survey, with 27.7 percent being from the Correctional Leadership Associations' Midwest region, 29.8 percent from the Southern region, 23.4 percent from the Midwest, and 19.1 percent from the West.

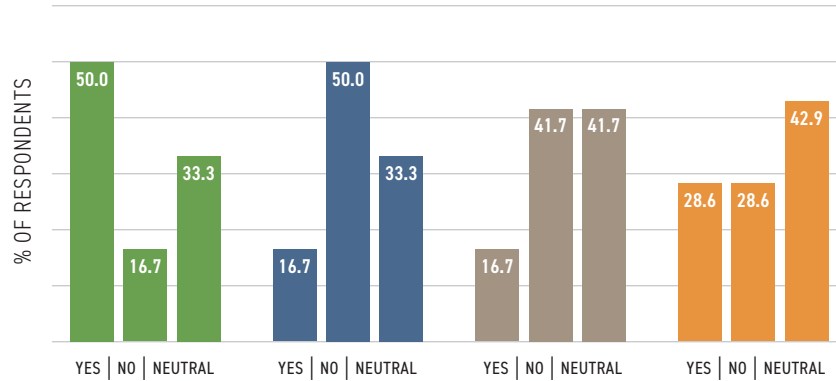
This project was supported by Grant No. 2019-RY-BX-K002, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

FUNDING

As shown in figure 1, most states reported that their budgets do not meet their training needs. The Southern and Midwestern states were most likely to report budget deficiencies for training. The Northeast region had the most states reporting that their budget met their training needs, which was half the states.

BUDGET MEETS TRAINING NEEDS IN 2019
NORTHERN, SOUTHERN, MIDWEST, AND WESTERN

Figure 1

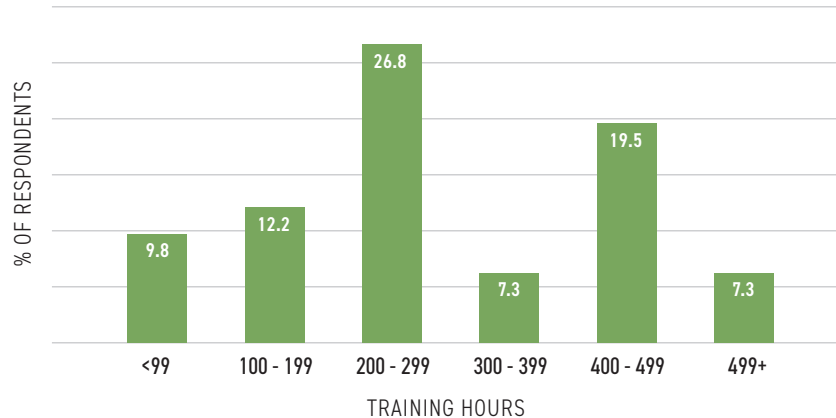


TRAINING HOURS AND CONTENT: NATIONALLY AND REGIONALLY

At the national level, there is substantial variation in the number of hours designated toward training newly hired corrections officers. For example, although figure 2 shows that more than 25 percent of states train officers between 200-299 hours in their academies, nearly 20 percent of states designate between 400 and 499 hours for basic academy training. Also, slightly less than ten percent of states train officers for less than 99 hours.

NEW HIRE TRAINING

Figure 2

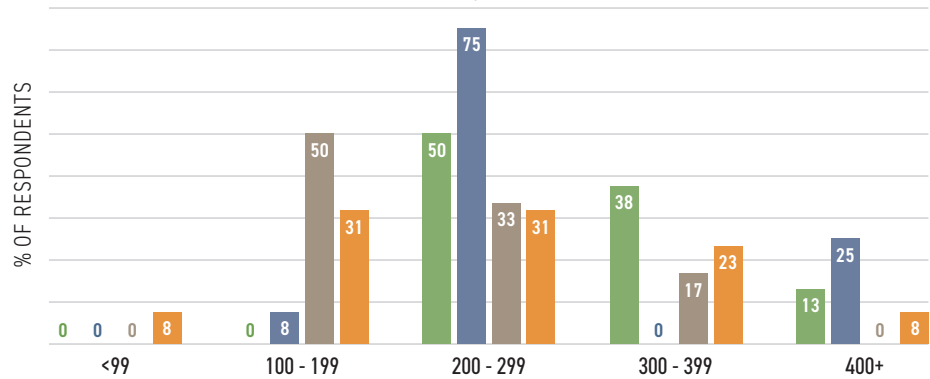


Turning to figure 3, we see that even within the same region, states vary in the number of hours they designate for basic training. Beginning with the Northeastern states, 50 percent train officers between 200 to 299 hours. The most frequent number of training hours for the Northeastern states, reported by 38 percent of the respondents, was 300 to 399 hours of basic training.

The Southern states reveal a slightly different story. Though most states train officers between 200 and 299 hours, no states in the South train officers between 300 to 399 hours. Instead, 25 percent of the Southern states designate more than 400 hours for basic training. The Midwestern and Western states appear similar in that most train officers are between 100 to 299 hours. However, just under ten percent of states in the West train officers for less than 99 hours; no states in the Midwest spend less than 100 hours on basic training.

BASIC TRAINING HOURS BY CLA REGION
 NORTHERN, SOUTHERN, MIDWEST, AND WESTERN

Figure 3



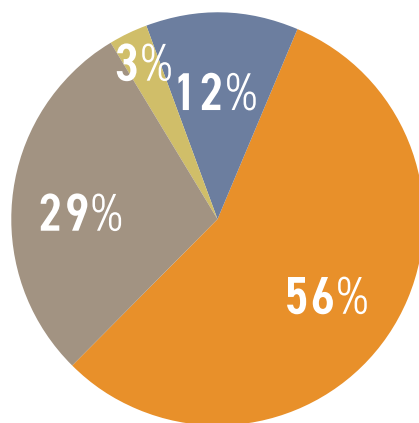
ACADEMY TRAINING INSTRUCTORS

Who are the individuals that train newly hired corrections officers in training academies? Our survey probed this topic by examining the qualification requirements for being a training academy trainer. Beginning with figure 4, most states' full-time trainers possess one to three years of corrections experience. Approximately 30 percent of states require full-time trainers to have four to six years of experience. Of note, 12 percent of states employ full-time trainers in their academies with less than one year of experience working in corrections.

Figure 5 shows the educational requirements for full-time trainers. As shown, 65 percent only require a high school diploma or GED for individuals to be a full-time trainer. Fourteen percent of states require officers to have any type of college degree to be a full-time trainer.

**MINIMUM YEARS EXPERIENCE
REQUIRED FOR FULL TIME TRAINERS**

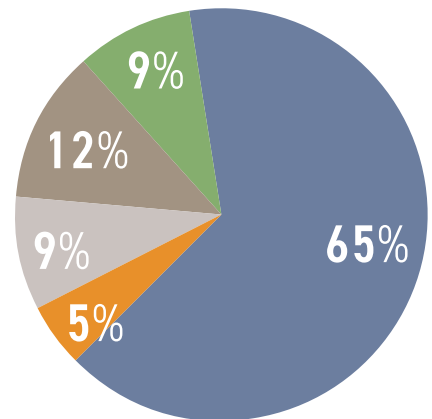
Figure 4



- 0 years
- 1 - 3 years
- 4 - 6 years
- 7+ years

**MINIMUM EDUCATION REQUIRED
FOR FULL TIME TRAINERS**

Figure 5



- High School or GED
- Two-Year College Degree
- Four Year College Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Non-degree
- No Requirement

Beyond basic tenure and educational requirements, the survey explored the various types of certifications that full-time trainers must possess to train of-

ficers in academies. Figure 6 shows the number of states that require each of the certifications listed. The most commonly required certifications are those falling into the categories of adult learning theory and instructional design. Other requirements consisted of Bloom's domains and taxonomy of learning, the ADDIE model, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) training for training, and basic instructor development (BID), among others.

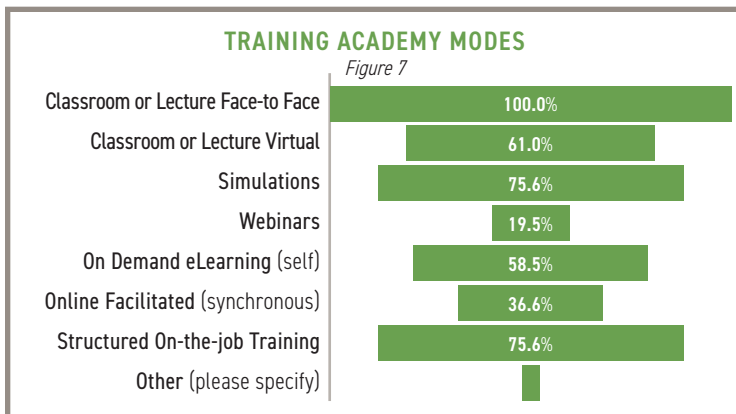
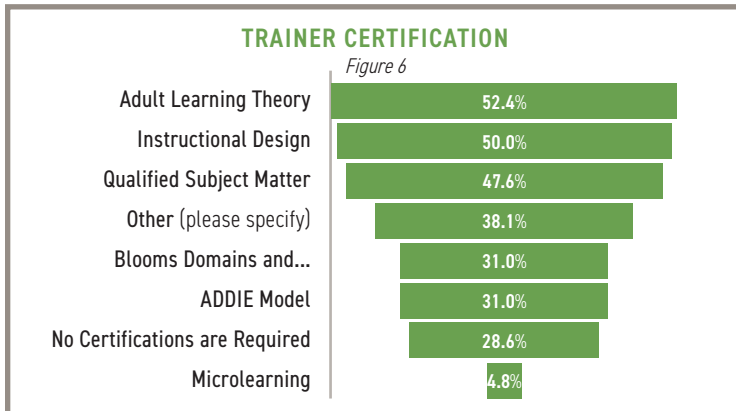


Figure 7 shows the instructional methods that academy training staff use to train newly hired corrections officers. The most common method is a face-to-face classroom-style lecture. On-the-job training and simulation-based training are also common in most states. Also of note is the use of technology in training. Approximately half of all states use virtual training and e-learning platforms to train officers.

OTHER REQUIRED TRAINING CERTIFICATIONS

- NIC training for trainers
- Certified law enforcement instructors
- Crisis intervention and performance excellence
- Peace Officer's Standards and Training (POST)
- Basic instructor development (BID)
- Carey Guides and brief intervention tools (BITS)
- State agency certifications
- Defensive tactics
- Firearms
- Pepper spray
- First aid/CPR

*The adaptability
of staff received
the highest
praise!*

TRAINING SUMMARY: STRENGTHS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A final topic covered in the survey explored what agencies are proud of regarding training. Agencies are proud of training focusing on professionalism, integrity, and accountability, wellness programs that include self-care for correctional officers, anger management, stress management, and better communication throughout the state about training newly hired officers. Finally, states are overall proud of the quality of officers that graduate from their academies.

GOOD NEWS! WHAT AGENCIES ARE MOST PROUD OF

- Focus on professionalism, integrity, and accountability
- Continuity of operations of academies during COVID-19 pandemic
- Curriculum development process and integrity of testing and evaluation
- Establishing a wellness program that includes self-care for correctional officers, anger management, stress management, and more
- How regularly the materials is reviewed and updated
- Communication throughout the state
- Quality of officers that graduate

In addition to the strengths of training that were highlighted, the respondents highlighted a number of areas where training could be improved. These topics might serve as a road map for future directions in training. Some of the themes consisted of more scenario-based training, a more professionalized training instructor workforce, more progressive training styles that are in line with contemporary prison challenges, and a more centralized training structure. See below for the additional themes our survey uncovered.

DESIRED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN TRAINING

- Use of up-to-date technology, including iPads or tablets
- Better physical training space
- More scenario-based training (including firearms)
- More professional, full-time instructors
- Implementation of a learning management system (LMS)
- Prioritization of training in strategic planning for agencies
- Consistency with training staff
- More progressive training styles
- More on-the-job training for new officers
- Smaller class sizes
- Automation of training records and statistics
- Centralization of training