



## USER-FRIENDLY ACCREDITATION SUPPORT HARRISONBURG (VA) POLICE DEPARTMENT

*The Harrisonburg Police Department (HPD) protects a population of about 50,000 in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. The department has used Lexipol's law enforcement policy solution since 2016.*

### THE CHALLENGE

Off and on for 15 years, the HPD pursued accreditation through the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC). But leadership turnover (three chiefs and two accreditation managers) as well as policy management challenges had stymied these efforts.

When the department first set out to become accredited, policies were paper-based, provided to each officer in a printed manual. "We rarely saw policy updates because that format discouraged us from making changes even if we knew they were needed," says Captain Carl Cline. "We also couldn't easily show the officers had read the policies."

Eventually, the department converted to an online policy management system designed to support accreditation, which made it easier to make changes and track policy acknowledgments, but "it was not very easy to navigate, for officers or administrators," Captain Cline says.

That system also did not supply policy content, leaving the department on their own to bring policies up to date to align with the VLEPSC standards. "Policing has evolved rapidly since Ferguson, and policies are continuously changing," Captain Cline says. "The policy content we had was sufficient for us at that time but if we were still using that now, it would not be sufficient."

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### THE SOLUTION

In 2016, the chief of the HPD at the time introduced the department to Lexipol's Virginia Law Enforcement Policies and Training solution. "Our previous chief had used Lexipol at a prior department and he was very much in favor of it," Captain Cline says.

The subscription-based service provides 160 Virginia-specific policies tagged to show alignment with the VLEPSC standards. Lexipol's Accreditation Workbench links the policies to the accreditation standards and organizes the documents in a folder



structure that mirrors VLEPSC's organization.

Erin Miller, who had served with HPD since 2004 and was named the department's accreditation manager in May 2017, says "Lexipol was a lot more user-friendly" than other systems she'd used. "VLEPSC has 190 standards you have to comply with, and those standards are broken down into 557 bullets," she says. "Lexipol's policy content covers about 75% to 80% of those requirements."

Miller also credits Lexipol with streamlining the policy review process: "I can give other leaders access to the policies during the review process, so they can make changes electronically. For me to be able to see the changes as they made them was great."

The Lexipol system also allows accreditation managers to upload and manage proofs of compliance and run reports for the accreditation assessor. "It quickly became my go-to in preparing for the assessment," Miller says.

## THE RESULTS

Armed with comprehensive policy content and tools to support the accreditation process, HPD successfully completed its VLEPSC assessment and was awarded accreditation in September 2020. "We strive for law enforcement excellence, and the gold seal is to be

accredited," says Interim Chief Gabriel Camacho. "Lexipol has been a huge tool in helping us achieve accreditation and to manage and update our policies in a user-friendly way."

The benefits go beyond the honor of achieving accredited status. "With Lexipol we are up to date across the board," Captain Cline says. "And it's very easy for us to make adjustments to policies and then get that information out to the officers in the field, have them acknowledge it and hold them accountable to it. It's easy to navigate and easy to use."

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The agency also benefits from policy updates in response to new legislation. "When laws change for us in July, Lexipol sends out the updates," Miller says. "We don't have to search to figure out which policies need to be updated. It's very quick to get out to our officers."

With Lexipol, the HPD found a community of agencies committed to the highest standards of policing, and the tools and content to support their commitment. "So many agencies use Lexipol; it's a positive network of support," Interim Chief Camacho says. "We are all striving to be better and we're doing it in the same way."