



Frequently Asked Questions

Certipol

Center for Professional Certification of Police Agencies

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1. **What is police certification?**

Police certification is the recognition granted when a police agency's institutional practices comply with the international standards recognized for policing in a democracy.

2. **Why is it useful?**

Police certification is useful to promote a higher quality of police service which, in turn, brings the agency and the community close together. Certification also allows police officers to work in a safer environment in terms of their physical safety, job stability and legal responsibility.

3. **How is it done?**

Through using standardized certification processes, the institutional guidelines and practices of police agencies are audited with pre-established criteria that consider local requirements as well as internationally recognized best practices.

4. **Who does it?**

The Center for Professional Certification of Police Agencies (Centropol) provides the certification. Centropol is an independent organization with specialized personnel who have the knowledge and expertise necessary to conduct the audit following standardized certification processes.



5. **Is it a mandatory process?**

Police certification is a voluntary process to enhance and support political and police leaders who wish to reform their police agencies in order to achieve international police standards in a democracy. Because it is voluntary, those agencies entering into certification illustrate their commitment to excellence in policing.

6. **What criteria does the certification include?**

In order to certify a police agency, the methodological criteria are the following:

- Observation by assessors.
- Audit of policies and procedures.
- Examination of the documents that prove the standards to be certified.
- Interview of personnel specialized in use of force.
- Images, videos, and other physical evidences of conformity.
- Relevant internal reports
- Interviews and comments from the community.

7. **What is certified?**

Certification is a statement to the community, that the agency has implemented and follows the management practices to run, supervise and correct their officers' actions under internationally recognized standards.



8. Why start with the use of force?

The use of force is the most determining factor in the relationship between police agencies and their communities. Because police certification is an effort to improve the quality of police services in relation to the standards expected by the community, the use of force is the most important area for this objective to undertake.

9. What does certification guarantee?

Certification guarantees that the police agency has undertaken important steps so that the institution's and the officers' performance comply with the standards accepted by the community and is recognized internationally.

With this, the individual actions of each member of the certified organization can be expected to be efficient, effective, honest, legal, democratic and respectful of human rights; and that when this does not occur, the necessary corrective and preventive measures are taken.

10. Is the institution certified, or the individuals that belong to it?

The institution is certified. However, in order to be certified, the agency must have internal procedures to certify that every officer is competent in the function he or she performs.

11. If an institution is certified, what happens to an officer that does not meet the criteria?

The certification process promotes self-evaluation in police agencies. In order to remain certified, an agency must be capable of detecting individuals who do not meet the criteria, in order to correct the situation, be it through training, reassignment of the officer, suspension from service or whatever is required, depending on the case.



12. Who pays for certification?

The cost of certification must be covered by the interested police agencies, through their own funds or through other financing methods.

13. How long does certification take?

The certification process, in all of its stages, can take anywhere from a few months to three years, depending on several factors such as the size of the agency and the areas subject to certification.

14. Can certification be revoked?

Yes, when the annual evaluation that accompanies certification concludes that the agency has stopped complying with the criteria originally certified.

15. What happens if an agency is not certified?

A more and more competitive environment is expected in public safety in Mexico. In time, the legitimacy of certified agencies will surpass those that are not certified. A certified agency implies better public safety and support for the development of the community. On the other hand, in the mid-term, an uncertified agency could imply, among other consequences, an impediment for the creation of social harmony and a competitive economical environment, and would be exposed to the loss of performance-based incentives.



16. How can agencies that are far from professional standards reach certification?

The certification process may become complex and slow for an agency with practices that are far from professional standards. However, by becoming involved in a continuous improvement process, in which different standards can be obtained one by one, agencies can eventually reach certification.

17. Why not certify in the United States, where there are already organizations doing it?

Our country's agencies require a certification process that caters to the challenges that exist in this country's reality and in the Mexican police model, independent of the fact that this model may reflect that of successful international experiences. Even when the principles of policing are the same in every democracy, differences in the organization, legal competences and training, among other factors, make it difficult to apply a certification model designed for one agency in another country.

18. Does it have international validity?

The Center for Professional Certification of Police Agencies has established a collaborative network with prestigious international institutions in order to implement police certification standards that comply with internationally accepted principles for police services in a democracy.

19. Why would a police agency in Mexico want certification?

Aside from such benefits as greater security for their officers, and better management mechanisms, the police agency would obtain legitimacy and trust from the community it serves and must work with.



20. Why believe in this, if no previous effort to improve the police has been successful?

International experience has shown that it is possible to reform police agencies to achieve a truly democratic police service that is respectful of human rights.

Police certification has a systematic and participative focus that previous efforts in Mexico lacked. It seeks to improve police work by permanently evaluating all the aspects related to policing, and making results available.

21. How do we know that this process won't be corrupted?

The certification process will be open, transparent, and subject to a scrupulous accountability process. Periodically, there will be independent audits, and the whole process will be permanently reviewed by a Board of Advisors, made up of representatives from the community and police agencies.

22. Are there successful certification examples in the world?

The use of police certification has been successful in countries like the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Certification is used in order for police agencies in these countries to improve the levels of recognition and trust by the communities they serve, which has accepted their methods and recognizes the quality of their services.