



Media Contact:  
Jonathan Jaffe  
(908) 789-0700  
[press@njsacop.org](mailto:press@njsacop.org)

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## **Berlin Township Police Department is First Recipient of New Grant to Fund Police Accreditation Process**

### ***New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police Distributing \$300,000 in Federal Funds to Support Accreditation***

**BERLIN TOWNSHIP – December 5, 2023** – The Berlin Township Police Department is the first law enforcement agency in the state to take advantage of a new grant from the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police (NJSACOP) to help fund the accreditation process.

NJSACOP, through its Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission (LEAC), secured a total of \$300,000 from the federal government to support non-accredited law enforcement agencies as they go through the detailed process of ensuring they have the highest ethical and professional standards in law enforcement.

The grant covers the initial costs of LEAC accreditation for up to three years or until the law enforcement agency attains accredited status. Grant recipients must then fund reaccreditation costs without the use of this grant.

The LEAC program provides the opportunities and tools required for agencies to successfully attain and retain accreditation, ensuring ongoing adherence to best practices and professional standards. NJSACOP officials note that law enforcement agencies are ineligible for the grant if they are receiving other federal funding for the accreditation process.

Earning accreditation is never easy, as law enforcement officers at every level of a police department need to fully embrace the lengthy and detailed process, with regular inspections from NJSACOP accreditors over the course of a two-year assessment. For those departments that earn this important designation, it expires within three years, requiring police departments to keep up with myriad requirements.

Berlin Township Police Chief Lou Bordi is a vocal proponent of the accreditation in his dual role, also serving as police chief in Voorhees. In that community, Bordi coordinated the initial

accreditation in 2019, and earned the designation again in 2022. Bordi is eager for Berlin Township to complete the process within the next 18 months.

“When I learned that federal money would be available to provide grants for the process, I was eager for Berlin Township to get involved,” Bordi said. “Accreditation would reduce our insurance premiums by upwards of \$14,000 a year. It quickly pays for itself, especially with the support of this grant.”

Bordi said it is a tremendous benefit to have independent, outside assessors review his departments’ policies and procedures. “You learn what operations you are doing well and what areas need improvement,” he said. “The goal is to meet and exceed the industry’s best practices.”

He noted that assessors are now studying the Berlin Township department’s operations, such as ensuring evidence lockers have multiple locks and separate weapons from drugs. The systems also ensure that a limited number of officers have access to these lockers and that video cameras are placed in strategic locations to ensure accountability.

“Becoming an NJSACOP-accredited agency has been identified as a significant priority in the early stages of transition because it is a proven method to drive change, make improvement, and meet industry best practices,” said Berlin Township Mayor Phylis Magazzu. “As mayor, I will remain committed to continuing the accreditation process in Berlin Township long after we receive our initial accreditation. I believe it is a required standard for all police departments in New Jersey that will enable them to continue to improve and not experience the type of organizational failure we experienced in the past.”

The NJSACOP accreditation program is managed by Program Director Harry Delgado. LEAC comprises law enforcement experts with the overall responsibility of adopting program standards, reviewing of all assessment reports and approving all recommendations for the granting of accredited status of applicant agencies.

Delgado explained that police departments are required to conduct a thorough self-analysis to determine how existing operations can be adapted to better serve the public. When the procedures are in place, a team of LEAC assessors verifies that the applicable standards have been successfully implemented.

He is quick to note that NJLEAP accreditation does not ensure mistake-free policing or crime-free communities. Nor will it stop citizens from suing police departments and their leaders.

“Accreditation is a progressive and time-proven method of assisting law enforcement agencies to improve their overall performance,” Delgado explained. “The foundation focuses on the adoption of standards with a clear statement of professional objectives. Our team of trained, independent assessors verifies that the applicable standards is implemented.”

Learn more at [NJSACOP.org](https://www.njsacop.org)

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