

Peace Officer Standards and Training

The Problem

Massachusetts is one of only four states that do not license police officers, while requiring licenses for over 50 other trades and professions including hairdressers, electricians, lawyers, doctors and many others.¹ As a result, even though police officers carry weapons and can severely injure or kill people, there is no procedure to revoke the license of an officer who engages in serious misconduct. Even if fired for serious misconduct, a Massachusetts police officer can be hired by another law enforcement agency.

Tragic events in recent years have placed national attention on the issues of police misconduct, accountability, and oversight. Several years ago a Chicopee police officer was fired for sexually harassing a female driver he arrested for driving on a suspended license. The woman he arrested was a licensed social worker. Because Massachusetts does not have a means of de-licensing the officer, he can work for another police department. Ironically, if the licensed social worker sexually harassed someone, she could lose her license and not be able to practice social work.

The Solution

Instituting consistent standards, training, and licensing for law enforcement agents across the state would give police departments a tool to ensure that they don't hire officers who cannot meet minimum professional standards. Such a system would protect both police departments and communities from the negative repercussions of having individuals with a track record of misconduct on the force.

An effective Peace Officer Standards and Training ("POST") program would:

- Establish standards and develop statewide curricula for licensing and training of law enforcement officers.
- Grant licenses to law enforcement officers who complete training, or deny it for those who do not.

- Establish rules for suspending or revoking licenses for officers who are convicted of crimes or engage in a pattern of conduct that jeopardizes public trust in the police profession.

In 2010, the legislature's Special Commission on Massachusetts Police Training found that the current state of police training is "negatively affecting the quality and quantity of current police training and police service in Massachusetts."² The Commission concluded that adopting a POST system would improve training, professional development, and accountability.

For more information on POST on the [ACLU of Massachusetts website](#).

¹ "Rogue Cops Should Not Be Recycled From One Police Department to the Next," [The Guardian](#), May 20, 2015

² "Results and Recommendations of the Special Commission on Massachusetts Police Training," [Special Commission on Massachusetts Police Training](#), June, 2010.