

**LAW ENFORCEMENT
PERSONNEL RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

A Center for Police Management Study



**THE COMMISSION ON
PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

16323

LAW ENFORCEMENT
PERSONNEL RECORDS MANAGEMENT

FOREWORD

This document is one of a series of management information publications developed by POST for use by California law enforcement administrators.

The material presented in this report is the product of a POST staff study. Ideas and suggestions contributed by the police administrators contacted during the period of this study are gratefully acknowledged.

Reactions, comments and opinions are invited to permit POST to continuously re-evaluate and revise the contents of this publication whenever it is appropriate.

September, 1974

Commission on
Peace Officer Standards and Training
State of California

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INTRODUCTION

Police personnel files, ranging in scope from single manila folders to sophisticated computerized personnel information systems, have always been important to effective police management. Equal employment opportunity legislation, the Fair Labor Standards Act, collective bargaining issues, and heightened interest in human relations factors are just a few of the reasons police personnel records are taking on added importance.

The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommends:

"Every police agency immediately should establish a central personnel information system to facilitate management decision making in assignment, promotion, advancement, and the identification and selection of individuals for participation in personnel development programs."¹

The Commission report stressed that the system should be designed to facilitate statistical analysis of personnel resources.

Because personnel costs normally represent eighty to ninety percent of the total budget for law enforcement services, personnel records deserve priority attention. True validation of current and future standards for selection, evaluation, and promotion of police personnel may ultimately be based upon documentation contained in police personnel file systems. Court decisions challenging the confidentiality of personnel files have also focused attention on this important aspect of records keeping.²

The overall subject of police personnel administration is addressed by several recognized texts and professional journals.³ The purpose of this review is to identify important elements a personnel records system should contain and examine alternative methods of personnel file management.

In small or medium sized law enforcement agencies, a well organized manual personnel file system should be sufficient to meet the needs of the agency. As a department increases in size, the expense of automated, or partially automated, systems must be weighed against both perceived needs and predicted effectiveness. When other information concerning departmental operations is either computerized or recorded within automated microfilm systems, a personnel records system may often be included at a minimal cost.

Since information must first be gathered and sorted whether the system be manual or automated, the emphasis of this report is a review of alternatives for basic, manual, law enforcement personnel records filing systems.

¹National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, *Police*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973.

²*Peter J. Pitchess v. the Superior Court of Los Angeles County (Echeverria)*; 11 Cal. 3rd 531, 1974. See also, *City of Los Angeles v. Superior Court for Los Angeles County (1973)* 109 Cal. Rptr. 365, 33 C.A. 778. See Section 6254, California Government Code, for exemptions listed in California Public Records Act.

³A brief listing of selected references has been included as an appendix to this report.

PERSONNEL FILE MANAGEMENT

A central personnel office (or function), whether it be staffed full or part-time, is normally a standard operation within city or county government. The central personnel agency may be under direct administrative control or it may be directed by an independent board or commission. Such an agency, when dedicated to principles of superior public service and career development, can provide valuable assistance to operating departments.

A central personnel office can offer broad staff assistance common to all departments of the city or county. This office should not be expected to maintain detailed personnel records which are operational in nature and essential for effective administration of a law enforcement agency. While copies of specified personnel records should be supplied to the central personnel offices as required, ordinances or regulations should not prohibit the maintenance of necessary records at the departmental level.⁴ If terminology becomes an issue, departmental files can be entitled "Administrative" or "Personnel Management" records. Continued liaison between the department and the central personnel office is imperative.

A written directive, defining policies and rules which regulate the management of departmental personnel files, should be issued by the department head. This directive should cover, but not necessarily be limited to, the following subjects:

- o Organization and design of the personnel records system.
- o Delegation of responsibility for maintenance of each element of the total system.
- o The location of storage as well as security and control regulations applying to each element (i.e., background investigation records, training records, etc.).
- o Provision for an employee to acknowledge materials before entry into file.
- o Availability of certain files for review by the employee.

It should be made clear in the directive that background investigation information is not available for review by anyone other than the department head or those specifically delegated the responsibility for personnel management.

The status of Internal Investigation Files before, during, and subsequent to announcement of final results and/or criminal or civil litigation should also be clarified.

⁴O. W. Wilson, Roy C. McLaren, *Police Administration*, 3rd edition, McGraw-Hill, 1972, p. 247-8.

ELEMENTS OF A PERSONNEL RECORDS SYSTEM

A comprehensive personnel records system would normally include, but not necessarily be limited to, the elements (or components) listed below:

Individual Elements

- o Background Investigations
- o Personal Information
- o Personal Health
- o Attendance Summary
- o Payroll-Fringe Benefit Records
- o Training and Education
- o Commendations, Complaints, Accidents, and Evaluations
- o Internal Investigations

Several, if not each, of the elements listed should be filed, stored, or managed separately. For this reason, each of these elements will be examined individually in the following discussion.

As mentioned frequently throughout this report, many alternatives exist for combining or further subdividing, as well as titling, the elements listed above. However, separating these elements into individual components does ease the task of retrieving specific information as it may be needed. Another important advantage gained is that when partial or full automatic data processing or microfilm storage systems become feasible, much of the necessary sorting has already been accomplished.

Background Investigations

A detailed guide for the investigation of peace officer applicants is contained in personnel investigation procedures published by the Commission on POST.

Once a background investigation is completed, regardless of whether the applicant is employed or rejected, the copies of documents and reports collected should be retained in file for whatever period they may be needed or required by law.

Because most information contained in the Background Investigation File is obtained through confidential inquiry, this material should be filed apart from other personnel records. Access to these files should be carefully controlled by the department administrator.

Although there is no such thing as a complete checklist for a thorough investigation, the illustration on page 7 may be useful for determining the status of any background investigation currently in process. This form, or one modified to suit local needs, could be used as a cover sheet or the form itself can be printed on the face of the envelope utilized to contain necessary documents and reports.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION CHECKLIST

Personal Information

The Personal Information section of the personnel records system should consist of at least a summary page as illustrated on page 7. This segment of personnel records might also be entitled "Administrative" because of the nature of the contents.

Personnel orders (or Personnel Action Forms) which document the date of employment, changes in assignment, promotions, demotions, or changes in salary rates should be retained in this section.

The employee's original application or resume (not to be confused with the personal history statement) can also be retained in the Personal Information section. If not maintained elsewhere, one fully completed fingerprint card should be retained in this section.

A record of equipment (badges, keys, uniform items, etc.) issued by the department to an officer can be maintained on a form such as illustrated on page 9. Departmental organization or procedures may require that these records be maintained at a separate, specific location.

Personal Health File

Health records could be incorporated within the Personal Information section, but the value of having this information segregated for ease of review should not be overlooked. Separate files are a necessity if the department requires a continuing physical fitness program and periodic physical examination.

Attendance Summary

The Employee Attendance Summary illustrated on page 11, when properly maintained, provides up to a two-year visual summary of an employee's attendance.

The coding suggested may depict certain patterns of behavior which are otherwise difficult to discover. An employee who consistently uses sick leave in conjunction with regular days off or one who always uses all sick leave earned can be identified by scanning this summary chart. Counseling can then be offered in order to discover personal problems involved.

A duplicate of the same form can be used to record overtime worked. This information is useful for payroll and/or budgetary purposes. A full year's illustration of overtime worked may also portray scheduling problems not previously noted.

Payroll-Fringe Benefit Records

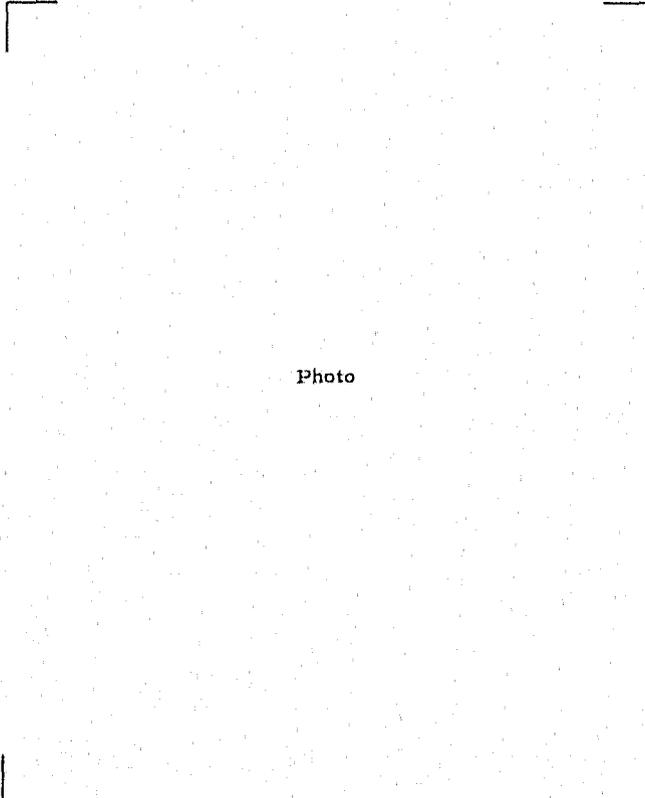
Official payroll records for law enforcement officers are normally maintained by the employing jurisdiction's Department of Finance (or Personnel). Actual attendance or status reporting will have to originate at the departmental, divisional, or even unit level of operation. Time cards, attendance forms, or daily activity reports may serve as originating documents for this information.

Data gathered by these original documents can be transcribed onto an employee attendance summary (described in the previous segment) before they are forwarded to the central payroll office. Other weekly or monthly summary forms may be useful or desirable for forwarding basic attendance information.

Name			Social Security Number		
			Date	by	
Medical examination report completed and reviewed					
Fingerprint cards to State Bureau of Identification					
Fingerprint return received ---- BI # _____					
DOCUMENTS VERIFIED					
	Date	by		Date	by
Birth Certificate			Military Discharge		
High School Diploma			Drivers License		
College Transcript					
Marriage Certificate					
REFERENCES CHECKS COMPLETED					
	Date	by		Date	by
Personal References			School References		
Military Records			Driving Records		
Current and Former Neighbors			Credit References		
Former Employers			Police Files		
			Local		
			Other Areas (Lived and Worked in)		
Secondary References					
Personal Interviews				Date	
by					
by					
by					
Narrative Investigation Report Completed				Date	by
Reviewed and Approved by		Date	Applicant Status		Date
			Employed		
			Withdrawn		
			Rejected		

PERSONAL INFORMATION SUMMARY

Badge or Employee No.

Name		Social Security No.	D. O. B.	Date Employed
Home Address(s)		City		Zip
Home Telephone	Phone (other than residence)	Spouse		
Children				
Blood Type	Known Allergies			
Family Doctor		Address		Phone
Other emergency contact Name		Address		Phone
Special Skills				
Languages		Hobbies		
Previous law enforcement experience			From	To
Higher education credits or degrees				Date
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">  </div> <p>Photo</p>		Certificates or licenses		Date
				Assignments
		Promotions		Date
Ht. _____	Wt. _____	Hair _____	Eyes _____	

EMPLOYEE ATTENDANCE SUMMARY

1. NAME OF EMPLOYEE _____	2. NAME OF SUPERVISOR _____
3. DEPARTMENT, DIVISION, UNIT _____	
4. RECORD OF ABSENCES: SICK LEAVE "S" VACATION "V" DAY OFF "O" HOLIDAY "H" _____	

PAY PERIOD CALENDAR FOR 1975						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
JANUARY						
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
FEBRUARY						
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
MARCH						
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
APRIL						
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
MAY						
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
JUNE						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
JULY						
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
AUGUST						
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
SEPTEMBER						
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
OCTOBER						
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
NOVEMBER						
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						
DECEMBER						
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
TOTAL WORKING DAYS _____						
TOTAL WORKING HOURS _____						

ANALYSIS OF ABSENCE RECORD FROM _____ TO _____			
5. VACATION A. NUMBER OF DAYS _____ NUMBER OF HOURS _____ B. NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TIMES _____ C. PRESENT VACATION BALANCE: DAYS _____ HRS _____	6. SICK LEAVE A. NUMBER OF DAYS _____ NUMBER OF HOURS _____ THIS EMPLOYEE AVERAGE OTHER EMPLOYEES B. NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TIMES _____ C. PRESENT SICK LEAVE BALANCE: DAYS _____ HRS _____		
7. ABSENCE WITHOUT PAY A. NUMBER OF DAYS _____ NUMBER OF HOURS _____ B. NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TIMES _____	8. TOTAL ABSENCES A. NUMBER OF DAYS _____ NUMBER OF HOURS _____ B. NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TIMES _____		
9. NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS IN THE PERIOD _____ NUMBER OF WORKING HOURS IN THE PERIOD _____	10. PERCENTAGE OF WORKING DAYS ABSENT PERCENTAGE OF WORKING HOURS ABSENT _____		

Training and Education Records

This component of Personnel Records is becoming increasingly important to the effective management of a law enforcement agency. Complete and up-to-date records of training and education completed for individual members of the department are essential and should be easily retrievable.

Training records are important for many obvious reasons. Some of the most important are listed below:

- o Career counseling and career development.
- o Determining overall departmental training needs.
- o Preparation and justification of training budgets.
- o Planning for required and optional refresher courses.
- o Development of internal training programs which complement those available externally.
- o Effective auditing of requirements for certification, promotion, or career incentive programs.
- o Continuing evaluation of courses and instruction available.

The form shown on page 15 illustrates one method of maintaining a continuing log of training and education as it is completed for an individual law enforcement officer. The "verified to date" entries at the top of the form can be initiated at the time of employment or at any time an employee's training and education records are examined in detail. This could occur during any career counseling session or at the time an application for a POST certificate is being prepared. Additional courses completed can be entered on the log chronologically until the page is full. When a page is filled with entries, new totals are entered at the bottom of each column. These new totals can then be transferred to a new page and the process continued.

The principal advantage of the continuing log system is that it provides, with minimal calculation, a current total of training hours and college credits (quarter or semester units) for an individual officer. This form should *not* be considered as a substitute for actual transcripts or certificates of completion. It can be a useful cover or summary form, however, if actual documentation is also retained in file.

Suspense (or "tickler") files designed to signal deadlines for required training, retraining, or license expiration dates may be valuable supplementary training records. One simple method of establishing a reminder system with a 3" x 5" card is illustrated on page 17. As an individual officer completes a required course, his 3" x 5" card is moved ahead and filed alphabetically within the segment representing the time period designated as the deadline for retraining in that specific course.

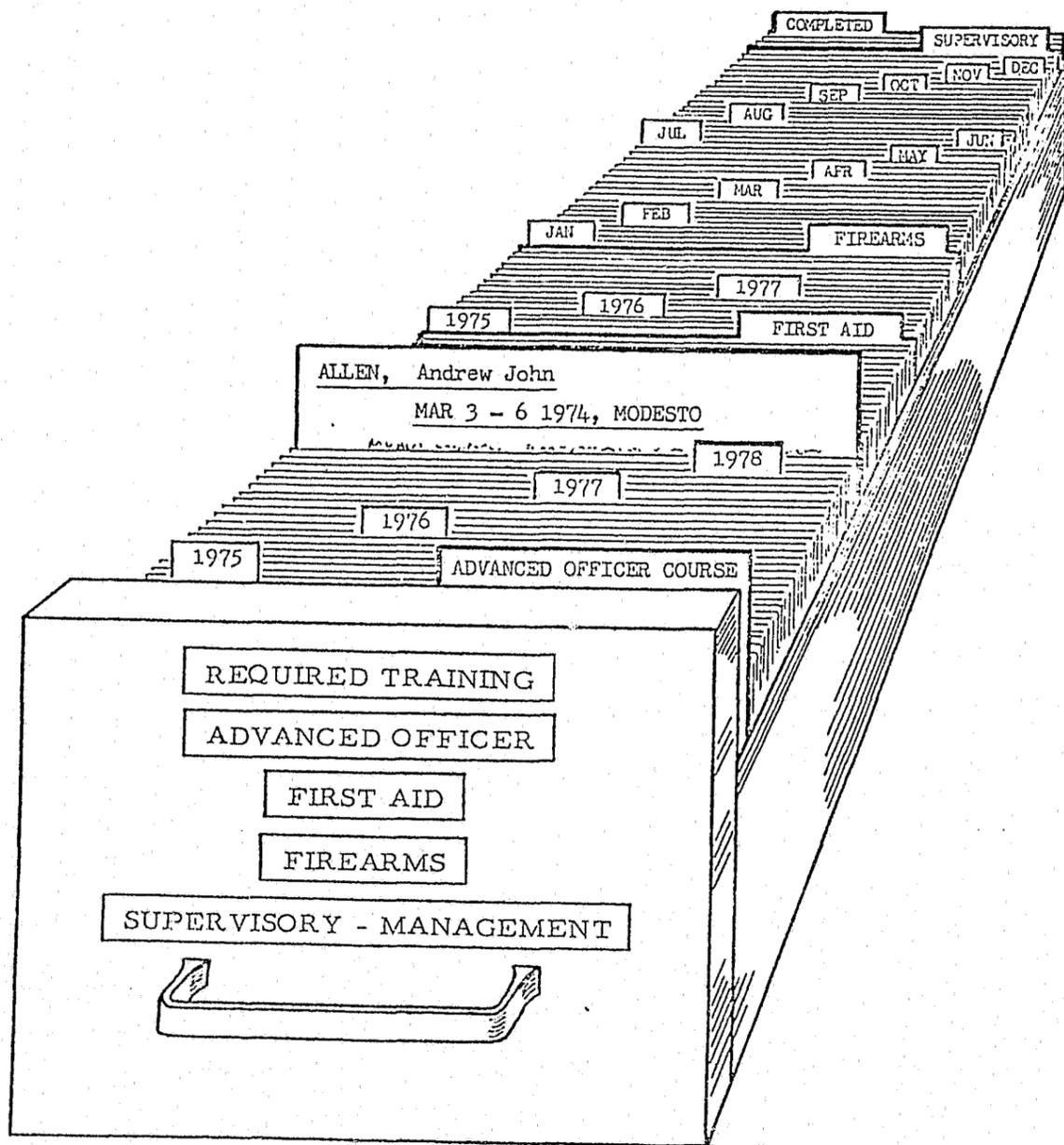
In addition to the subjects suggested on page 17, the same type of tickler file can be used to record completion of required courses for reserve officers and correctional personnel. Other special subjects applicable to an individual law enforcement agency may also be recorded in this manner. Card files for courses which do not have to be repeated need only two sections: "Not completed" and "Completed."

CONTINUING LOG OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION

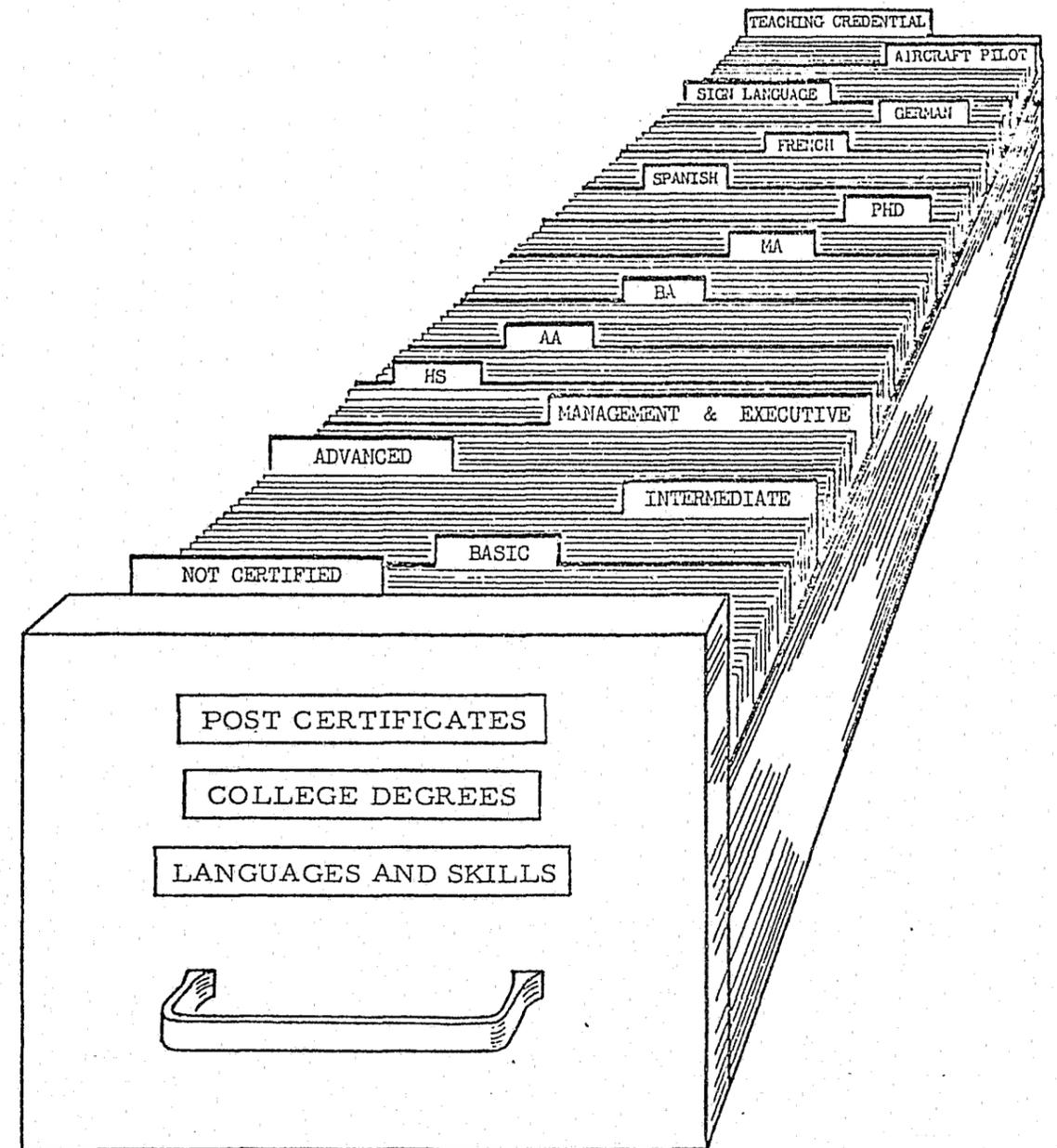
Name of Law Enforcement Officer				Social Security Number			Date of Birth			(Signature attests that the information entered on this form has been verified and is substantiated by records maintained by this department.)
Last		First		Middle						
Date Employed								Training Hours	College Credits Qtr. or Sem.	
TOTALS OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION HOURS DOCUMENTED AND VERIFIED TO DATE						Mo.	Day	Yr.		
Dates		COURSE OR SUBJECT TITLE	COURSE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	INSTITUTION SPONSOR, OR LOCATION					GRADE	
From	To									
						Mo.	Day	Yr.		

Totals to:

- 15 -



Suspense (or "Tickler") File
(3 x 5 card)



Skills Index File
(3 x 5 card)

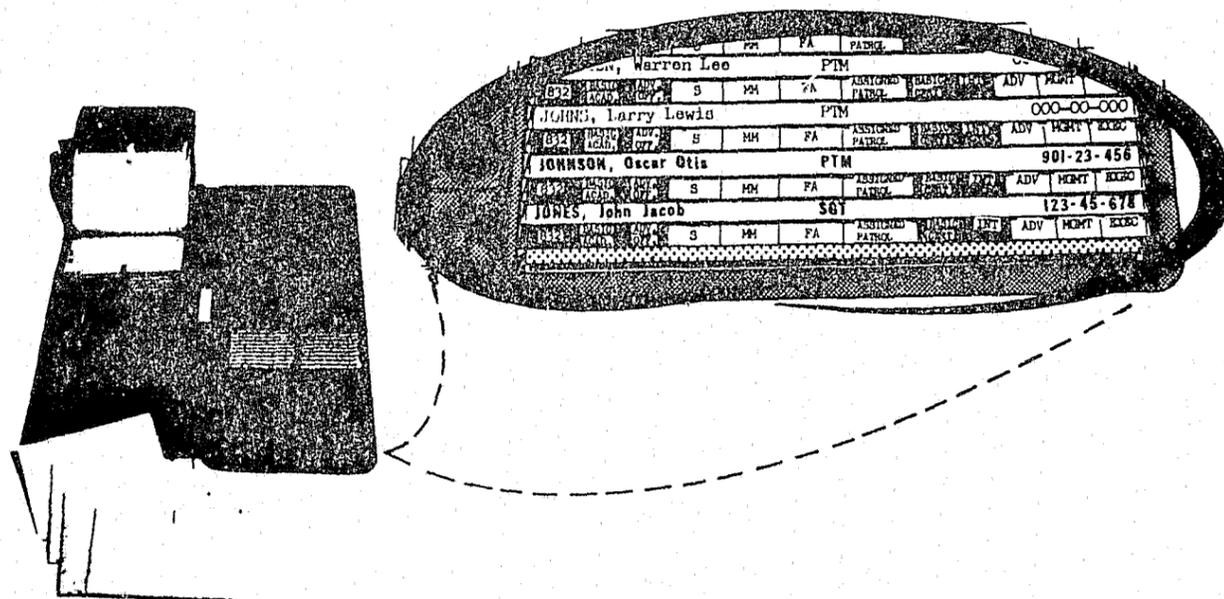
A similar card file can also be designed to identify members of a law enforcement agency who hold POST Professional Certificates as well as the number and identity of individuals within each category.

The number and identity of officers having degrees (or equivalent hours) can be maintained in file and easily up-dated with the same type of file system as illustrated on page 19. Special skills can also be indexed in this manner.

As discussed previously, individual cards should be filed alphabetically within each division of the index.

Various color coding systems can be combined with the index files described to signal almost any informational element deemed useful.

"Visible Files" provide additional alternatives which can be utilized for summary records of required course completions as illustrated below. Color coding, as supplied by colored tape or marker pens is effective when used in connection with a visible file system.



Visible File System

Commendations, Complaints, Accidents, and Evaluations

Depending upon the scope of the systems or the volume of records involved, it may be advisable to arrange separate storage (or folders) for each of these segments. In any case, a summary page or form consisting of abstracts briefly describing specific incidents will quickly illustrate patterns or trends and simplify retrieval of information.

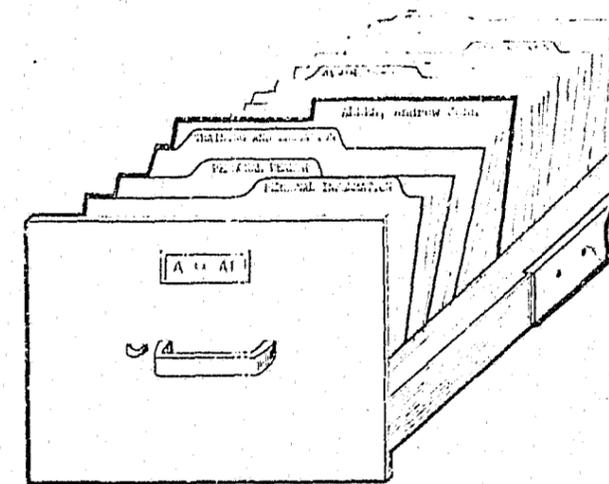
A listing of brief abstracts of complaints, not to be confused with the full investigative files described on the following page, should always include the final disposition or action taken in each case.

FILING METHODS

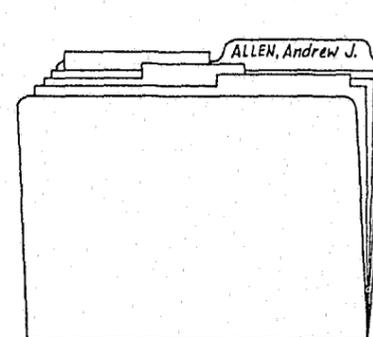
Methods of storing law enforcement personnel records may vary considerably according to the size of the department as well as the extent of delegation or assignment of personnel management functions. For purposes of this review only manual personnel file systems will be discussed. Automatic data processing systems will vary according to equipment used and programs adopted.

One simple and common method of storing personnel information is to utilize one file folder to contain all of the various elements of personnel records maintained. Some departments use a clip or a metal binder to secure papers in the file.

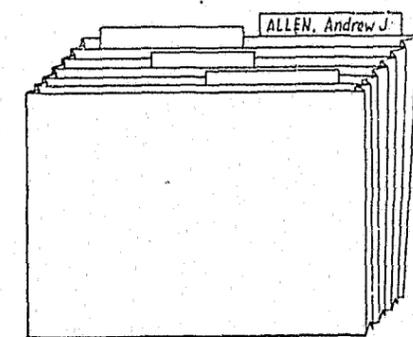
The single folder system can be expanded to incorporate several folders containing one or more elements of the records system. These individual folders can be separated by a heavy divider tabbed to identify the employee by name as illustrated below.



Dividers can also be designed within one single folder, or ready-made "expando" type folders can be fitted with tabs to separate certain segments.



Single folder with dividers



Expando file with tabs

SUMMARY

Law enforcement personnel records systems are becoming increasingly important to effective police management. Some of the reasons for this accelerating trend may be briefly summarized as follows:

- o Equal Employment Opportunity legislation.
- o Collective bargaining issues.
- o 1974 Amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- o Court decisions affecting confidentiality of personnel files.
- o The need to validate standards for recruitment, selection, and promotion of law enforcement officers.
- o Personnel costs which range from eighty to ninety percent of the total budgets of most local law enforcement agencies.

No attempt is made in this report to speculate as to the impact of future legislation and court decisions on personnel records. Current trends demand that every police administrator maintain awareness of changing legal requirements. The preservation of the confidentiality of personnel records will be of utmost future concern.

The design of a total personnel records system should be tailored to answer the needs of the department. Several alternatives exist for effective file management.

Identification of the elements (or components) which make up the total system is most important. Whether the system is automated or manual, a method should be devised for maintaining a current summary or abstract for each element. The ease of up-dating these summaries and the simplicity of retrieval of information are the most important factors involved.

Written directives should define policies and procedures and assure the overall integrity and security of the personnel records system.

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Note: In addition to law enforcement professional journals, publications of such organizations as the International Personnel Management Association, The American Society for Public Administration, and the American Management Association provide valuable reference materials for personnel managers.

Also, a listing of personnel reference materials received each month by the California State Library, entitled, "What's New...in Personnel", is available at most public libraries throughout California.

END