

Field Observation

A field trip can offer a real world setting for your cadets to learn from. The method is underutilized by academy instructors, but I assure you it can serve as an excellent learning experience for future law enforcers. With required hours in the classroom it may be impossible to take your class on a field trip but you're not the one needing the experience; they are. We teach adults in the police academy that don't require a chaperone to visit law enforcement related sites.



The following assignments are only suggestions for you to use and some may not be available in your area. You may decide to allow your students to choose their own assignment from a list you provide. Regardless of the assignment make sure cadets take some notes, or fill out a worksheet following the observation, to share with the class.

- ★ Assign cadets to ride along with a different law enforcement agency each month of the academy. Consider a mix of agencies including villages, large cities, counties, state, and federal. Try to have students assigned to other units as well: detective section, crime scene investigation, school resource officer, crime prevention, etc.
- ★ Attend any criminal or traffic court hearing. Mayor's courts are held in the evening hours if cadets cannot attend court during business hours.
- ★ Visit juvenile detention center or a children services agency.
- ★ Attend a neighborhood watch meeting or visit a homeless shelter.
- ★ Cadets must make a request for police records from a local agency and bring them to class the following day. Require them to obtain different types of records: accident report, crime scene photographs, domestic violence report, traffic citation, officer's personnel file, etc. Let them experience the public records system first hand.

When students complete their assignments have them share the experience with the class the following day. It provides a variety of experiences that will be shared by everyone throughout the academy. Ask students:

- ★ How were you treated by the person you shadowed? Were they open and honest or conceited and rude?
- ★ Was the experience a good one?
- ★ What did you learn that you didn't know before?
- ★ Would you have handled it differently if you were the LEO?