

Multiple North Carolina Agencies Centralize and Streamline Officer Training and Certification Management in One System



North Carolina Law Enforcement Governance and Training Operations

North Carolina has two law enforcement “standards” divisions—the Criminal Justice Standards Division and the Sheriffs’ Standards Division—both of which regulate the training and certification of officers, governed under the North Carolina Department of Justice (DOJ).

The North Carolina Justice Academy (NCJA) is the state training entity that trains more than 10,000 officers annually, including sheriffs’ deputies, law enforcement officers, corrections officers, and juvenile justice officers across two academy campuses located in Salemburg and Edneyville. Together, the NCJA campuses feature 27 classrooms, four resident halls, four firing ranges, two gymnasiums, cafeterias, a running track, a defensive tactics facility, a driving track, a CSI lab, and enforcement operations simulators (jail cells, interrogation rooms).

Prior to 2014, NCJA and the Standards Commissions used several different software applications and manual paper-based processes to manage operations. The fragmented and siloed processes created a lot of manual administrative work for the staff, inefficient and time-consuming processes, and lack of insight into real-time metrics.



North Carolina Justice Academy's Vision for Better Operations

The NCJA was the first to seek a better solution to manage its academy operations—one that would serve the state's law enforcement officers for decades to come. NCJA's visionary objective included a comprehensive system to integrate all of its primary functions, such as academy class management, a publicly accessible course catalog, an online registration system, class and instructor scheduling, resident hall housing management, online testing, and an online learning management system (LMS) to launch a new "Virtual Campus."

In addition to providing basic training for new recruits, NCJA also provides ongoing in-service training to help officers stay current on the latest legal and legislative updates, ethics, mental health resiliency, and skills like evidence handling, firearms training, and responding to hazardous substances. Of the 24 hours of annual training required by the Standards Commissions, up to 20 hours can be completed online so the NCJA's Virtual Campus launch was key to NCJA's mission of modernizing operations and making it easier for officers to meet training mandates, with the convenience of completing their training online.

Issues the Standards Commissions Sought to Solve

The Criminal Justice Standards Division and the Sheriffs' Standards Division manage certification and continuing in-service training for tens of thousands of officers across the state. The Commissions require 20 of the 24 hours of annual training to be taught by an instructor that is certified by the Standards' Divisions using lesson plans developed by NCJA. Consequently, in addition to tracking the multiple types of officer certification and in-service training, tracking instructor training and certification was also an essential function for the Commissions.

Prior to Acadis, the Commissions used a paper-based system to certify new officers, which required printing and mailing certificates and storing paper training records in filing cabinets. The Standards database didn't have a means for deleting officer records so when data was entered incorrectly and then entered a second time to correct it, duplicate records were created—making it difficult to access accurate data. There was also no auditing capability to ensure officers met compliance mandates. The Commissions also wanted to standardize its testing operations across the 68 delivery sites as well as improve the new officer application process.

In summary, the goals were to

1. Create and maintain a single site and accurate database for all active North Carolina law enforcement officer training and certification records
2. Leverage a single Master Name Index across multiple partner agencies to unify officer data
3. Develop a statewide online training and testing portal
4. Improve the process for officers to access Commission courses and streamline pre/post processes
5. Move to paperless training and certification records with online payments for fee collection



Can a Single System Meet the Operational and Compliance Needs of so Many Agencies?

Acadis was built for the specific needs of large academy operations and standards agencies. With a high degree of configurability, data partitioning, user restrictions/permissions, and security that meets state (and even federal) IT standards, Acadis was the clear choice to manage multiple state law enforcement agency operations in a single system.

NCJA Fulfills its Virtual Campus Vision

Built as a modular system, NCJA was able to start with the Acadis modules needed to manage their two academy campuses and operations and launch its Virtual Campus. Of the many objectives that NCJA envisioned, a Virtual Campus was a primary goal to offer online training. The vision called for a seamless system where students could access the NCJA course catalog, see basic course information like prerequisites and available seats, register for classes, update account information, take online events, and print course attendance certificates within a secure, personalized portal. In turn, NCJA staff would have 24/7 access to centralized training data and real-time reporting to view the progress of their students.



NCJA found **online training to be exceptionally popular, with the number of annual online course completions skyrocketing** from 1,883 in 2015 to **240,904 in 2024.**

“It has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars,” said an NCJA Instructor Developer. “Officers are not away from their agency and families and their agencies don’t have to pay overtime and backfill their shifts. There are no adjunct instructor costs. Courses are available 24/7 so officers can work at their own pace. Officers sign in, they take the training, including a pretest and post-test, and at the end, they can print their certificate. It’s just so easy for them to do that.”



The Standards Commissions Improve Officer Certification and Compliance Operations

The Criminal Justice Standards Division and the Sheriffs’ Standards Division joined the Acadis platform in 2023 [after the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services joined the instance in 2019 to manage its alcohol forensic tests training and certifications]. As the certification authorities for officers in North Carolina, the Standards Commissions wanted to improve its processes for initial certification, which includes application and testing processes, as well as its in-service training compliance management.

With four separate agencies now on a single Acadis instance, it was important to build tiered level of permissions. As the head governing agency, North Carolina DOJ IT is the super admin with full access to all sites and a centralized data repository that fuses multiple officer training and certification categories for more actionable insights into the law enforcement preparedness in the state.

Each of the four agencies on the single Acadis instance was provided with its own partitioned site and respective user permissions to only access the data they were entitled to. The Criminal Justice Standards Division has 68 approved agency academy programs and higher education entities that provide officer training and certification testing, so each of the 68 entities also needed a partitioned site and respective role permissions.



“The Criminal Justice Standards Division has saved \$54,000 in printing, mailing, and postage for certification testing each year since moving our testing operations to Acadis,” said Acadis Admin and Research & Planning Specialist for the Criminal Justice Standards Division. “We have also freed up an entire room that was just used for paper file storage.”

The Acadis modules being leveraged in the North Carolina’s DOJ instance include

People & Resources



The Acadis person record provides a snapshot of all the details that each agency needs to document with search capability that enables instant insight into the status of every person tracked in the system, from new officer applicants, to officer’s in-service training, to officer investigations, to separations.

Registration



Each agency on the shared Acadis instance can leverage online registration to provide easy access to training courses, testing sign-ups, and services through secure online registration portals. Students can register or join waitlists if a class is full, while instructors and registrars can see student prerequisites and manage student approvals, waitlists, transfers, reporting, and more.

Training



NCJA tracks and manages all training (online and in person) across its two campuses in Acadis; they leverage the Training module to automate class creation from templates and graduation processing, and the centralized system provides easy access and legally defensible hire-to-rotate training records.

Scheduling



NCJA simplified its academy training logistics by creating custom rules to assign resources automatically for rooms, equipment, and instructors which helps avoid conflicts and saves time.

Housing



NCJA tracks specific needs (such as student accessibility) resident hall availability and then automates student housing assignments accordingly to the appropriate resident hall and room.

Case Management



The Criminal Justice Standards Division manages new officer applications in Acadis and leverages workflows to track the step-by-step processes—from background, records, criminal history, and fingerprint checks—to approval. In addition to officer applications, the Division also uses the Case Management module (which they call “Sensitive Files”) to manage investigations, questionable separations, Giglio notifications, Critical Incident Notifications (NC statute requirement), break-in-service evaluations, diversion investigations, school audits, agency audits, and more.

Compliance



The Criminal Justice Standards Division manages officer in-service training with auditing capability and has plans to leverage the module more in the future.

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“With the comprehensive documentation tracked in the Sensitive Files (Case Management) module, we can easily explain to any Chief that inquires why an officer application was diverted to investigations,” said Acadis Admin and Research & Planning Specialist for the Criminal Justice Standards Division. “It tracks all inquiries, emails sent, etc. providing a transparent and defensible process.”

Online Testing



The Criminal Justice Standards Division leverages Acadis Online Testing to not only centralize and streamline its testing operations across the state, but also to standardize testing across all 68 testing delivery sites, ensuring all officers are taking the same test with questions mapped to learning objectives. Acadis' anti-cheat tools help strengthen the integrity of the online testing in all 68 sites by enabling the admins and proctors with tools like lock-down browsers, test answer and/or question randomization, and role permissions in Acadis. NCJA leverages Acadis Online Testing for its 38 End-of-Blocks Testing for Basic Law Enforcement Training.

Observed Testing



NCJA leverages the Acadis mobile app for its skill-based testing which includes five critical practical skills.

Budgeting



The Criminal Justice Standards Division collects online payments for fee-based services, like licenses to carry a weapon, fees that entities pay for private security (i.e. hospitals, malls, schools), and its annual School Director's Conference.

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“Acadis Admin and Research & Planning Specialist for the Criminal Justice Standards Division explained, “We have processed over \$500,000 in online payment since starting the online payment process and we’re saving countless hours of processing paper checks.”

The four agencies leveraging the single Acadis instance works collaboratively to ensure that each agency can continue to evolve processes without negatively impacting another. While there are more plans to continue evolving processes with Acadis, the amount of improvements to modernize processes and reduce expenses has been amazing. Each time one staff member is freed up from a manual process they can work on other priorities that continue to advance the law enforcement profession in North Carolina.

