Comprehensive Law Enforcement Review: Police Officer Training
SUMMARY

Many factors are driving rising costs and expectations of present-day policing. These include increases in officer salaries; pension liabilities as a large number of officers prepare to retire; the transfer of additional responsibilities from other agencies; and continually changing community, interagency, and operational environments. But while training may seem like an expense that can be easily cut, quality academy and ongoing police training is more important now than ever.

The changing nature of harm is also significant. New threats and responsibilities continue in terms of terrorism and transnational crimes that challenge police to deal with global issues in their local communities.

These issues, combined with increasing accountability demands regarding expenditure of public funds, necessitate a refocusing of police training toward accomplishing these ends in the most effective way. This summary distills training recommendations from various chapters of the full Law Enforcement Review into one place, organized by thematic area: (1) general officer and leadership training concerns, (2) law enforcement responses to mental health crises, (3) law enforcement's role in the fight against terrorism, and (4) procedural justice and police legitimacy.

1) GENERAL OFFICER TRAINING

Current issues

- Recruiting and training challenges: agencies must fill different internal skill and ability needs as operations and communities evolve, either through hiring or training or both. Two such challenges have been identified related to general officer training:

  - There is a need for more and better practical, scenario-based, realistic training in dealing with varying situations.
  - Training must apply community and problem-oriented policing principles to current, diverse issues such as community representativeness and diversity training, problem-solving and communication skills, increasing transnational and cybercrimes, and practical applications of new technology. [1]

- Leadership requirements are evolving:

  - Qualities and skills that make a leader effective change with the times. Driving the most current evolution is the confluence of a new generation of police officers entering the profession during

a period of great societal change and the opportunities and challenges created by new technology.

- How does police leadership decide what mix of command and control versus latitude for independent decision making will work best in a given department?
- How much organizational structure and procedure can be customized by department and how much should be standardized nationally, regionally, or by agency size or type? The answer to these questions impacts the type of leadership needed.

- It is important to have nimble, responsive police organizations built to adapt over time. Important areas of flexibility include technology, analytical capability, and victim services.

Programs and recommendations

New recruit training

- **Field training**: Police Training Officers (PTO), the first major overhaul of Field Training Officer (FTO) programs since inception, incorporate contemporary adult learning methods—challenging recruits to creatively problem solve and use community resources to do so.[2] Tying evaluations of FTO program effectiveness to candidate profiles developed for recruitment is important.
- **Interpersonal skills**: While training in functional skills is primary, good interpersonal skills are of critical importance as a cornerstone of procedural justice. Balancing both types of skills in the academy and throughout training is important.

Collaboration and partnerships

- Facilitating collaborations and partnerships among police agencies and with other public or private service providers can increase efficiency, effectiveness, and legitimacy while also controlling costs. Effective training will help police and collaborating organizations make the most of these partnerships.
- Studies note the importance of having such partnerships in place *before* crises hit, so that communications channels and procedures are already established when they do—which requires training.[3]
- Further work in evaluating partnerships with the academic community, the impacts of their research on practice, and where synergies in this area may be improved, is also recommended.

Developing effective leaders

- Decide on desired outcomes first, then break them into functional, behavioral, or interpersonal competencies around which to develop a comprehensive, ongoing training program that nurtures them from the academy throughout an officer's career.
- One expert recommends a comprehensive approach involving candidate assessment centers combined with

a leadership development process, including the use of 360-degree evaluations, a recommended study course on leadership issues, and psychometric instruments [to] give both the candidate and the organization a more accurate picture of . . . the candidate['s] . . . strengths and weaknesses. [4]

- Develop and implement a formal mentoring system for leaders. This can result in increased productivity, improved retention, and a pipeline of future leaders.
- Partner with academic institutions to provide leadership academies that supplement training developed and delivered in-house. Models include the Kansas Law Enforcement Leadership Academy at Kansas University, the NYPD Leadership Program at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and the International Institute of Criminal Justice Leadership at the University of San Francisco.
- The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has developed a course series entitled "Leadership in Police Organizations" that has been used by 220 agencies to date. Several training and delivery models are available to meet varying departmental needs depending on size or type of agency and topic areas desired.[5]
- Law enforcement officer fellowships or exchange programs between police agencies offer another avenue for meeting training needs.

Agency evolution and adaptability

- **Analytical capacity**: Promote and use analytical and technological research and development. Evidence validation is becoming scientific rather than speculative, and agencies need to capture more and different types of data. Further investments are needed to improve crime analysis capacity and to assess police effectiveness, despite significant strides via CompStat and similar tracking mechanisms.[6]
- **Technology**: Emerging innovations like body-worn cameras, unmanned aerial vehicles, and license plate readers will continue to emerge, and balancing technology's value with citizen rights to privacy will be of critical concern. Policies, procedures, and training on all newly acquired technology will be requisite for successful use.
- **Victim services**: Perceptions of police performance are often driven by the experiences of crime victims, especially victims of violent crime. These victims often have more intense needs that must be met over longer periods of time, requiring basic trauma training for police as well as training on resources available to which they can refer victims.[7]

2) RESPONDING TO MENTAL HEALTH AND CRIME

Current issues

- The combination of apparent defiance by a mentally ill person and lack of specialized training for police can contribute to increased use of force against mentally ill individuals. Police were between 1.4 and 4.5 times more likely to use force against the mentally ill in these interactions.[8]

- Police officers without special training are less likely to correctly identify mental illness in citizen interactions.[9]

Programs and recommendations

Crisis intervention training

- Crisis intervention training (CIT) was developed in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1988 and has been shown to improve police ability to recognize symptoms of a mental health crisis, enhance their confidence in addressing such an emergency, and reduce inaccurate beliefs about mental illness.[10]
- It has been found that after completing CIT orientation, officers felt encouraged to interact with people suffering a mental health crisis and to delay their "rush to resolution."[11] Similarly, CIT-certified officers are less likely to escalate, to draw their gun, or to forcibly subdue a person with mental illness—instead preferring to use de-escalation techniques.[12]
- There are three significant systemic challenges faced by police departments in implementing a full CIT response team:[13]

  - Lack of training for dispatchers
  - Lack of an emergency psychiatric unit with a policy of no refusal (and significant intake and processing time)
  - Lack of funding and community-based services for rural departments.

  While many departments face these challenges, some have creatively and effectively addressed them by engaging community partners.

3) LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

Current issues

- Application of traditional law enforcement activities to terrorism requires law enforcement agencies to develop deeper knowledge of foreign affairs, Middle Eastern culture, expertise in al-Qaeda and affiliated organizations, the nature of modern terrorism, and potential links between normal criminal activity and terrorism. This has been challenging for local agencies struggling to see where they fit into the larger fight against terrorism vis-a-vis the Federal Government.
- Additional resources are still required to expand law enforcement capabilities to address terrorism while still maintaining their focus on local public safety concerns.
- As the threat evolves, continuous and timely training is required to keep law enforcement personnel abreast of the latest threats and procedures for handling that information.
- Key challenges include adequate funding, coordination of local intelligence units, vetting information leads, the rise of social media, training, and unauthorized disclosure of intelligence.
- Terrorism occurs much less frequently than other crimes, with fewer leads and investigative threads to follow, requiring different intelligence capabilities and skills from traditional criminal justice information-gathering techniques.

- Two training-specific questions should be considered to strengthen local law enforcement counterterrorism analytical intelligence capabilities:

  - How do we develop the best academy and in-service training on intelligence gathering, fusion centers and their capabilities, and the officer's role in preventing terrorism?
  - How do we increase professional development opportunities for locally-based intelligence professionals?

Programs and recommendations

Countering violent extremism (CVE)

- State and local law enforcement efforts address all forms of violent extremism and are focused not on any one ideology but on preventing violent attacks.
- The best defenses against violent extremism are well-informed and equipped families, local communities, and local institutions.[14]
- Effective CVE requires provision of more federal funding, training, and other resources to state and local law enforcement, as well as more cultural awareness training to build trust, and open and honest dialogue with communities.

Promising local initiatives

- Using the expertise of individuals from multiple disciplines, cultures, and agencies, Boston plans to develop a "comprehensive strategic guide" with action plans and processes aimed at the prevention of all violence including violent extremism. The guide will contain key focus areas and concepts that can be used by faith-based organizations, nonprofits, cities and towns, law enforcement, schools, businesses, and others to reduce violence.
- Local law enforcement agencies are partnering with the federal government to present community awareness briefings (CAB). CABs are designed to help communities and law enforcement agencies understand al-Qaeda-inspired recruitment tactics and explore ways to collectively prevent and address such public safety threats at the local level.

4) POLICE LEGITIMACY AND PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

Current issues

- The public cares as much about how police *interact* with them as they do about the outcomes they receive.[15] People believe that a legitimate authority is entitled to have its rules and decisions accepted and obeyed, but this legitimacy is attributed only to those whom the public believes are acting in procedurally just ways and not to those deemed to be unfair.
- The pillars of procedural justice—fairness and consistency in rule application, impartiality and unbiased decision making, providing voice and representation, and demonstrating transparency and openness—provide a framework upon which principled law enforcement is built.[16] Some believe that the majority of law enforcement agencies practice this in word more than in action.

- Initial and ongoing training that highlights the benefits of procedural justice, such as greater community cooperation and police discretion, is essential to bring the principle to life for line personnel and to build consensus throughout the organization.

Programs and recommendations

- Training should focus on institutionalizing the principles and values behind procedural justice and legitimacy rather than use of specific terminology.
- Organizational training should be comprehensive and job-specific.[17] While patrol officers are most likely to interact with the community, other employees can also leave a lasting impression if they interact with the public or if their work product affects the outcome of a case.
- The Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Police Department implemented fair and impartial policing training as a means to address bias. All levels of the organization have received the training.[18] The goal is to develop norms within the department that will extend to encounters with the public.
- Similarly, the Brooklyn Park (Minnesota) Police Department required officers to undergo introspective training to encourage full adoption of a community service mentality, encouraging them to think about the nature of their work and its impacts while also recognizing the toll the job can take on their lives. Their leadership training, likewise, emphasized that leaders were to serve as coaches and not just referees, thus reinforcing internal procedural justice values.[19]
- Training on procedural justice and impartial policing in the academy and through the ranks is crucial. Resources available to assist agencies include the BJA "Creating Leaders of the Future" portal,[20] the COPS Office's "Community Policing Learning" portal,[21] and the U.S. Department of Justice's National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice. Additional resources should be developed to address unique, local procedural justice issues.

CONCLUSION

Four areas that agencies must examine when designing effective training programs are changing personnel requirements; shifts in organizational structure; shifting and sharing of responsibilities for local, national and international public safety problems; and demonstrating value to public and local officials. Training plays into solutions for all of these concerns.

To maximize training investments, agencies could benefit from greater information on the costs and benefits of various academy and in-service training options. Which training is essential to improving effectiveness and efficiency in policing? Which training programs produce the greatest improvements, based on the evidence? Might tiered educational programs with various levels of certification and credentialing similar to other professions be viable? Further, how will citizens define success, and will police definitions differ? Can one set of measures of success be created?

By working together with communities throughout the process—from development of objectives to program implementation where it intersects with communities and community organizations to program evaluation—police and their communities will need to collect, analyze, and report on data that provides evidence of true progress and quality of service. The value premise then lends itself to

enhanced oversight of police and unprecedented levels of required accountability while also giving communities a personal stake in ensuring successful outcomes.

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