

**TESTIMONY TO PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING:
TRAINING & EDUCATION--Ellen Scrivner, Ph.D., ABPP, February 14, 2015**

Introduction: I am pleased to see the Task Force focus on Training and Education as one of the significant topics under consideration. This is a critical area and goes beyond tactical training since it can lay the foundation for how police, very early in their careers, can learn about their communities and how their responses may be perceived when providing police services to their communities. If configured appropriately, this expanded focus will go beyond traditional and required crime control techniques and tactical skills taught in academies, as well as the discrete management skills taught in much of the leadership training provided to law enforcement. In essence, the Task Force has an opportunity to broaden the field of how police develop knowledge about the intricacies of their communities and how they learn the importance of their role, not just in fighting crime but in creating communities where people feel safe going about their everyday activities without being targets of crime or subject to police harassment.

Background: Unfortunately, in many of our communities there is the perception that those who are targets of crime are probably involved in crime even though they may be innocent of wrong doing. However, if police do not see them that way, then they may identify them as part of a problem and go all out to see that they are deterred. There is little doubt that it is this type of behavior that is one element accounting for large numbers of young black males behind bars, and a major factor contributing to neighborhood distrust of the police.

This level of distrust can go both ways. Community members may look at the police as those coming into their neighborhoods to do them harm rather than to help them.

Consequently, they may never give the police a chance. In these instances, neither the police officers nor community members have “learned” about each other because opportunities for mutual “learning” were not included in police training which typically involves required skill-based programs delivered in a para-military policing framework.

Transformations and New Directions: Some of the topics of interest to the Task Force are particularly relevant to easing this dilemma including: community oriented policing, fair and impartial policing, cultural competency, use of force de-escalation, particularly when working with the mentally ill, and the critical distinction between the “Guardian” vs. “Warrior” mentality. However, rather than presenting them as a list of single classes, my recommendation would be to group them into a new framework based on reality based and experiential learning that also engages the community and provides opportunities to learn about each other. The end goal would be the shifting of the police culture.

I contend that the police culture cannot be changed based on several two hour classes no matter how good the curriculum is or how powerful the instructor may be. Rather, we are talking about the need for a national systemic change that creates major shifts in law enforcement mind-sets. That type of change will require immersion into a framework that integrates the previously mentioned topics into a coherent strategy for changing how police both experience and respond to the community. That change cannot occur unless officers learn about themselves and how they use their learning when thinking about, and responding to, community members, particularly in communities of color. This approach involves a new strategy and is far more than simply teaching a skill.

We see many of these same issues playing out in leadership training. Currently there is a wealth of police management and leadership training available but generally the training is based on models from the 20th century, using talking heads, case studies, and “great men” theories of leadership. They are delivered in a classroom format or in time-limited workshops and some coincide with academic criminal justice programs focused on management curricula. While many contend that they still work well, and for some that may be true, the question remains, if they work so well, why are we having so many problems? I contend that it may be more a problem with the model in that 21st Century leadership training and development cannot be based on models from the past. The world has changed and continues to evolve. It is a digital age that is more complex and unpredictable, and there is a new generation of tech savvy officers as well as those potential leaders waiting in the wings that bring very different perspectives to management.

Consequently, it is time to take a look at how we can do this better rather than just create more of the same. Across all ranks, from recruit to command level executives, we need a 21st Century transformational process that incorporates innovations in the world of police development, particularly those that focus on law enforcement’s role as a collaborative partner with the community and where social justice is the norm.

Recommendations to Achieve Transformational Goals:

- 1). Focus on “Learning” rather than training since learning to collaborate with the community is far different from being trained in a skill, such as shooting a firearm.

- 2). Review the best of existing models, reconfigure, and add approaches designed to build trust with communities and with a goal of beginning to change the police culture.
- 3). Create a National Law Enforcement Learning Network with learning centers across the country that include the best of existing models but which also provide trust building experiences and comprehensive programs where the community is an integral partner.
- 4). Incorporate police reforms and police patterns and practices into this network that are based both on the law and on scientific evidence reflective of constitutional policing.
- 5). Sustain on-site Learning Center experiences by combining post-experiences with innovations such as E-learning, where appropriate, community internships, and maintaining communication through regularly scheduled conference calls or virtual meetings that are focused on best practices and new initiatives and that will create an ongoing community of practice.
- 6). Strive to achieve end product goals: shifting of police culture to a Guardian versus Warrior mentality; growing police legitimacy; and enhancing greater trust in the police.

None of this means that police will go soft on crime. Quite in contrast, they will work more closely with community to solve problems and control crime, and the Task Force can provide the needed direction in training and education to achieve these goals.

More importantly, the Task Force represents an important moment in history and has the opportunity to create a new day for how police services are delivered across the country, for changing a national police mindset, and shifting the police culture to that of service rather than adventure.