



California Community Colleges

In partnership with POST

The following is a
summary of the
CCCCO and POST
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Panelists

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Evidence-Based Policing: Training



The nature of police work requires officers to perform a complex, multi-faceted job in diverse communities. Training and education can prepare officers by instilling professionally appropriate values and principles so that officers develop a service-oriented, empathetic mindset; by giving officers relevant knowledge and information; and by teaching officers the physical skills that they will use in the course of their duties.

What is the connection between Evidence-Based Policing and training?

There is a body of scientific research on effective adult learning and pedagogical (teaching) methods that can help inform the substance of police training (i.e., what officers are taught), the modalities of police training (i.e., how officers are taught), the timing of policing training (i.e., the order in which topics are taught), and a range of other factors. Research can also help inform assessments that can be used to evaluate police trainee's attitudes, knowledge base, and skillset. Unfortunately, it is difficult to rigorously test exactly how training affects officer behaviors, largely because of the many *other* factors that can affect the delivery of police services (e.g., officer recruitment and selection, supervision, agency culture, peer expectations, etc.).

Effective preparation for the policing profession combines elements of education and training. Pre-service training, including academy training, conveys the fundamental values, knowledge, and skills to prepare a new officer for field training. Field training and experience provide the capacity to translate academy knowledge into successful practice.

What are the critical inflection points in police training?

Infrastructure. An institutional commitment to creating and maintaining a police training infrastructure is critical. Academies and police agencies with in-house training units must develop the capacity to provide quality training, which requires an advanced understanding of instructional methods, subject matter selection, and both formative and evaluative assessment.

Instructor Selection. A commitment to training includes developing highly qualified, effective instructors, especially at the academy level where early-career officers begin to acclimate to police culture. In every module they teach, instructors impart their perspectives about policing, including about police-community relations. Selecting and training instructors who not only have relevant expertise, but also have training in contemporary adult learning pedagogies and can introduce a diversity of perspective to the classroom is a significant component of police training. In California, CalPOST has formalized instructor development, relying on the best available evidence on learning methods, presentation of delivery, and quality assurance.

Training Emphasis. Historically, police training has put significantly more emphasis on training for high-risk, low-probability activities (e.g., so-called "high-liability" areas like vehicle operations and the use of force, including both deadly force and less-lethal defensive tactics) than it has on low-risk, high-probability activities (e.g., interpersonal communications) or theoretical aspects of policing (e.g., community-policing philosophies). Training providers should consider how to incorporate aspects of high-probability events into training on high-risk activities. For example, trainers might incorporate communication skills training into traffic stop or less-lethal defensive tactics training.

How can agencies use training to improve police culture?

It is vital for officers to see the community members they interact with as *people* rather than as problems. That perspective demands and reinforces a service-orientation in policing and insulates against what can be a counterproductive *us vs. them* mentality. Effective policing, then, requires officers to develop a sense of belonging – both within their agency and within their community – and a public-service orientation. Both begin in the academy, where institutional culture is conveyed explicitly (in formal training) and implicitly (by example). Pedagogical research suggests that people learn not just from their training instructors, but also from each other. That means that having a diverse academy cohort increases officer capacity to communicate with, understand, promote cultural sensitivity, and build better relationships with community members later in their career.

How can we train for officer wellness?

Intentionally training on officer health and wellbeing has the potential to improve the delivery of police services to community members. Healthy officers are more receptive to community policing and communication and less likely to use of force. Teaching officers to develop an officer wellness mindset can increase organizational legitimacy (that is, an officer's positive perception of their agency), which can in turn improve officer performance in the field. It teaches officers to understand that incidents and police encounters occur because people have problems, and it reinforces officers' ability to focus on the problem rather than on the person. This can reduce secondary trauma to officers.

Where can I learn more about evidence-based training practices?

Resources

1. American Society of Evidence-Based Policing, www.americansebp.org
2. The Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University, www.cebc.org
3. US DOJ C.O.P.S., Training Portal, <https://copstrainingportal.org>
4. Good Practices in Basic Police Training – Curricula Aspects, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/2/109933.pdf>.
5. US DOJ, F.B.I., *Suicide and Law Enforcement*, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/193528-193589.pdf>

Books

1. Arbinger Institute, *The Outward Mindset* (2016)
2. Maria R. Haberfeld *Critical Issues in Police Training* (3rd edition, 2016)
3. Maria R. Haberfeld *Police Leadership: Organizational and Managerial Decision Making Process* (2nd edition, 2012)
4. *Police Organization and Training* (Maria R. Haberfeld et al., eds., 2011).
5. Carl B. Klockars et al., *Enhancing Police Integrity* (2006)

Articles & Book Chapters

1. Scott Wolfe et al., Social Interaction Training to Reduce Police Use of Force (2020), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0002716219887366>
2. Kyle McLean et al., *Police Officers as Warriors or Guardians: Empirical Reality or Intriguing Reality?*, (2019), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07418825.2018.1533031>
3. Maria R. Haberfeld, *The Triangle of Recruitment, Selection, and Training in the 21st Century Policing*, in *The Politics of Policing: Between Force and Legitimacy* (Mathieu Deflem, ed., 2016)

4. Seth W. Stoughton, *Principled Policing: Warrior Cops and Guardian Officers* (2016),
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2830642
5. Maria R. Haberfeld, *Recruitment, Selection, and Training - the Triangle of Police Integrity or Corruption?*, in *Policing, Security & Democracy: Theory and Practice* (Menachem Amir & Stanley Einstein, eds., 2003)

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training Virtual Forums

About POST

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (Chancellor's Office) has partnered with the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) on a series of virtual forums to share best practices in Evidence-Based Policing and review the policies and practices that govern police academy instruction.

This initiative is a result of the Chancellor's [Call to Action](#) in June 2020, in response to the protest and social unrest stemming from George Floyd's death. In it, the Chancellor's Office called on community colleges to address structural racism and injustice to ensure that our communities and students have access to equal educational opportunities. The Call to Action highlights the focal point of diversity, equity and inclusion at the core of the Vision for Success.

The Chancellor's Office leadership reached out to POST to better understand Police Academy programs as 19 of the 41 certified basic police academy programs are operated by community colleges. Since then, POST has been collaborating with the Chancellor's Office to:

- Answer police academy certification questions
- Provide clarification about POST regulations and training requirements
- Share Evidence-Based Policing theory and practices

The focus of these forums is intended to contribute to a police culture reform agenda. As providers of nearly half of the state's police academies, the Community College system is in a unique position to influence and drive statewide instructional practices that will shape the standards by which officers conduct themselves while on duty.

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