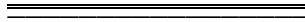


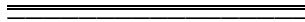
**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**



**Field Training Programs and Continuing Education
For Law Enforcement**



**A Leadership White Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**



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September 2010**

ABSTRACT

Effective field training programs are relevant to contemporary law enforcement because the field training program lays the foundation for the future of a police department and the professionalism of the police officer responding to a community's needs. Effective field training programs will also lessen the chances of civil liability and provide a safe environment for the department, its officers, and the citizens of the community. The law enforcement trainee is hired after extensive background investigation, medical and psychological testing, as well as a battery of other testing methods that are individualized per department needs. After completing and passing these tests, the new officers are put on the payroll. The newly hired officer then enters the training academy and spends approximately 500 hundred to 700 hours of classroom and practical training before becoming certified and entering the field training program. The cost of the first year of training can run somewhere in the range of \$50,000 or more for human resource benefits, uniforms, equipment, training, and payroll. The cost and time allotted to one newly hired officer makes their training and the method in which this occurs extremely relevant to the future of law enforcement. Often times, the role of the program and the officers overseeing the program is overlooked, causing command staff and supervisors within the department wonder why good candidates turn into bad officers.

The position of this paper is that field training programs and continuing law enforcement training should be structured in a paramilitary manner. The types of information used to support the researcher's position include a review of textbooks, professional journals, published articles, as well as law enforcement training instructor lesson guides. Based on the review of various references, the recommendation drawn is that field-training programs must

be clear, concise, and consistent in their function. Field training officers must be mandated to complete continuing education so they are current on laws and procedures and can provide the most updated/current training they can to the new officers. The new officers must be able to look up to their trainers with respect and confidence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction	1
Position	3
Counter Position	10
Conclusion	12
References	15

INTRODUCTION

The transformation an officer takes as he or she embarks on their new law enforcement career is an important one. New officers are faced with many challenges and dilemmas as their new world begins. The field training program is the backbone of that career. This is why field training programs should be structured. In the initial six months, field training sets the standards for a possible 25 to 30 year career. While newly hired officers can learn valuable lessons from their field training officers, at other times, they can be exposed to inappropriate or career ending lessons. New law enforcement officers can be subjected to unethical or immoral field training officers, field training officers who have bad attitudes, low morale, or those who do not stay current with continuing education. They can also be subjected to field training programs that are unorganized or unstructured.

This type of training can have damaging and devastating effects for the new officer. In addition, inappropriate training can have long term impact on the citizens in the community, the department, and all law enforcement officers throughout the country. When an officer engages in misconduct, this draws immediate negative attention from the media, which creates an environment of mistrust for all law enforcement. Further, an untrained or inappropriately trained officer can be a liability to police departments, which is evidenced by lawsuits around the country. According to Delattre (2002), "Even when men and women are virtuous, even when they behave with high standards of conscience, they benefit from responsible supervision and instruction designed to make them become better" (p. 33).

Officers have lost their jobs due to poor training or poor examples set for them by veteran officers who were entrusted by their department. Field training officers are required to train and mentor the young officer. New officers deserve superiors and peers who evaluate their performance and make departmental expectations clear. A new officer is much like a blank piece of paper. He or she will show up at the police department on that very first day, eager and wide-eyed, like a sponge ready to soak everything up. That officer takes an oath administered by the chief of police. They are then given a badge and are told what the badge represents. In the optimum scenario, the officer is reminded of the many officers that have come before them who have both honorably served and have tarnished the badge. These stories will hopefully have an impact on their future actions. The new officer is then sent to a field training program. Kessler (1994) stated, "The basic instruction of new officers is critical since the training they receive will set the pattern for their future activities" (p. 1).

Gaines and Kappler (2004) stated, "police work has become much more difficult than in the past and therefore more training is being required. Police training went from nonexistent during its early days to requiring months of academy training, not to mention field training programs" (as cited in Pray, 2006, p. 15). Much of the training that law enforcement officers are required to attend is the result of an action or inaction on the part of current and past police officers. Use of force requirements stem from many instances of police brutality law suits, and family violence training is the result of inaction on the part of officers responding to family violence calls. Ethics and professionalism training is the result of ethics violations and corruption among police officers. Kessler (1994) indicated that "The Wickersham Commission reported to President Hoover and

recommended that training was in the best interest of the police departments to transform their officers into professional personnel” (p.10).

POSITION

Field training programs should be run in a paramilitary structure. There should be clear and concise guidelines, policies, and procedures. Field training officers should be fair but firm and set an example for the rest of the department to follow. According to Haider (1990), “The days when a senior officer on a shift was assigned a rookie to train are quickly waning” (p. 7). In days past, it was not uncommon for the experienced officer to tell the rookie to forget what they previously since “I’ll show you how it’s done on the streets” (Haider, 1990, p. 3). There are other problems associated with undisciplined training programs like veteran officers teaching new officers bad habits like where they could obtain a police discount, where they could take their girlfriends on duty and not get caught, and how they could safely sleep on duty rather. There is much debate over what happens to an officer from the time they are hired to the day they are released from training. Some officers start their careers fresh and positive, while others have already been affected by the attitudes of their training officers. Every day, in law enforcement agencies across the country, officers are sent into the police world with very little idea of the journey they are embarking on. They have been trained in a few short months on the ways of the police world. Some learn they can make their way through the system by flirting or acting defenseless; others make their way by not being productive because by not doing anything, they cannot get into trouble. Some excel in training and in law enforcement activity but let the power of the job and the freedom it affect their judgment. They begin exhibiting behavior that disregards any ethical or

moral training they received. Administration may wonder why the officer believed they could get away with this behavior, but they do not look at the basis of the officer's training or that officer's training officers as the cause.

Schroeder and Lombardo (2006) believed that "Entry-level training provides officers with a broad-based, foundational instruction in police work and should run from two to nine months" (p. 170). They believed that the quality of the training program will reflect on the trainer, trainee, and agency. The quality of the new recruit will also bear results in the community served by those officers. The need for field training has been evident for much of the history of policing but came to the forefront in the early 70s, when the police academy provided the academic background for police work but did not incorporate real world scenarios. As a result, a significant number of academy graduates were deficient in some aspects of police work. For example, the San Jose model of training was created as an outcome of a tragic event that occurred in San Jose, California in 1970. According to Kaminsky (2002), "The San Jose Field Training Program, the first recognized field training program established in 1972, was designed in part by Chief Robert Allen and based on his military experience" (p. xiii).

Historically, field-training programs have involved the assignment of a cadet to a veteran member of the department. That veteran is often selected at random and, therefore, may not have been skilled as a teacher, evaluator, or role model. Kaminsky (2002) felt "these factors have led to a small but constant influx of unqualified persons into the criminal justice profession" (p. 1). Since those days, paramilitary training and structure has traditionally been the model of training and the method in which many police departments function today. It has been reinforced by the military personnel who

leave the military and join law enforcement. The paramilitary training method is based on a strict chain of command and concise policies and procedures with exact disciplinary measures when policies or procedures are not followed.

Pray (2006) noted, “since both the military and police are service organizations that share a risk of danger, many of the same people may be attracted to both professions for similar reasons” (p. 94). Law enforcement officers with prior service in the military prefer the structure as opposed to ambiguity or lack of structure. The actions of officers both on and off the job are directed by police and military procedure and protocol. Hence, there is no room for error and there is very little the officers have to think about since their decisions and actions are directed by superiors. The officer knows the consequences of their actions or lack thereof.

In describing the paramilitary structure, the journey of becoming a Marine, where failure is not an option, cannot be overlooked. Tomajczyk (2004) stated that, “Every Marine wraps himself or herself in the Corps’ long tradition of service and sacrifice, and adheres to an uncompromising code of honor, courage, commitment, discipline, and personal integrity” (p. 26). The same could be said for police work and the dedication it requires to survive and be successful in law enforcement. While the Marine Corps model is somewhat of the extreme, it lays the embodiment of someone who would excel in the law enforcement profession. As in the Marine Corps and paramilitary training models, the new officers are told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. Tomajczyk (2004) stated the Marine expectations are clear in that “they must give 100% of themselves at all times, they must obey all orders quickly, willingly, and without question, they must be proud of themselves and their uniform, they must work hard to

strengthen their body” (p. 50). Police departments should and must demand the same of their new officers. New police officers should not be provided vague or ambiguous policies and training that leave holes for those few officers who are willing to fill in the blanks with behavior they deem appropriate. Michaelson (2001) believed, “The vision of what the organization wants to be must be planned with an awareness of reality. The vision components articulate purpose, mission, guiding values, and a vivid image of the organization’s future” (p. 3). A police department’s training program should be a vision of what the department wants to be, and they should train all personnel to strive for and reach that goal.

Many times in police work, chiefs of police and command staff will create policies and procedures and pass those down to the officers, yet they never follow up to ensure that these policies and procedures are being followed until something goes wrong. It seems as if they use the “out of sight, out of mind” philosophy regarding command. Kaminsky (2002) believed that “Without a quality selection process and an effective field training and evaluation program, the potential consequences to the system are ominous” (p. 2). Law enforcement, much like the military, is a field of work where wrong decisions and complacent attitudes can get an officer or someone else killed or severely injured. Officers who do not have clear guidelines and cannot follow orders given to them in a crisis situation create a dangerous environment for the other officers and the citizens in a community. Even decisions made with the best of intentions can find the officer and the department being sued. Decisions made when there are no clear policies or directives cost many law enforcement officers their jobs, cost the departments their level of professionalism, and cost the community their feeling of safety.

Delattre (2002) indicated that “without individuals of good character and institutions that apply high ideals to daily practice, the goals of liberty, order and justice cannot be achieved” (p. Xiii). The concerns regarding training must also include training on the value system of a police department and dispel any preconceived ideas of police work initiated by television or movies. There are frequent occurrences in many departments where new officers start at a police department and are soon involved in citizen complaints, ethical and professional problems, and internal affairs investigations. This often occurs when new officers are not given clear direction in their training phase. Although department supervisors ask themselves why this is occurring, they never think to look at the foundation of their department, which is the field-training program and the officers that represent that program.

Gilmartin (2002) stated that new officers “have so much to learn to become competent officers, most of which they learn from the older cops” (p. 2). Long before an officer hits the road as a commissioned peace officer, they develop a reputation based on their experiences in the academy, their interaction with other officers, and the behaviors they exhibit. There are many forms of informal training that occur during this time. New officers are extremely sensitive to what is said around them and the stories that are told.

In describing the way police departments function, Delattre (2002) stated, “Police officers become victims of the non-system...Many who succumb to the temptations of graft, laziness, and minimal productivity were once highly motivated, but were overcome by poor management, weak leadership and lack of fulfillment” (p. xv). To counter the loss of interest, ethics, and indifference among new officers, a police department must

use sound policies and procedures that are consistently enforced. Field training and continuing education must be consistent in its nature so the ideals of that department carry on through the department and its new officers. Delattre (2002) indicated that “everything a department can do to recruit better-educated candidates and develop their capabilities should be embedded in the ethical standards of the department, the moral expectations of its finest members... and the fabric of the formal and informal accountability” (p. xix).

Police departments must have clear and structured standards for their finest members to follow which, in turn, sets an example for the new officers to follow. Delattre (2002) felt strongly that “Habits are acquired by initiation and instruction from others- in the telling of stories; the explanation of decent behavior; the introduction to heroes, heroines, and villains; the exposure to the meaning of fundamental ideals; and the discussion of questions” (p. 8). Without a consistent and structured environment, it lends feasibility for officers of lesser morals, ethics, and performance to make up, devise, or implement their own form of training. This leads to citizen complaints, ethics violations, internal affairs investigations, disciplinary issues, and civil liability. Aristotle said, “It is a matter of real importance whether our early education confirms in us one set of habits or another. It would be nearer the truth to say that it makes all the difference in the world” (as cited in Delattre, 2002, p. 6). A police department that does not have clearly established morals and internal peer pressure for their new officers on the side of good and ethical is leaving the door wide open for other types of behavior.

The lesson to police departments regarding training has to be that they should hire well qualified people, have role models that the new hires can look up to, and

respect and provide them consistent training and clear policies. In addition to appropriate training for new officers, it is also important to hold veteran officers accountable to the same standards. Many times, departments ignore when veteran officers bend and break traditions, procedures, and policies. Complacency sets in even with the best, most proactive and dedicated officers and it is accepted by supervisors because it is an expected transition as officers progress through a career. Inappropriate behaviors must be curtailed through continuing education for veteran officers, otherwise these mixed messages are interpreted as acceptable behavior by the younger officers as they become experienced.

While there is much conversation about the reliability and effectiveness of the San Jose model of training, even the Reno model, which has been updated to include community-oriented policing, the research is clear regarding training. Findings indicated that “it is not necessarily the type of training model an agency chooses that reduces liability, but rather the method by which the training is applied, the field trainer assigned and the guidelines adhered to that make the difference” (Hoover, 2004, p. 5). Without proper administration and supervision, no training program will protect an agency’s interests in a court of law.

COUNTER POSITION

Many departments and law enforcement educators believe that a new form of adult learning, which includes a comfortable, open, and friendly environment are a better method of teaching and leading. The Reno model of police training is founded on adult learning principals and emphasizes problem solving and community oriented policing. Kaminsky (2002) stated that “adults must have motivation to learn the

knowledge and skill necessary to master an objective (p. 154). This motivation must come from their desire to be the best and to do the best.

Officers must first learn to keep themselves, their partners, and citizens of the community out of harm's way. The responsibility of human life and victim safety is not something that can be taken lightly nor should anyone be comfortable in making that type of decision. It has also been stated that many find the paramilitary model to be a hindrance to law enforcement agencies since it often stifles the creativity within the department and promotes a lack of flexibility. Haider (1990) indicated "There are problems found in loosely organized field training programs" (p. 4). Schroeder and Lombardo (2006) suggested that "the biggest criticism of entry level training is that it does not adequately prepare recruits to deal with the real world" (p.170).

There is a shift in the method of training regarding adult learning principals and paramilitary training in that many law enforcement trainers are preparing their managers and leaders for the generational issues that will be arising with four generations of workers being in the same work pool. This training calls for a different approach than the paramilitary training model and specifically refers to Generation Y or the Millennial as the group that will create the biggest challenges. This generation refers to people born in 1978 or after. The Millennials do not allow themselves to be defined by their jobs. They choose to work flexible work hours and to be treated like equals, regardless of years of experience (Greene, 2008).

Law enforcement, by its very nature, is a challenging profession, and any officer entering this field must be made to understand that through clear and concise training. Officers must leave the training program knowing that there are people they will come

into contact with who will curse them or spit on them and some people who will want to injure or kill them. There is no room for nurturing or pampering these officers in training. Anything less than direct orders and concise training can get the new officer killed. Through paramilitary structured training, the officer will learn how and why they need to carry themselves with confidence and authority so they do not become targets to people with deadly intentions. The new officer will learn how to walk, how to talk, how to carry themselves, how to shoot someone, how to be shot at through the use of simunition, how to fight, and how to comfort. This is a profession like no other and to train officers in any manner that somehow softens these lessons or makes them enjoyable is doing a great disservice to the new officer and their department. Kaminsky (2002) stated, "New kids to law enforcement may discover some harsh realities. Being a police officer requires physical and mental toughness that probably have been absent from earlier life experiences" (p 3).

A pioneer of the field of adult learning, Malcolm Knowles believed that there are certain traits for adult learners. He believed they are independent and can direct themselves. The relevance of information is important to them, and there must be reason to learn certain information. They tend to focus only on the information that is of use to them and may not seek out knowledge just for the sake of knowledge. When dealing with adults, they should be treated as informed equals and allowed to voice their opinions (Texas Commission on Law Enforcement, 2007).

New officers have not yet been exposed to the dangerous environment of being in the real world of police work. They are entering an environment that could get them killed if they do not follow learned procedures and direct orders. There is no prior life

experience, short of the military, that can prepare them for the job of a law enforcement officer. The police job is one that requires the new officers to follow orders immediately and without question, or tragic results can happen. If an officer or many officers were allowed to question the authority of their commanding officers on a regular basis, imagine the chaos that would ensue during a time of crisis. Law enforcement officers must be able to follow clearly established guidelines and orders.

CONCLUSION

Law enforcement agencies and their field training programs need to perform in a more structured environment, establish clear and concise policies and procedures, and enforce the policies in a manner that holds all the members of the department accountable for the culture that is created within the department. The evolution of a new officer begins on day one, as soon as they enter the doors of the police academy. It is extremely important that the training process begin and that, at no time, is training taken for granted.

Haider (1990) felt that with a solid field training program, “a department is investing time and experience in its richest resource, its officers. Knowing what knowledge and skills the officer needs to perform and teaching them how to accomplish this task is what field training is all about” (p. 6). The selection of the field training officer is also of the utmost importance when an outstanding field training program is sought. A department must choose the best and the brightest of their department to train, teach, and mentor these new officers. Also, field training programs need to establish a specific curriculum for the duration of the recruit’s training. Haider (1990) believed that “The

police executive who desires to have a thorough selection and training process must have a program that is standardized” (p. 5).

Law enforcement is a profession where one mistake, violation of policy, or deviation of procedure can cost an officer or several officers their lives, such as the events in Oakland, California and Austin, Texas. In California, two officers lost their lives because their commanders failed to follow basic police procedure (Stewart, 2009). In Austin, Texas, an independent review reported that a citizen was killed unnecessarily due to poor tactics on the part of the officer (Kroll Government Services, 2007). These reviews are only two examples of the tragic events that often occur nationwide. Sadly, officers and citizens are killed daily in cities across the country due to police related functions. What is tragic about this, other than the obvious fact of law enforcement officers and citizens dying, is that many of these deaths could be prevented if officers received and maintained training that was consistent and concise as well as followed the established procedures and policies provided to them. In law enforcement, the saying “complacency kills” is often overstated but under-used. This must be the lesson passed on to future law enforcement officers through their training and continuing education.

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