



POLICING FOR TODAY AND THE FUTURE



Training methods in Ohio established by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy and Commission have been relatively static for a decade. Meanwhile, expectations have changed and evolving demands on policing have created recruiting and retention challenges.

The Attorney General's **BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE** on the Future of Police Training in Ohio spent months fact-finding, researching, discussing, debating and seeking public comment, exploring how best to devise and deliver world-class continuing education for the state's 30,000 law enforcement officers.

With its work concluded, the task force recommended seven changes:

1

Amend the Peace Officer Basic Training (POBT) curriculum to reflect contemporary police services.

Of particular note, officers entering the field are bringing fewer communication skills with them than did their predecessors. The current POBT curriculum is insufficient at requisite skills-based training to effectively deliver the services that officers are called on to provide. Forty-eight hours of effective communications skills is recommended for the basic curriculum.

2

Establish certification levels to reflect an officer's training and experience.

The task force noted that every peace officer in Ohio is treated equally regarding certification. After graduation, officers clearly develop a varying array of skills and experiences. To recognize these differing levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities, the task force recommends the creation of continually progressing levels of certification.

3

Create a Tactical Patrol Officer Program.

In its Guiding Principles on the Use of Force, the highly respected Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) compares the outcomes of specialty teams such as SWAT with the outcomes of patrol officers who encounter similar crises — and notes a skills gap.

To rectify this disparity, the task force advocates for a uniquely tailored course aimed at providing skills and abilities to patrol officers who utilize tactics commonly employed by specialty teams but applying the course to patrol responses.

This training will rely heavily on lessons related to crisis mitigation, de-escalation, and resolving high-risk, low frequency events in a manner that promotes the wellness and safety of both officers and the public.

Ideally, this training will be provided first to field-training officers, officers-in-charge, and first-line supervisors — the staff members who influence new officers most directly and profoundly. This will ensure that the program lessons are perpetuated over time as new officers enter the profession.

4

Add new technologies while incorporating elements of reality-based situational decision-making scenarios into both basic and advanced training.

The University of Chicago has researched a new training technique known as Sit-D, or situational decision-making, which centers on the cognitive demands related to policing. This method of training has been shown to improve how officers assess situations, leading to decreases in use of force, discretionary arrests, and officer injuries.

The task force recommends adopting a Sit-D model, or a similar variation, into police training. Further, it recommends incorporating new technologies, such as virtual reality, into training protocols. Courses should contain less static lecture and more practical application — notably, by introducing scenario training and incident debriefs.

5

Develop integrated lesson plans across training platforms.

Current lesson plans stand alone, each focusing on a single topic. The task force recommends changing lesson-plan formats to integrate peace officers' common activities into a multidimensional approach that might combine, for example, crisis intervention, subject control, report writing, and courtroom testimony.

Every newly created lesson plan should include elements of supervisory activities, community perspectives, officer wellness, tactics, and policy considerations. For select courses, a knowledge-based review or exam should be administered at the end of the training.

6

Focus CPT training so that it keeps advancing police services.

CPT training is currently developed ad hoc, with no expectation that the training advances the profession by using tactics capable of resolving previous undesirable outcomes. CPT training that perpetuates outdated practices should be replaced with progressive methods that minimize biases and promote trust.

7

Expand annual firearms qualifications.

Firearms qualifications should be broadened beyond the current once-a-year qualification course of 25 shots (minimum score of 20).

Qualifications should include an annual legal and policy exam, ideally along with a decision-making course.

By implementing these seven recommendations, Ohio will create a sustainable progressive model of continuing education that provides new skills, satisfies the demands of the profession, meets community expectations, and promotes officer wellness.



To access the full Blue Ribbon Task Force Report, scan the QR code or go to www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/The-Future-of-Police-Training-in-Ohio