

Transforming Police Recruit Training: *40 Guiding Principles*



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CRITICAL ISSUES IN POLICING SERIES

Transforming Police Recruit Training: 40 Guiding Principles

November 2022



POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM

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Message from PERF Executive Director Chuck Wexler

YOU CAN TELL A LOT ABOUT A POLICE TRAINING academy from the moment you walk in the door and encounter a group of recruits. If the recruits immediately back up against the nearest wall, look straight ahead, and bark out in unison, “Good morning, ma’am!” or “Good afternoon, sir!,” you pretty much know the culture and operating philosophy of that academy. If, on the other hand, the recruits pause, look you in the eye, and offer a more conversational, “Good morning, sir” or “How are you today, ma’am?,” that tells you something else.

I have visited numerous training academies over the years, and overall, my experience has been that most of them are more like the former than the latter. Academies have traditionally followed a paramilitary, boot camp-like model that emphasizes discipline, deportment, following orders, and a strict hierarchy where recruits are often on the lowest rung. Discipline and following the chain of command are certainly important and necessary aspects of police training and operations. But when those elements become so pervasive that they overshadow almost everything else, it can undermine the mission of the academy, which is to prepare new police officers to serve and protect their communities with compassion and humanity.

One exception to this overall trend occurred in 2015 when about two dozen U.S. police leaders and I visited the Police Scotland College. Our purpose was to observe how Police Scotland trains their officers, almost all of whom do not carry firearms, to handle persons in crisis who are armed with knives, baseball bats, and other weapons other than firearms. We



spent a week at the College at Tulliallan Castle, and during the course of our visit we had the opportunity to meet many of the officers going through their recruit training.

None of them ever backed up against a wall and shouted out, “Good morning, sir!” To the contrary, they were all collegial, conversational, often inquisitive. It wasn’t unusual, waiting in line for coffee, for a recruit to inquire what the U.S. delegation was doing in Scotland or to solicit our opinions on some aspect of policing that they were studying.

When I remarked to some of the Police Scotland leaders how different this was from what I had experienced at many academies in the United States, they had an interesting and perfectly understandable explanation. Because most police constables in Scotland are unarmed, they need to rely heavily on their communications skills. Police Scotland actively recruits people who are good communicators to begin with, and then the agency emphasizes those skills throughout their training – in the classroom,

in scenario-based training, even in the halls of the academy. The expectation is that recruits will model that behavior and practice those skills during their time at Tulliallan, so that by the time they hit the streets, new officers possess strong communications skills and the confidence to use those skills in a variety of situations.

In fact, a year earlier, in 2014, I went to Scotland and had an opportunity to attend the Oath of Office ceremony for new members of Police Scotland. I asked one of the new constables, “How do you deal with people with knives, when you don’t have a gun?” This young officer told me he had been trained to use all his tools, including tactical defense skills, a baton, chemical spray, and handcuffs – but especially his communication skills. This conversation would have far-reaching implications for PERF’s thinking about use of force and the development of our ICAT (Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics) training.¹

When you consider the most important skill we want the police officers of the future to have, it is communication – the ability to talk to people, not just give them orders. And to have not just the skill but also the confidence that they are effective communicators.

PERF’s visits to Police Scotland got me thinking: what message do American academies send when they require recruits to back out of the way, brace against the wall, and bark out a canned greeting to just about anyone who enters the training facility? When those recruits graduate the academy and engage with members of the community, are they going to be effective and confident communicators? Or will they revert to the same ways of communicating that they were expected to practice in the academy?

Furthermore, will the new officers bark orders as their instructors did at them in the academy? Will they expect the same obedience to authority they showed their instructors? Will they react punitively if the public doesn’t act in accordance with their wishes?

PERF has been examining police training – and, in particular, use-of-force training – for many years. In 2015, we published the report, *Re-Engineering Training on Police Use of Force*.² It documented how both recruit and in-service training devoted considerable hours (and appropriately so) to firearms skills, defensive tactics, and other “hard” skills, but scant few hours to communications, de-escalation, crisis intervention, and other “soft” skills.

The next year, PERF published our *Guiding Principles on Use of Force*, which included several recommendations on training and how it intersects with tactics.³ This report also provided the conceptual foundation for PERF’s ICAT training curriculum. ICAT has been implemented in hundreds of agencies across the United States, including the New York City Police Department and all municipal police agencies in New Jersey.⁴

In 2020, an independent research study in the Louisville Metro Police Department found that ICAT was associated with sizeable reductions in use-of-force incidents, and fewer injuries to both officers and citizens.⁵ Effective communication is a central element of ICAT and key to successful de-escalation.

PERF’s earlier efforts focused largely on how officers are trained on the critical matter of use of force. This project looks at how police recruits are trained more broadly. **Our thesis is that while policing has changed dramatically in the last few decades, the way in which police recruits are trained has not fundamentally changed all that much.**

1. See <https://www.policeforum.org/icat-training-guide>.

2. Police Executive Research Forum. “Re-Engineering Training on Police Use of Force.” 2015. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/reengineeringtraining1.pdf>

3. Police Executive Research Forum. “Guiding Principles on Use of Force.” 2016. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/guidingprinciples1.pdf>

4. PERF. “Agencies Implementing ICAT.” <https://www.policeforum.org/icat-agencies>

5. International Association of Chief of Police (IACP) / University of Cincinnati (UC) Center for Police Research and Policy. “Examining the Impact of Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) De-escalation Training for the Louisville Metro Police Department: Initial Findings.” 2020. https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Research%20Center/LMPD_ICAT%20Evaluation%20Initial%20Findings%20Report_FINAL%2009212020.pdf

Our research has largely supported that thesis. **While there are pockets of innovation in recruit training, training as a whole has not kept pace with the dynamic changes taking place in policing.** This includes not only the training recruits receive in the academy, but also the field training they engage in when they exit the academy. As a result, today's police officers are not universally being prepared for the challenges they face in providing police services in increasingly diverse and demanding communities.

American policing needs to re-imagine and retool recruit training. We need to rethink the following issues:

- How academies are operated and staffed,
- What the recruit curriculum contains,
- How the training is delivered and by whom,

- How to use reality-based scenario training more broadly and effectively, and
- How recruit training integrates with field training once recruits leave the academy.

Re-imagining policing begins with tackling how police officers are taught. This report is a blueprint for fundamentally rethinking the current way we train new police officers – for dismantling the existing model and building a new approach. The goals are ambitious and far-reaching. But our hope is that if police agencies can attract those who possess the “right stuff,” we can provide them with the kind of training that will take us into the future guided by a new way of thinking.



Chuck Wexler
Executive Director
Police Executive Research Forum
Washington, D.C.

Acknowledgments

THIS PROJECT INCLUDED MANY COMPONENTS, and many people helped us along the way.

PERF developed and fielded an extensive national survey to our members who are the chief executives of their agencies. We are grateful to the 401 members who completed the survey – a strong response rate that illustrates just how important the topic of recruit training is to PERF members. PERF frequently reaches out to our members to capture their experiences and opinions on a wide range of topics, and every time they respond enthusiastically. The willingness of PERF members to share information and insights is one of the strengths of our organization.

PERF also conducted a literature review, in which we studied previous research articles about police recruit training programs. And we conducted one-on-one interviews with numerous subject matter experts, including academy directors, instructors and other training personnel, and researchers. These experts included:

- **Michael Becar**, Executive Director, International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST);
- **Andrew Ferguson**, Professor, American University Washington College of Law;
- **Marvin (Ben) Haiman**, Chief of Staff, Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C.;
- **Sean Hendrickson**, Instructor, Washington Criminal Justice Training Center;
- **Tom Hill**, Program Manager, Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission;
- **Eric Kazmierczak**, Deputy Chief, Tucson Police Department;
- **Kevin Lutz**, Captain, Camden County (NJ) Police Department;
- **Deidre Magee**, Academic Director, New Orleans Police Department;
- **Sue Rahr**, former Sheriff, King County (WA) and retired Director, Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission;
- **Michael Schlosser**, Director, University of Illinois Police Training Institute;
- **Greg Speed**, Commander, Anne Arundel County (MD) Police Department; and
- **Jerrell Wills**, Deputy Director, Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission.

We salute each of these experts for their dedication to the policing profession and their insights which helped to shape this publication.

In June 2021, PERF hosted a virtual meeting of police training practitioners and other subject matter experts to review an early draft of PERF’s guiding principles on recruit training. The following individuals provided valuable feedback, which helped to ensure that this report is firmly grounded in the realities of what is necessary and possible with recruit training:

- **Mike Chitwood**, Sheriff, Volusia County (FL);
- **Gary Cordner**, Academic Director, Baltimore Police Department;

- **Kenneth Corey**, Chief of Department, New York City Police Department (formerly Chief of Training);
- **Ben Haiman** of Washington, DC's MPD (see above);
- **Shelly Katkowski**, Lieutenant, Burlington (NC) Police Department;
- **James O'Keefe**, Vice Provost and Associate Professor, St. John's (NY) University;
- **Luther Reynolds**, Chief, Charleston (SC) Police Department; and
- **Seth Stoughton**, Professor, University of South Carolina School of Law.

Mr. Haiman also invited PERF staff to sit in on two virtual meetings of the National Symposium on Police Academies and Training. This is a group of training directors and other leaders from approximately two dozen mostly large law enforcement training academies who come together periodically to share ideas, challenges, and new programming related to police training. These meetings provided important insights about recruit training and helped PERF to identify additional subject matter experts to interview.

This report also benefited from the insights and experiences of Bob Wasserman, whose extensive experience in the field of policing includes serving as Director of Training and Education in the Boston Police Department and assisting the New York City Police Department. Bob provided helpful information and perspectives that improved the quality of this publication.

This project is part of PERF's *Critical Issues in Policing* series, which the Motorola Solutions Foundation has supported for the past two decades. The *Critical Issues* initiative allows PERF to identify and explore some of the most pressing issues facing policing today and to provide police leaders with important information and useful guidance for tackling those challenges. This report follows in that tradition.

PERF is grateful to all of our long-time and supportive partners at Motorola: Greg Brown, Motorola Solutions Chairman and CEO; Jack Molloy,

Executive Vice President of Products and Sales; Jim Mears, Senior Vice President; Jason Winkler, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; Tracy Kimbo, Chief of Staff, Global Enterprise and Channels; Monica Mueller, Vice President of Government Affairs; Shamik Mukherjee, Chief Marketing Officer; Karem Perez, Executive Director of the Motorola Solutions Foundation; Wesley Anne Barden, Manager of Evaluation and Grantmaking at the Foundation; and Matthew Starr, Director of Government Affairs and Privacy Policy.

Like all PERF projects, this was a team effort. Kevin Morison, PERF's Chief Program Officer, led the project team and was the primary author of this report. Kevin has considerable experience working in the Chicago and Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Departments, where he helped to drive innovations in community policing, training, and communications. Senior Research Associate Sarah Mostyn and Senior Research Assistant Nathan Ballard helped to design and execute the survey of PERF members and analyze the results. Research Assistant Rachael Thompson researched promising practices, wrote several sections of the report, and proofread the entire document. She and Executive Assistant Soline Simenauer also supported a variety of project tasks. PERF Senior Principal Martin Bartness, a retired, 25-year veteran of the Baltimore Police Department whose commands included Education and Training, provided valuable insights and comments.

Director of Communications Craig Fischer edited this document, and Assistant Communications Director James McGinty assisted with report preparation and dissemination. The final report was designed and laid out by Dave Williams.

Throughout our research, PERF staff was fortunate to be able to tap into the knowledge and experience of our project consultant, Steve Edwards. Steve retired as a Senior Policy Advisor at the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. He has a wealth of insights and a real passion for improving police training, both of which were on display throughout this project. Steve did everything from offering big-picture observations to conducting interviews and reviewing documents. He was instrumental in making this report both leading-edge and practical.

Introduction: A System Built to Train Officers Quickly and Cheaply

“You have one chance to train somebody correctly – one chance. You have one chance to build the culture of your organization.”

— Sheriff Mike Chitwood
Volusia County (FL) Sheriff’s Office

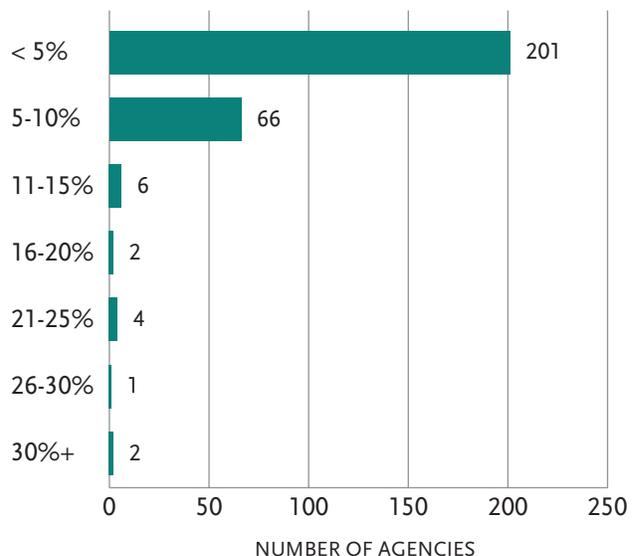
THE UNITED STATES HAS TRADITIONALLY trained police officers on the cheap. The survey PERF conducted for this project (see page 10) found that more than 71% of agencies devote less than 5% of their total budget to recruit training.

And while nearly half of the agencies responding to the survey said that spending on recruit training had increased over the past five years, that was before police budgets faced the dual challenges of cuts related to the COVID-19 pandemic and calls to “defund” the police. Investments in training could be stalled or reduced at the very time they need to be increased to bring about needed changes in American policing.

In many jurisdictions, the goal seems to be moving as many recruits as possible through academy training as fast as possible and at the lowest possible cost. This approach has been driven, in part, by the desire to get more officers on the street, quickly – a challenge that became particularly acute as officer hirings declined and retirements and resignations increased because of the COVID-19 pandemic,⁶ and as homicides and other violent crimes surged.⁷

What percentage of your agency’s overall budget is dedicated to recruit training?

n = 282



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

6. Police Executive Research Forum. “Survey on Police Workforce Trends.” June 11, 2021. <https://www.policeforum.org/workforcesurveyjune2021>.

7. Police Executive Research Forum. “Violent Crime Trends: Homicides, Shooting, and Carjackings Are Increasing in 2021; Robberies Continue to Decline.” September 22, 2021. <https://www.policeforum.org/violentcrimesurveyseptember2021>

But there can be serious consequences – legal, financial, and reputational – for agencies that fail to adequately invest in training for their recruit and veteran officers. In the United States, the Courts have consistently held that municipalities can be held liable for failing to adequately train police officers under Section 1983 of the U.S. Code.⁸ While these claims can be difficult for plaintiffs to prove and the total cost of failure-to-train judgments is hard to ascertain, police agencies that fail to invest in training run the risk of losing the trust and support of the community when they are sued.

Compared with other countries and other often demanding professions, the duration of police recruit training in the United States is limited, especially given the levels of crime and disorder that today’s police officers are expected to address, and the challenges of policing during an opioid addiction crisis, an underfunded behavioral health system, a protracted pandemic, and a largely unchecked firearms market. In 37 states, recruits are permitted to begin working as police officers even before they have completed their basic training course.⁹

Furthermore, recruit training is not necessarily aligned with research on what works, although the research in this area is limited. As the Council on Criminal Justice Task Force on Policing recently pointed out, “Despite the critical importance of police officer training to the onboarding of new recruits, there is very little evidence about its effectiveness. The scant research that does exist is not promising.”¹⁰ So not only does the policing profession need to invest in training itself; it also needs to invest in rigorous research about what works and what doesn’t in police recruit training. For example, there should be research not just on what topics need to be covered, but also on the best sequence for delivering those courses.

The current state of recruit training demands that we rethink – and remake – the system for how new police officers are trained. We need national consensus and national standards on what the training contains, how it is delivered, and by whom.

This report may present a grim picture of the current state of recruit training, but it also puts forth a series of principles that can help guide the transformation of training to meet the challenges of policing for today and tomorrow.

Policing has changed – recruit training has not kept pace

Policing in the United States has changed dramatically over the past several decades in a number of important ways:

- **Crime-fighting:** Starting in the 1990s, police agencies have adopted new strategies for controlling and preventing crime. These approaches – community policing, problem-oriented policing, intelligence-led policing, and others – are based on the principle of preventing the *next* crime through partnerships with the community and other stakeholders, collaborative problem analysis and solving, and effective use of technology and outside resources.
- **Technology:** Police agencies have access to information technology that was unimaginable decades ago. Sophisticated records management and data analysis systems, powerful land mobile radio and mobile broadband networks, ballistics and other forensic applications, gunshot detection systems, and artificial intelligence and machine learning have all revolutionized how police understand, respond to, and solve crimes.

8. Thomas J. Martinelli, “Unconstitutional Policing: Part 3—A Failure To Train Is Compensable Liability,” *The Police Chief* 82 (November 2015): 56–60.

9. Institute for Criminal Justice Training Reform. <https://www.trainingreform.org/untrained-police>.

10. Council on Criminal Justice, Task Force on Policing. “Policy Assessment: Effectiveness of Police Training.” March 2021. <https://counciloncj.foleon.com/policing/assessing-the-evidence/iv-effectiveness-of-police-training/>.

- **Diversity:** Police agencies are more diverse than they ever have been. Even though their numbers are not yet reflective of their representation in the community, women, persons of all races, members of the LGBTQ community, and recent immigrants are now part of the diverse mix of people working at all levels of police agencies, including as chiefs and sheriffs.
- **Equipment:** Police officers have access to new tools and equipment that go far beyond the revolvers, batons, and handcuffs that previous generations of officers had to rely on. More powerful and reliable service weapons (to match the increased firepower on the streets), a wide range of less-lethal tools, and technologies such as body-worn cameras and drones are helping today's officers be more efficient and effective.
- **New challenges:** The challenges facing the police have grown more numerous and complex. Officers today are confronted by criminals armed with incredibly powerful firearms, an increasing number of which are “ghost guns” that can't be traced. They also face a new breed of offenders who understand how to use the Internet and the Dark Web to facilitate both traditional crimes such as drug and human trafficking as well as entirely new types of cybercrime.¹¹ And while the police have traditionally confronted issues such as addiction, homelessness, and mental illness, the scope and complexity of these problems and their impact on the community are arguably unprecedented.

Almost every major aspect of policing has fundamentally changed in recent decades, except for one: how we train new officers. That is not to say that there have not been incremental improvements or important innovations. In most jurisdictions, for example, the number of hours of training provided to new recruits has doubled, from the 400 hours noted in a landmark Presidential report in 1967¹² to 800 or more hours today (although, as noted, that is still

fewer hours of training than officers in many other countries must complete).

Most training academies have added courses on community policing, drug abuse and addiction, homelessness, and other topics. Some academies are now providing recruits with more intensive instruction on de-escalation and handling critical incidents through the use of scenario-based training. And a few academies are focusing on orienting recruits to the neighborhoods they will be working in, introducing them to community leaders, institutions, history, and culture, and teaching recruits about the police profession's often troubled history with African Americans and other communities of color.

Overall, however, recruit training simply has not kept pace with the dramatic changes that have taken place in policing in recent decades or with the increasingly complex and challenging realities that today's police officers face. In too many instances, academies continue to train officers to be warriors, even though their agencies and communities expect them also to be guardians, social workers, and community partners. That is the overarching conclusion from the research that PERF conducted into the current state of recruit training and what should be done to improve training in the future.

Is training the last bastion of an outdated police culture?

Recruit training presents an immediate crisis for policing.

In many communities, new police officers and sheriffs' deputies are hitting the streets without a thorough understanding of the challenges they will face and often without the full range of skills – both technical and non-technical – they will need to succeed. The lack of perspective and necessary skill sets can hamper new officers' performance in the short term and also prevent them from growing and developing later in their careers.

11. For more background, see Police Executive Research Forum. “The Changing Nature of Crime and Criminal Investigations.” 2018. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ChangingNatureofCrime.pdf>

12. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. “The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society.” 1967. <https://www.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh241/files/archives/ncjrs/42.pdf>

In addition, there is often a disconnect between what new officers are learning in the academy and what is being taught and reinforced during their field training. Today, body-worn camera videos depict a side of policing that previously was unknown to the public. For example, videos of a controversial use of force or other action may show a field training officer (FTO) on the scene, either engaging in questionable conduct themselves or standing by as other officers do. This may suggest that the current combination of academy training and field training needs to be reevaluated to guard against the unintended effect of perpetuating outdated or counterproductive ideas about how policing should be done.

But the current state of recruit training also presents an opportunity for police agencies and training academies to rethink what they are teaching and to align that instruction with the principles of adult learning.

There is also an opportunity to fundamentally reshape the culture of policing and to align the values of individual agencies with the training their new officers receive. In too many agencies, organizational values and training are out of alignment. Communities don't want their police officers operating like soldiers; they want officers who are part of the community and have strong interpersonal skills and other traits to serve effectively as community guardians. This realignment – this culture change – begins with how academies are structured and operated, how recruits are treated (like adult learners, not soldiers in a boot camp), and how academy training is integrated with field training and real-world experiences of officers.

Reshaping police culture to more effectively meet the challenges of today and tomorrow will require a radically different approach to training and educating new recruits. And this initial training will need to be followed by rigorous and carefully designed field training that reinforces not just the basic skills that officers need, but also the core values and personal qualities that are instilled in the academy.

Not a panacea, but a critical element of police reform

Better training, especially at the recruit officer level, will not fix every problem in policing today. Nor will simply legislating that officers receive *more* training – a trend seen in many jurisdictions seeking to reform policing. Too often, training is treated as a panacea, but other systems – policy, supervision, inspections and audits, discipline, etc. – must function properly too. If they don't, the positive effects of high-quality training are likely to wane or be undermined.

But when these other systems are high-functioning, and they are supported by training that is well designed and executed, then police agencies are in a much stronger position to provide fair, effective, and Constitutional policing.

This report is designed to help police agencies and training academies review and reconsider their current practices and make the changes that are needed in recruit training. The document does not present a “model curriculum” or specific details on what ought to be taught to new recruits. Rather, it represents a first step toward re-engineering recruit training – a set of guiding principles that agencies and academies should adopt in order to begin the process of change and set a new direction for recruit training that is both transformative and sustainable.

About the PERF Survey on Recruit Training

To help gain a better understanding of the state of recruit training, PERF surveyed our members on a range of training issues. The 25-question survey covered five main areas:

- Academy organization, operation, and philosophy
- Recruit training curriculum
- Academy leadership and instructors
- Technology and physical facility
- Integration of academy and field training

In March 2020, the survey was sent to the chief executive (police chief, sheriff, director, etc.) of all law enforcement agencies that are members of PERF, a total of 753. PERF left the survey in the field for approximately four months and received 401 responses, for a response rate of just over 53%.

Survey Respondents

Agencies represented in the survey came from 43 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. They ranged in size from 5 to

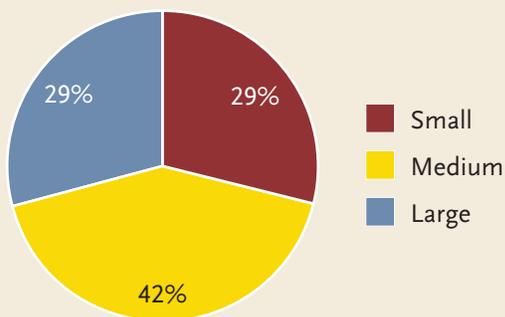
10,000 full-time sworn personnel and were fairly evenly distributed among small (1-49 sworn officers), medium (50-249 sworn officers), and large (250+ sworn officers) departments. The vast majority of respondents (87%) represented local police departments; sheriffs' offices and university police agencies accounted for approximately another 10%.

It should be noted that this survey is not a nationally representative sample of all law enforcement agencies in the United States or North America. However, it is a broad sample of agencies with different approaches and experiences in how they train their recruit officers. For example, 21% of the agencies that responded to PERF's survey operate their own training academy for recruits. Most of the rest rely on either a regional (53%) or a statewide (18%) academy for training their recruits. This breakdown is comparable to the most recent national census of training academies published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.¹³

Survey results are presented throughout this report to illustrate the key findings of our research and support the recommendations.

Agency size of survey respondents, by number of sworn personnel

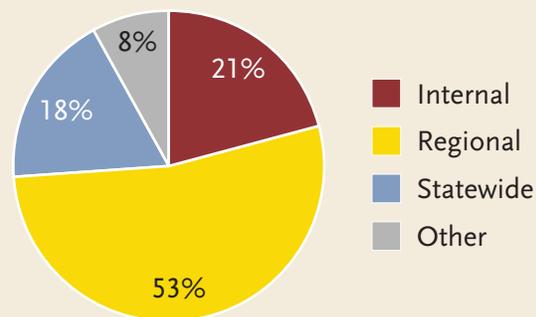
n = 381



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

What type of training academy does your agency utilize for recruit officer training?

n = 385



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

13. See U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. "State and Local Law Enforcement Training Academies, 2018 – Statistical Tables." July 2021. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/slleta18st.pdf>

The Current State of Recruit Training

BESIDES RECRUITING AND HIRING, THERE IS perhaps no activity that is more crucial to the success of police departments and sheriffs' offices than how their new recruits are trained.

Recruit training is where new officers acquire the basic knowledge and skills to do their jobs. It's where they learn the right way to do things and have an opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them, without the serious consequences of making those mistakes in the field. It's where new officers acquire the foundation of technical know-how that will stay with them throughout their careers.

But recruit training is about more than just technical instruction. Recruit training is where prospective officers are introduced to the concept of public safety and public service. The training academy is where police agencies can articulate their philosophy and vision and begin to instill their core values. Recruit training is where agencies build and reinforce their culture through the next group of front-line employees.

PERF used a variety of approaches to assess the current state of recruit training:

- In spring 2020, PERF fielded an extensive survey on recruit training to all PERF members who were the chief executives of their agencies; more than 400 responses were received. (See page 10 for more information about the survey.) Findings of this survey are presented throughout this report.

- PERF reviewed recent research articles and academic literature on recruit training academies and practices.
- PERF conducted in-depth one-one-one and group interviews with approximately two dozen police executives, training directors and instructors, researchers, and other subject matter experts. PERF staff also sat in on virtual meetings of training directors and visited academies.

It is unfair to generalize about all recruit training academies. In fact, many of the practitioners PERF interviewed for this project have implemented meaningful reforms that are helping to shape the future of recruit training in positive ways. Still, recruit training on the whole suffers from a variety of challenges and deficiencies.

Recruit training is splintered among hundreds of academies.

According to the 2018 survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, there are close to 700 different academies across the United States that provide training to police recruits. Approximately one-third of these academies are operated by local law enforcement agencies; another 47% are operated by four- or two-year colleges or technical schools.¹⁴

A more recent study was conducted by the Little Hoover Commission, an independent state oversight

>> continued on page 13

14. Bureau of Justice Statistics. July 2021.

What Two National Commissions Have Said about Recruit Training

How new police officers are trained has been the focus of national policing commissions spanning the past half century. These bodies addressed some of the issues in this report. And while there has been some progress, PERF's research found that many of the prior recommendations have not been fully embraced.

In 1967, President Lyndon Johnson's **Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice** evaluated police recruit training and made recommendations for improvement in some key areas.

- **Length of training**

1967: In the 1960s, the commission found that roughly 30 percent of large cities provided police recruits with less than 8 weeks of training, and recruits in small, mostly rural departments often received no formal training at all.¹⁵ The commission recommended formal training programs for all recruits, consisting of at least 400 hours of classroom work combined with supervised field training.

Today: Most agencies are now exceeding the Johnson Commission's recommendation. On average, agencies that responded to PERF's 2020 survey reported that their recruits complete just over 800 training hours in the academy and nearly 600 hours in field training. While the total length of recruit training is still much shorter than the training required by other professions, there have been dramatic increases over the past 50 years.

- **Instructional staff**

1967: The Johnson Commission report noted that not enough recruit training programs incorporated recognized teaching techniques or used professional educators and other experts to teach specialized courses.

Today: While academic approaches to training have become more widespread, the use of instructors who are **not** current or retired police officers is still limited. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), professional (civilian) staff made up only 11 percent of full-time academy instructors in 2018.¹⁶

- **Curriculum**

1967: The 1967 report found that recruit training curricula were almost entirely technical in focus, with little emphasis on principles such as proper use of discretion, relationships between police and members of minority groups, problem-solving, and community relationships.

Today: The BJS found that by 2018, the majority of recruits were trained in ethics and integrity (99.6%), cultural diversity (97%), problem-solving (80%), and community-building (80%). However, each of these subject areas was only taught for 11 to 16 hours on average. That is only a fraction of the time devoted to technical subject areas such as firearms skills (73 hours), defensive tactics (61 hours), and patrol procedures (52 hours).¹⁷

15. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. 1967.

16. Bureau of Justice Statistics. July 2021.

17. Ibid.

In 2015, President Barack Obama’s **Task Force on 21st Century Policing** amplified the need for fundamental changes in police recruit training. In its report, the task force recommended reforms in many of the areas that had been identified in the 1967 report:

- A need for a more academic, less paramilitary approach to training;
- Curricula focused on social and communications skills in addition to technical skills; and
- Increased involvement by outside experts and community members in recruit training.¹⁸

The 2015 report also addressed the complex demands on police officers that have

arisen in the 21st century. The report noted that it is crucial for today’s officers to be trained in areas such as:

- Crisis intervention,
- Handling calls involving persons with mental health issues,
- The disease of addiction, and
- Interacting with populations such as LGBTQ individuals, persons experiencing homelessness, and people from Muslim, Arab, and South-Asian communities.

The task force also recommended that the federal government invest in research into the development of technology that will enhance police social interaction skills, scenario-based training, and interactive distance learning.¹⁹

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agency in California that analyzes state government operations, with support from the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST). This study identified 822 basic training academies in the United States. It found that close to half are administered by academic institutions, one-third by local agencies, and 10% each by regional entities and state entities.²⁰

Just over 20% of the agencies that responded to PERF’s survey operate their own academies for training recruits, and most of these were large departments. The remaining agencies – mostly small and medium-sized departments – send their recruits to outside academies.

The splintered nature of recruit training results in vast differences in the quality and content of instruction. This is further compounded by the fact that individual states set their own requirements and standards for how recruit officers are trained. Across the United States, there are vast differences in the types of academies each state has, the minimum number of hours of instruction required, and the material that is presented.

Nine states centralize administration of all training through a single academy,²¹ which can help ensure greater consistency in the curriculum, instruction, and oversight that recruits receive. But the more typical model is Ohio, which has more than 80 police academies spread out among big-city departments; state, community and technical colleges; and career centers.²²

18. President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing. “Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing.” 2015. https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf

19. Ibid.

20. Little Hoover Commission. November 2021. “Issue Brief: Comparing Law Enforcement Basic Training Academies.” <https://lhc.ca.gov/sites/lhc.ca.gov/files/Reports/264/Report264.pdf>

21. Ibid.

22. Ohio Attorney General’s Office, Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy. “2020 POBT Annual Report.” 2021. <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Files/Reports/OPOTA-POBT-Annual-Report/2020-POBT-Annual-Report>

What type of training academy does your agency utilize for recruit officer training?

Academy Type	Agency size			
	Small	Medium	Large	Total
Internal	1 1%	10 6%	70 63%	81 21%
Regional	72 65%	106 66%	26 23%	204 53%
Statewide	28 25%	35 22%	6 5%	69 18%
Other	9 8%	10 6%	10 9%	29 8%
Total	110 100%	161 100%	112 100%	383 100%

Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

Note: Small agencies are those with fewer than 50 full-time sworn personnel; Medium have 50-249 sworn members; Large have 250 or more.

The philosophy of the academy may not align with the philosophy of the agencies they serve.

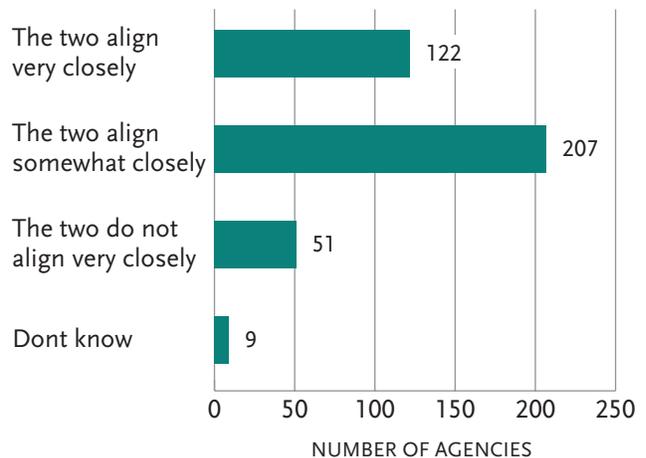
One byproduct of this splintered system is that the training police recruits receive at an outside academy may not align with an individual agency’s culture and operating philosophy. In PERF’s survey, fewer than one-third of respondents said that the culture of the training academy they use aligns “very closely” with the culture of their agency. Most said the two align “somewhat closely,” but about 1 in 8 respondents said the two cultures did not align very closely.

Differences in culture and philosophy can be especially pronounced – and critically important – on issues such as police use of force, pursuits, police-community relations, and other high-risk, high-profile matters. In agencies that send their recruits to outside academies for basic training, these differences can be glaring.

For example, recruits may be trained in outdated or counterproductive concepts such as the “21-foot rule,” while the agency the recruit will

How closely would you say the culture of the training academy aligns with the culture of your agency?

n = 389



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

“The academy cannot be either a boot camp or community college – it has to be something more. It has to be an institution that teaches community-focused individuals to tackle the rigors and challenges of modern-day society and modern-day policing.”

— Sue Rahr

Former Sheriff of King County (WA) and retired Director of the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission

work for emphasizes de-escalation, tactical communications, and repositioning.²³ When that happens, the agency needs to spend considerable time and energy re-training their new officers to “un-learn” some of what they were taught in the academy and to learn for the first time how their agency operates.

In addition, the philosophy and culture of the academy often reflect the philosophy and culture of the academy’s leaders. When the leadership changes, the philosophy and culture of the academy often change as well.

The desire to better align recruit training with agency culture and philosophy is a key reason that some agencies, including the Volusia County (FL) Sheriff’s Office²⁴ and the Henderson (NV) Police Department,²⁵ have recently pulled their recruits out of regional training facilities and stood up their own academies (see page 36).

The Volusia County Sheriff’s Training Academy opened in June 2021, and its first class of 20 graduated in late November. Sheriff Mike Chitwood said having its own academy allows the agency to focus more instruction on topics such as de-escalation, implicit bias, diversity, and the use of body-worn cameras.

For too long, some police academies have trained recruits more like soldiers than police officers.

Traditionally, many police academies have followed a regimented, boot-camp style approach to training new recruits. Many academies place an overriding emphasis on strict discipline, deportment, following orders, and a stress-based style of instruction. As one group of researchers put it, “Often, academy training staff would be indistinguishable from military drill sergeants, who verbally harass and even demean recruits who are not measuring up.”²⁶

The problem is that the mission and roles of the military and policing are completely different, and entry-level personnel in these professions require different approaches to training. It is true that both soldiers and police officers need to follow their chain of command and understand and execute orders. Also, both professions demand physical exertion at times, and personnel regularly encounter extremely stressful situations, so physical fitness and some level of stress-based training are necessary.

>> *continued on page 17*

23. In 1983, a firearms instructor with the Salt Lake City Police Department conducted a series of tests that purported to show that an adult male, armed with a knife and charging at full speed, could cover 21 feet before a police officer had time to draw, aim, and shoot a firearm. Although developers said the tests were intended to remind officers about maintaining a safety zone with offenders armed with edged weapons, many police agencies and officers embraced the “21-foot rule,” leading some officers to believe they are justified in shooting anyone with a knife who gets within 21 feet of the officer. See Police Executive Research Forum, 2016, p. 20.

24. Volusia County Sheriff’s Office. “Volusia Sheriff’s Office Launching New Training Academy with State Approval” (news release). February 11, 2021. <https://www.volusia-sheriff.org/news/volusia-county-sheriff/volusia-sheriffs-office-launching-new-training-academy-with-state-approval.shtml>

25. Bleakley, Caroline. “Henderson moves ahead with plans for fourth police station, first training facility.” *KLAS-TV*. May 12, 2020. <https://www.8newsnow.com/news/local-news/henderson-moves-ahead-with-plans-for-fourth-police-station-first-training-facility/>

26. Blumberg, David M., et. al. “New Directions in Police Academy Training: A Call to Action.” Published in *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. December 6, 2019.

Closed vs. Open Academies: Different Systems Can Produce Different Results

The U.S. system of police training includes a mix of “closed” and “open” academies.

“Closed” academies are typically operated by a single police department or sheriff’s office (usually in a large jurisdiction) and are attended by people who have been hired by that agency. The recruits are not charged tuition, and they are paid as employees during the time they are in the academy.

“Open” academies are open to a wide range of recruit candidates. They are typically operated by universities, community or technical colleges, or agency academies that accept people from outside their own departments. Open academies charge tuition for the training they provide. Some law enforcement agencies cover tuition costs and pay a salary to recruits while they are in training. However, these academies are also open to anyone who has an interest in policing and can afford to pay the tuition, even if they have not yet secured a policing job upon completion of the training.

Receiving training at a community college or other institution is common in many professions, and many open police academies provide excellent instruction. However,

their tuition structure can create a financial incentive to enroll and graduate as many students as possible, with little regard for their suitability to be sworn law enforcement officers.²⁷

In Ohio, recruits who attend closed academies have greater success than open academy recruits in passing the state-mandated test at the end of training. Data from 2020 compiled by the Ohio Attorney General’s Office found that almost 100% of the recruits who attended academies operated by individual police departments – including Akron, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, and Toledo – passed the state exam on their first try, and their average scores were higher than 90 (out of 100).²⁸

By contrast, the initial pass rates on the state exam were generally lower among the open academies, and initial scores ranged from about 70 to the mid-90s. At the academy operated by Eastern Gateway Community College, just 7 of the 14 students who took the state exam passed, and the average initial score was 69.5. Another 12 students who started the academy there dropped out before being eligible to take the state exam.

27. For an in-depth look at this issue, see Semuels, Alana. “Society Is Paying the Price for America’s Outdated Police Training Methods” *Time*. November 20, 2020. <https://time.com/5901726/police-training-academies/>.

28. Ohio Attorney General’s Office, Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy. 2021.

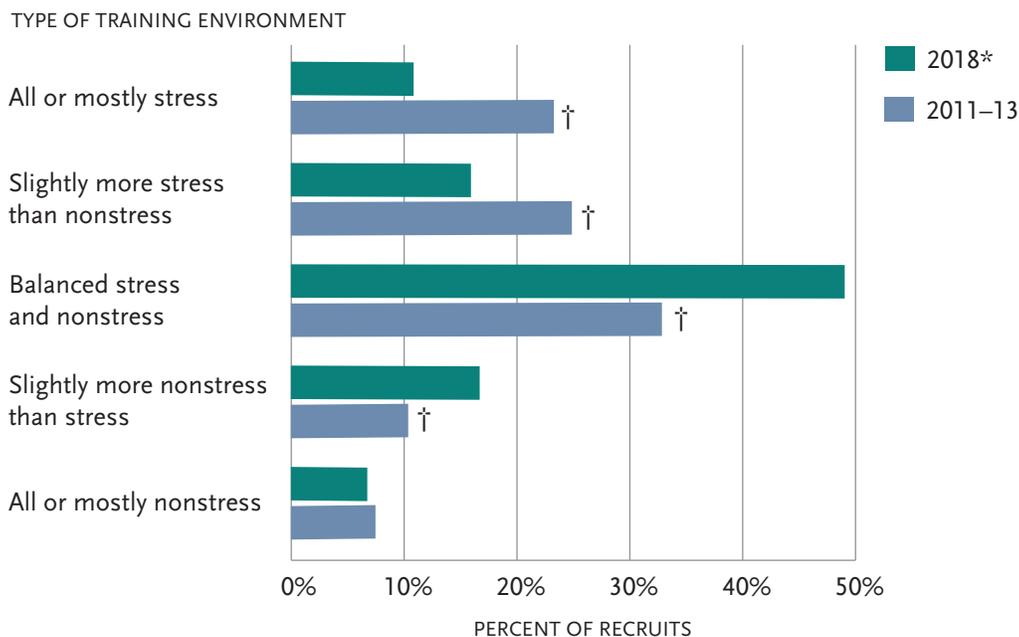
However, unlike soldiers, police officers spend most of their time on their own, without immediate direct supervision, and they possess enormous discretion when faced with the myriad circumstances they may encounter in one shift. As such, officers need to develop skills beyond understanding the rules and following the orders of their superiors; they need to learn to think and act on their own. Police officers need communication skills, and they need to know how to be problem-solvers and how to defuse tense situations. They also need to view the community as allies, not the enemy.

The culture of a police academy has ramifications beyond what happens during initial training.

If the academy culture is demeaning and controlling, then new officers may be more likely to model those traits in the community when they graduate. But if the academy culture is supportive and reflects the concepts of procedural justice, then it would seem more likely officers will be supportive and just with the community.

One piece of encouraging news is that academies seem to be shifting away from a mostly paramilitary approach to training. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the percentage of recruits attending academies that emphasize a stress-based training environment has declined from nearly 50% in 2011-2013 to just over 25% in 2018. That year, almost half of all recruits were instructed using a training model that was roughly equal parts stress and non-stress learning.²⁹

Recruits in basic training programs in state and local law enforcement training academies, by type of training environment, 2011–13 and 2018



Note: Academies were asked about the degree to which their curriculum followed a stress model (i.e., military or paramilitary style), a nonstress model (i.e., academic or adult learning), or a combination of both models.

* Comparison group.

† Difference with comparison group is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Census of Law Enforcement Training Academies, 2013 and 2018.

29. Bureau of Justice Statistics, July 2021.

This trend was reflected in the PERF survey as well. The majority of respondents (55%) reported that the operating philosophy of their academy was “balanced” between a paramilitary and academic approach. Just 13% of respondents reported a more paramilitary philosophy, and nearly 32% reported a more academic setting.

Still, in many police academies across the country, there remains an enduring tradition of treating recruit officers much like the military treats soldiers during basic training.

The United States does not devote enough time to training police officers.

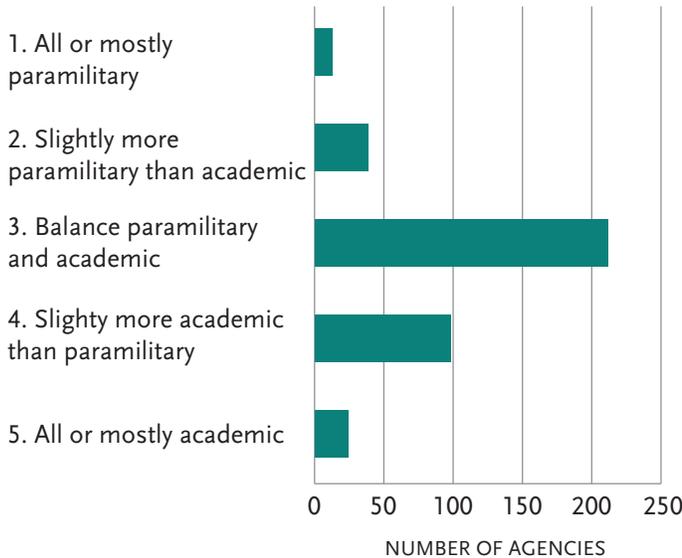
Compared with other countries and with many other professions, the amount of time devoted to training police recruits in the United States is low. Most Western democracies devote far more time to training their officers than most U.S. agencies do (see page 20).

Among respondents to PERF’s survey, the average number of academy training hours that a new recruit must complete is 807, or about 20 weeks. The latest BJS survey had a similar finding: the average length of academy training in its 2018 census was 833 hours.³⁰ These averages include both the number of training hours mandated by each state, plus any additional training hours that individual academies may provide. In California, for example, 80% of the state’s 41 academies require 900 or more hours of training.³¹

The minimum number of hours of academy instruction is generally dictated by each state’s Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) commission, and it varies widely from state to state. According to data compiled by the Institute for Criminal Justice Training Reform, the number of hours mandated by each state ranges from 408 in Georgia to 1,321 in Connecticut.³² (Hawaii does not mandate a minimum number of training hours.) The national average for state minimum mandates is 537 hours.

How would you characterize the operating philosophy of the academy your agency utilizes for recruit officer training?

n = 386



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

Total Recruit Training Hours in U.S. Academies

How many total training hours are recruits in the academy required to complete?	
Mean	807
Maximum	1829

How many of those hours are for state-mandated training?	
Mean	662
Maximum	1680

Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

30. Ibid.

31. Little Hoover Commission. November 2021.

32. See <https://www.trainingreform.org/state-police-training-requirements>.

Field training does not change the imbalance in training hours.

Even if field training hours are included in the total, police officers in the United States still receive less training than their colleagues in other countries. PERF’s survey found that, on average, police officers complete 550 hours of field training on top of their academy instruction. PERF’s survey found that large agencies (those with 500 or more full-time sworn officers) devoted more time to both academy (945 hours) and field (611 hours) training than did medium and small agencies. On average, the total training time for police recruits in the United States,

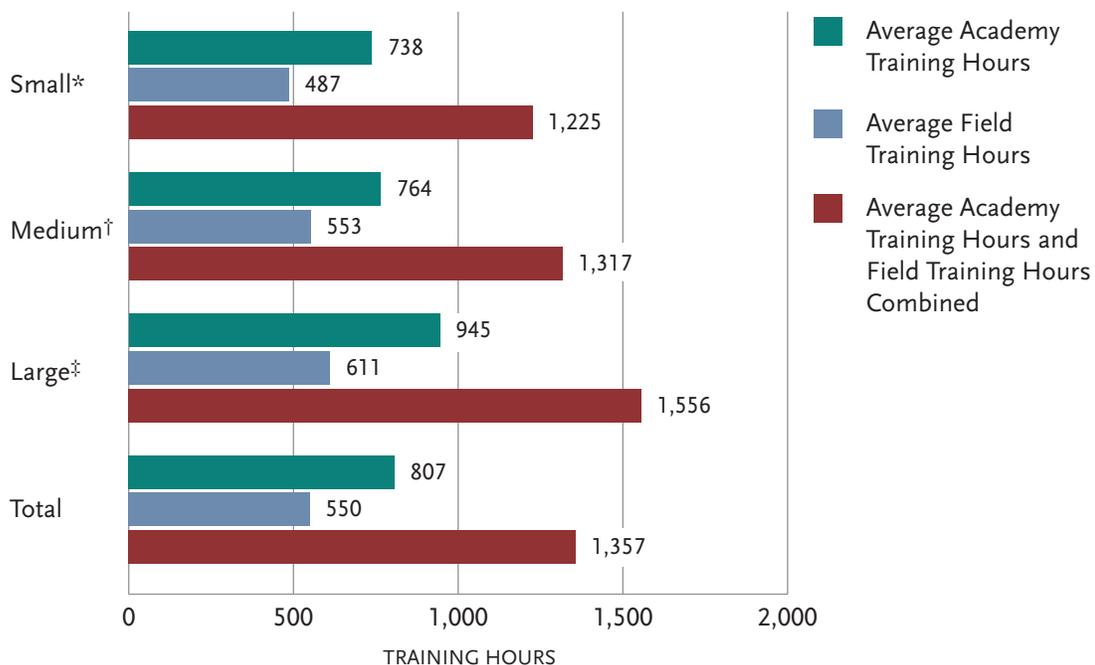
including field training, is 1,357 hours – just under 34 weeks.

Police recruit training also seems inadequate in comparison to training for other trades and professions in the United States that do not necessarily require a college degree. While the numbers vary by state, cosmetologists must complete between 1,400 and 1,600 hours of training,³³ and in many states, plumbers are required to complete up to 3,500 hours of training, and sometimes more.³⁴ And of course, professions such as social work, law and medicine require many years of undergraduate and graduate studies.

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Average Training Hours by Agency Size

n = 323



* Agencies with fewer than 50 full-time sworn personnel

† Agencies with between 50 and 249 full-time sworn personnel

‡ Agencies with 250 or more full-time sworn personnel

n = 323 (94 small, 139 medium, and 90 large agencies)

Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

33. American Association of Cosmetology Schools. <https://www.beautyschools.org/students/careers-in-beauty/>.

34. “Plumber Licensing Requirements by State: A Comprehensive Guide.” Next Insurance, Inc. <https://www.nextinsurance.com/blog/plumber-licensing-requirements/>

How Police Training in the United States Compares with Other Countries

Although direct comparisons with the United States are not always precise, many other countries, including several Western democracies, devote far more time to training their new police officers than the U.S. does.³⁵

Weeks of training in the United States, compared to months and years of training in other nations: Both the PERF survey and the Bureau of Justice Statistics census found that in general, police recruits in the United States spend approximately 20 weeks in academy instruction.

By comparison, police recruits in Japan receive between 15 and 21 **months** of training, depending on their highest level of education.³⁶ The length of basic training in Estonia and Croatia is similar, roughly 18 months.

And many other European countries require police recruits to undergo 2 to 3 years of training before they are allowed to work.³⁷ In Finland, for example, police recruits complete 3 years of training at the Police University College.³⁸ In Germany, police recruits complete about 2.5 years in the police academy.³⁹

India requires 5,400 hours (about 135 weeks); the Netherlands, 4,050 hours; Australia, 3,500 hours; England, 2,250 hours; and Canada, 1,040 hours.⁴⁰ In Scotland, probationary training lasts for two years through a combination of

instruction at the Police Scotland College, training at the local division, and an extensive period of field training, with periodic assessments along the way.⁴¹

Militaristic vs. academic approaches: In addition to being generally longer in duration, recruit training programs in Europe differ from the United States in other ways as well. For example, while many U.S. academies still follow a paramilitary or stress-based approach to training, European countries typically use a more academic setting. In Finland and Norway, for instance, policing is treated as an academic discipline, and training is carried out at police universities. Recruits receive the same quality education as teachers or nurses, and they graduate with the equivalent of a bachelor's degree.⁴²

Differences in curricula: In many European countries, the recruit *curricula* are markedly different from those used in most U.S. academies. For example, European police tend to provide recruits with extensive instruction on the history of policing and the role of police within the community. In Norway, the first full year of training is dedicated to the social role of police and their ethical obligations.⁴³ In Germany, confronting the history of German

35. Some European police academies incorporate college-level courses into their curricula, similar to what U.S. officers may complete toward an associate's or bachelor's degree.

36. National Police Agency. "Police of Japan." https://www.npa.go.jp/english/Police_of_Japan/2020/poj2020_full.pdf

37. Council on Criminal Justice, Task Force on Policing. March 2021. It should be noted that in some countries, undergraduate education and police academy training are conducted in tandem.

38. See <https://polamk.fi/en/bachelor-of-police-services>.

39. Bennhold, Katrin, and Melissa Eddy. "In Germany, Confronting Shameful Legacy Is Essential Part of Police Training." *The New York Times*. June 23, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/23/world/europe/germany-police.html>.

40. Institute for Criminal Justice Training Reform. "Not Enough Training." <https://www.trainingreform.org/not-enough-training>.

41. Police Scotland. "Training." <https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/tblf33gs/police-officer-training.pdf>

42. Kates, Graham. "Some U.S. police train for just a few weeks, in some countries they train for years." *CBS News*. June 10, 2020. <https://www.cbsnews.com/amp/news/police-training-weeks-united-states/>

43. Khazan, Olga. "American Police Are Inadequately Trained." *The Atlantic*. April 22, 2021. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2021/04/daunte-wright-and-crisis-american-police-training/618649/>

policing – including the cataclysmic era of Nazi rule – is a key part of recruit training.⁴⁴

While some U.S. academies have launched innovative partnerships with museums and other community institutions to teach recruits the history of policing and the police role in the community (see pages 45-46), focusing on these topics is not standard practice in most U.S. recruit curricula.

Other countries also place greater emphasis than the United States on communications and interpersonal skills for police recruits. Recruit education in Japan focuses heavily on ethics and cultural training. Ethics courses cover topics such as the correction of negative attitudes, as well as the benefits of a compassionate attitude and the importance of justice, responsibility,

and service in policing.⁴⁵ In Switzerland, psychological training and “softer” qualities are considered essential for a professional police officer, and the recruit curriculum focuses largely on appreciation of emotion, sensibility, and understanding of situations the trainees might find themselves in.⁴⁶ At Police Scotland College, communication skills are emphasized throughout the recruit curriculum, particularly when teaching de-escalation skills and dealing with persons in crisis.⁴⁷

By contrast, most U.S. police academies devote a relatively modest amount of time to communication and interpersonal skills, especially when compared to the amount of training focused on firearms skills and defensive tactics.⁴⁸

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Recruit training in the United States does not focus enough on decision-making, communications, and other critical skills that officers use every day.

In many academies, there is a disconnect between the focus of the training that recruits receive and the range of skills that officers need to carry out the everyday demands of the job.

A 2015 PERF survey found that, on average, police recruits received 58 hours of training on firearms and 49 hours on defensive tactics, but they completed 10 or fewer hours each on communications skills, de-escalation, and use of various less-lethal technologies.⁴⁹ And in some academies, “communications” training still consists of the

outdated “Ask, Tell, Make” approach that focuses on obtaining compliance with orders, rather than two-way communication.⁵⁰

It is critical that recruits be thoroughly trained in how to deal with armed and aggressive suspects. These encounters are rare, but they can be extremely dangerous and sometimes deadly for police officers and others.

However, there is a range of other skills – communications, crisis intervention, community engagement, and problem-solving, for example – that officers will rely on day-in and day-out for the routine encounters that will occupy the vast majority of their time. Being a skilled communicator and problem-solver is crucial not only to addressing crime and disorder, but also to building community trust and support.

44. Bennhold and Eddy, June 23, 2020.

45. Millie, Andrew, and Dilip Das. “Education and Training in Four Countries: Getting Rule of Law Messages Across.” In “For the Rule of Law: Criminal Justice Teaching and Training @cross the World,” No. 53, pp. 184-202, 2008, Kauko Aromaa, Salwomir Redo, eds. <https://www.sccjr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/millie-and-das-2008-HEUNI.pdf>

46. Institute for Criminal Justice Training Reform. “Not Enough Training.”

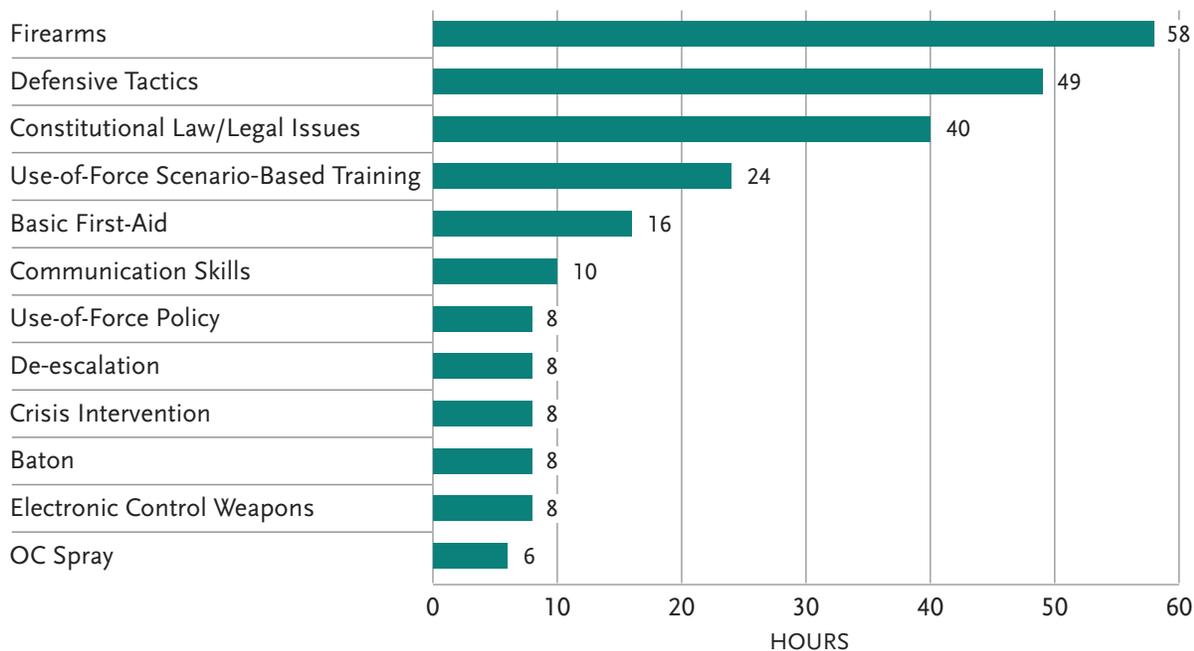
47. Police Executive Research Forum, 2016, pp. 88-115.

48. Police Executive Research Forum, 2015.

49. Ibid.

50. For a discussion of the history and application of “Ask, Tell, Make,” see Wolfe, Duane. “The ‘Ask, Tell, Make’ Mistake.” *Police1.com*. Nov. 5, 2019. <https://www.police1.com/police-training/articles/the-ask-tell-make-mistake-fz633oUFKu8G82nO/>

Recruit Training: Hours Spent on Use-of-Force Topics (median values)



Source: Police Executive Research Forum
2015 Survey of Member Agencies (n = 280)

In addition, police training tends to focus on teaching specific skills or following specific rules, as opposed to helping recruits develop into critical thinkers and sound decision-makers. In reality, there are many situations in which there is no detailed rule or policy that officers can readily apply. Agencies give officers tremendous discretion on the street, and they need to think on their feet, be able to analyze situations, and make sound decisions. Yet, very little recruit training is focused on critical thinking and decision-making.

Police academy training is often presented in silos.

In many academies, the recruit curriculum is laid out in a detailed roster of courses covering dozens of individual classes. Recruits must complete a certain number of hours on a particular topic, demonstrate a basic level of understanding, and then move on to the next topic.

Topics are often presented as separate and distinct from one another. And in some academies, the sequencing of courses is sometimes dictated more by

the availability of instructors and training facilities (e.g., firearms ranges and driving courses) than by a logical flow of how material should be presented.

This check-the-box approach to recruit training ignores the reality that many skills – such as communications, crisis intervention, and defensive tactics – are interconnected. Officers will need to use – and integrate – a range of skill sets to successfully address the challenges they face on the street.

Scenario-based exercises are an excellent way for recruits to apply different skill sets to a given problem. However, not enough academy training is focused on helping recruits understand and practice the connections among the various topics they are taught.

Academies are not routinely using modern and effective adult-learning methods and techniques.

Most police recruits are relatively young, in the 21-25 age range. Even so, they bring knowledge and life experiences to the academy that should be recognized and incorporated into their instruction. They

Recruit the Educated or Educate the Recruit?

When he served as deputy commissioner of training for the NYPD in the 1990s, James O’Keefe, now vice provost and associate professor at St. John’s University, used to ponder this question.

“It takes both training and education to produce a solid police officer in a free society. I used to ask, ‘Is it better to recruit the educated or educate the recruit?’ Since most police academies don’t have the ability, time, accreditation from the state Board of Regents, or faculty to educate the recruit, why not recruit the educated – and then train them? Nurses and elementary school teachers do it that way.

“In addition, the length, curricula, structure, and outcomes of a police academy are all significantly dependent upon the educational status of the entering recruit. We might be able to build a shorter, and better, academy curriculum if the recruits came in with a degree in criminal justice or other fields.

“Currently, many departments are having trouble recruiting enough police officers, so they are, once again, talking about dropping the existing requirement for college hours. Personally, I think we should take a stand and require a bachelor’s degree or military service.”

“We hear so much about needing more training. Well, more training is better. But better training is better still.”

— **Chief of Department (and former Chief of Training) Kenneth Corey**
NYPD

are not like schoolchildren who need to be fed information; rather, they are adults who need to be actively engaged in their instruction. That is the foundation of the concept of adult learning.

However, not all academies have embraced adult learning, and they do not fully engage recruits in their training. PERF’s survey found that approximately 57% of recruit training was spent in classroom lectures. Only 31% of recruit training was spent on practical applications such as scenarios. And much less time was spent on small-group discussions, problem-solving exercises, and other adult learning approaches.

What types of teaching methods does the academy use to deliver recruit officer training? (Select all that apply and estimate the percentage of time spent on each teaching method)

Training Methods	Frequency	Average Estimated % of Time Spent on Each Method
Classroom Lectures	332	57%
Practical Applications/ Scenarios	317	31%
Small Group Discussions	220	13%
E-learning (online coursework)	100	10%
Don’t Know	14	12%

Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

Note: The percentages reflect an average of the responses provided; as such, they do not add up to 100%.

Cadet Programs Can Improve Training Outcomes

A growing number of law enforcement agencies are instituting – or, in some cases, restarting – police cadet programs. Under these programs, agencies hire promising candidates for police officer positions as part-time or full-time, non-sworn employees and support their secondary education, often through a local community college or university. Cadets can then enter the police academy and often complete their recruit training in an expedited manner.

Some agencies are finding that police cadet programs not only enhance officer recruitment, especially from diverse communities within their jurisdictions; they also can improve recruit training outcomes, according to some of the experts PERF consulted for this project. This is because the cadets are already familiar with the agency, as well as its operations and culture, when they enter the academy and have a better sense of what the expectations are.

In the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C., police cadets earn both their law enforcement certification and an associate’s degree from the University of

the District of Columbia. They do not have student debt because their college was paid for, and they earned a salary as a part-time employee while they were in school.

Kenneth Corey, former chief of training and now Chief of Department for the New York City Police Department, said he wants to expand the NYPD’s cadet program to pick up students right out of high school as well as those who are partway through college. And he wants to make student loan forgiveness part of the initiative.

“The cadet program addresses a lot of obstacles – needing to go to college, needing to work to pay for college, and hoping to get into the police academy,” Chief Corey said.

Cadet programs have the potential to address both recruitment and diversity issues in policing, by providing a different path into policing for young people who might not otherwise have the time and resources to go through the recruiting and training processes. These positive effects can also increase the diversity of officers advancing through the ranks over the years.

Academy curricula are often outdated and not regularly updated.

At many academies, the curriculum is based largely on what has been taught in the past. However, as new laws and agency policies are implemented, these are not always incorporated into recruit training right away. Similarly, new and emerging best practices are not always reflected in the recruit curriculum.

Not all academies have a regular and systematic process for reviewing their recruit curricula and ensuring it is up-to-date and reflective of best practices in policing and police training. In its standards of what constitutes good training, the International

Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST) advises that, “All training programs should have complete and detailed written instructor and student lesson plans *developed from valid job task and training needs analysis (emphasis added)*.”⁵¹ Yet there is little evidence that academies are regularly conducting job task analyses to ensure their training reflects the needs and realities of modern-day policing.

In addition, many academies seem to rely almost exclusively on current or retired law enforcement officers to develop their training curricula. While these officers bring valuable experience and perspective

51. See <https://www.iadlest.org/our-services/model-standards#TS>.

to the curriculum development process, they often do not have backgrounds in curriculum design and presentation. Some academies are hiring curriculum development professionals to oversee the creation of their recruit curricula, but this does not seem to be standard practice in most academies.

Academies do not take advantage of a broad range of instructors and community resources.

At many police academies, the instructors are also primarily current and retired law enforcement officers. For many subjects – such as use of force, defensive tactics, and firearms proficiency – the guidance and perspective provided by experienced law enforcement personnel are critical to recruits learning these skills.

However, for many other topics – communications, crisis intervention, report writing, Constitutional law, problem solving, and community engagement – non-law enforcement instructors with specialized skills and expertise may be more appropriate and effective teachers. Some academies are now hiring professional educators to teach subjects that do not require or benefit from having a law enforcement trainer, but this practice does not appear to be widespread.

PERF’s survey found that most academies have minimum requirements – education, experience, or subject matter expertise – for their instructors. However, some of the experts that PERF spoke with said there is tremendous variation in the quality of instructors at most academies. Some instructors tend to focus on personal “war stories,” and they may not always be up-to-date on current agency policies or modern police practices.

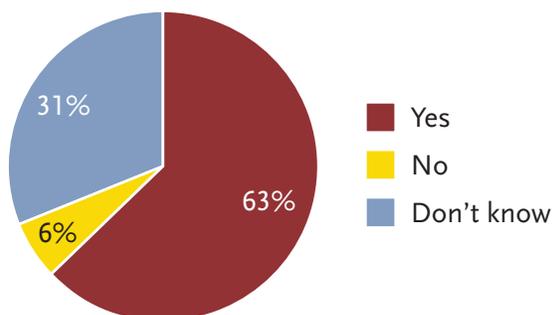
PERF’s survey also found that most academies allow their sworn instructors to remain in the academy for extended periods of time and do not regularly rotate them to patrol or other operational assignments. Only 6% of academies have a mandatory rotation of instructors back to the field. In 15% of the academies, a mandatory rotation depends on the course being taught.

Cycling training personnel back to operational assignments allows them to gain additional experience and insights into the real-world challenges officers face and how their training is being practiced.

In addition, PERF’s survey found that while most academies utilize outside resources to teach specialized topics, these stakeholders tend to be traditional partners such as mental health and social service agencies and prosecutors’ offices. In general, academies are not taking advantage of the opportunity to form creative partnerships with community

Are there minimum requirements (e.g., education, experience, expertise) for instructors in the training academy?

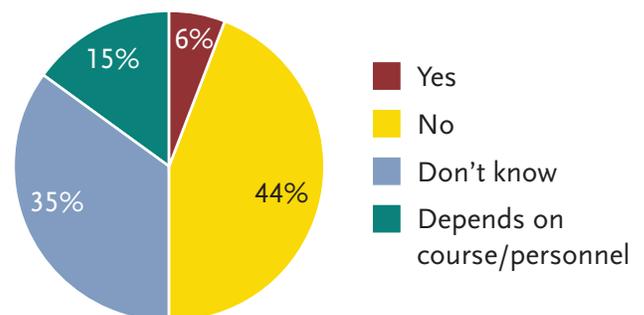
n = 389



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

After instructors have served in the academy for a certain amount of time, are they required to rotate to another assignment?

n = 392



Source: PERF Survey, 2020

What outside stakeholders are involved in presenting training? (Check all that apply.)

n = 277



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

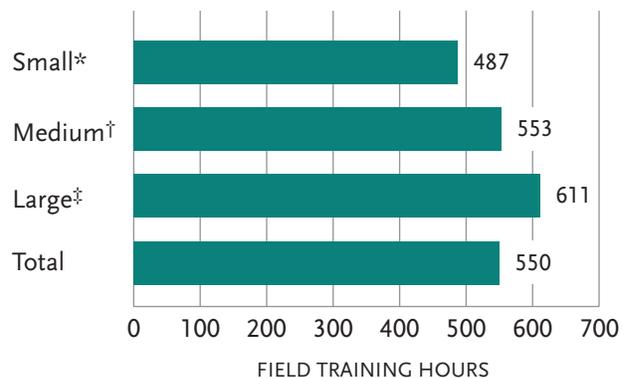
organizations, colleges and universities, and museums and cultural institutions. And very few academies carve out time for recruits to go out into the communities they will eventually serve, interact with neighborhood residents and leaders, and learn about the history, culture, and resources of those communities.

Academy and field training can contradict each other.

Practically every law enforcement agency in the United States requires new police officers who successfully complete recruit training to undergo a period of on-the-job training with an experienced field training officer (FTO). First proposed in the 1967 report of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, field training programs are designed to help new officers better understand police procedures by riding with experienced officers who can monitor their performance and help correct mistakes.⁵²

Average Field Training Hours by Agency Size

n = 323



1. Agencies with fewer than 50 full-time sworn personnel
 2. Agencies with between 50 and 249 full-time sworn personnel
 3. Agencies with 250 or more full-time sworn personnel
- n = 323 (94 small, 139 medium, and 90 large)

Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

52. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967.

Among agencies responding to PERF's survey, the average length of field training was 550 hours, or about 14 weeks, following graduation from the training academy. New officers in large agencies (250+ full-time sworn officers) receive the most field training, 611 hours on average. Officers in small (1-49 officers) and medium (50-249 officers) agencies spent, on average, fewer hours in field training.

As with academy instructors, most agencies in the PERF survey (87%) reported having minimum education and experience requirements to become field training officers (FTOs).

However, FTOs are not always providing effective guidance to new officers because the FTOs are not up-to-date on what recruits are learning in the academy. Just over half of the agencies in PERF's survey said their FTOs receive periodic updates on changes in the recruit curriculum.

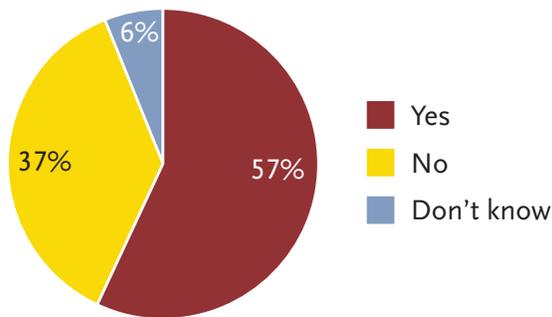
The old cliché about FTOs is that the first thing they tell their new police officer trainees is to “forget everything they taught you in the academy.” Some of the experts PERF interviewed for this project said a bigger problem is that FTOs do not always know about the latest policies, procedures, and agency philosophy that are being taught in the academy.

According to PERF's survey, about one-third of agency executives believe that their academy training and field training programs align “very closely.” The majority (nearly 54%) said the two align “somewhat closely,” and about 1 in 10 said they “do not align very closely.”

In addition, investigations by the U.S. Department of Justice and news media outlets have found that in some agencies, officers with histories of multiple citizen complaints and disciplinary findings were still selected to be FTOs.⁵³

Do your agency's field training officers receive periodic training on changes in academy training?

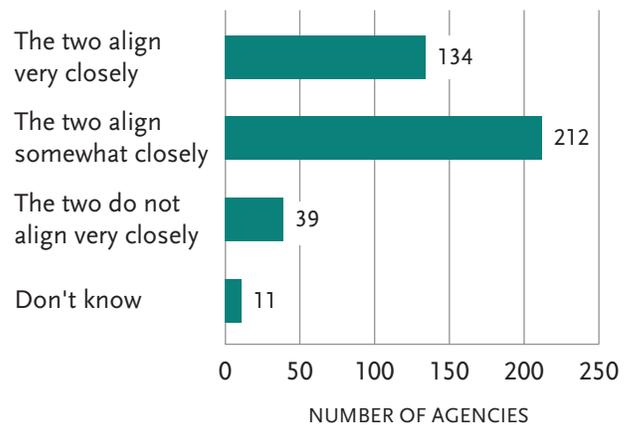
n = 396



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

How closely would you say the academy training your officers receive aligns with the field training they receive?

n = 396



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

53. Weichselbaum, Simone. “One Block to Police Reform: Veteran Officers Who Train Recruits.” *The Marshall Project*. July 22, 2020. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/07/22/one-roadblock-to-police-reform-veteran-officers-who-train-recruits>.

IADLEST: 6 Recommendations on Recruit Training

The International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST) has developed six recommendations for policymakers to consider when reviewing training models and requirements. These recommendations represent the basic building blocks for creating effective training.

1. All training programs should have complete and detailed written instructor and student lesson plans developed from valid job task and training needs analysis.
2. All training programs should engage and challenge the participants mentally and physically with well-designed lesson plans that include discussion questions, in-class collaborative exercises, and realistic, practical exercises replicating the most common tactics and incidents for effective police response.
3. Good training should be evidence-based and developed in an unbiased manner.
4. All training programs should incorporate a variety of learning preferences that will stimulate students and foster content retention.
5. Students should demonstrate content mastery and training transfer with pre-and post-testing.
6. Critical skills areas (vehicle stops, use of deadly force, de-escalation techniques, responding to individuals with mental illness, etc.) should be tested using graded practical exercises.

These recommendations are further explained on the IADLEST website.⁵⁴

Where Do We Go from Here?

PERF's review of the current state of police recruit training in the United States revealed the enormous challenges that agencies and academies are facing. As police departments and sheriffs' offices struggle to recruit and retain personnel, the pressure to get officers trained and out on the street intensifies. However, few agencies or academies are seeing dramatic increases in their training budgets that would support significant increases in their training capacity.

In addition, recruit training in the United States remains splintered. Today's police officers are being trained in a hodge-podge of literally hundreds of academies that have different approaches, philosophies, resources, and quality of instruction. Curricula may not reflect best practices in policing or adult education, and instructors may not always

be the most qualified to teach the material they are assigned. And in many agencies, there remains a disconnect between what recruits are taught in the academy and the guidance they are receiving from field training officers.

But while PERF's survey and other research paint a concerning picture of the current state of recruit training, the research also points to the fundamental changes that will be needed to advance recruit training and better prepare new officers for the challenges they will face in the future. The rest of this document details 40 guiding principles for re-engineering recruit training in the United States. Together, they present a bold plan of action that all agencies and academies should review, compare against their current operations, and use to identify and implement the sweeping changes that are needed.

54. See <https://www.iadlest.org/our-services/model-standards>.

Guiding Principles for Re-engineering Recruit Training

EVERY MAJOR ASSESSMENT OF POLICING OVER the years has emphasized the importance of how new officers are trained. Basic recruit training lays the foundation of knowledge and skills that officers will need to perform their jobs effectively and safely. As importantly, recruit training plays a major role in instilling the values and culture of police organizations.

Yet, in many ways, both police academy and post-academy training are still carried out in much the same fashion as they have been for decades. There have been some reforms and pockets of innovation over the years. But for most police chiefs who visit a police academy today, the look and feel and experience are probably quite similar to what they encountered when they began their careers.

The Guiding Principles presented in this report are designed to move police training forward and ensure that police academies and the agencies they serve are providing the highest quality training to the men and women entering the policing profession. Covering five key areas of academy operations, these Guiding Principles do not spell out a particular curriculum or specific course of study. Rather, they

serve as guideposts for how recruit training can be re-engineered to meet the challenges of policing today.

There are excellent police training academies across the United States that already follow many of these guiding principles. In fact, the ideas behind many of these principles came from the practices of forward-thinking academies and their leaders.

However, these practices are far from universal. Too many academies still cling to outdated concepts and approaches that are not serving recruit officers or their agencies very well. PERF's guiding principles are designed to dramatically raise the bar and improve recruit training at all academies.

PERF's Guiding Principles are presented in five areas:

- Academy Organization, Operation and Philosophy
- Curriculum
- Academy Leadership and Instruction
- Technology and Physical Facilities
- Integration of Academy and Field Training



AREA 1:

Rethinking Academy Organization, Operation and Philosophy

With 18,000 police agencies in the United States and an estimated 700-800 training academies, recruit training is splintered and inconsistent. There are no national standards for how new officers are trained; even the minimum number of hours that recruits must complete varies widely from state to state and from agency to agency.

In many academies, police recruits are still trained more like military recruits in a boot-camp environment than like public servants and problem-solvers in a more educational setting. Training academies tend to be closed, insular environments where discipline is sometimes valued over academic inquiry, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

The following Guiding Principles are designed to address these and related issues.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #1:

Throughout a police academy, recruit training should be centered on critical thinking and values-based decision making. All lesson plans should reinforce the development of these skills.

Decision making is at the heart of everything a police officer does, yet not nearly enough time is devoted to developing the critical-thinking and decision-making skills among police recruits. Recruit training tends to focus on the mastery of technical skills such as shooting a firearm, using a less-lethal device, or going “hands-on” with a subject. But there is not enough emphasis on the decision making that goes

into applying those skills, which often occurs in dynamic, high-stress situations.

PERF’s Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM) can serve as the foundation for all recruit training.⁵⁵ While the CDM was created to help guide decision-making in potential use-of-force situations, it can be used to help recruits think through their decision making on traffic stops, investigations, community engagement, and most other common officer activities. Even “hard skills” such as firearms and defensive tactics can be presented in the context of the CDM.

Developing sound decision-making skills is critically important for police officers, given the variety and complexity of the situations they encounter and the fact that there will never be clear guidance – a “rule” – to cover every situation. Because officers are given so much discretion, their decision making must be firmly grounded in the agency’s values.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #2:

National standards for recruit training should be developed and implemented. These standards should specify, among other things, the core topics to be taught, learning objectives to be met, and how student proficiency is to be measured.

Having a comprehensive and agreed-upon set of training standards is what distinguishes a profession from an industry or a trade. For policing in the United States, the responsibility for setting these standards has been left up to the states. This has led to

55. For background on the CDM, see Police Executive Research Forum. “ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment and Tactics.” 2016, p. 27. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/icattrainingguide.pdf>

a hodge-podge of training standards that vary from state to state and from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

To meet the needs of their communities, many academies and individual law enforcement agencies supplement the minimum training required by their states with extensive, additional instruction. In California, for example, recruits are required to complete either 664 or 730 hours of training, depending on the training format.⁵⁶ But 98% of California's 41 training academies provide 800 or more hours of instruction to complete their curriculum.⁵⁷

National training standards would ensure that all recruit officers, regardless of jurisdiction or agency size or location, receive comprehensive instruction on a common set of topics and learning objectives, and are taught in ways that maximize comprehension and retention. The standards would require that recruit officers be able to demonstrate mastery of the wide range of concepts, skills, and tactics that police officers must rely on to be effective in today's policing environment.

And, as the United States becomes more mobile and police officers increasingly change departments mid-career, having national training standards would help ensure that officers entering a new agency have met the same national training standards as everyone else in the department.

National standards would be the floor, not the ceiling. States or communities may have additional or special topics that need to be covered, and local agencies are in the best position to address those training needs.

“Officers need critical-thinking and decision-making skills, but those skills also need to be grounded in values. Values and principles are what officers rely on when making a decision in the absence of clear guidance – which for the police, is most of the time.”

— Professor Seth Stoughton
University of South Carolina School of Law

State POST boards need to step up

For too long, some state POST (Police Officer Standards and Training) boards have clung to traditional, outdated approaches to training and stood in the way of needed reforms. For new, forward-looking national standards on recruit training to take hold and be successful, POST boards will need to embrace new ways of thinking about recruit training and a new role for themselves. Under this approach, state POSTs would be responsible for:

- Helping to develop and refine national training standards.
- Certifying that academies are meeting those standards by monitoring academies and ensuring they are teaching to the national standards.
- Identifying additional training standards or special topics (above and beyond the national standards) that academies in their states should cover.

An important role for DOJ

The U.S. Department of Justice also should play a role in the process of developing national standards for recruit training.

DOJ's highly respected research branch, the National Institute of Justice, should gather existing research studies on training principles in policing, and should conduct or commission research about new content and methods of recruit training that reflect the needs of policing today. The Bureau of Justice Statistics should continue to play an important

56. Basic training academies are certified by the California POST to provide the Regular Basic Course (RBC) in two formats. The standard format is delivered in a one-part instructional sequence; the modular format is delivered in a three-part instructional sequence. See, California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. “Regular Basic Course.” <https://post.ca.gov/regular-basic-course>

57. Little Hoover Commission. November 2021.

role in gathering data about training academies, and DOJ's grant-making units should consider grant funding and technical assistance to police agencies for the purpose of developing and implementing new training programs that adhere to, or exceed, the national standards.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #3:

Investments in police training should be substantially increased, beginning with recruit training.

Policing is usually the largest item in a municipal budget, but the vast majority of the police budget is spent on personnel costs, primarily the salary and benefits of sworn officers. PERF's survey found that the vast majority of agencies spend less than 5% of

their annual budgets on recruit training, and spending on training has increased in fewer than half of agencies over the past five years (see page 6).⁵⁸

To improve the quality of policing, all levels of government need to dramatically increase investments in training, especially recruit training. More resources are required not just for instructional staff, but also for curriculum development, technology, facilities improvements, and other investments covered in these guidelines.

Some agencies have been compelled to expand training through U.S. Department of Justice consent decrees and other agreements. Over the years, consent decrees have become more extensive, and training is almost universally identified as a key reform.⁵⁹ But all agencies, not just those compelled through consent decrees, should be proactive in boosting their investments in recruit training.

Kentucky's Innovative Approach to Funding Training

To fund its police training needs, the Commonwealth of Kentucky has implemented an innovative and consistent source of funding.

Since 1972, the Kentucky Law Enforcement Foundation Program Fund (KLEFPF) has provided the necessary funds for mandatory training of law enforcement officers in the commonwealth. The program also provides an annual training incentive stipend to officers whose agencies adopt KLEFPF standards.⁶⁰

KLEFPF is funded through a 1.8% surcharge on casualty insurance premiums, including homeowners, fire protection, and vehicle policies. Any city, county, or state law

enforcement agency that employs a paid police or sheriff's force and meets minimum requirements spelled out in Kentucky law may participate in KLEFPF.⁶¹

The fund covers the cost, up to \$4,000 a year, for each law enforcement officer who attends the minimum number of training hours. The fund requires all law enforcement officers to successfully complete 800 hours of basic training within one year of the date of employment and 40 hours of annual in-service training approved by the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council (KLEC). (In July 2020, Kentucky waived 32 hours of that annual requirement because of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶²)

58. It should be noted that because many agencies use primarily sworn personnel as academy instructors, their salaries may not be reflected in the academy budget specifically but may be included in the overall "sworn salaries" budget item.

59. Police Executive Research Forum. "Civil Rights Investigations of Local Police: Lessons Learned." 2013. https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Critical_Issues_Series/civil%20rights%20investigations%20of%20local%20police%20-%20lessons%20learned%202013.pdf.

60. A summary of the KLEFPF program can be found here: <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/300/12367/022020-1-KLEFPF.pdf>

61. See <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=51066>.

62. See <https://klccitylimit.com/news/2020/07/kentucky-amends-2020-klefpf-requirement/>.

“I think the ideal is to transition to a blended approach where a more academic environment is predominant. But that does not negate the necessity to include some appropriate stress-based training, for a position which is inherently filled with stress-based triggers.”

— **Marvin (Ben) Haiman**
Chief of Staff, Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, DC

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #4:

Training academies should avoid predominantly stress-based, paramilitary approaches to recruit training and instead adopt a balanced approach that creates an academic environment based on adult-learning principles, augmented with appropriate stress-based learning.

Both the PERF survey and the most recent BJS census of training academies found that more academies are adopting a “balanced” approach that blends academic and stress-based approaches (see pages 15-18). However, a substantial percentage of academies still follow some aspects of a paramilitary approach to recruit training.

The stress-based academy model overemphasizes appearance, deportment, and following rules, and it undervalues skills such as critical thinking, communications, and problem solving. As a result, the paramilitary model goes against the principles of adult learning theory and is incompatible with preparing

recruits to effectively engage in community-policing strategies.⁶³ The boot-camp approach can also conflict with the principles and messages presented in training on de-escalation, procedural justice, and response to calls that involve persons with mental-health issues, which can undermine officers’ effectiveness at those critical skills.⁶⁴

How the training academy operates should reflect the attitudes and behaviors that law enforcement agencies want their officers to display in the community. That is why the experts that PERF consulted for this project almost universally favored a balanced approach whose foundation is academic inquiry and adult learning, supported by appropriate stress-based training that emphasizes sound decision making. They pointed out that policing inherently involves stress to varying degrees, and recruits need to be trained and tested for those stressful situations. But stress should not be the only or even the predominant method or philosophy of the recruit training experience.

“Police training needs to prepare officers to operate in real-world conditions. That means the stressful aspects of training should be carefully calibrated to prepare officers for the high-stress aspects of the job, which don’t include getting yelled at by drill sergeant types for not shining your shoes properly.”

— **Professor Seth Stoughton**
University of South Carolina School of Law

63. Blumberg, David M., et. al. December 6, 2019.

64. Council on Criminal Justice, Task Force on Policing. March 2021.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #5:

There are too many police training academies in the United States, which leads to inconsistencies in resources, curricula, instruction, and quality. The number of training academies should be reduced through consolidation or, where feasible, the creation of “super-regional” or statewide academies.

The vast majority of the nearly 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States cannot afford to operate their own academies and must rely on outside facilities to train their recruits (see pages 11-14).

Statewide academies, like those in Washington and Oregon, are one option for providing instruction to large numbers of recruits at a single facility. If properly designed and resourced, they can enhance the professionalism of instruction and ensure officers are consistently trained on the latest topics and using modern adult learning principles.

However, statewide academies can be expensive – it costs more than \$16 million a year to operate the Washington state academy – and they can place a greater burden on students and agencies (travel and other costs, being away from families for extended periods of time, etc.). In addition, the competition among agencies for slots in a statewide academy can be fierce, and especially challenging for agencies that are trying to quickly hire and train a large group of new officers.⁶⁵

Move toward consolidation

If statewide academies are not an option, states could look to consolidate existing regional academies to help ensure a greater level of quality and consistency in instruction. Ideally, these facilities should be affiliated with institutions of higher education or respected law enforcement agencies that have the capacity and resources to train officers from other agencies. These affiliations provide important resources for curriculum development, coaching and evaluating instructors, and providing facilities and technology to support adult learning.

In addition to certifying academies, state POST commissions should closely monitor and, if necessary, help manage the admission practices and tuition structures of regional academies. In some “open academies,” there is a financial incentive to enroll and graduate as many recruits as possible, even if some of those students are not qualified or suitable for becoming law enforcement officers.

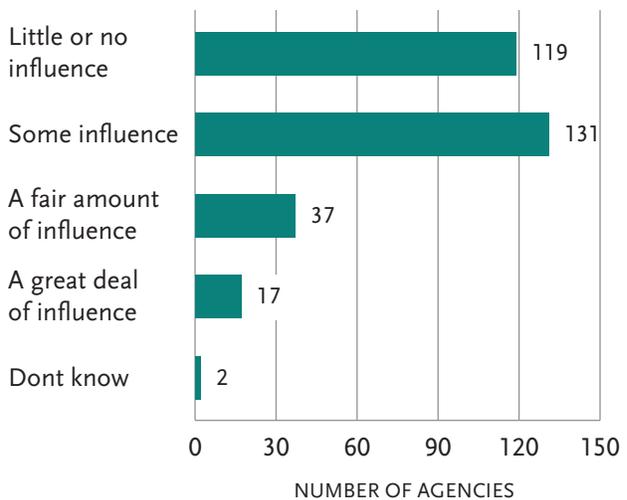
GUIDING PRINCIPLE #6:

Regional and statewide police academies should create formal mechanisms to receive meaningful input and feedback from police departments that use their services. For example, regional or state academies should have advisory boards with members from a wide range of police departments.

In PERF’s survey, 39% of the agencies that use outside academies to train their recruits said they had little or no influence over how those academies operate. Another 43% said they had only “some” influence, and only 5.5% said they had a great deal of influence.

How much influence would you say your agency has over the regional or statewide academy’s training philosophy and operations?

n = 306



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

65. For example, the Portland, OR Police Bureau may have difficulty reaching its goal of adding 200 police officers because of the limited availability of recruit training slots at the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training academy. See <https://katu.com/news/on-your-side/oregons-police-training-rules-could-slow-portland-mayors-200-officer-hiring-goal>.

“Our agency has little input on the way recruits are trained, and I feel the academy has differing standards than what our department expects. But as soon as they’re done at the academy and start working for us, then I’m responsible for them and will always answer for what they do and the outcomes they achieve.”

**— Chief Luther Reynolds
Charleston, SC Police Department**

The most common input that agencies had into regional or statewide academies was supplying instructors or staff and providing informal advice. Relatively few agencies reported serving on an advisory board or subcommittees related to academy operations.

This lack of formal input is part of the reason that some police chiefs report that the culture of the academies where their recruits are trained does not always align with the culture of their agencies. This creates enormous challenges for agencies when their recruits graduate and report for duty.

In addition to allowing agency representatives to serve on advisory boards and committees, regional and statewide academies should establish formal mechanisms for all participating agencies to review and comment on curricula, provide input on instructors and teaching methods, and help shape the overall philosophy and culture of the academy. Not all agency heads will agree on everything, especially when it comes to philosophy and culture. But academies need to find ways to gather input and find consensus.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #7:

Throughout the training process, police agencies should reinforce their mission, vision, and values with recruits. Pre-training orientation meetings and post-academy sessions are especially important in departments that use an outside agency for training.

Even before recruits begin their first day in the academy, agencies should host pre-academy workshops to welcome their new employees and acclimate them to the agency and its culture. Some agencies hold pre-academy sessions that focus on physical fitness, to help recruits get a head-start on meeting their fitness requirements. But these workshops should be more expansive and focus on topics such as the agency’s mission and values, as well as officer health and wellness. Ideally, the police chief, sheriff, and other high-ranking officials will participate.

Pre-academy orientation is especially important for agencies that send recruits to an outside regional

>> *continued on page 37*

Does your agency do any of the following to provide input to the regional or statewide academy? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Frequency	Cases %
Supplies instructors/staff to the academy	193	63.5%
Provides informal direction or advice	153	50.3%
Serves on an academy advisory board (or similar entity)	112	36.8%
Serves on subcommittees for specific issue areas	60	19.7%
Does not provide input	45	14.8%
Other	17	5.6%
Don't know	3	1.0%
Total	304	

Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

Some Medium-Size Agencies Are Standing Up Their Own Academies

While most major city law enforcement agencies in the United States operate their own training academies, medium-sized and small agencies typically have to rely on regional or statewide academies to train their recruits.

In recent years, however, some mid-sized police agencies have stood up their own training academies.

Agency leaders point to three primary benefits of having their own in-house academies:

1. In-house academies allow for greater control over curriculum, instructors, training methods, and facilities and technology.
2. In-house academies help ensure that recruit officers are exposed to and trained in the agency's mission, values, operating philosophy, and policies and procedures from the first day of instruction. Agencies that rely on outside academies need to expend considerable time and resources in providing additional training to new officers on the agency's culture and operations.
3. In-house academies can be a valuable recruiting tool, especially among agencies that will pay their recruits while they are in the academy.

In February 2021, the **Volusia County (FL) Sheriff's Office** received approval from the state's Criminal Justice Standards & Training Commission to launch its own academy.

Previously, deputies hired by the Sheriff's Office completed their initial training at the Basic Law Enforcement Academy at Daytona State College. Then upon graduation, recruits had to complete 240 additional hours of New Deputy Training put on by the Sheriff's Office, followed by 560 hours of field training.⁶⁶

The Volusia County Sheriff's Training Academy opened in June 2021, and its first class of 20 graduated in late November.⁶⁷ Sheriff Mike Chitwood said having his own academy allowed the agency to focus more instruction on topics such as de-escalation, implicit bias, diversity, and the use of body-worn cameras. The Volusia County Sheriff's Office has been using PERF's ICAT training – Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics – for several years.⁶⁸

The smaller class size also helped to build cohesion among the new deputies and steep them in the culture of the Sheriff's Office from day one.

In addition, once they enter the academy, the new recruits become paid employees of the sheriff's office; in the past, recruits were not paid during their training at the Daytona State Academy. Sheriff Chitwood said this change has helped to boost recruiting in the sheriff's office.

The **Bowling Green (KY) Police Department** and the **Henderson (NV) Police Department** also opened their own stand-alone academies in the past two years.

The Bowling Green Law Enforcement Academy opened in June 2020. Department officials said having their own academy

66. Volusia County Sheriff's Office. February 11, 2021.

67. Balona, Patricio C. "First class of deputies graduate from Volusia County Sheriff's Training Academy." Daytona Beach News-Journal. Dec. 1, 2021. <https://www.news-journalonline.com/story/news/2021/12/01/volusia-county-sheriffs-training-academy-graduates-first-class-deputies/8822279002/>

68. For information about ICAT, see <https://www.policeforum.org/icat-training-guide>.

had practical benefits. Recruits don't have to travel 180 miles to Richmond, KY for training, and they can hit the streets in a more timely manner because the new officers are being trained in the agency's policies and procedures from the start. The department said the academy "allows new officers to enter into field training with a more comprehensive understanding of our agency, our community, our culture, and our expectations."⁶⁹

In May 2020, the Henderson Police Department announced plans to construct its own training academy.⁷⁰ Police Chief Thedrick Andres said that moving training to an in-house academy would allow the department to customize its curriculum, and that having a modern training facility would help the department attract high-quality officer candidates in a competitive job market.

"Conducting our own police and correction officer training academy enables us to tailor curriculum to the Henderson Police Department's best practices, giving recruits a better understanding of what their job will entail and a greater likelihood of success."

— **Chief Thedrick Andres**
Henderson (NV) Police Department

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or statewide academy. These sessions give the agency and its leaders an opportunity to communicate key information and set the tone right away about the agency's philosophy and operations.

The orientation sessions should include sessions specifically for the families of recruits. They need to learn what it means to be a part of a police family, how their loved ones will likely be changing during the academy experience and after, what family members can do to best support their loved ones,

and available support services. Families should get a chance to meet the police chief or sheriff and academy instructors so they can get a feel for the police academy experience.

After recruits complete the academy, agencies should bring them back for a post-academy session, again with a focus on reinforcing the agency's philosophy, mission, values, and culture. This is especially important for agencies whose recruits attend outside academies, particularly if the academy's training philosophy does not closely align with the agency's operating philosophy.

69. Martin, Madison, Ana Medina and Brandon Jarrett. "Bowling Green Police Department opens first-ever law enforcement academy." *KBKO-TV*. June 15, 2020. <https://www.wbko.com/2020/06/15/bowling-green-police-department-opens-first-ever-law-enforcement-academy/>

70. Bleakley, Caroline. "Henderson moves ahead with plans for fourth police station, first training facility." *KLAS-TV*. May 12, 2020. <https://www.8newsnow.com/news/local-news/henderson-moves-ahead-with-plans-for-fourth-police-station-first-training-facility/>

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #8:

A culture of wellness should be established within the academy beginning on the first day.

Officer wellness should be emphasized from the start of the academy (and during any pre-academy orientations), and wellness resources should be made available to recruits and their families even before the formal start of academy training. This is critical for building resilience and emotional wellness among officers throughout their careers.

Most academies, rightly so, place a great deal of focus on the physical threats that officers face, which is important. However, recruits also need information and guidance on the psychological and emotional trauma they may face during their careers. This includes not just the criminal victimization of community members, but also poverty, mental illness, homelessness, addiction, food insecurity, and other public health issues.

In addition to acknowledging and explaining these issues, academies should give recruits the tools

Two Police Academies that Have Embraced Wellness Training

Some academies have begun to incorporate wellness training into their recruit curricula, with sessions on topics such as exposure to trauma, stress and anger management, and resiliency.

The **San Diego Police Department** has developed several training programs through its Wellness Unit:⁷¹

- **Emotional Survival Training.** Near the end of their time in the Academy, recruits receive two two-hour blocks of training on emotional survival. The curriculum covers how to recognize the signs of stress, cynicism, anger, and burnout, and strategies for coping with these issues.
- **Psychological Preparedness Training.** This 10-hour “Wellness Day” is held immediately after officers graduate from the academy. Designed for both officers and their families, it is designed to set realistic expectations about the emotional impact police work may have, showcase the department’s wellness resources, and emphasize the importance of accessing those resources when needed.

- **Effective Interactions Training.** This two-day block of instruction is given immediately after officers complete their field training. The purpose of the training is to help officers develop their emotional intelligence and better manage the stressors associated with policing.

The **New York City Police Department** has incorporated resilience and well-being instruction throughout its recruit training.

The program begins with a 45-minute introductory module on the basics of wellness and resiliency. Then, once a week over the course of 22 weeks, recruits receive a 30-minute block that includes evidence-based practices such as controlled breathing, followed by a brief podcast on a related topic, and then a group discussion.

Each NYPD recruit also gets a mini-notebook in which they enter weekly journal prompts, and they engage in “gratitude practice” throughout the program.⁷²

71. Police Executive Research Forum. “Building and Sustaining an Officer Wellness Program: Lessons from the San Diego Police Department.” 2018. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/SanDiegoOSW.pdf>

72. For information on the science behind practicing gratitude, see Harvard Health Publishing. August 14, 2021. “Giving thanks can make you happier.” <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

they need to cope with the level of trauma they will likely experience on the job.

The reality of officer suicide must also be part of the wellness training provided to all recruits.⁷³ Academies need to send the message to recruits that sometimes “it’s okay to not be okay” and that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Recruits should be made aware of the mental health and peer support resources available to them, and they should be encouraged to take advantage of those resources.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #9:

Training academies should practice the principles of “internal” Procedural Justice. They should convey that recruits are respected and valued, and are given a voice in academy operations.

To help build public trust and confidence, many police agencies have adopted the principles of Procedural Justice to guide their interactions with members of the community.⁷⁴ Some police chiefs have taken this concept one step further and have embraced “internal” Procedural Justice as a way to ensure their personnel are listened to and given a voice in agency operations. Training academies should follow this example.

Some academies still treat recruits like soldiers in a boot camp, as opposed to students striving to learn a profession. Recruits should feel they are treated fairly and with consistency, dignity and respect. In turn, they will be more likely to practice these qualities with community members when they graduate.

Recruits also should have a voice in academy operations. They should be given opportunities to provide constructive feedback on instructors, curriculum, and academy culture, and they should be able to discuss current issues in policing and other topics in an open environment.

At the same time, personal honesty and integrity must be emphasized and enforced. Academies should have a code of honor governing recruits, much like many colleges and universities have.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #10:

To help build trust with the community, academies should be open and transparent. They should welcome community leaders, residents, and the news media into their facilities and encourage community participation in curriculum development and review.

Training academies are part of the community, and the community should play a role in preparing their protectors and guardians. Academies should not be secretive institutions, walled off from the rest of the community. Academies should regularly invite community members and the news media to see their operations and sit in on some classes.

Community members and institutions should be part of the training process as well, including involvement in the development and delivery of training. Academies should have a curriculum review group, and it should include community representatives. And portions of the curriculum that are not law enforcement-sensitive should be shared with the community, so that residents and others know what is being taught to new officers and how it is being presented.

An example of this is the Baltimore Police Department’s Community Training Review Committee (CTRC), which meets routinely with BPD’s Education and Training staff to review curricula, observe and critique training, and improve delivery and instructional design. BPD also posts many of its lesson plans online for the public to see.

These steps will help community members better understand the police, and the police better understand the community.

73. Until COVID-19 caused a dramatic spike in officer deaths, the number of officers who died by suicide has outpaced the number of line-of-duty deaths in recent years. For more information and statistics on officer suicide, see <https://bluehelp.org/>.

74. For background on Procedural Justice, see Tyler, Tom R. “Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and the Effective Rule of Law.” *Crime and Justice* 30 (2003): 283–357. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1147701>.



AREA 2:

Overhauling the Recruit Curriculum

Analyses of the training that most police recruits receive reveal a serious misalignment. While academies devote a substantial amount of time (and appropriately so) to teaching such “hard skills” as firearms proficiency and defensive tactics, they typically devote far less time and attention to the more frequently used “soft skills.”⁷⁵

As a result, academies often fail to develop critical thinkers who possess the type of strong communications and decision-making skills that are essential to police work today.

Also, some academies still rely heavily on lectures and Power Point presentations during classroom instruction, and do not take full advantage of modern principles of adult learning and scenario-based instruction.

Police academy curricula should be based on the best available evidence about what works and what doesn’t work in police training. And the instruction should be guided by the best available evidence about how adults learn and which teaching methods work best.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #11:

Academies should apply the principles of adult learning throughout recruit training, and they should use innovative approaches to reinforce critical thinking and decision making.

PERF’s survey found that most academies continue to rely on lectures and Power Point presentations for presenting much of their instruction. This reliance on passive learning is at odds with the way most adults learn.

Instead, there should be greater use of small group discussions, problem-solving exercises, realistic scenario-based exercises in which instructors and students take roles and try to find the best resolution to a complex situation, and other “active learning” approaches. Experts told PERF that when recruits are actively engaged in their instruction, they learn and retain more of what they are taught.

In other words, following the principles of adult learning helps recruits to develop their independent critical-thinking skills by reducing “didactic micro-management” and increasing opportunities for autonomous decision making.⁷⁶

Some academies, such as those in Washington state and Tucson, have incorporated techniques such as reflection and journaling into their training. Having recruits record and reflect on the events of the day, and explain what they have experienced and learned, can also support the development of their critical-thinking and decision-making skills.

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75. See, for example, Police Executive Research Forum. “Re-Engineering Training on Police Use of Force.” 2015. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/reengineeringtraining1.pdf>

76. Blumberg, David M., et. al. See p. 5.

“A key feature of adult learning is that you’re teaching and training adults, not children. They have knowledge and life experience that they can contribute. They’re not empty vessels. They should participate in their learning, not sit passively. The more they are directly engaged, the more they learn and retain. Don’t feed them fish; teach them to fish.”

— Gary Corder

**Academic Director, Education and Training Section
Baltimore Police Department**

What Is Scenario-Based Training?

Scenario-based training is a hands-on approach to learning in which instructors and students role-play various types of situations, especially situations that are complex, potentially dynamic, and may require multiple personnel to work together toward a resolution.

PERF’s ICAT training program (Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics) is based heavily on such scenario-based training exercises.⁷⁷

For example, ICAT instructors and students may role-play a behavioral health call for service in which a person is behaving erratically in a park, waving a knife, and shouting incoherently. In the scenario, each participating student or instructor takes a role as an officer, the person with mental illness, a friend or relative of the person in crisis, a passer-by, or others who might be at such a scene.

In ICAT, a key goal in this type of scenario-based exercise is for the student to learn how to speak to the person in crisis, make a connection, and ultimately get the person to voluntarily put down the knife without having to use force, if possible. Students learn these techniques by practicing them in a realistic setting and by reacting to what the role-player does in response to the student’s actions.

After a scenario plays out, there is typically a debriefing in which instructors, role players, and students review the incident and how it was handled. (Sometimes, the entire class may be part of the discussion.) The debrief is an opportunity to reinforce positive actions by the student and to identify any shortcomings and discuss how to address them.

Putting recruits through these types of dynamic, sometimes unpredictable scenarios helps them learn and practice the best ways to handle a variety of different situations they are likely to encounter while on patrol.

“Research on human decision making tells us that people make substantially better decisions when they have to explain those decisions, and police officers are always explaining their decisions – in their reports, in their testimony, etc. From traffic stop training to arrests to use of force, recruits should be expected not just to explain what they’re doing in the Procedural Justice sense, but to justify their actions – to make them better at making the types of decisions that officers have to make, often under pressure.”

— Professor Seth Stoughton

University of South Carolina School of Law

77. Police Executive Research Forum, 2016. See pp. 20-22.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #12:

Recruit training should focus on the activities and tasks that police officers are engaged in on a day-to-day basis, as well as on the high-risk encounters that officers may face infrequently. Scenario-based training should cover both “everyday” and high-risk situations.

Academies tend to devote a substantial amount of training time to low-frequency, high-risk encounters such as armed offenders, active shooters, and other potential use-of-force situations that officers face less frequently in their careers relative to other tasks and responsibilities. Preparing officers for these stressful, highly dangerous situations – usually through scenario-based exercises – is critically important.

But academies also need to ensure that recruits receive extensive training in the types of “everyday” situations they will face with much greater frequency throughout their careers. These include encounters with persons experiencing addiction, mental illness, homelessness, or increased stress due to poverty, family conflict, and other issues. If not handled properly, these encounters can escalate into situations where police end up using force. But through scenario-based exercises, recruits can develop critical decision-making skills to manage these situations and avoid complacency in seemingly routine tasks.

To help identify the key tasks that officers should be trained on, academies should consider some type of systematic method, such as a job task or training needs analysis.

Virginia’s Department of Criminal Justice Services, for example, undertook an extensive job task analysis in 2018.⁷⁸ It looked at the frequency with which hundreds of different tasks were performed by entry-level law enforcement officers, and the consequences of inadequate performance of those tasks. DCJS then examined the extent to which the various tasks were included in state-mandated training and where new instruction was needed. The analysis was used to update the DCJS Training Reference Manual.

It should be noted that job task analyses are most effective at identifying routine mechanical *tasks* that police officers engage in. However, they may not capture the range of *skills* that officers require, including critical thinking, decision making, judgment, and communications. In addition, job task analyses typically do not capture the community’s expectations for what police officers *should* focus on and how they should carry out their responsibilities.

Therefore, academies should not rely solely on job task analyses to develop their training curricula, in particular their scenario-based instruction. These analyses should be supplemented with academic research on training effectiveness, feedback from recent recruits, and community engagement efforts (see Guiding Principle #18, page 48).

Recruits and Experienced Personnel Training Together

Just as new police officers can benefit from the experience of their field training officers, recruits can gain valuable insights from training alongside experienced personnel in the academy. If possible, agencies should try to schedule some in-service training so that experienced supervisors and officers can train with recruits.

Recruits can learn from the decision making, demeanor, and tactics of experienced personnel. The experienced officers, in turn, can gain valuable experience in directing and mentoring recruits. This approach can be especially useful in scenario-based exercises involving challenging or high-risk situations.

78. Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. June 2018. “Final Report on the Job Task Analysis Study of Entry Level Law Enforcement Officers in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the DCJS Basic Course Performance Outcomes.” https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/jta_report.pdf

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #13:

Academies should embrace “Monday-morning quarterbacking” – that is, reviewing videos of past incidents in order to learn from officers’ tactics and outcomes.

After every professional or college football game, players and coaches get together in the “film room” the next day to study video of the game in great detail. The purpose is not to ascribe blame for mistakes but rather to improve performance.

“Monday-morning quarterbacking” is a tool that police agencies should consistently use to study what may have gone wrong in situations that ended badly,

as well as what police did differently in comparable situations that went well. PERF has found that this tool is becoming a valuable mechanism for improvement in many police departments.⁷⁹

For too long, police agencies and training academies have shied away from studying “game film” like professional athletes do. But with the proliferation of body-worn cameras and cell phone video in recent years, there is now an ample library of police encounters that recruits could study and learn from. Academies should take advantage of that resource.

In the police academy setting, Monday-morning quarterbacking would allow recruits to discuss their impressions of critical incidents, hear from

Why Monday-Morning Quarterbacking Is the Right Thing for Police to Do

Excerpted from PERF Trending, August 29, 2020

Monday-morning quarterbacking needs to become part of the DNA of policing. It’s a model that other professions have embraced.

When there is a plane crash or train derailment, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) immediately dispatches a team of subject matter experts to the site. They dissect the incident and make recommendations to prevent similar occurrences in the future. The medical profession follows similar protocols following mistakes by doctors.

The whole concept of Monday-morning quarterbacking comes from sports. What do professional and collegiate football players do the day after a game? They go into the film room to watch what happened, study their performance, and map out improvements for the next game.

But in the police culture, “studying the film” has been always been frowned upon. The culture tends to shut down conversations at the very moment those conversations need to be taking place. Some incidents, such as the murder of George Floyd, are pretty clear-cut, and the lessons (such as the need to strengthen duty-to-intervene policies) are obvious. Others are more complex and may require a deeper dive because they are likely to offer more important teaching moments.

Regardless of how straightforward or complex the situation may be, police leaders and police agencies need to get comfortable with having these uncomfortable conversations. Importantly, over time these conversations will get easier, and they will become part of how police agencies operate.

For the full article, see www.policeforum.org/trendingaugust29

79. For details, see the following “PERF Trending” columns: <https://www.policeforum.org/trendingaugust29>; <https://www.policeforum.org/trendingsep5>; <https://www.policeforum.org/trendingsep12>; <https://www.policeforum.org/trendingsep19>.

experienced officers and trainers on what the officers did well and not so well, and better understand why certain encounters ended the way they did.

In addition to reinforcing critical decision-making skills, Monday-morning quarterbacking can instill the concepts of risk management early in an officer's career. Recruits are taught that it's important to study and learn from mistakes and near-misses and to constantly work to improve performance. If this mindset is presented and reinforced in the academy, it is more likely to stick throughout an officer's career.

To support their use of Monday-morning quarterbacking, academies should develop a process for identifying videos that have training value. These should include examples of both positive and negative outcomes.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #14:

All recruits should be taught the history of policing in the United States and in their own communities, with a special emphasis on racial justice issues and law enforcement's role in society. Recruits should also be trained in *how* to interact with community members.

The history of policing in the United States has not always been honorable. Over time, police have supported slaveholders, enforced Jim Crow laws, failed to prevent or investigate lynchings and other atrocities, and protected corrupt politicians.

It is important for recruits to learn about this history. It helps them understand and appreciate how historical events shape perceptions of the police *today*. And it helps them understand how learning from past experiences and mistakes can help make them better police officers in their communities.

Recruits should also learn about their own department's history, as well as the history, culture, politics, and community resources of the jurisdictions and neighborhoods they will be working in. This is especially important for recruits who are

new to the jurisdiction where they will be working and may not be familiar with its history and culture. Members of the community – in particular, leaders whom police officials know and respect – should be involved in developing and delivering this training.

Experts told PERF that it is critically important that new officers be given opportunities to “walk in the community's shoes” before they are given their first assignments. For example, Bob Wasserman discussed how he helped the Boston and New York City police departments formalize community orientation into the recruit curriculum.

In Boston, recruits began rotations in both police stations and the community starting in the fourth week of the academy. Recruits attended roll calls and got acclimated to other station operations. They also spent time in the community, knocking on doors, conducting surveys, and meeting with residents and leaders.

In New York City, recruits in the 12th week would begin a three-week rotation in the precinct they would ultimately be assigned to upon graduation. The first week covered precinct operations. The second week focused on working with community partners. The third week involved observational ride-alongs with precinct officers.

In addition to learning about the communities they will be working in, recruits should be trained in *how to engage* with the public once they're assigned. Far too often, even veteran officers on foot patrol or another assignment in the community tend to stick with one another and talk among themselves. This is often because, as recruits, the officers were never trained in how to effectively approach and talk with residents. George Kelling said officers walking in a neighborhood should have a “felt presence” – that is, touching the people they encounter not just with a hello, but a brief conversation instead.⁸⁰ Training officers in strategies and techniques for engaging with the community should be a part of every recruit curriculum.

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80. “Motor City Policing Strategy: Detroit Implements ‘Broken Windows.’” Manhattan Institute. <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/on-the-ground/detroit-policing-strategy>

How Some Academies Are Teaching Recruits the History of Policing

Here are a few examples of how law enforcement agencies and police academies are training their recruits in the history of policing:

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum – Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust⁸¹

Started in 1999 as a partnership among the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, DC (MPD), this program focuses on the role of police in Nazi Germany and challenges officers to reflect on their roles in a democratic society.

All MPD recruits go through the day-long program, which is also suitable for in-service and command-level training. Dozens of other agencies have adopted the training, which has been completed by more than 150,000 local, state, federal, specialized law enforcement, and international police officers. The Law Enforcement and Society (LEAS) and similar programs have been adopted by local Holocaust museums in Philadelphia, St. Louis, and other cities, and the national Museum has developed a virtual version of LEAS.

National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel

For the past several years, recruits from the Memphis Police Department Training Academy, as well as many neighboring agencies, have toured the Museum as part of their training. The Lorraine Motel was the site of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther

King, Jr. in 1968. Trainees with the Shelby County (TN) Sheriff's Office tour the Museum and then write personal essays about the experience and discuss their impressions.⁸²

Metropolitan Police Academy, Washington, DC

MPD recruits are receiving lessons in history and culture through a partnership with the National Museum of African American History and Culture and two local college professors. As part of a two-day course, recruits visit the Museum and reflect on the experience. They also tour some of DC's diverse neighborhoods, review their history, and learn about go-go music, half-smokes, and other unique aspects of DC culture.⁸³ The professors also teach a course on "The Origins of Race and Violence in DC."

Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture⁸⁴

As part of their training, officers with Baltimore Police Department, the Prince George's County (MD) Police Department, and other agencies tour the Lewis Museum to explore the history and culture of African Americans in Maryland and how they shape public perceptions of the police.

Chicago Police Academy

Recruits spend time touring both the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center and the DuSable Museum of African American History, where they participate in frank discussions about the history and current state of race and policing.

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81. See <https://www.ushmm.org/outreach-programs/law-enforcement>.

82. Wade, Dan. "Deputies training includes tour of National Civil Rights Museum." *Daily Memphian*, May 15, 2021. <https://dailyMemphian.com/article/21904/sheriff-deputies-get-national-civil-rights-museum-tour-in-training>

83. Hermann, Peter. "D.C. police recruits are learning about Black history, go-go music and half-smokes. Leaders think it will make them better officers." *The Washington Post*, May 29, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/dc-police-training-black-history/2021/05/29/a97683a2-b6fc-11eb-a6b1-81296da0339b_story.html

84. See <https://www.lewisMuseum.org/>.

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New Orleans Police Academy

The Police Academy has created a four-hour “Cultural Gumbo” class to familiarize recruits who are not from New Orleans with the city’s history, culture, and community. Topics include Mardi Gras, second lines, and big street parties, along with an introduction to the various nationalities and languages represented in New Orleans. The academy also brings in a local Indian chief who discusses the historically fractured relationship between Indigenous peoples and the police department, and recent efforts to improve collaboration.

Sarasota Police Department

The Sarasota (FL) Police Department has teamed up with the local chapter of the NAACP to develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion training for new recruits.⁸⁵ The course focuses on topics such as community expectations of the police and how national incidents can impact local community perspectives on policing. The training uses real incidents and scenarios to explore a range of issues including implicit bias, stereotypes, and prejudices.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLE #15:

Physical fitness should be incorporated throughout recruit training, and it should be treated as part of a career-long focus on health and wellness.

Traditionally, fitness training for recruits has focused on making sure they can pass a standardized physical fitness test. These tests typically include milestones such as running a certain distance within a prescribed period of time, and doing a set number of push-ups and sit-ups. Some academies also use a physical qualification test that involves navigating an obstacle course.

The extent to which these fitness standards relate to the actual duties of a police officer has not been consistently validated. In addition, some commonly used standards have been shown to have an adverse impact on disqualifying female and older recruits. In some states, the courts have intervened and required agencies to norm their fitness standards for age and gender.⁸⁶

In addition, the short-term objectives of passing these tests often obscure what should be a larger goal:

officers achieving and maintaining fitness, health, and wellness throughout their careers.

Police agencies need to shift their thinking about physical fitness, and this change should begin in the academy. Physical fitness should be presented as a positive, career-long aspiration, not a check-the-box requirement that recruits must meet in order to graduate. This approach can help reduce injuries among recruits; in our research, PERF heard examples of recruits injuring themselves as they trained too strenuously to pass upcoming fitness tests.

Achieving this change in perspective will require academies to implement a number of reforms:

- **Recruits should not be automatically disqualified simply for missing one or two fitness criteria.**

Instead, academies should work with recruits to improve their overall fitness. This can be done by:

- ▶ Developing customized fitness plans for individual recruits.
- ▶ Hiring coaches to help recruits meet their fitness goals. (Local college or university athletic departments can be a resource for fitness coaches.)

85. Sarasota Police Department. “Sarasota Police Department Announces Innovative Training with Sarasota Chapter of NAACP” (news release). April 7, 2022. <https://www.sarasotapd.org/Home/Components/News/News/2770/1458>

86. Philo, Kaila. “Pennsylvania State Police Will Pay Up After Fitness Test Drew Bias Suit.” Courthouse News Service. Apr. 13, 2021. <https://www.courthousenews.com/pennsylvania-state-police-will-pay-up-after-fitness-test-drew-bias-suit/>

“We got tired of having to drop people for missing a 1.5-mile run time by 3 seconds. So we stopped doing that. Now we reinforce the idea that fitness is a reward, not a punishment, and we have seen a lot of positive changes.”

— **Marvin (Ben) Haiman, Chief of Staff**
Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, DC

- ▶ Using technology (such as FitBits, smart watches, and other apps) to monitor recruits’ progress with health and wellness goals – in the academy and beyond.
- **Nutrition and wellness should be incorporated in the academy training regimen.**
Academies can start by removing junk food from cafeterias and vending machines, and replacing it with healthy alternatives. Academies should also teach good sleep habits and offer classes in yoga, mindfulness, and other stress-relieving techniques. For example, the Knoxville (TN) Police Training Academy launched a “Yoga for First Responders” program for recruits, officers, and other employees.⁸⁷
- **Academies should not use physical fitness as punishment, either for individuals or entire platoons or classes.**
Requiring recruits to run or do push-ups following a mistake sends the signal that fitness is not a positive experience, and it can lead to needless injuries.
- **Physical fitness programs should be part of officers’ continuing training throughout their careers.**
Officers who are fit and agile will be happier and more capable of performing policing duties that have physical components.

This type of long-term view toward fitness can also improve the overall wellness of officers throughout their careers. Most departments have no ongoing fitness requirement for veteran officers. All that most officers need to do is meet a minimum fitness standard when they’re still in the academy – a time when they are younger and tend to be more fit.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #16:

Police agencies that use outside academies to train their recruits should provide post-academy training that focuses on agency policies, procedures, organizational values, and the local community.

Regional or statewide academies provide basic skills that apply across multiple agencies, but they cannot possibly cover the unique policies, procedures, and practices of every department. Nor can these academies adequately present and ingrain the mission and values of the departments they serve.

That is why agencies that use outside academies should develop and provide a comprehensive post-academy training program to all recruits before they hit the streets. This training should focus on agency-specific policies, procedures, and other key operational information, and it should also address and reinforce the agency’s mission, philosophy, and values.

As part of their post-academy training, recruits who train at outside academies should get a thorough orientation to the neighborhoods they will be serving. Members of the community should help design and deliver this orientation training.

In the Burlington (NC) Police Department, recruits returning from the academy complete six weeks of post-academy training to learn “the Burlington way.” This is also an opportunity for them to become more familiar with the local community and be exposed to the department’s culture.

This post-academy training should be carefully constructed and taught in a standardized manner by trained personnel, as it is in Burlington. This instruction should not be left up to a recruit’s field training officer.

87. Sullivan, Cole. “Knoxville Police Department starts yoga program with mantra of officer wellness.” *WBIR-TV*. Jan. 28, 2022. <https://www.wbir.com/article/life/knoxville-police-department-starts-yoga-program-with-mantra-of-officer-wellness/51-b46e5fb7-c955-451e-9f38-207ae316ab69>

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #17:

Academies should hire professional curriculum development personnel who are experts in adult learning, to help develop, write, and update the recruit training curricula. And the courses should be sequenced according to the learning objectives, not the availability of instructors.

Writing training curricula is a specialized skill. Having experience in a profession like policing does not necessarily mean that one is adept at developing curricula to teach the subject.

To ensure that curricula are comprehensive, effective, and in alignment with adult learning principles, police academies should utilize specially trained curriculum development experts. These curriculum professionals should work alongside experienced police practitioners to make sure that recruit training is technically accurate, follows best practices in policing, and is designed for adult learners.

Academies should not rely on simply updating or recycling existing curricula that were developed years earlier. Professional curriculum development staff members should be empowered to take a fresh look at all instruction and to develop new materials and training approaches as appropriate and within the guidelines of the state POST commission or other governing body.

In addition, the sequence of courses should be carefully thought-out and consistent with the learning objectives for that portion of the curriculum. Too often, courses are scheduled according to the availability of instructors, which means that some portions of the curriculum are taught out of logical sequence. And because there are typically several courses taught each day, every training week should

end with a one-hour debriefing on the entire week, with an instructor linking what was taught in the various courses.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #18:

To keep their training fresh and relevant, academies should continuously review and update their recruit curricula using data and research. Recent graduates should be part of the review process.

There is a tendency in some academies to simply use the recruit curriculum they have always relied on. Instructors become familiar with the content, and teaching it becomes second-nature. **However, this approach can result in curricula becoming outdated and less relevant to current issues and realities in policing. Another tendency is for academies to add material to their curricula without ever removing parts that are duplicative or no longer relevant. Training should always reflect new laws, agency policies, research findings, and changes in professional best practices.**

All academies should have a regular, formal process and timeline for reviewing and updating their recruit curricula, including removing material that is no longer needed or relevant. Even if the basic lesson plan remains largely the same, there may be opportunities to insert new videos, discussion points, or other, more current content.

The review process should involve the recruits themselves:

- Students should be given the opportunity to anonymously evaluate their classes – both content and instructors – in much the same way that college students do.

When I was doing work at the NYPD, we had an analysis done of the recruit curriculum for Commissioner Bratton to determine whether we could fit in a few weeks of community orientation for new recruits at the district to which they would be assigned. The review found that there were five weeks of generally duplicate material in the 26-week program. That allowed us to devote three weeks for community engagement activities in the middle of the curriculum, so recruits would start to get a sense of the real world in local neighborhoods to which they would eventually be assigned.

— **Bob Wasserman**

Law Enforcement Consultant

(former Director of Training and Education, Boston Police Department)

- Then, after they graduate, officers should be brought back to the academy at certain intervals – for example, six months and one year after they graduate – to provide feedback on how applicable and useful their recruit training was and how it could be improved.
- Feedback on the training should also be captured in exit interviews with people who drop out of the academy before graduation or don't complete their field training or probationary period.

All of these data should be systematically collected and thoroughly analyzed by researchers who are experienced in the evaluation of training curricula and outcomes.

In agencies that operate their own training academies, curriculum development staff should work closely with the agency's policy unit to ensure that the recruit curriculum remains up to date. As new general orders and other directives are developed and rolled out, the curriculum team should be simultaneously updating recruit training (as well as in-service training lesson plans) to reflect the new policies or procedures.

In addition, training academies, and the state bodies that oversee and regulate them, should engage in rigorous research on the effectiveness of their recruit training. And they should keep abreast of training research in general and incorporate promising findings into their lesson plans. Research

The Use of Academic Assessments to See Whether Recruits Are Learning

James O'Keefe is vice provost and professor at St. John's University and former deputy commissioner of training for the NYPD. He said police academies should follow the lead of colleges and universities and adopt the process of academic assessments to measure whether students learned what they were supposed to:

"I think it is time we incorporate academic assessment in our police academies. Academic assessment is a dynamic review process to document and constantly improve what the students learn. I have testified in federal courts across the country in civil rights cases involving police training and use of force, and juries are not impressed with us testifying about what's in the curriculum. We must be able to prove what the students learned!

"Academic assessment tools can be found in essentially any local college or

university. I instituted a software program in the NYPD that was built specifically for academic assessment, and it provides the framework for the process. This is something that is not widely practiced outside the university campus."

One example of an academic assessment program comes from New York University.⁸⁸ The university explains the concept this way:

Academic assessment is the process of using evidence to understand and improve student learning in academic programs. At its core, it is a collaborative form of research designed to answer one simple question—did students learn what they should have upon completing a program? Most important, assessment provides faculty with diagnostic information about gaps in student learning, that can be used to tailor efforts for program and curricular improvement.

88. NYU. "Academic Assessment." <https://www.nyu.edu/academics/accreditation-authorization-assessment/academic-assessment.html>.

should guide the “content, duration, and modality” of recruit training.⁸⁹ Academic research should be used not only to identify promising and effective practices, but also to highlight and correct any gaps and deficiencies in current instruction.⁹⁰

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #19:

In evaluating recruit performance, academies should ensure that recruits have demonstrated mastery of all the essential learning objectives in the curriculum – and are not just meeting an overall minimum standard.

Some academies allow recruits to graduate based on an “overall passing score” for the entire course of instruction. This means that recruits can score below the passing grade on some subjects, but still graduate if their overall composite score is above the minimum threshold for passing.

This can be problematic if recruits are not proficient in essential topics, such as use of force and constitutional law. Academies should eliminate the “overall passing score” and require that recruits demonstrate a minimum level of proficiency in *all* essential subjects. And the passing score may vary depending on the subject matter. For example, the standard for use of force might be higher than the standard for report writing.

Academies should also expand the ways in which they measure proficiency, going beyond multiple-choice exams. They can use essay questions, oral presentations, and scenarios to ensure that recruits understand material and can explain it.

At the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Academy, the final week for recruits includes a

practical exam that is detailed and scenario-based. Because scenarios can be hard to control and not uniform, they are not the sole method used to determine proficiency. Performance on the scenario is combined with a more traditional written exam.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #20:

Academies should recognize that people learn in different ways and at different rates. To the extent possible, they should embrace “adaptive learning,” which customizes the learning experience for different students.

In adaptive learning, the general shape of the course is the same for all students, but the course includes frequent assessments to determine whether individual students are absorbing the lessons and provides alternative paths to help ensure that all students are keeping up.

Adaptive learning has been defined as systems that “use a data-driven approach to adjust the path and pace of learning, enabling the delivery of personalized learning at scale.”⁹¹ Different students may participate in different learning activities, in different media, or in a different order, to help them grasp the same basic content.

Here is how the concept of adaptive learning might be applied to addressing accuracy issues during firearms training. Instructors start by explaining and demonstrating the fundamentals. Students first practice the fundamentals in a classroom with inert weapons, then move on to live-fire drills. Instructors are continuously assessing, correcting, and coaching student performance. For students who are not achieving the learning objectives, instructors might

“Academies have to meet each recruit where they are. Some students will easily master certain aspects of the curriculum and struggle in other areas. Academies that assume everyone proceeds at the same pace end up playing to the lowest common denominator.”

**— Professor Seth Stoughton
University of South Carolina School of Law**

89. Council on Criminal Justice, Task Force on Policing. 2021

90. Little Hoover Commission. November 2021.

91. Educause Learning Initiative (Syracuse University). “7 Things You Should Know about Adaptive Learning.” January 4, 2017. <https://library.educause.edu/resources/2017/1/7-things-you-should-know-about-adaptive-learning>.

Two-page summary: <https://library.educause.edu/-/media/files/library/2017/1/eli7140.pdf>

“Professional development should be included in all recruit training. Some recruits have never had a ‘real job’ before. They need to be trained in things like how to clock in and out, professional interactions, and how to be a good colleague. We need to give them the skills to be a fellow employee.”

— Dr. Deidre Magee, Academic Director
New Orleans Police Training Academy

assign dry-fire skills practice at home, give more practice rotations at the range, or provide one-on-one instruction. The academy might consider switching instructors to find a better fit for the recruit or drilling the student on a firearms simulator. In other words, the academy will take various steps to give recruits the instruction and opportunity they need to succeed.

In addition to adaptive learning, academies should provide remedial training for those who need additional help.

It is expensive to recruit and train a police officer today. From an economic and operational perspective, it makes sense to give recruits reasonable opportunities to correct mistakes, learn from them, and improve performance. And it is better to take the time to get it right in the academy, rather than try to correct poor performance or behavior on the street.

That is the philosophy adopted by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission. Its academy emphasizes remedial instruction for recruits who need it, ensuring that they get the material right. The concept is that any mistakes made by recruits should occur in the academy, not after they are sworn in and placed on duty. Another option is to allow some recruits to cycle through the Academy a second time, if they need more time to master certain skills or recover from injuries.

Some academies offer specialized instruction for recruits who need it. For example, the Anne Arundel County (MD) Police Academy hired an English tutor for ESL (English as a Second Language) recruits, and to improve the basic writing skills of all recruits.

Fully embracing adaptive learning can be challenging, especially for academies that are trying to graduate large numbers of officers to meet the demands of law enforcement agencies. But academies should study the concept and find creative ways to inject adaptive learning into their curricula and operations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #21:

All academy lessons plans should be readily available to everyone in the agency.

It is important for all members of a law enforcement agency to be aware of what new recruits are being taught. But it is especially helpful for field training officers and supervisors to know, in detail, the content (lesson plans) of the recruit training curriculum.

In some cases, FTOs and supervisors may not be aware of training that is new or significantly updated from the time they went through the academy. FTOs and supervisors also need to see how that material is being presented – what scenarios, video case studies, and other examples are being used to train recruits – so that they better understand how new officers are learning to approach different situations. This material can also serve as an important refresher for experienced officers.

In addition, it is important for the top leaders of an agency to know what is being taught to their recruits. Especially in large agencies, chiefs and other command staff sometimes are not aware of what their academies are teaching and how lessons are being taught. Police chiefs should visit their academies from time to time, sit in on classes, and meet with instructors and administrators. Doing so helps chiefs know what is being taught and signals to rank-and-file personnel the importance of maintaining familiarity with recruit training.

New technologies allow academies to store all training materials in the “cloud,” so that it is accessible to instructors and students during training and throughout their careers, as well as to all agency staff. Alternatively, agencies can post their recruit curriculum on their internal websites.

Academies should send out periodic updates to employees when key parts of the curriculum have been added or updated. Agencies that use outside academies should insist that their academy makes its curricula available to share within the agency.



AREA 3:

Expanding and Professionalizing Academy Leadership and Instructors

Many training academies are led and staffed primarily by experienced or retired police professionals. PERF’s survey found that 61% of academy directors were current law enforcement professionals, and another 26% were retired from policing.

Because they have been through policing training themselves and have served as police officers, often for decades, these individuals bring critically important knowledge and skills to recruit training. Many support staff members at police academies are also current or retired law enforcement personnel.

However, academies that rely almost exclusively on law enforcement professionals for their leadership and staff miss out on other valuable experiences and perspectives that can enhance learning and improve performance.

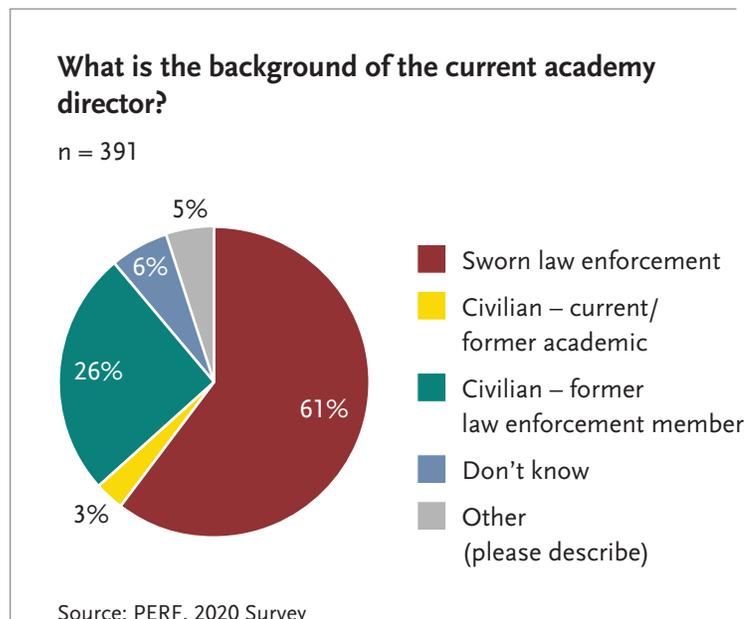
To complement their law enforcement professionals, academies should hire professional educators and managers, curriculum developers, and other experts. To round out their training staff, academies should also take advantage of outside experts and community resources that can offer specialized training from different perspectives.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #22:

Academies should diversify their leadership teams and include more people with a background in adult education and learning.

Being an experienced police officer or trainer provides an important foundation for being able to lead a training academy. But those credentials, by themselves, do not make someone qualified to be an academy director. The position requires a background that also includes expertise in education, academic credentials, “real-world” experience, leadership skills, and the right mindset to break through traditions and embrace new ways of thinking.

Academies should establish detailed qualifications – knowledge, skills, and abilities – for their academy directors, and they should recruit broadly,



“Since all cops complete a police academy, a lot of them think they can run an academy. That view is an oversimplification of what the job entails. It takes a specific skill set, mindset, and toolset to be a training director.”

— James O’Keefe, Vice Provost and Associate Professor
St. John’s University
(Former Deputy Commissioner of Training, NYPD)

inside and outside their agencies, to find the right candidates.

In addition, academies should recruit a diverse mix of administrators to help lead the institution. Several academies – including those in the Baltimore, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Washington, DC Metropolitan police departments – have hired academic directors and other high-ranking professional staff members to oversee the development and delivery of the recruit curriculum. These individuals often have backgrounds outside of law enforcement and bring an understanding of adult learning principles and best practices in adult education.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #23:

Academies should establish a formal, rigorous process for selecting instructors.

In some academies, instructor assignments are based largely on seniority. In agencies that operate their own academies, experienced officers can bid for instructor assignments, even if they do not have the requisite background or skills in teaching. Sometimes, agencies have transferred under-performing personnel to the academy because they needed to “find a spot” for them.

Regional academies often rely on retired officers to serve as instructors. While these officers may have extensive experience and many “war stories” to share, they might not always be up to speed on the latest issues or trends in policing, or current instructional (adult learning) approaches.

To ensure they are getting qualified instructors, academies should draft detailed job descriptions, spelling out the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) that are required of instructors. Academies should select instructors who possess the necessary KSAs and who also buy into the overall philosophy and operating principles of the academy.

As part of the interview and selection process, academies should have potential instructors teach a “test class” to see if they are knowledgeable and effective in front of a group of recruits.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #24:

Academies should hire professional educators to teach classes in areas that do not require specific law enforcement experience.

Law enforcement experience is essential to effectively teach certain subjects to recruits. These include firearms proficiency, defensive tactics, less-lethal weaponry, and other topics. For many other subjects, however, law enforcement experience is not necessary to effectively teach recruits.

For those classes, academies should hire professional educators who are subject matter experts and trained teachers. Professors from local universities or community colleges may be able to work part-time at police academies. This can be especially beneficial when teaching many of the essential skills that are critically important but often downplayed, including communications, community relations, the history of policing, legal matters, writing, and others. As with sworn law enforcement instructors, professional educators should have to demonstrate teaching proficiency in an academy setting by leading a test class.

Academies should also embrace team-teaching, in which sworn officers and professional teachers pair up. The educators can present the material, while the officers can provide important context and examples on how skills and information can be utilized in the field.

Whether sworn or professional staff, academy instructors should be allowed to specialize in their areas of interest or expertise. Under this type of arrangement, instructors would teach the same

materials to each recruit class that comes through, just as college professors specialize in one or two subjects.

For some academies, this would be a departure from a more traditional arrangement in which a small team of personnel – for example, one sergeant and two officers – stay with the same recruit class throughout the academy and teach every subject to them. That approach may help build discipline and *esprit de corps* among recruit classes, but it may not be the most effective way to teach recruits, since not every member of the team may be adept at teaching all (or even most) of the topics in police training.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #25:

Academies should continuously train and evaluate their instructors to ensure they are up to date on current issues in policing and adult learning principles.

Many professions – doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers, and police officers – require that practitioners complete a certain number of “continuing education credits” each year. Personnel charged with training police recruits should have the same type of requirement. Teaching in a police academy should be elevated from a job assignment to a professional appointment, where excellence and improvement are expected and required.

Continuing education for police instructors should focus on two areas: 1) the latest in police research, policy, and best practice; and 2) adult learning and education. Instructors need to be current on developments and thinking in policing, and they need to know how best to present material to their students.

Academies need to invest in their faculty by providing them with instructional training, mentorships, and technology to support and improve their teaching. Many colleges and universities have Centers for Teaching Excellence or similar facilities to help their own faculty. Police academies can look to partner with these entities to help gain valuable guidance for their instructors.

Academies should enlist educational specialists to sit in on classes to monitor presentations, evaluate instructors, and provide constructive feedback. Instructors should also have to complete the

scenarios that their students go through and be evaluated on their performance. This will help ensure that instructors understand issues such as new approaches to de-escalation, communications, tactics, and other critical skills.

Finally, academies should create a formal evaluation system that includes student feedback and assessments from supervisors and peers. The results would be used to identify any additional training that instructors may need.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #26:

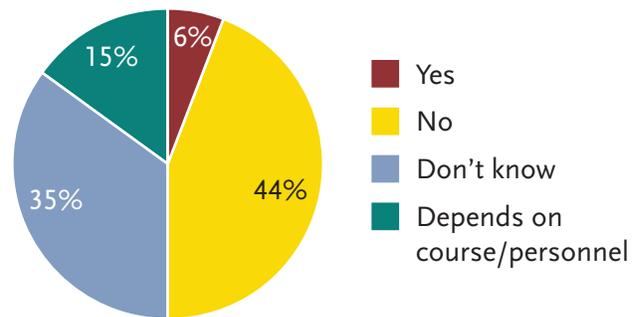
Academies should rotate sworn instructors back to the field, to keep their skills fresh and to ground their teaching in the practical aspects of current policing practices.

Active police officers make up a large percentage of the training staff in many academies. Once assigned there, some officers remain in the academy for extended periods of time and often close out their careers in the academy.

There are benefits to having continuity and experience among academy trainers. However, there also can be drawbacks to having recruits trained by police officers who have not staffed a patrol car, responded to 911 calls, or made an arrest in many years. Over time, their tactical skills, proficiency with technology and less-lethal tools, and understanding of crime

After instructors have served in the academy for a certain amount of time, are they required to rotate to another assignment?

n = 392



Source: PERF Survey, 2020

patterns and community dynamics may diminish by not having recent practical experience to draw upon.

PERF's survey found that only about 6% of agencies require all sworn trainers to rotate to another assignment after a certain period of time in the academy. Another 15% said that such reassignments depend on the course being taught or the personnel teaching it. (More than one-third of survey respondents did not know if their academies required a rotation of assignment.) For the small number of academies that do have mandatory rotations, they typically occur after 3 to 5 years.

Academies should consider a rotation schedule for some of their sworn instructors, cycling out trainers after a few years and bringing in new instructors from the field. This arrangement will bring fresh thinking and perspectives to the training team and ensure that recruits are being taught by sworn personnel who have had recent experiences that are similar to what the recruits will encounter when they hit the streets. This system would also allow current instructors to gain valuable field experience that they could bring back to the academy after a few years.

Because of staffing pressures, some academies may be unable to rotate their trainers back to the field. There are other ways for academies to help

ensure their training personnel remain connected to the field. These could include periodic, short-term rotations in patrol, attending training sessions required of patrol personnel, and participating in special events details.

In addition, there may be instances where a certain sworn officer is the only member who is certified or qualified to teach a particular topic and cannot be rotated back to the field. But for many sworn instructors, a system that ensures trainers have recent field experience will benefit the recruits, the instructors, and the academy.

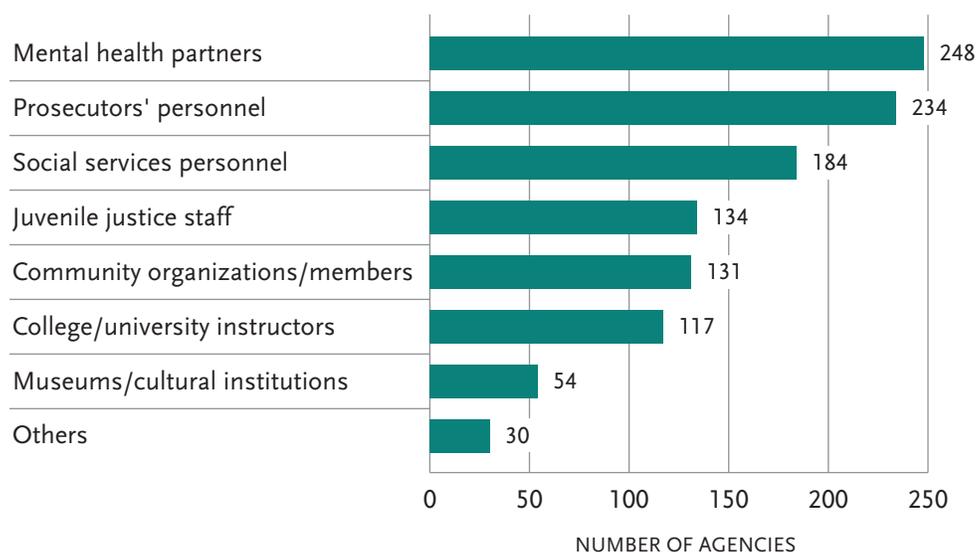
GUIDING PRINCIPLE #27:

Academies should utilize a broad spectrum of outside instructors and community resources that bring different perspectives on policing issues as well as expertise in various topics.

Most law enforcement agencies and academies have access to a wide range of educational resources in their communities. These include partner agencies in the criminal justice and social service systems, colleges and universities, and other local resources such as museums and cultural institutions.

What outside stakeholders are involved in presenting training? (Check all that apply.)

n = 277



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

PERF's survey found that more than 70% of academies involve outside stakeholders in presenting instruction. The most common outside stakeholders were mental health partners, prosecutors' offices, and social services personnel. While these partners provide important information that recruits will need, academies should look to broaden the topics and the outside stakeholders they include in their training.

Guiding Principle #14 (see page 44) includes several examples of academies that are using local museums and institutions to teach the history of policing and to orient recruits to the neighborhoods they will patrol. While not every academy will have access to national museums, there are community leaders who can be called upon to provide instruction on a variety of topics, especially the history and culture of the jurisdiction.

In some instances, community members or local businesses may have other types of expertise that can

be shared with recruits. For its training on ethics and integrity, the Baltimore Police Training Academy brings in community members who were victimized by the illegal activities of members of the department's Gun Trace Task Force. Recruits get a chance to hear directly from residents about how corruption impacts them and their trust in and support of the police.⁹² A different example comes from the New Orleans Police Academy, which uses community members to teach recruits yoga and mindfulness. In selecting outside instructors, academies should assess their teaching skills and ensure they are following the principles of adult learning.

In addition to bringing community stakeholders to the academy, agencies and academies should send recruits out into the neighborhoods to learn from residents about the history, culture, community organizations, businesses, cuisine, and other elements of the communities they will be serving.

Visiting Professors Program

When he served as deputy commissioner of training for the New York City Police Department in the 1990s, James O'Keefe launched a "Visiting Professors" program. Professors from New York University, St. John's University, the City University of New York, and other institutions held temporary assignments at the NYPD Academy to teach a range of courses, including report-writing, psychology, and other behavioral sciences.

"College professors from the area were happy to spend a semester at our academy, and their universities were happy to allow them the time and pay their salary," said Dr. O'Keefe, who is now vice provost and associate professor at St. John's University and a member of PERF's Research Advisory Board. "Since many professors didn't know

the difference between a taxicab and a police car, they learned a lot from us and appreciated the credibility it gave them back in their college classrooms."

Dr. O'Keefe said that in addition to teaching classes, the visiting professors attended staff meetings, reviewed curricula, and provided other assistance to the academy. One adjustment the professors had to make was teaching five days a week over two tours of duty. The NYPD Academy typically had 2,000 recruits at a time and many blocks of instruction to cover.

"Their membership on our faculty did add prestige. And I always thought it was a good practice to stretch the recruits intellectually with these visiting professors," Dr. O'Keefe said.

92. For information about the Gun Trace Task Force investigation, see <https://www.gtfinvestigation.org/>.



AREA 4:

Upgrading Technology and Physical Facilities

Today's police recruits have grown up with modern technology in school, work, and their personal lives. They expect to have ready access to those tools in their workplaces too. But not all training academies are meeting those expectations.

Technology plays an increasingly central role in modern policing. Sophisticated records management systems, body-worn cameras, drones, data dashboards, and mobile broadband networks are all reshaping how police personnel do their jobs. However, recruits do not always have access to, or receive training in, the key technologies they will rely on when they are placed on duty as officers.

In addition, some training academies are antiquated, run-down facilities that lack the infrastructure to provide modern, technology-based instruction in support of adult learning principles.

Upgrading the physical plant and technological backbone of training academies is a critical step toward attracting recruits, improving their training, and preparing them for the world of modern policing.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #28:

In agencies that have body-worn cameras, recruits should be equipped with BWCs and use them throughout their academy and field training.

Body-worn cameras (BWCs) have become standard (and often required) equipment in many law enforcement agencies. These audio and video recorders are a critically important technology to promote transparency and legitimacy with the public. Today, it is essential that police officers know how and when to activate their BWCs, because failing to do so, especially in high-risk encounters, can undermine accountability and breed anger and distrust in the community.

Police recruits should be given BWCs soon after they enter the academy, and they should be required to wear the cameras and activate them at times consistent with department policy throughout their training. Equipping recruits with BWCs serves two important purposes:

- BWCs provide a tool for recruits and their instructors to review the actions taken during scenario-based exercises and other academy activities, to learn from mistakes, and to help trainers provide guidance and coaching.
- Recruits get used to wearing the device, and they build familiarity with how and when to properly activate the cameras.

Recruits should continue to use BWCs as both an operational and a learning tool during field training. Field Training Officers should use BWC footage as a training tool with recruits to conduct after-action reviews and call attention to positive or negative performance.

>> *continued on page 59*

“Each recruit gets an iPad for training that they can take home and do practice tests and the like. Sometimes videos of a current event will get sent out to their iPads, so recruits can watch what happened, and then discuss the incident during the next class.”

— **Sheriff Mike Chitwood**
Volusia County, FL

The Role of e-Learning in Recruit Training

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that remote learning (or e-learning) for police personnel is not only possible, but even preferable in some instances. Investing in technology to support e-learning will help with everyday training needs. It will also allow academies to continue training if other unforeseeable circumstances arise, such as a natural disaster, another health crisis, or the physical plant becoming unusable.

However, academies need to be careful about when and how they use e-learning. They need to identify the appropriate topics that are conducive to e-learning and the appropriate modalities for providing instruction – synchronous, asynchronous, video-based, etc. (In synchronous online learning, students must log in and participate in a class at a certain time. In asynchronous learning, students can view lessons whenever they choose.⁹³)

There may be a tendency to move training on certain skills to an e-learning platform, but some topics, such as communications or the nuances of 4th Amendment searches and seizures, are likely better handled through in-person presentations and discussions. In classes where the material is complex and

there are nuances in how it can be interpreted, students need the dialog with a classroom instructor, which is not always possible with online instruction.

E-learning may be valuable for helping with student review and comprehension, and can be used in conjunction with in-person learning. Because students learn and comprehend in different ways and at different paces (see Guiding Principle #20, page 50), e-learning tools can allow recruits to review material they may not have fully comprehended during in-person instruction and do so at their own pace. This can help improve retention.

The academy in Washington State employs a “brain exercise” app that recruits log into on their smartphones following use-of-force training. The app builds upon material presented in the classroom and during scenarios, and tests recruits’ understanding and retention.

E-learning can have other advantages, such as quickly training on new and emerging issues where curriculum developers may not have time to prepare a full lesson plan, and to streamline learning for recurring material.⁹⁴

93. For an explanation, see Ohio State Online. “What’s the Difference Between Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning?” <https://online.osu.edu/resources/learn/whats-difference-between-asynchronous-and-synchronous-learning>

94. Lexipol. “Training in a Post-Pandemic World.” White Paper, 2021.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #29:

Academies should invest in technology that promotes collaboration and distance learning, and should provide recruits with the technological tools they need to succeed.

Many of today's recruits have used technology throughout their academic careers, to conduct research, write reports, and collaborate with fellow students. They are used to using technology to help them learn, and they are comfortable with using technology for social interactions, personal business, and in the workplace.

Academies should equip their recruits with mobile devices – laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones – that can be used to organize lectures and handouts and support collaborative projects, small-group discussions, journaling, and other adult learning-based activities.

In addition to body-worn cameras, recruits should be given the opportunity to test out and learn the technologies they will use in the field. These may include mobile report writing, e-citation systems, geographic information systems, crime analysis, and other common apps.

The Tucson Police Department issues a laptop with a Wi-Fi connection to every new recruit. Students learn on this platform throughout their academy training. Later, the laptop becomes their duty computer when they leave the academy. It has all the applications the officers will need, including computer-aided dispatch, records management, and report-writing systems.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #30:

Academies should not become overly reliant on training simulators. Live, in-person scenarios play a critical role in recruit training.

PERF's survey found that 70% of respondents said their academies utilized use-of-force simulators, and 28% used driving simulators.

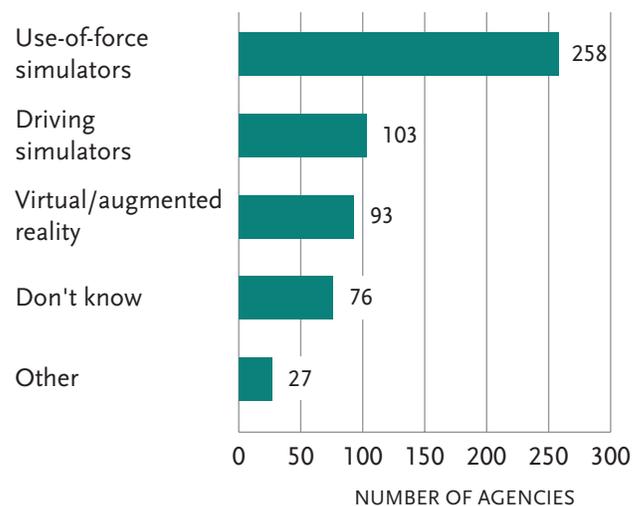
Academies should carefully review and evaluate the simulators they use. They should avoid scenarios that are generic in nature, and instead ensure that scenarios mirror as closely as possible the actual terrain, conditions, and environment where the officers will be working. In addition, the scenarios should cover the range of situations that officers may encounter and emphasize concepts such as de-escalation, tactical communications, time and distance, and the Critical Decision-Making Model. Simply testing "shoot-don't shoot" decision making is inadequate.

Even as they have become more sophisticated, simulators cannot take the place of live, in-person scenario-based exercises, especially for use-of-force and de-escalation training.

Live scenarios can provide for a more realistic setting to test students' communications and decision-making skills. The in-person role players can

Which of the following technologies are used for training at the academy? (Check all that apply)

n = 368



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

respond more quickly and realistically to the student’s actions, and the student learns to take cues – verbal and non-verbal – from the role player.

PERF has seen this repeatedly in our ICAT (Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics) de-escalation training. ICAT focuses on training officers to respond effectively to difficult situations, such as an agitated person, possibly in a mental health crisis, who may present a danger to themselves or others.

“These situations are dynamic, potentially dangerous, and require a mix of communications, tactical, and decision-making skills,” PERF said in its ICAT handbook. “Scenario-based training provides opportunities for officers to practice and demonstrate proficiency in all of those skill sets, in a realistic, hands-on, and sometimes stressful environment.”⁹⁵

In scenario-based training, it is important that police officers or recruits not engage in “gotcha” exercises that embarrass or shame them for not performing perfectly every time. Rather, scenario-based

training emphasizes that officers face complex situations that can be difficult to navigate but are more manageable after they have learned the strategies, communication skills, and tactics that are most likely to be effective.

One other benefit of in-person scenarios is that after the exercise concludes, the instructor, role players, and even classmates at times can participate in a facilitated discussion and provide real-time feedback. The role player can say, “When you did this, I responded with that.” A robust discussion that allows all participants to engage in a thoughtful debriefing to reinforce learning objectives is not possible with a simulated role player.

Some academies may find that using a combination of live scenarios and simulators can help recruits learn, practice, and reinforce their skills, especially in high-risk situations. Initial training can be done with in-person scenarios, with simulators used for follow-up and refresher courses.

New Virtual Reality Platform Aims to Support Immersive, Realistic Training

One recent development in Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality training is a VR-based platform called Trainer. It was developed by Jigsaw, a technology incubator created by Google, in collaboration with a group of law enforcement, civil rights, and academic partners.

Trainer is described as a VR platform that “combines recent advances in voice recognition, natural language processing, and VR to provide law enforcement instructors, and criminal justice scholars, with an

immersive, realistic environment to train and evaluate officer performance.”⁹⁶ The prototype has been tested at the police departments in Camden County (NJ), Jersey City (NJ), and Stockton (CA).

Now, the technology behind Trainer has been transferred to a consortium of academic institutions that will be leading research on the platform. The group includes the University of Cincinnati, Morehouse College, the University of Maryland, and the Georgetown University Law Center.

95. Police Executive Research Forum. ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics. <http://www.policeforum.org/assets/icattrainingguide.pdf>. 2016. p. 20.

96. Jigsaw. “Immersive Technology to Help Advance Public Safety.” October 26, 2021. <https://medium.com/jigsaw/adaptive-technology-to-help-advance-public-safety-b4256388dd3>

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #31:

Academies should monitor developments in Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) training applications, and should be prepared to implement these technologies when applications become widely available.

The training experts PERF consulted on this project generally agreed that most virtual reality and augmented reality training applications are not yet sophisticated enough for widespread use, although they are likely only a few years away from being viable.

Once they are more fully developed, VR and AR could dramatically enhance the “simulation” experience in police training. Academies could more easily customize scenario settings to the local environment, and they could create scenarios for a wide range of situations that officers face, including traffic stops, neighbor disputes, and calls involving people who are experiencing homelessness, mental illness, or addiction.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #32:

Academies should use technology to support physical fitness training.

As noted in Guiding Principle #15 (see page 46), physical fitness should be introduced in the academy as a career-long focus on health and wellness, and not simply as a way to meet a short-term training requirement. Technology can help in this regard.

Apps such as FitBit can be used to monitor recruits’ exercise regimens and overall health and fitness. They also can measure performance in reaching individuals’ fitness goals. Other apps support healthy eating habits and nutrition goals.

Police academies that deploy these technologies need to build in privacy safeguards for individual recruits. But when implemented properly, these apps can build *esprit de corps* among recruit classes who engage in friendly competitions to reach and maintain their fitness goals. And the technology can stay with officers throughout their careers, helping them to set and meet long-term fitness goals.

The New York City Police Academy

Like other big-city departments that operate their own academies, the NYPD for years struggled with a training facility that was inadequate for the number of recruits the agency needed to train and the subject matter they needed to cover.

The previous academy opened in 1964 in the Gramercy Park neighborhood of Manhattan, but within 25 years, the eight-story building was considered antiquated, obsolete, and severely overcrowded. Discussions about building a new academy started in 1985, and after several false starts, ground was broken in 2009 and the new academy opened in 2014.

Situated on a 32-acre campus in the College Point neighborhood of Queens, the 750,000-square-foot facility has three times the space as the old NYPD academy. Importantly, the facility has modern classrooms with



extensive technology; a gymnasium, indoor track, and pool; an 800-seat auditorium; conference rooms; a two-story library; and a spacious, 800-seat cafeteria.

Importantly, the academy features an expansive tactical village for conducting scenario-based training exercises. Among the mock environments are a precinct station, grocery store, restaurant, multi-family dwelling, park, courtroom, bank, street, and a subway car and platform.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #33:

Police academy facilities should be designed with appropriate layouts, infrastructure, and technology to support modern approaches to teaching.

Too many academies are housed in buildings that are old, in disrepair, and not conducive to providing a modern educational environment. Dilapidated facilities can send a message that an agency doesn't value training and education, which can turn off recruits who have been educated in modern facilities with state-of-the-art technology.

Ideally, training facilities should have the following:

- Modern classrooms containing a strong technology infrastructure, including dockable workstations, charging bases, video monitors, etc.
- Flexible configurations to allow for large lectures, demonstrations, small-group discussions, and collaborative projects.
- A modern gymnasium with the appropriate equipment to support weight training and overall fitness.
- Sufficient space to conduct scenario-based training exercises. "Tactical villages" should strive to replicate the local environment. For example, the expanded Macon County Law Enforcement Training Center in Decatur, IL, will feature a variety of settings for conducting scenario-based training exercises, including a mock school, church, hospital, warehouse, hardware store, fast-food restaurant, and outdoor park. The tactical village at the DC Metropolitan Police Academy includes rowhouse apartments that are similar in design to those found in many parts of Washington, D.C.



AREA 5:

Ensuring Continuity between Academy and Field Training

It's been a longstanding cliché in law enforcement circles: the first thing a field training officer says to a new officer in their charge is, "Forget everything they told you in the academy."

The extent to which this actually takes place is unknown. More than 87% of respondents to PERF's survey reported that their academy and field training programs align "very" or "somewhat" closely.

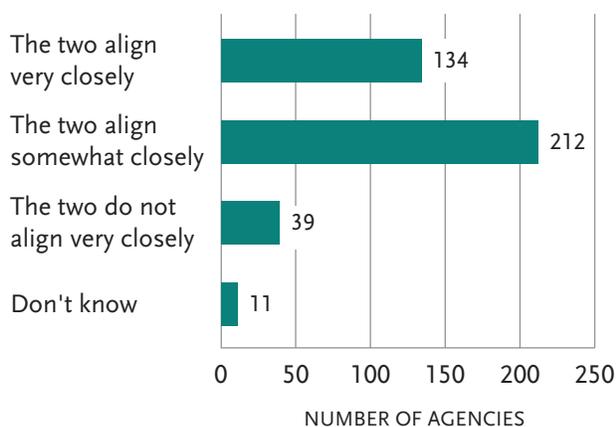
However, when there is a clear disconnect between academy and field training, it can create confusion among new officers: Do they follow what they were taught in the academy, or what their FTO is telling them?

Beyond not knowing how to carry out specific policies and procedures, a disconnect between academy and field training can undermine how new officers embrace and practice the values of the organization.

Field training may be the most significant factor in educating new officers and setting them on a trajectory for success. Yet, in some agencies it seems to be treated almost as an after-thought. Police agencies need to discard their antiquated thinking about field training and embrace a new approach. They need to invest in the rigor and quality of their field training programs and ensure they are building upon, and not undermining, what is being taught in the academy.

How closely would you say the academy training your officers receive aligns with the field training they receive?

n = 396



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #34:

Academy and field training should be developed in tandem, to help ensure continuity between the two.

Transitioning from academy to field training needs to be a smooth and seamless process. To promote continuity, academy and field training programs and curricula should be developed in tandem. This will help to ensure that field training builds upon and reinforces what is taught in the academy curriculum.

For agencies that use outside academies to train their recruits, the challenges are even greater.

As recommended in Guiding Principle #16 (see page 47), these agencies should put their recruits through a post-academy session – focusing on agency-specific policies, procedures, municipal statutes, and organizational values – before they begin their field training. Then, the field training needs to

“In Burlington, the FTOs get paired with recruits early on, before their post-academy training begins. Many FTOs teach at the academy as well, so they are familiar with the recruits. They get to know each other quite well. For example, they train together for the first few days. It becomes more of a mentor relationship.”

— **Lieutenant Shelly Katkowski, Training Director**
Burlington, NC Police Department

focus on any gaps in the recruit curriculum and reinforce the agency’s practices and values.

For example, as academies increasingly emphasize critical thinking and values-based decision making among recruits (see Guiding Principle #1, page 30), agencies need to ensure that their field training programs are reinforcing those skills.

In the New Orleans Police Department, for example, FTOs are trained not to constantly interrupt or correct probationary police officers (unless they are doing something illegal, dangerous, or extremely outside policy). Instead, the FTOs are instructed to take notes on what happened and sit down with the probationary police officer later and ask a series of guiding questions about their actions.

Every Officer Is an FTO

While almost every law enforcement agency uses dedicated field training officers, some have adopted the mindset that “every officer is an FTO.”

The idea is that while specific officers may have the formal designation and responsibility as an FTO, every officer (at every rank) should see field training and mentoring as part of their role. These officers should focus on matters of agency culture, values, and relationships with the community, and leave the training and evaluation of specific skills to the designated FTO.

This mindset can be part of an agency’s commitment to continuous learning and organizational cohesion.

The focus of these conversations is not only on policies and procedures, but also on values and agency philosophy. “It’s a shift in thinking for the FTO, to be more a mentor and a guide,” said Dr. Deidre Magee, academic director at the NOPD academy.

And just as an academy’s recruit training curricula should be guided by research (see Guiding Principle #18, page 48), so too should an agency’s field training program. Agencies should lead or participate in research into the effectiveness of their field training, and they should monitor what the research says about field training in general.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #35:

Agencies should centralize the management of field training; it should not be left up to individual units to run field training their own way.

Field training is too important a function to allow for an ad hoc approach to managing the program. Especially in larger agencies, instead of permitting each police district or precinct to oversee field training for their unit, management of field training should be centralized. This helps to ensure consistency and quality of field training throughout a department.

Because academy and field training must be integrated and build on each other, in many agencies it makes sense to have the academy training unit manage field training as well. Some agencies have adopted the concept of the “recruit training year” in which the academy oversees the entire recruit and field training experience. That way, experienced trainers and curriculum developers can oversee the selection, training, and evaluation of FTOs and ensure that their work complements the training that their probationary police officers received in the academy.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #36:

Agencies should have a formal and rigorous application process to become a field training officer and should offer incentives to attract high-performing officers to the role.

Nearly 87% of the agencies responding to PERF's survey said they have minimum requirements, such as education, experience, and expertise, to be selected as field training officers.

However, experience and education do not guarantee success as an FTO. Agencies should identify the critical knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that are needed to effectively perform the FTO role. Agencies should have a formal application and interview process to ensure that FTO candidates possess those KSAs and that their approach to policing aligns with the agency's training and operational philosophy.

Experience is an important component of being an FTO, but seniority alone should not be the deciding factor in selecting FTOs. And officers who have not applied for the position or otherwise expressed interest should not be assigned as regular FTOs. (Officers may at times have to step into the role on a temporary basis, but only those who have applied for and been selected should be given the formal assignment.)

To ensure they have a sufficient number of qualified FTOs, agencies should make FTO a desirable role that officers want to apply for. Possible incentives could include a pay differential, a take-home vehicle, or scheduling preferences.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #37:

Agencies should have a comprehensive training program for field training officers that includes periodic refreshers on what is being taught to recruits in the academy.

Field training is too important a responsibility to assign to personnel who have not been thoroughly vetted *and trained*.

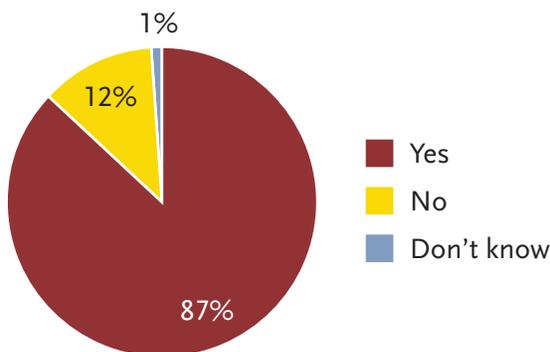
Using curriculum development experts in their training units (see Guiding Principle #17, page 48), agencies should create a comprehensive FTO curriculum, with specific learning objectives. FTOs should be tested to ensure they have mastered the material and understand their roles.

As part of their training, FTOs should be temporarily detailed to the academy, if possible. Having them teach (or co-teach) a class or assist with other responsibilities is a good way of evaluating how effectively they interact with recruits, provide guidance and instruction, and serve as a mentor.

>> continued on page 67

Are there minimum requirements (e.g., education, experience, expertise) for personnel to be selected as field training officers?

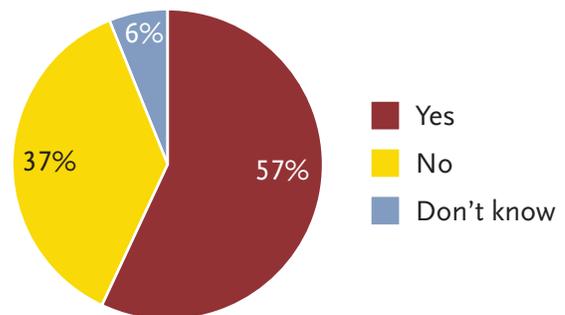
n = 395



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

Do your agency's field training officers receive periodic training on changes in academy training?

n = 396



Source: PERF, 2020 Survey

The Vancouver (BC) Police Department Integrates Classroom and Field Instruction for New Constables

Prior to becoming a Certified Police Constable in British Columbia, municipal police recruits must complete the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) police recruit training. This program consists of three separate training blocks carried out at the Police Academy and a fourth block (essentially field training) at the recruits' home departments.

In many agencies, recruits complete the first three JIBC training blocks in sequence, then return to their agencies for additional instruction in their departments' policies and procedures. But the Vancouver (BC) Police Department has implemented a different model that is designed to better integrate general classroom instruction; agency policies, procedures, and culture; and field training.

In addition to the JIBC Block Training, recruits hired by the Vancouver Police Department go through the department's Recruit Development Program (RDP). The program provides recruits with extra training and support to help them "become successful in policing the vibrant and unique environment that is the City of Vancouver," said VPD Recruit Coordinator Dan Pain.

The RDP includes a combination of online learning, hands-on skills and scenarios, and lectures from subject matter experts from within and outside the police department. It consists of four phases, designed to complement each stage of the JIBC Block Training and provide recruits with a broader range of training topics and experiences leading up to and following their graduation from the academy. The RDP segments are interspersed with the standard JIBC Block Training sessions. This helps to connect the basic JIBC training with the specific areas of focus within the Vancouver PD.

Orientation is the first phase of the VPD Recruit Development Program. It serves primarily as an introduction to the culture and values of the department and some of the key

concepts that will be reinforced throughout the training. Topics covered in this 8-day phase include legal training, personal and professional expectations, mental and physical wellness, and Police Judo, which covers both physical and mental skills that focus on "duty of care" and treating their partners with "mutual respect and benefit."

The training received during the **Pre/Post Block II Phase** continues the focus on culture and values, but also includes a variety of more nuts-and-bolts topics, including information management systems, report writing, diversity training, predictive policing, forensics, jail procedures, technology and cyber-crime, and financial wellness.

The Pre-Deployment Phase takes place after graduation from the police academy. It provides VPD recruits with 11 days of additional training before they begin their patrol assignments for what is essentially one year of field training. During this phase, recruits are trained in diversity/First Nations issues, standardized field sobriety testing, traumatic wound care (bleeding control,

VPD Recruit Training Schedule

Training Block or Phase	Duration
VPD RDP Orientation Phase	8 days
JIBC Block I	13 weeks
VPD RDP Pre/Post Block II Phase	10 days
JIBC Block II	18-21 weeks
JIBC Block III	8 weeks
VPD RDP Pre-Deployment Phase	11 days
JIBC Block IV (post-graduation)	1 year
VPD RDP Block IV Phase	8 weeks

CPR, and AED), firearms, mental health and wellness, and more.

By the time a recruit reaches the **VPD Block IV Phase**, they are essentially finished with the Recruit Development Program, but still receive support as they enter the next stage of their career. Each recent graduate officer is partnered with a senior member of the department who serves as a mentor and helps them transition from the Police Academy to frontline policing.

In total, the Recruit Development Program provides VPD recruits with an extra 28 days of training to complement the instruction received through the JIBC Block Program. The RDP seeks to do more than simply “fill any gaps” in the JIBC program. It is designed with flexibility in mind. Training topics and content delivery are designed to meet the ever-changing needs of policing in the City of Vancouver.

continued from page 65

In addition, FTOs need regular refresher training, including updates to the recruit curriculum taught in the academy. In PERF’s survey, 57% of agencies said their FTOs receive periodic training on changes in the academy instruction, and 37% said they did not.

Refresher training should focus on updates to agency policies and procedures, as well as any changes in the recruit curriculum. It can also include any research or other updates on promising or best practices in how to perform the FTO role. Providing FTOs with regular training helps to ensure the seamless integration of academy and field training.

The Anne Arundel County (MD) Police Department is one example of an agency that has embraced this concept. Each year, the agency brings its FTOs to the academy for 2 to 3 days of refresher training.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #38:

Agencies should establish a formal process for monitoring and evaluating field training officers, and FTOs should have to requalify every year to remain in that position.

Just as field training officers are charged with evaluating the recruits under their direction, agencies should have a formal process for monitoring and evaluating FTOs. Part of that process should involve creating performance standards that FTOs can be measured against.

New FTOs should have to complete a 6- to 12-month probationary period, during which they are reviewed and evaluated by their superiors, peers, academy staff responsible for field training, and the officers they are training. After completing their probationary period, FTOs should undergo annual evaluations to qualify for remaining in that role.

“There is a heavy community engagement component in our FTO program. Every day, the recruit and their FTO have to make some sort of meaningful visit to the community, whether it’s a barber shop, another local business, or a place of worship. The recruit is expected to talk with people and engage with them in a meaningful way.”

**— Chief of Department (and former Chief of Training) Kenneth Corey
NYPD**

Like recruits and probationary police officers, FTOs should be required to keep journals and other documentation of their own experiences, impressions, and performance, and they should be required to articulate and explain their actions and decisions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #39:

Agencies need to be systematic and thorough in how field training officers monitor and evaluate recruits during field training.

Agencies should develop specific objectives that FTOs use in evaluating the performance of each recruit they train. A core set of objectives should apply to all recruits. In addition, there should be a customized set of objectives for each recruit, based on their performance in the academy and emphasizing any skills that they may need to work on.

In the Cincinnati Police Department, FTOs are given written guidelines on training content and are presented with student performance objectives in various tactical endeavors, including traffic stops, use of force, and handcuffing. FTOs rate their recruits using a Likert scale for all 13 weeks they are in training.⁹⁷ The FTOs also complete detailed narratives on aspects of the work that recruits performed well and where improvement may be needed.

In addition to tactical skills, recruits in field training should practice and be evaluated on their community engagement and communications skills. The NYPD places a strong emphasis on these activities in its FTO program.

Some agencies have experimented with a Field Training Evaluator (FTE), in addition to the FTO. This is done to guard against the tendency for some FTOs to become too attached to their recruits and lose objectivity in evaluating their performance. Once the FTO certified that a recruit is ready to work on their own, the FTE would step in and independently evaluate the recruit against the core requirements the agency has established.

To support recruit evaluations during field training, agencies should look to use mobile data technology to capture field evaluations on tablets, laptops, or smartphones so they can easily upload that information to training databases.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE #40:

After completing their field training, officers should be brought back to the academy to review what they learned during the FTO program and how well it aligns with their instruction in the academy.

Every officer who completes field training should be brought back to the academy for a thorough debriefing. Officers should be asked to relate their experiences during field training and describe how well they think their academy training prepared them for street patrols.

Through classroom discussions, focus groups, and individual interviews, agencies can identify whether their academy and field training are out of alignment or contradict each other in certain areas. This information is invaluable for pinpointing areas where either academy or field training may need to be adjusted. This review also can help to identify potential knowledge gaps among FTOs, who may not be up to speed with the agency's current policies or procedures.

The Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, DC and the New Orleans Police Department are among the agencies that have instituted this practice. In addition to reviewing specific policies, procedures, and training, these post-field training sessions can be an opportunity for agencies to remind officers why they got into the profession in the first place, to reinforce the agency's mission and values, and to discuss the career options that lie ahead.

For example, the New Orleans Police Department brings in deputy or bureau chiefs to discuss career opportunities and paths with their new officers. Training officials say this has been an important strategy for getting officers off on the right foot and for retaining officers over time.

97. For information about a Likert scale, see <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Likert-Scale>.

Alternative Approaches to Integrating Academy and Field Training

Seth Stoughton was as an officer with the Tallahassee (FL) Police Department for five years, where he served as a trainer and a founding member of the Special Response Team. Today, he is an associate professor in the University of South Carolina School of Law and the university's Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice. He has studied and published papers on several aspects of policing, including police training.

In discussions with PERF for this project, Professor Stoughton presented an alternative approach to how recruits could be taught in the academy and in the field:

“We have the opportunity here to do something bold by calling into question the traditional ‘X weeks at an academy, then FTO, then probationary period’ approach. What adult learning pedagogy tells us is that *exposure* is key to picking up the types of critical skills that officers need.

“Imagine a system where an officer goes through two weeks of classroom instruction for specific concepts, then two weeks of FTO, then a week of classroom discussion where they can talk about seeing how the specific concepts they went over played out on the ground. Then repeat that process with a different set of concepts (ideally ones that build on what they learned earlier).

“In the early field observations, the recruits might not be uniformed; they are almost purely observers. Later on, they may be in uniform.

“This type of approach could produce a much tighter integration of *academy* training and *field* training. Agencies could work with training experts to create the program, experiment with it, and evaluate it.”

Bob Wasserman experimented with this type of structure when he led training and education in the Boston Police Department and assisted the New York City Police Department. In Boston, recruits began rotations in both police stations and the community, starting in the fourth week of the academy. In New York City, recruits in the 12th week began a three-week rotation in the precinct they would ultimately be assigned to upon graduation, getting involved in both station and community activities. (See page 44 for more information.)

Another concept, recently endorsed by the Little Hoover Commission in California, is to supplement traditional recruit and field training with an “advanced academy experience” for officers with 2 to 5 years of experience. The purpose would be to “reinforce entry-level training and incorporate the more advanced concepts currently embedded in the basic academy.”⁹⁸

98. Little Hoover Commission. November 2021.

Conclusion:

We Need to Fundamentally Change How We Train the Next Generation of Police Officers

POLICING HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DYNAMIC PROFESSION. Its history is replete with examples of innovations and breakthrough ideas in strategies, tactics, technologies, and philosophies of policing.

But one area of policing that has not consistently seen this type of growth and innovation is training – especially how new personnel entering the profession are trained.

Through this project, PERF sought to understand and document the current state of recruit training. What we found was not always impressive. In many police academies, recruit training is structured and carried out in much the same manner that it was decades ago. And while academies report that they are much more “balanced” today between paramilitary and academic approaches, most academies still place a strong emphasis on appearance, deportment, discipline, and following orders. These are important traits that need to be developed in new police officers, but sometimes, they seem to come at the expense of developing recruits’ communications skills, critical-thinking capabilities, decision making, and creativity in working with communities to reduce crime and build trust.

The current state of recruit training demands that we rethink – and remake – the system for how new police officers are trained. We need to adopt a new philosophy and culture around police training – one rooted in academic inquiry and developing recruits’ critical-thinking and decision-making skills, as well as physical fitness and discipline.

This new approach and culture will be achieved not through military-like boot camps, but through rigorous institutions of education that combine classroom instruction with small group exercises, realistic scenario-based exercises, and other approaches that follow the principles of adult learning. Because policing is, by its nature, a profession that involves dealing with stressful situations, recruits need to be challenged with stress-based training as well, largely through scenario-based exercises. But the entire philosophy of the academy and learning experience should not be based predominantly on stress. Police academies should be places where expectations are high, and students are challenged to reach beyond the minimum standards of proficiency and demonstrate mastery of everything they are taught.

Moving forward, we need national standards on what recruit training looks like in the United States, and how and by whom it is developed and delivered.

We also need to re-engineer the field training process, to ensure that it aligns not just with academy instruction, but also with the vision, values, philosophy, and culture of the agencies that new officers are joining. Field training is a critically important, but often under-valued and under-resourced, aspect of preparing new police officers.

This report presents a series of 40 principles to help guide this transformation in recruit training. The principles cover five key areas:

- Academy organization and philosophy
- Curriculum

- Academy leadership and instructors
- Technology and physical plant
- Integration of academy and field training.

Adopting these guiding principles will move police training – and the policing profession – forward. These guiding principles have the potential not only to dramatically improve the education and training that new police officers receive; they also could help boost recruitment and retention of new officers.

Potential job seekers want to see that an agency or academy is willing to invest in training and developing their new employees, through high-quality curricula, engaging instructors, and modern technology and facilities. They also want to know that the academy will treat them with the respect they are due

as an adult learner – someone who has experiences and ideas to bring to the table – and not as a foot soldier who needs to be commanded and sometimes belittled.

Training is not a magic wand that can fix everything that needs improvement in policing. Agencies still need to focus on recruitment and hiring, supervision and leadership, policies and practices, equipment, and officer health and wellness.

But if we want to fundamentally change American policing, we need to start with how recruit officers are trained. Training may be the last bastion of a system of policing that holds on to outdated concepts instead of embracing new approaches built on critical thinking and creative problem solving. We hope this report will be an important resource to help lead the way toward dramatic improvements in training and policing.

About the Police Executive Research Forum

THE POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM (PERF) is an independent research organization that focuses on critical issues in policing. Since its founding in 1976, PERF has identified best practices on fundamental issues such as reducing police use of force; developing community policing and problem-oriented policing; using technologies to deliver police services to the community; and developing and assessing crime reduction strategies.

PERF strives to advance professionalism in policing and to improve the delivery of police services through the exercise of strong national leadership; public debate of police and criminal justice issues; and research and policy development.

The nature of PERF's work can be seen in the reports PERF has published over the years. Most of these reports are available without charge online at <http://www.policeforum.org/free-online-documents>. All of the titles in the *Critical Issues in Policing* series can be found on the back cover of this report and on the PERF website at <https://www.policeforum.org/critical-issues-series>.

In addition to conducting research and publishing reports on our findings, PERF conducts

management studies of individual law enforcement agencies; educates hundreds of police officials each year in the Senior Management Institute for Police, a three-week executive development program; and provides executive search services to governments that wish to conduct national searches for their next police chief.

All of PERF's work benefits from PERF's status as a membership organization of police officials, who share information and open their agencies to research and study. PERF members also include academics, federal government leaders, and others with an interest in policing and criminal justice.

All PERF members must have a four-year college degree and must subscribe to a set of founding principles, emphasizing the importance of research and public debate in policing, adherence to the Constitution and the highest standards of ethics and integrity, and accountability to the communities that police agencies serve.

PERF is governed by a member-elected President and Board of Directors and a Board-appointed Executive Director.

To learn more about PERF, visit www.policeforum.org.



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supports organizations that offer first responder programming and technology and engineering education, and align to our values of accountability, innovation, impact, diversity and inclusion. The Foundation is one of the many ways in which the company lives out its purpose of helping people be their best in the moments that matter.

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