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POLICE TRAINING PROGRAM (PTP) PHILOSOPHY

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING (PBL)

PBL is a method of teaching that presents trainees with a real-life, ill-structured problem that has no one simple solution. The PTP model (Table 1.1) encourages the trainee to ask questions, hypothesize, research, resolve their learning issues and create an action plan. Some of the benefits of PBL include an opportunity for learning according to individual learning styles and the development of critical thinking skills. Most important, the trainee learns to enlist the community as group members in his/her learning process. It is important to understand that problem-based learning is not a problem-solving model—it is a learning model.

► ***PBL is a trainee-centered teaching model*** that incorporates problem-solving as the vehicle for learning. Traditionally, learning has involved a teacher or instructor delivering information as content to the learner. PBL, however, begins with the presentation of a *real-life* problem that the trainee must attempt to solve. The trainee follows a pattern of discovery whereby he/she expresses ideas about resolving the problem, lists known facts, decides what information to use (including naming sources for that learning) and develops action plans to solve the problem. Several evaluation methods follow the process to determine success or failure of the action plan.

Clearly, it is critically important that trainees know and apply the proper procedures for responding to daily calls for service, violent crimes, and serious traffic incidents. Yet, it is equally important for trainees to understand how to look at such problems in a broader community context. Therefore, much of the effort in this training model focuses on process rather than content. The most tangible benefit of the model lies in its application to street situations that have neither easy answers nor obvious solutions. This model encourages trainees to explore, analyze, and think systemically. The PBL method encourages trainees to collaborate with peers, develop resources, and communicate effectively with the community. These are the hallmarks of good police work.

ILL-STRUCTURED PROBLEMS

► ***Known as Problem-Based Learning Exercises (PBLE)***, ill-structured problems are the foundation upon which this model rests. The characteristics of ill-structured problems are:

- No one simple solution.
- The trainee initially lacks essential information that he/she must obtain to solve the problem.
- The trainee must consider a variety of facts and issues.
- The learning occurs in the context of the problem-solving.
- Learning that occurs has a *real-life* context.
- The trainee learns a process that he/she can apply to future problems.

Traditional field training programs evaluate trainees daily on their ability to perform individual policing tasks. In the PTP, the requirement to demonstrate basic policing skills is simply placed in the context of solving problems. The learning proceeds in a number of ways:

- The trainee receives a Problem-Based Learning Exercise (**PBLE**) during each phase of training. There are four PBLEs, one designed for each phase of training.
- The trainee transfers the knowledge from this specific problem to other policing activities.
- At the end of each phase of training, the trainee presents his/her solutions for the PBLE.
- The trainer and trainee proceed with their daily routine. They record appropriate training calls and activities in their Training Progress Notes or Journal.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES IN PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

In the PBL method, the student examines a real-life problem for study and learns to ask questions about the problem. The PTO supports and encourages the trainee in the process of inquiry, and guides the trainee appropriately.

The PTO presents problems and allows the trainee to go through an established process to find answers or solutions. For years, professions such as education and medicine have successfully employed PBL to train and graduate competent and confident teachers and doctors. The PBL training model, applied to the police profession, will offer the same benefits to new police officers.

PBL forces trainees to confront what they know as well as what they don't know. It requires them to ask questions, do research, and determine what actions to take. The following steps are the basis of the problem-solving style:

- Presentation of a real-life problem.
- The trainee works with the problem and considers initial ideas.
- The trainee identifies what he/she knows about the problem.
- The trainee identifies what he/she needs to know about the problem and seeks information from available resources, including relevant community sources.
- The trainee develops an action plan based on his/her research.
- The trainee evaluates his/her own performance and learns to transfer the new knowledge to future problems.

FAILING FORWARD

Many of our greatest discoveries and learning occurs when we make mistakes or fail. Contemporary police writers and leaders call this *failing forward*.¹ Policing agencies want to minimize mistakes and provide high quality police services. By using PBL, new police officers discover not only positive solutions to problems in the community, but also *what does not work*. Under the supervision of their PTO, trainees suggest solutions to problems, some of which may not work. Thus, learning can legitimately take place within the context of failing

¹ Geller and Swanger, 1995

forward. Allowing trainees to explore ideas and make non-critical mistakes fosters an environment of exploration and learning. ***This, however, does not absolve the PTO of the responsibility to intervene if the trainee is about to make a mistake of a serious nature.***

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING EXERCISES (PBLES)

Problem-based learning in policing has unique characteristics. A key difference lies in how police trainees will establish learning groups. In other training environments, groups of students come together to form learning cohorts. They collaborate to develop an end product that will help solve the problem they receive from the instructor. In this model, however, the trainees and PTOs form a slightly different unit. The PTO helps the trainee utilize members of the department and community as part of his/her problem-solving team. This community learning facilitates the involvement of those individuals most invested in community problems.

► ***Community Learning*** – Once a trainee receives the PBLE, he/she will form partnerships to solve the problem. Learning cohorts may include the PTO, other police officers, members of social or community services, witnesses, victims, or other members of the community. This learning dynamic is known as ***community learning***.

For example, if the trainer presents a “youth selling drugs in a park” problem to the trainee, the trainee may consider contacting others such as local park authorities, school administrators, drug squad officers, neighbors using the park, and perhaps even the suspects. These individuals become part of the cohort with whom the trainee seeks input and solutions. The PTO encourages the trainee to listen to their concerns, guidance, and expertise. The PTO serves as both mentor and guide to the trainee as he/she moves through this process.

Once presented with the PBLE, the trainee follows these steps:

STEP 1 IDEAS – ***The trainee lists initial ideas for solving the problem.***

For example: Close the park, arrest the sellers, etc. The trainee will later revisit these ideas to determine their validity in light of new information he/she gains during the process.

STEP 2 FACTS – ***The trainee lists all of the known facts.***

For example: The sales are not during school hours, the sellers are from out of the area, the buyers are from the area, etc.).

STEP 3 LEARNING ISSUES – ***The trainee asks, “What do I need to know to solve this problem?”***

For example, the questions may include: Who is responsible for the park? What is the municipal ordinance regarding the park? What are the drug laws? What vehicle or walking routes do the dealers take to arrive at the park? Whom should I notify at the school? After consulting the learning cohort in the community and conducting research, the trainee revisits his/her initial ideas to determine which are still applicable.

STEP 4 ACTION PLANS – ***The trainee develops an action plan to address the learning issues.***

STEP 5 EVALUATION – ***The trainee and the trainer evaluate both the product and the process.***

The trainee presents his/her response in a number of different ways: verbally, in a written report, or as a formal presentation to the PTO. The PTO will assess the trainee’s mastery of subject material in that phase. Part of the evaluation will focus on the trainee’s problem-solving and community learning process.

USING PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING EXERCISES (PBLES) AS A TEACHING METHOD

As noted above, PTOs will use the Problem-Based Learning Exercises as the primary teaching method with trainees. While learning will occur during daily police activities, the PBLEs will develop the trainee’s problem-solving skills.

In the PBLEs provided, a number of potential responses are available to the trainee. There is no one *right* answer. In every instance, the learning will cover a variety of departmental procedures, legal topics, and individual skills.

Trainees must learn to analyze complex problems as they appear in real life. The program structure allows the trainee and trainer to proceed using daily policing activities. The trainee receives PBLEs from the Police Training Officer that he/ she must complete within the training phases. Throughout training, the trainee and PTO respond to calls for service and perform normal police activities. These activities provide the necessary background information to complete the training phase and phase assignments. A sample PBLE–Completed Form (for PBLE #1) is located in [Appendix C](#).

Table 1.1

POLICE TRAINING PROGRAM MODEL

Part A. Essential Elements	
PBLEs	A Problem-Based Learning Exercise shall be completed during each phase.
NPEs	Complete a Neighborhood Portfolio Exercise (NPE) during the Police Training Program.
Matrix	Apply the Learning Matrix in each element of the program.
Journal/Notes	Trainee’s Journal / Trainers write Training Progress Notes.
Part B. Program Components	
Duration	The Police Training Program (PTP) shall be delivered over a minimum of 15 weeks based upon the structured learning content as specified in this manual.
Prior Training	A trainee shall have successfully completed the Regular Basic Course before participating in the Police Training Program.
PTP SAC	The Police Training Program shall have a Supervisor/Administrator/Coordinator (PTP SAC) who meets the criteria contained in Regulation 1004(a)(3)(A–C) and 1004(c) .
PTOs	The Police Training Program shall have Police Training Officers (PTOs) who meet the criteria contained in Regulation 1004(a)(4)(A–D) and 1004(d) .
Supervision	<p>Trainees shall be supervised depending upon their assignment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) A trainee assigned to general law enforcement uniformed patrol duties shall be under the direct and immediate supervision (physical presence) of a qualified PTO. <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b) A trainee temporarily assigned to non-enforcement, specialized functions(s) for the purpose of specialized training or orientation (e.g., complaint/dispatcher, records, jail, investigations, etc.) is not required to be in the immediate presence of a qualified PTO while performing the specialized function.

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Part B. Program Components <i>cont'd</i>	
Monitoring Trainee Performance	Trainee performance shall be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Documented daily through trainee's journaling and PTO's Training Progress Notes, which shall be reviewed with the trainee by the PTO AND b) Monitored by the PTP SAC.
PTO Evaluation by Trainee	Each PTO shall be evaluated by the trainee and a PTP SAC as described in Regulation 1004(a)(7)(A-B) .
Program Evaluation by Trainee	Trainees shall complete an evaluation of the Police Training Program at the end of the program.
Program Completion	The PTO's attestation of each trainee's competence and successful completion of the Police Training Program and a statement that releases the trainee from the program, along with the signed concurrence of the department head, or his/her designate, shall be retained in department records. Retention length shall be based upon department record policies.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section describes the duties and responsibilities of key program personnel. Their tasks interrelate and are essential to the success of the program. Agencies must develop the necessary policies and procedures to support the leadership, administration, and management of this program. In some cases, minor changes or additions to personnel to manage the program may be necessary to address the unique needs of some agencies.

PERSONNEL

- **Program Manager**

The Program Manager is a command officer responsible for the overall management of the Police Training Program. The Program Manager works closely with the Program Coordinator and Field Supervisors (FS) to ensure that members of the agency follow the policies and procedures of the program.

- **Police Training Program Supervisor/Administrator/Coordinator (PTP SAC)**

The PTP SAC is the person assigned to act as the agency's liaison with POST. The PTP SAC must attend the SAC Course within 12 months of assignment. To better understand the program, *it is highly recommended* the PTP SAC also attend the 40-hour PTO Course (Basic). The PTP SAC is responsible for ensuring compliance with all POST guidelines related to the implementation and operation of the Police Training Program.

- **Field Supervisor (FS)**

The FS is usually a police supervisor assigned to the agency's Patrol Division. The FS will provide daily supervision and coaching to the PTO/trainee team and ensure that the needs of that learning team are met. The FS will:

- Participate in the selection and evaluation of Police Training Officers (PTOs) and Police Training Evaluators (PTEs).
- Provide training in Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to the PTOs and trainees.
- Administer the program according to POST and local regulations.
- Meet regularly (weekly is recommended) with the PTO and trainee.
- Keep the Program Manager and Coordinator informed of any unusual problems or activities related to the PTO/trainee team and the learning experience.

- **Police Training Officer (PTO)**

This individual is primarily responsible for guiding the trainee through the learning experience. The PTO provides daily coaching and training to the trainee, documents training provided, and keeps the Police Training Supervisors and Program Coordinator informed about any pertinent issues associated with the trainee and the learning experience. PTOs must possess a Basic POST certificate, have one year of experience, and have been selected through an agency-specific process. PTOs must complete a POST-certified PTO Course prior to training new officers/deputies and complete 24 hours of update training every three years. The PTO will:

- Take ownership of the training experience.
- Provide a positive learning environment for the trainee.
- Act as a role model for the trainee.
- Facilitate Problem-Based Learning (PBL); advise and counsel the trainee through each of the problems provided in the manual.
- Prepare material for the trainee, such as relevant community problems, within which the trainee frames his/her learning.
- Assist the trainee with the Neighborhood Portfolio Exercise (NPE) and Problem-Based Learning Exercises (PBLEs).
- Record the teaching and coaching experiences with the trainee by using Training Progress Notes and Journaling, and bring forward any persistent concerns to a Field Supervisor (FS).
- Act in accordance with any organizational regulations regarding the training experience.
- Maintain Trainee Journaling/Training Progress Notes documenting the trainee's progress.

- **Police Training Evaluators (PTEs)**

The PTEs are experienced Police Training Officers who have met qualifications established by individual agencies. The PTE identifies, assigns, and records the daily performance of the trainee as it relates to the categories identified for each period of evaluation. This program includes two evaluation periods: mid-term and final evaluations. The PTE will evaluate the trainee during the mid-term evaluation on training received during Phases A and B. For the final phase of evaluation, the PTE will evaluate the trainee comprehensively on training received in Phases A through D.

- **Board of Evaluators (BOE)**

The BOE should consist of managers, supervisors, and trainers involved in the program. The BOE is responsible for the following:

- Review all trainee and PTO performance as directed by the Program Manager or Program Coordinator.
- Evaluate trainee and PTO performance. Evaluations may include a review of PTE reports or other written material relative to the program. The BOE may also conduct interviews of PTOs and trainees before making any written recommendation to the Program Manager.
- Provide a written recommendation to the Program Coordinator and Program Manager on what action to consider regarding training, prescriptive training, or termination of a trainee or PTO from the training program.
- The BOE will conduct an exit interview of each trainee for the purpose of assessing the overall training experience.

If needed, any person involved in the training process may request to convene a Board of Evaluators (BOE). This board will be responsible for reviewing the trainee's progress in the program as well as the performance of the PTO. Individual agencies should determine the number of staff assigned to the BOE.

TRAINEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Learning**

Trainees must accept responsibility for their own learning as it applies to the job of policing.

- **Resourcefulness**

Police trainees must learn how to utilize the many resources available to them inside and outside the agency.

- **Initiative**

Trainees must take the initiative and hold themselves accountable and responsible for their learning process. Program managers and trainers should understand that mistakes will occur from time to time in any training program. Trainees must accept the concept/process of failing forward and show the initiative to correct mistakes.

- **Self-Evaluation and Journaling**

Trainees will participate in self-evaluation by Journaling. Honest self-evaluation will assist both the trainee and the PTO during the training process. Self-evaluation will also ensure that learning transfers from theory to practice. This process is vital to trainee development.