

Law Enforcement Resilience Training Program Overview

Through the Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement Officers and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability Initiative of the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center, has developed the **Law Enforcement Resilience Training Program**.

What is resilience, and why is it important? The stressors that law enforcement officers face can have serious implications for overall health and wellness. Having the skills to navigate adversity and grow and thrive in the face of the many challenges and stressors that law enforcement experience could strengthen not only their mental wellness but also their physical wellness.

One key aspect of resilience is optimism, which is a focus of the program. There is a significant body of research on the benefits of optimism on mental and physical health.^{1,2} In one study, optimistic older adults were 48% less likely to develop heart failure four years later.³

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This training is based on the University of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center's evidence-based training programs that have been delivered to military personnel, educators, students, and others. This program has been

tailored specifically for law enforcement, to include dynamic interactions, one-on-one instruction, and engaging activities. The training includes empirically validated skills that can prevent and decrease anxiety and depression and increase optimism and well-being. These skills can be applied professionally and personally, and are divided into three core themes:

- 1. Mind skills** harness thinking to drive productive emotions, reactions, and physiology. Officers learn skills to increase realistic optimism and identify and avoid counterproductive thoughts, or "thinking traps," which can interfere with work and personal effectiveness.
- 2. Energy skills** regulate energy and maintain vitality. Officers learn skills to increase gratitude, leverage character strengths, and reduce the fight-or-flight response by deliberate breathing and other strategies.
- 3. Connection skills** strengthen professional and personal relationships. Officers learn how to plan for and engage in conversations when there are difficulties to address, and how to respond to others' positive experiences to build trust and strong relationships.

¹ Alarcon, G.M., Bowling, N.A., & Khazon, S. (2013). Great expectations: a meta-analytic examination of optimism and hope. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 54(7), 821-827.

² Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (2018). Dispositional optimism and physical health: A long look back, a quick look forward. *American Psychologist*, 73(9), 1082-1094.

³ Kim, E.S, Smith, J., & Kubzansky, L. (2014). A prospective study of the association between dispositional optimism and incident heart failure. *Circulation: Heart Failure*, 7(3): 394-400



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Training Details:

Phase 1:

During the three-day direct training, attendees learn resilience skills through an interactive, experiential format which utilizes role-plays, videos, practice exercises, and discussions. Participants will learn valuable resilience strategies they can incorporate into every aspect of their lives.

Phase 2:

The direct training can be accompanied by a four-day train-the-trainer session. During the train-the-trainer program, Agency Trainers first learn resilience skills for themselves and then are given the tools to teach those skills to others.

Following the full training, the IACP and the University of Pennsylvania teams work with Agency Trainers to develop implementation plans for their agencies based off of the manualized curriculum.

92 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the 7-day combined program prepared them to teach resilience skills to law enforcement personnel.

- Phase 1 direct trainings are also available to agencies that do not want to complete the train-the-trainer component. These trainings may be conducted by trainers from the University of Pennsylvania or qualified Agency Trainers within the region.

- Program participants can include sworn personnel from all ranks, as well as dispatchers, peer support leaders, or mental health professionals.
- Full trainings can be held regionally to accommodate participants from multiple agencies.

Law Enforcement Resilience Training Program Participant Testimonials

“This will be a wonderful addition to the overall training tool belt. This program was well planned and well executed. I look forward to introducing this to the entire organization!”

“I’ve learned that although agencies tend to work a little differently, ultimately, we seem to experience the same struggles and stressors in one way or another. Building resilience can help us in not only our day-to-day lives, but also in the career of law enforcement no matter what agency or location.”

“Resilience means being able to weather the storm and being mindful of your emotional and physical well-being. In doing so, it fosters personal growth and allows you to focus on things within your control, saving you time and energy.”

For more information about this training and training availability, please contact osw@theiacp.org or visit www.theiacp.org/osw.

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