

Protecting and Serving: Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Children Exposed to Violence Training Curriculum

I. Introduction

Training purposes:

- To help officers better understand and recognize the acute signs of traumatic distress so often associated with events that require police intervention.
- To apply law enforcement strategies that simultaneously achieve law enforcement goals and provide a foundation upon which to help children and families heal and recover.

Training goals:

- Improve the ability of law enforcement personnel to identify children exposed to violence they encounter while on the job.
- Augment law enforcement personnel's ability to interact effectively with children of all ages who have been exposed to violence, using both developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed approaches.
- Acknowledge the roles of multi-disciplinary partners (including those who specialize in childhood traumatic stress and recovery), the principles for working together effectively, and how these partnerships benefit police and the communities they serve.
- Enhance officers' sense of professional effectiveness.

Target audience:

- Front-line officers and supervisors currently working in law enforcement agencies.

Trainers:

- The training is intended to be delivered by law enforcement officers with extensive experience in patrol.

Training resources:

- The training package includes a *Notes to the Trainer* section with detailed guidance for those conducting the training, including: an overview of the training package; training preparation tips; and suggestions for participant energizers.

II. Overview of the Curriculum

There are two main components to the training curriculum—the Facilitator's Guide and the Participant's Workbook. In addition, there are instructional multi-media (PowerPoint slides, video clips, graphics) training aids; worksheets and learning materials for interactive,

experiential exercises; resource materials for learner reference and further study; tools for front-line officers; and evaluation materials.

Curriculum Organization:

- Module 1: Police, Children Exposed to Violence, and Trauma.
- Module 2: Trauma and Its Impact on Children and Adolescents.
- Module 3: A Hero for the Moment Can Impact a Lifetime: The Role of Law Enforcement in the Lives of Children Exposed to Violence.
- Module 4: Protocols for Law Enforcement Officers Responding to Children Exposed to Violence.
- Module 5: Partners in Responding to Children Exposed to Violence.

Learning Objectives:

Module 1 – Police, Children Exposed to Violence, and Trauma

- Clarify the term “children exposed to violence” using examples from law enforcement experience.
- Explain how children exposed to violence are at greater risk for future involvement in the juvenile and/or criminal justice systems.
- Differentiate between exposure to violence and trauma.
- Assess the larger impact a traumatic incident may have on the child, family, school, and community.
- Emphasize the unique opportunity police officers have to do less harm through a trauma-informed response.

Module 2 – Trauma and Its Impact of Children and Adolescents

- Explain the developmental impact of childhood exposure to trauma.
- Describe common responses to exposure to violence at various stages of development (infants, toddlers, preschool, school age, and adolescent children).
- Discuss the on-scene physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions law enforcement might encounter in victims or witnesses.
- Detail how police officers may more effectively respond on scene with children of each development stage.

Module 3 – A Hero for the Moment Can Impact a Lifetime: The Role of Law Enforcement in the Lives of Children Exposed to Violence

- Explain how traditional law enforcement efforts to re-establish order support and promote the recovery of children exposed to violence.
- Acknowledge the importance of using professional authority in a non-threatening, positive way to establish psychological and physical safety and order.

- Describe how using both developmentally-appropriate and trauma-informed approaches at scenes of violent crimes and other potentially traumatic/overwhelming events benefits children, families, communities, and law enforcement.
- Expound upon how even a brief intervention may be critical in decreasing the traumatic nature of children’s exposure to violence as well as in aiding children’s longer-term recovery.

Module 4 – Protocols for Law Enforcement Officers Responding to Children Exposed to Violence

- Describe principles and best practices for on-scene/acute responses.
- Define special considerations and practices regarding domestic violence calls for services.
- Detail special considerations and practices regarding follow up visits
- Outline steps to take when conducting death notifications.

Module 5 – Partners in Responding to Children Exposed to Violence

- Detail how different types of partners help law enforcement personnel do their jobs better.
- Describe the benefits of a collaborative response between law enforcement and mental health practitioners to address children exposed to violence.
- Identify principles for working together effectively with local partners to address children exposed to violence.
- Explain common barriers to effectively working with local partners and how to overcome them.
- Describe the components of a successful collaboration between law enforcement and mental health practitioners in addressing children exposed to violence.

III. Additional Resources

- The Participant’s Workbook includes slides with spaces for note taking, worksheets for activities, handouts, evaluation questionnaires, post-test questionnaires, and action planning worksheets
- Videos for each module, including—*Through Our Eyes: Children, Violence, and Trauma*; [Cops, Kids, and Domestic Violence: Protecting Our Future](#); [Connecting Cops and Clinicians](#) (Child Development-Community Policing Programs).
- Handouts including: *How Kids View Police*; *Traumatic Stress Reactions on Scene*; *On-Scene/Acute Protocols for Children Exposed to Violence*.

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