It’s Time to Think CLEAR About Officer Safety

5 Keys to Increased Officer Safety and Performance
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Executive Summary

Encounters with citizens are at the heart of police work. The public's expectations of the police when responding to incidents and fulfilling multiple roles are very high.Officers are expected to have strong interpersonal skills and the ability to transition from one situation to the next, while treating everyone with equity, dignity, and respect. Officers are also expected to exercise good judgment in terms of resolving or preventing conflict, gaining compliance, or solving problems using objectively reasonable force.

Notwithstanding these expectations, interacting and communicating with the public in a manner that is both effective and perceived as fair is a challenge for many officers. Citizens often voice their dissatisfaction with these encounters, with complaints ranging from verbal to physical abuse. Negative public attitudes toward the police stemming from negative encounters are well documented.¹

The desired outcome of these encounters, from compliance to officer safety, is often the result of how the police handle themselves in every situation. Increasing officer safety is always an essential function of every officer and their leaders. This is especially true in a time when the latest research indicates a sharp increase in law enforcement officers being assaulted and feloniously killed in the line of duty.²

Police interactions with citizens are in the national spotlight with increased scrutiny coming from the public, media, and even internal leadership. Our nation has seen a series of controversial cases in recent years, with many of them captured on video. These events have sparked protests across the country and soul-searching among police executives. They have also threatened community-police relationships in many areas.

The current climate of our society has created a new set of issues that many officers are not prepared to deal with, such as enforcement of free speech issues, citizens refusing to identify themselves, citizens baiting officers into confrontations over “open carry” laws, citizens filming officers on duty, and a general refusal to submit to an officer’s lawful authority. Law enforcement needs a new cache of principles designed to enhance officer safety while simultaneously improving the quality of contacts with citizens.

This paper will identify some the most challenging aspects of police interactions and recommends a comprehensive training solution for increased officer safety and performance. This approach includes information on how officers can communicate better with the public, understand their legal authority, how to properly manage their emotions when they are presented with a difficult situation, improve adaptive decision-making, and apply the principle of unconditional respect.
Nationwide Law Enforcement Trends

Increased Violence Against Law Enforcement

Over the period of the last ten years, 1,512 law enforcement officers died in the line of duty, an average of one death every 63 hours or 151 per year. The FBI’s latest annual Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) report indicated that 57,180 officers were assaulted in the line of duty, with nearly 30 percent of those officers being injured in the incidents, and 66 feloniously killed. These numbers reflected a staggering 61 percent increase from the previous year, as 41 were feloniously killed in the line of duty and 50,212 were assaulted.2

On average, more than 150 officers were assaulted in the line of duty every single day. Personal weapons (hands and feet) accounted for the majority (78 percent) of injuries, with a 10 percent increase since 2015. Firearms were responsible for 15 percent more injuries than last year with 2,377 officers threatened or injured. There was a 19 percent increase in officers assaulted with edged weapons. Other dangerous weapons used against officers also showed an increase of 18 percent over the previous year.2
Increased National Attention on Law Enforcement Training

The institution of policing at various levels finds itself in a precarious state. The public scrutiny surrounding law enforcement has been elevated to unprecedented levels.

The results of a 2017 Police Community Relations Poll found that Americans see interactions with police getting worse across the nation. When asked about interactions nationwide, only 12 percent said they were getting better and 50 percent said they were getting worse. Nineteen percent of all respondents felt that police were not respectful of citizens’ rights, and 11 percent were not sure.³

Other research suggests that the impact of police actions on public opinion is not limited to the individuals that police deal with directly. There is, in fact, a far wider audience among the family and friends of each person who comes in contact with the police. When people feel that they have been treated well or badly, their feelings toward the police appear to spread through these social networks.⁴

In today’s Internet-driven world, customers and citizens alike have more power than ever. Interactive marketing expert Pete Blackshaw calls this "consumer-generated media" – blogs, social networking pages, message boards, and review sites, where a single disgruntled customer can broadcast his complaints to an audience of millions. There is little difference when it comes to citizen-police encounters, except that the stakes are higher. With videos being posted by citizens, the public is now privy to a steady diet of seemingly unsavory footage of officers.⁵

In Blackshaw’s best-selling book, “Satisfied Customers Tell Three Friends, Angry Customers Tell 3,000,” he describes how the Internet has given consumers not only a collective voice, but also a platform and a forum for those voices. Armed with a new suite of tools, resources and technologies, consumers are no longer passive observers; they are actually defining and shaping the landscape of tomorrow. It doesn’t take much to see that a very reasonable comparison can be made when it comes how citizens are redefining the law enforcement landscape.⁵
However, reducing the number of negative encounters may be more important than increasing the number of positive encounters. “Ordinary, good police work is not terribly newsworthy,” said Gary Cordner, a professor of criminal justice at Kutztown University, “but lots and lots of good, ordinary police work goes on every day just about everywhere.”

In line with this concept, research shows that while positive encounters do not appear to have a substantial effect on people’s opinions of the police, negative encounters very much do. This means that attempts to improve public opinion by promoting positive contacts are, on their own, probably insufficient. More important will be police managers’ efforts to reduce the number of negative encounters.

**Sweeping Changes in Standards, Policy, & Training**

Increased scrutiny from the public and media has thrust law enforcement into a national discussion on use of force issues. As a result, government stakeholders and communities have begun to seek ways to increase public confidence in law enforcement, which is critical to public safety. This has resulted in sweeping changes nationwide, particularly in the in the wake of high-profile in-custody police deaths or deadly force against unarmed citizens. We are now seeing training recommendations, standards, policies and laws are being re-written across the country.

In corroborating these findings of widespread changes in training and policies, the Vera Institute of Justice released a report which reviewed state-level changes in policing policy and practice that were enacted in 2015 and 2016. The report revealed that there has been a significant uptick in states’ actions around policing, including clarifying and changing policies around use-of-force and misconduct cases and improving tracking of police operations around the use of body-worn cameras in order to both protect the public and police officers. Overall, 34 states and the District of Columbia made at least 79 changes to their laws governing policing in the last two years, compared to at least 20 bills total in the prior three-year period.
A CLEAR Approach

Law enforcement agencies devote much time and energy to the “hard skills” such as firearms training, control tactics training, and use of technology. But these projects often take away the focus from equally important intangibles, such as how police officers treat others. How they regard people, from coworkers and citizens to the individuals they arrest, is crucial to law enforcement’s reputation and corresponds to officer safety.

Evidence-based training programs which focus on the most contemporary topics in law enforcement are necessary today to enhance officer safety, while also enhancing the quality of interactions officers have with the public and others.

Law enforcement today needs an evidence-based framework to maximize their safety while helping them increase quality contacts within the community.

In response for the national call for increased training, we present this Think CLEAR framework which represents five critical elements of all officer - public encounters:

Communication  
Legal Authority  
Emotional Intelligence  
Adaptive Decision Making  
Respect Unconditionally
Communication

Communication is the first step to officer safety, and it is important to emphasize effective communication skills without compromising sound tactical behavior.

In three related Department of Justice studies on felonious assaults on our nation’s Law enforcement officers, the term “The Deadly Mix” describes the relationship and context of the officer, the offender and the circumstances that brought them together. Examining the “Deadly Mix” adds a different perspective when examining our current training, what we do and why, and it can only improve our training.8

A particular behavioral descriptor to note within these “Deadly Mix” studies, especially in this time of promoting de-escalation, is how well an officer feels that he or she can read others. The victim officers in all three studies felt they could read others, and in doing so, they made judgments of the individuals they met. In the selected study "In the Line of Fire," over 60 percent of the victim officers reported that they were not aware an attack was forthcoming. From the offender perspective, 31 percent reported that the victim officer was surprised by the attack, and 19 percent said the officer appeared unprepared and/or indecisive. In the study “Violent Encounters,” 33 of the 50 victim officers, were not aware an attack was forth-coming. While the victim officers believed they could read people, the offenders were reading the officers.8

The ability to control emotions and actions sets law enforcement apart from many occupations. Factoring in that police are the only professionals authorized to use force legally, it is imperative for officers to devote time to improving the first line of defense: communication skills.

Effective communication skills are fundamental in all successful relationships. In policing, it begins with how officers express themselves using effectual language and carefully chosen words to achieve professional objectives. It is the distinction between commanding and communicating. Words are a force option to gain voluntary compliance. Estimates show that police presence and verbal direction are effective in gaining voluntary compliance 97 percent of the time, with only 3 percent requiring empty hand, intermediate weapons, or deadly force.9
A New Look at De-escalation

Law enforcement currently operates in a politically and emotionally charged environment. Disengagement and De-escalation have become the new buzzwords in law enforcement. They are often pushed by well-intentioned people who really do not understand the dynamics of what they espouse, and the concepts are often tossed out without any idea what de-escalation actually is. Focusing only on these buzzwords such as de-escalation, implicit bias, and procedural justice is inadequate and not effective at creating a comprehensive approach to officer safety.

While these "silos" of training have merit, we must realize that communication alone cannot prevent all use of force incidents. De-escalation never means compromising officer safety by placing themselves in a position of tactical disadvantage for the sake of building rapport.

Officers should always be respectful and professional, but they should always communicate from a position of safety and be prepared to respond to any threat. Once that position of safety is established, good communication techniques still apply such as speaking calmly and watching your nonverbal communication.

In many, if not most cases, effective communication, cannot occur without good tactics. When an officer is in a tactically unsound position, they are more focused on their personal safety, and less so on communicating effectively.

Case Study
Officer Tim Purdy
Charlotte-Mecklenburg P.D.

Let's examine one particular incident that, although applauded by the media resulting in it going viral, shows an officer in a particularly vulnerable and tactically unsound position.

Tim Purdy, a veteran with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg police department, was pictured sitting on the ground speaking with a suicidal autistic high school student.

While Officer Purdy is applauded for his communication skills, police officers can continue to communicate well with people and still accomplish what needs to be done while maintaining sound tactical positioning.
Almost every application of force incident in the United States is preceded by a detention, arrest, or search. Federal Constitutional law governs a number of the most critical and often high-risk police actions: use of force, seizures of persons, investigative detentions and arrests, searches of persons, vehicle stops and searches, entry into private premises, and the concepts of reasonable suspicion and probable cause.

Despite extensive case law and thorough academy training, many police officers don’t fully grasp every aspect of lawful encounters with the public until they combine their experience in the field with a refresher of their legal authority. For instance, do officers understand the constitutional points of law that they must adhere to?

- Ask ten cops the difference between reasonable suspicion and probable cause and you’ll likely get ten different answers.
- What is a consensual encounter?
- Can the officer explain the Terry Doctrine and what an investigative stop is?
- Do they understand articulable suspicion and when it applies?
- How long can the officer detain someone and under what circumstances can they demand identification?
- When can they pat someone down? How about a search? Do they know the difference?
- At what point does a consensual encounter become a Terry stop?
- When does a Terry stop turn into probable cause for an arrest?

Common misunderstandings in the police community on these points of law are a result of many factors, not least of which is inconsistency among our own trainers as well as prosecutors and judges.10
Officer Safety in Lawful Contacts

Officers need to be confident in applying their authority without violating a citizen’s rights in regard to detention and searches for the sake of officer safety. This is not to suggest we should abandon officer safety concerns. If anything, it should heighten motivation for us to train, condition and prepare even more diligently. Most officers will do just that, but there may always be some who leverage the “officer safety first” mindset to systematically violate the rights of others while destroying relational capital and creating friction with our communities.

If someone asks the officer, “Am I being detained?” or “Am I free to go?”, the officer must be able to intelligently and calmly respond while accurately explaining why or why not. It changes the dynamic of the encounter when the officer clearly articulates to the subject that is stopped the reason for the stop. When officers fail to answer these basic questions, there is often an increase of friction between the officer and the subject who has been detained.

Officer safety must be more than just a mantra. It must represent a commitment to being skilled, conditioned, prepared and invested in positive community relations—and not an excuse to marginalize the concerns of others or disregard the fundamental tenets of our oath. We must find constitutionally compatible protocols for assuring reasonable levels of officer safety.

Officers must understand their legal authority which affects every encounter they have with citizens. To avoid civil rights litigation, evidence suppression and public criticism, citizen contacts must adhere to the constitutional points of law. Officers must know and understand these constitutional standards in order to lawfully apply them.
## CASE STUDY
### Supreme Court of Ohio. Ohioans For Concealed Carry, Inc., V. City of Clyde

On a midsummer evening in Ohio, Shawn and Denise Northrup went for a neighborhood walk with their daughter, grandson, and dog. Shawn carried a cell phone, which he holstered on his hip—next to a black semiautomatic handgun. A passing motorcyclist stopped to complain about Shawn’s visible firearm and ultimately called 911, reporting that “a guy walking down the street” with his dog was “carrying a gun out in the open.”

### The Initial Encounter

Ten minutes later, Officer David Bright spotted the Northrups. At that point, according to Officer Bright, Shawn pulled out his cell phone, then “moved his hands back toward his weapon”—where his cell phone had been—“in what Officer Bright believed to be furtive movement.”

Bright asked Shawn to turn around with his hands over his head. Rather than comply, Shawn “kept asking” why Bright was there. And rather than answer, Bright walked up with “his hand on his firearm,” announced that if Shawn “goes for the weapon, he’s going to shoot,” and refused to answer any of Shawn’s questions, such as: “What was going on?” “Am I free to go?” “Am I under arrest here?” Bright unsnapped Shawn’s holster and temporarily took possession of his firearm.

### The Arrest

After Bright disarmed Shawn, he explained he was responding to a call. Bright demanded Shawn’s driver’s license and concealed-carry permit (though Ohio law does not require a permit for open carry). After Shawn gave Officer Bright his license, Bright arrested Shawn, placed in handcuffs, and put into the back of Officer Bright’s cruiser.

After Bright looked up Shawn’s driver’s license, he discovered that Shawn had a concealed-carry permit.

After about a half hour, Officer Bright released Shawn with a citation for “failure to disclose personal information,” which was later dismissed.

### The Lawsuit

Shawn Northrup sued alleging violations of his rights. The district court permitted his Fourth Amendment and state-law claims to go to trial. Officer Bright claimed that he had a “reasonable suspicion” that Northrup was engaged in criminal activity based on two undisputed facts: (1) Northrup was visibly carrying a gun on his holster, and (2) Bright was responding to a 911 call. That reasonable suspicion, Bright claims, justified his disarmament, detention, and citation of Northrup.

The Fourth Amendment no doubt permitted Bright to approach Northrup in a consensual encounter to ask him questions. But that is not what he did. He relied on the two undisputed facts to stop Northrup, disarm him, and handcuff him. The court noted that while the dispatcher and motorcyclist may not have known the details of Ohio’s open-carry firearm law, the police officer had no basis for such uncertainty. Clearly established law required Officer Bright to point to evidence that Northrup may have been “armed and dangerous.” Yet all he ever saw was that Northrup was armed—and legally so.

### The Court Ruling

The Supreme Court of Ohio affirmed the district court’s conclusion that, after reading the factual inferences in the record in Northrup’s favor, Officer Bright could not reasonably suspect that Northrup needed to be disarmed. Officer Bright’s other arguments on appeal rise and fall with his reasonable suspicion defense. If Bright had no reason to stop and frisk Northrup, he violated clearly established law in handcuffing—fully seizing—Northrup in his squad car for thirty minutes.12
Building and maintaining community trust is the hallmark of effective policing. Every day, tens of thousands of law enforcement officers perform honorable and conscientious police work.

Despite this, the facts often stand in stark contrast to the public perception of the frequency and appropriateness of force used by the police. Two separate national police studies\(^{13,14}\) reflect that less than one-tenth of one percent of all police-citizen contacts result in the use of force.

While these studies indicate that chances of the police using force is slim, the occurrence of inappropriate use-of-force is far more unlikely. Still, irreparable damage is often done to a police agency and even the entire profession from even one remote story of questionable police actions. One report of abuse among millions of police-citizen contacts can create a damaging, false narrative of broad police misconduct and abuse in law enforcement while at the same time undermining public support for policing.

Beyond the damage to community police relations is the financial cost that agencies face. The cost of misconduct cases nationally has climbed significantly in the last decade: In 2015, the 10 cities with the largest police departments in the United States—including New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago—paid out nearly $249 million from police misconduct cases, up almost 50 percent from 2010, according to an analysis from the New York Times.\(^{15}\)

A study by Governing.com showed that 20 of the nation’s 25 largest cities, paid out a combined annual average of nearly $1.2 billion in judgments and settlements for police misconduct. The median annual total cost—including payouts, legal and insurance costs—was $12 million for each of the 20 cities reviewed.\(^{16}\)

While we cannot expect to completely remove police misconduct or the human factor from law enforcement, we can effect change by having a better understanding of our emotions. To be an effective and efficient law enforcement officer in today’s environment requires control of emotions to meet the demands faced on the streets.
Today’s officers need to be highly motivated; have well developed communication skills, and be able to engage leadership, other officers, and community members by managing relationships and making emotional connections to balance the needs of the organization and the community.

Professor Yvonne Brunetto of Southern Cross University in Australia, conducted a survey of 193 serving Australian police officers and concluded that emotional intelligence in police officers could be just as important a skill as physical fitness and knowledge about the law. Through a series of responses, she discovered that self-awareness, managing emotions, motivation, empathy and handling relationships directly impacted job satisfaction.17

Successful law enforcement professionals with higher levels of emotional intelligence have more self-awareness, self-control, social awareness, empathy, stress tolerance and impulse control. They are better able to recognize and manage their behavior, have more positive interpersonal interactions, and engage in fewer problem behaviors including aggressive or violent acts.18

Emotional intelligence also enhances officer safety. Studies conclude that police officers who have the most success with de-escalation and social interactions, also have a stronger sense of emotional intelligence. These police officers tend to use less force than their peers and approach potentially explosive situations with a calm demeanor which ends with more positive results. They are able to prevent simple incidents from growing out of proportion and to bring calm to a chaotic situation. Monitoring one’s sense of empathy and utilizing the tactics of emotional intelligence so as to display less defensive emotions is the safest strategy in approaching conflict resolution. This skill is specifically essential for police officers who gravitate toward dominant behavior.19
Adaptive Decision Making

All crises are fraught with uncertainty. While uncertainty must be reduced to the maximum possible extent, it can never be completely eliminated. Accordingly, efforts will always be necessary to deal with the unexpected. Effective leaders are compelled to continually improvise, innovate and adapt to ever-changing circumstances. The most successful leaders are able to both anticipate a change and promptly deal with it. Developing these types of leaders then becomes an imperative.

Law enforcement officers need to learn to focus on the process of continually adjusting the officer’s understanding of the situation, using emergent information and modifying the course of action in order to achieve a given objective. This is the concept of adaptive decision making. It is best understood as the mental process of effectively reacting to a change in a situation. In the simplest terms, it refers to problem-solving.

Barriers to effective decision-making include indecision, stalling, overreacting, vacillating, and half measures. Officers must demonstrate the ability to make a critical decision under stress, hazard or fatigue, while circumstances are uncertain, fast-moving or ill-defined.

What’s Important Now – W.I.N.

“What’s important now” and its acronym were coined by the legendary football coach Lou Holtz. He instructed his players to ask themselves this question at least 35 times a day.20

We can apply Holtz’s W.I.N. concept to law enforcement and nearly every other area of our personal and professional lives. This is because W.I.N. is highly applicable to the dynamic concept of adaptive decision making. The purpose is to guide ourselves through making choices. The simple act of asking this question will give us time to briefly pause and consider the proper decision and the impact it will have. W.I.N. allows us to prioritize decisions.

Every choice we make in our personal and professional lives is a series of WIN decisions. Our responses to those choices, the decisions we make, have a lasting impact on our health, our relationships, our careers, and our finances. For us to achieve excellence in our lives we must ask ourselves this simple, but powerful question throughout every day –What’s Important Now?
A police officer’s day is a long series of WIN moments from the time they get up, put on their uniform, and drive to work, to every situation, every assignment, use of force decision making, end of the shift, and preparation for the next day.

Brian Willis, a renowned thought leader and trainer in the law enforcement community, brought the concept of W.I.N. to the law enforcement profession and has made it his signature slogan. He believes that cops should ask themselves what he terms “life’s most powerful question” throughout every day. “In doing so,” he says, “we are forced to focus on what is important at a particular moment in time, enabling us to prioritize our mission, the threats, and our actions.” “No matter what kind of call you have, it can help you stay on your toes and not get complacent.”

**Deliberate Movement**

Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden would tell his teams “Be quick but don’t hurry.” When we can slow things down, we generally make better decisions.

Many agencies and law enforcement officers have recognized that time is usually on their side and they are re-examining tactics. Tactics have evolved from being primarily dynamic entries and room clearing to slower, more methodical search tactics.

This is why police departments nationwide are now moving towards a practice of “Deliberate Movement.” This is not the slow and deliberate response where movements are painstakingly slow. This is movement that clears an area but does not move so fast that the officer’s OODA Loop is over-taxed. This tactic recognizes that there are areas in which one must move very fast, and others where slowing down is the most appropriate.

Don Alwes of the National Tactical Officers Association has said, “It comes back to the three Ts: time, tactics, and troops.” He added, “Sometimes in our haste to catch the bad guy, we fail to honor that old axiom.”

Officers should slow their movement somewhat to allow themselves to accurately process their observations. The overall movement through a structure should vary from speed to deliberate action, depending on the area, intelligence, and situation confronted.
Respect Unconditionally

Every contact with the public that police make comes with a chance to either build or damage relationships. One of the most basic and fundamental principles in human interaction is respect. The police professional who treats every person they encounter with human dignity and respect operates on a higher plane than those who alter their actions based on self-imposed labels, biases or judgment.

Policing methods characterized by positive contacts with the public are more effective than those that focus solely on “law enforcement.” Indeed, policing strategies that focus exclusively on routine law enforcement functions have been shown to be costlier in the long run.

In their book, "Unleashing the Power of Unconditional Respect: Transforming Law Enforcement and Police Training," Colwell and Huth argue that police culture can breed a "cynical unwillingness to have a true sense of respect for the realities of the people we police and serve." Their approach to policing asks officers to make a leap of empathy.22

That’s not a popular view among many cops. Huth and Colwell struggled with the pushback from officers who equate showing unconditional respect to everyone, even criminals, with weakness. However, they maintain that an officer who is confident in his abilities will not bully a citizen out of fear or feel the need to intimidate.

There is a strong nexus between officer safety and public treatment, particularly with apprehended individuals. The criminal element in America are the least likely to respond to intimidation. And working from fear will ultimately compromise an officer’s safety. How police react in every situation is crucial not only to their own safety, but to maintaining a bond that is sacred to policing: the consent of the governed. If we lose that, we all stand to suffer. You can be tough on bad behaviors without treating people like they’re worthless and fueling their resentment.
Procedural Justice

In 2006, the theory of procedural justice was introduced to law enforcement and many police agencies began incorporating it into their training. This theory indicates that compliance with the law and willingness to cooperate with enforcement efforts primarily are shaped not by the threat of force or the fear of consequences but by the strength of citizens’ beliefs that law enforcement agencies are legitimate. It is not about enforcing laws or making arrests, but treating people fairly.⁹

Sir Robert Peel’s philosophy was that “police must secure the willing cooperation of the public through voluntary compliance of the law to…secure and maintain the trust of the people.”

The one aspect of police work the public will remember over time is how law enforcement officers treated them. Poet Maya Angelou once said, “I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” How law enforcement personnel treat people often determines how those citizens regard the next officer they meet. If law enforcement personnel attack the dignity and respect of a suspect, how will that person interact with police during their next encounter?
CASE STUDY
Officer Chato Villalobos
Kansas City Police Department

The Kansas City Police Department had a back-to-school drive to give backpacks to underprivileged children. Officer Chato Villalobos had the opportunity to assist a mother who came in for the backpack giveaway but had not pre-registered. She apologized, stating that she had just heard about the drive. She asked if it were possible to still get backpacks or she could receive some extra supplies if there was anything leftover when the drive was finished. Despite Officer Villalobos’ initial reluctance, he found two backpacks for her. He then provided the woman his cell phone number, which was not uncommon for officers to do in the community.

About a week later, around 10:30pm, Officer Villalobos received a call from the woman. She asked if he was the officer who spoke Spanish. She went on to relate that she was really concerned because she had just heard some gunfire outside of her home. When she looked out of her window, she saw some young boys with big rifles. She believed that they intended to kill somebody because they were hiding in the bushes and waiting. She was now very concerned, because cops were showing up and she really believed the kids were going to shoot the cops. She told Officer Villalobos that she needed to call because she felt an obligation after he helped her out with the backpacks since she didn’t speak English. She felt overwhelmed and grateful for his help and wanted to say thank you.

Officer Villalobos immediately reached dispatch, who relayed the information to the sergeant on the scene. They got the officers to pull-back. They then brought in a helicopter to spotlight the kids and take them into custody without incident. When the cops searched the area, they found three high-powered weapons. The kids told the cops that they were there to assassinate a gang leader so that they could go to prison, get a real tattoo, and be official gang members. Their culture created a desire to belong to something so bad that they were willing to kill.

All that Officer Villalobos could think about was this woman. If she had not called him, then the officers on scene would have ended in a gunfight with these kids. The police would have been outgunned and up against kids whose objective was to get locked up for killing someone. And though the woman had nothing to gain by calling Officer Villalobos that night, she did so out of gratitude because of the way she was treated.23
A Framework for Law Enforcement

In response to a national call for increased training, we present this Think CLEAR framework which represents five critical elements of all officer - public encounters: Communication, Legal authority, Emotional intelligence, Adaptive decision making, and Respect unconditionally.

This framework is critical because it provides context to law enforcement interactions, while being flexible enough to incorporate contemporary issues such as de-escalation, procedural justice, legitimacy, and implicit bias.

What’s more is that research and the data are the basis for this evidence-based framework. Officers gain new expertise in the areas where they a most need it, according to statistics.

Some people think quality contacts within the community must somehow come at the detriment of officer safety. But they are not mutually exclusive. Think CLEAR empowers officers and maximizes their safety while helping them become more knowledgeable about the people they are serving and the situations in which they serve.

Law enforcement officers, charged with safeguarding the nation’s citizens, face interactions with citizens that are increasingly scrutinized and put on display for all the world to see. They deserve the best possible tools to effectively engage citizens in a professional manner without compromising their own safety in the process.
Dynamics of Officer / Citizen Encounters

Dynamics of Officer/ Citizen Encounters was created as an elite training module, designed to be highly effective not only because of the approach of the trainer but also because of the evidence-based knowledge it presents while offering real life benefits to the officer. Officers attending this training can expect to be safer, more professionally fulfilled, less stressed, and highly productive without feeling as if they have lost their vital role in society.

Through guided discussions, video analysis and case studies, participants will examine:

- Current Research about the Threats to Officer Safety
- The Five Keys to the Think CLEAR model of Increased Officer Safety and Performance

*The Think CLEAR approach covers the most fundamental issues facing law enforcement today. The ingenuity of developing an acronym to help officers remember these simple but fundamental topics and applying them to everyday encounters will help develop a mindset that is a win for officers and the public.*

~ Chief Tim Barfield²⁸

*In my opinion, there’s no better way to enhance professional mentality than to use CLEAR techniques.*

~Captain Scott Woodell²⁷
Command Presence is a law enforcement training and consulting company headquartered in Brunswick, GA. We focus on delivering evidence-based law enforcement training to state, local, and Federal law enforcement officers nationwide. Our instructor cadre is comprised of some of the finest law enforcement trainers in the country (including the 2012 and 2017 ILEETA Trainers of the Year), who have collectively trained more than 40,000 officers. We develop and present highly interactive courses with an emphasis on practical tools that can increase officer safety, while simultaneously improving public safety.

Our programs are designed to benefit anyone in the law enforcement profession, from the patrol officer to investigators, specialized units, command staff, correctional officers, as well as policy decision makers. Our unique blend of guided discussions, video analysis, and learning activities help ensure the training easily transfers from the classroom to the “real world,” going beyond theory and providing officers with performance-based tools to enhance their safety.

Do you have a question for Command Presence? Feel free to call us anytime or visit CommandPresence.net to sign up for upcoming training opportunities.

**Phone:** 1-833-LE-TRAIN
Notes

12. Ohioans for Concealed Carry, Inc. v. Clyde, 120 Ohio St.3d 96, 2008-Ohio-4605