Professional Communication Skills

A Training Guide for Law Enforcement and Jail Officers

Wisconsin Department of Justice
Law Enforcement Standards Board
December 2014
The Law Enforcement Standards Board approved this textbook on December 2nd, 2014.

Training Academy effective date is January 1, 2016.

All law enforcement basic preparatory training courses that begin on or after January 1, 2016 must incorporate this updated textbook and any related updates to the curriculum. Courses beginning before that date may elect to use these updated materials.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to the writing of this manual. The Training and Standards Bureau, Wisconsin Department of Justice, gratefully acknowledges the hard work and dedication of several Advisory Committees, which provide valuable information and insights regarding, among other things, Professional Communication.

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The Wisconsin Department of Justice also acknowledges the contributions of the original **Professional Communication Advisory Committee** which spent countless hours over the course of nearly four years to develop the content. The following individuals worked on the original development of this text:

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In addition, the following people assisted the Committee by sharing their expertise:

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Finally, the Committee would like to thank Dr. George J. Thompson, president and founder of the Verbal Judo Institute, for his many contributions to the field of professional communication. Dr. Thompson is a pioneer in developing a systematic framework for teaching fundamental communication skills to law enforcement and jail officers. By recognizing that good tactics include not just what officers do, but also what they say (and how they say it), Dr. Thompson expands the tools available to officers, broadens the scope of law enforcement training and substantially increases officer safety and effectiveness. We gratefully acknowledge his seminal contributions to the development of effective tactical communication techniques.
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INTRODUCTION

Officers, both law enforcement and in the jails, use communication skills daily in performing their duties—whether they are calming a frightened victim, directing an inmate, placing someone under arrest, making a death notification, or allowing visitors into the jail. Because it is such a big part of an officer’s job, it is important to set communication skills in the context of professional jailers and law enforcement.

WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION?

The idea of Professional Communication really involves three separate concepts: professional, communication, and skills. Let’s look at how each of these relates to the work of jail officers and law enforcement officers.

Professional

Today’s officer is expected to be a professional. What does that mean? What differentiates professional communication from ordinary communication? While there are many different definitions of what it means to be a professional, most of them involve these concepts:

- **Ethics**—a professional is expected to meet high ethical standards
- **Respect**—a professional is expected to show respect for others and to earn the respect of others
- **Appearance**—a professional is expected to “look the part” by being fit, well-groomed and neat
- **Demeanor**—a professional is expected to exhibit a calm and authoritative demeanor, regardless of how others around are reacting
- **Diligence**—a professional is expected to complete assigned tasks carefully and thoroughly, and to do any necessary follow-up
- **Competence**—a professional is expected to have the knowledge and skill to do the job at hand
- **Attitude**—a professional is expected to demonstrate a positive, helpful, and respectful attitude, and to be a positive representative for his or her employer.

Communication

Law enforcement and jail officers spend the majority of their work time communicating in one way or another. Sometimes the communication is verbal, as when an officer interviews a witness or gives directions to an inmate. Sometimes it is non-verbal, as when an officer uses presence or body language to convey a message to someone. Communication can be oral, written or non-verbal.
Whatever form it takes, communication is a process that involves four basic elements:

- A sender
- A message
- The atmosphere in which the communication takes place
- A receiver

A simple diagram can illustrate this.

![Diagram showing the process of communication with the four basic elements: Sender, Message, Atmosphere, Receiver.]

Another way of looking at the process is that the sender encodes the message (in spoken or written words or in gestures and body language) and the receiver decodes the message. The goal is for the message that is encoded, or sent, to match exactly the message that is decoded, or received.

Frequently, however, people encounter barriers to communication that disrupt the process and make it less likely that the message will come through clearly and without distortion. Sometimes these barriers are obvious obstacles like language barriers, and sometimes they are subtler, such as the emotional climate or atmosphere in which the encounter takes place. You will learn about the barriers to communication most often encountered by officers and will learn techniques for overcoming them.

**Skills**

According to the dictionary, a skill is “...a learned power of doing something competently: a developed aptitude or ability” (Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10th edition). In other words, while a person may be born with an aptitude, one has to learn a skill. We are familiar with this concept in athletics—just because a person is strong and coordinated does not automatically make him or her a good basketball player. To become good at a particular sport requires learning specific skills, such as ball handling, teamwork, strategy, and so on.
Jail and law enforcement work involves many skills with a strong physical component, such as driving a car or using physical force. These skills are taught in Defensive and Arrest Tactics (DAAT) and Principles of Subject Control (POSC)\(^1\). These are often called *psychomotor* skills, because they involve both mental and physical components. Other skills, such as communicating effectively, involve mental and relational/transactional components. In other words, employing the skill involves both *knowing* what to do and also being able to “read” a person or situation accurately and respond to feedback.

The old saying, “what you don’t use, you lose” applies to all skills. Unless you practice regularly, you will lose the ability to perform a skill competently. We know this is true of physical skills—even professional athletes generally get better as they practice and play their sport. That’s why the first games of the season are usually “exhibition” games that don’t count toward the final standings. It is also true of non-physical skills like communication. It’s important to practice all the skills related to jails and law enforcement to stay proficient in their use.

If we combine these three ideas into one concept—*professional communication skills*—we have the basis for all law enforcement and jail work. Officers must be skilled professional communicators, because the essence of police and jailers is dealing with people. You have equipment such as firearms and flashlights to aid you, but they are not the focus of your work: people are. All of your work directly depends on your ability to communicate effectively with citizens, with inmates, with suspects and victims, and with your fellow officers. In order to succeed you must develop Professional Communication Skills.

**WHY IS PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SO IMPORTANT?**

Approaching your work as a professional and communicating skillfully (both on and off the job) can make you safer and more effective, and can enhance your career development.

Good communicators are safer on the job because they are less likely to have physical confrontations with inmates or citizens. An officer who is skilled in talking with people can often get people to comply voluntarily with his or her directives, when a less-skilled communicator would need to rely on force. A few well chosen words can make an individual reevaluate a situation and decide to cooperate.

Officers often get hurt in physical confrontations, even if they are proficient in subject control or arrest techniques, simply because the situation is fluid and dynamic. At the same time, good communicators can more easily gain the trust and support of individuals and the entire community, so that everyday encounters with inmates or the public are less apt to be hostile. Of course, not every suspect can be “talked” under arrest but many can. Even if you end up using force, you will need to “come full circle” and finish the interaction with words.

\(^1\) P.O.S.C. is a registered trademark of ACMi Systems LLC.
Good communicators are more effective officers for a number of reasons. Obviously, the clearer the message, the less likelihood there is of someone misinterpreting the officer’s intentions. Interestingly, the way something is said can be more important than the words themselves. Most agencies find that the bulk of citizen and inmate complaints have to do with officers who were perceived to be rude or overbearing. A skilled communicator is less likely to have complaints lodged against him or her, and better able to represent his or her agency positively. Additionally, skilled communicators write clearer, more precise reports reducing rework and making testifying in court easier.

Overall, good communication makes doing your job easier and less stressful, and enhances your career development. As you move up the ladder to positions with wider responsibilities, clear communication is essential, both within the organization and with the public. For that reason, skilled communicators are more likely to be promoted with a resulting increase in job satisfaction. The benefits of being a skilled communicator can spill over into your personal life as well, boosting your confidence and self-esteem and enhancing your personal relationships.

Who Is Listening?

We mentioned that clear communication is essential to ensure that the person to whom you’re speaking understands your message. But is that person the only one listening? As an officer, you cannot escape being in the public eye. You are easy to identify because you wear a uniform. You are often seen not as an individual, but as a representative of your agency or even a representative of law enforcement and corrections in general. What you say and do, and the way you behave at any given moment may have implications far beyond the particular situation you are facing. We’ve all heard stories of officers saying or doing something in an unguarded moment that sets off a storm of controversy. The short answer to “Who is listening?” is everyone.

More specifically, the following are among those who are listening; those who are aware of what officers are doing and saying:

- Persons interacting directly with officers such as complainants, victims, suspects or jail inmates
- Other officers
- Supervisors
- Administrators
- The public such as jail visitors or a witness to an accident
- Media reporters
- Municipal or county elected and appointed officials
- Attorneys representing suspects and inmates

You should assume that whatever you say, write, or do could appear in tomorrow’s newspaper or be headlined on the 10 o’clock news. Citizens have scanners, and they can listen in on radio traffic, even car-to-car “talk-around” transmissions. In Wisconsin, most documents are public records, including electronic messages typed
into a mobile data terminal (MDT) in a squad car. An offhand remark, or derogatory comment intended as a joke can come back to haunt you. When an officer is dealing with a citizen on the street, other citizens are watching and sometimes videotaping. What seems like a minor over-reaction in the context of a heated exchange can look like an officer out of control without that context. Professionals avoid the risk of being misinterpreted by communicating in a controlled and professional manner.

**Public Cooperation or Resistance: An Issue in Communication**

As an officer, you always want people to cooperate. If they do, it makes the job easier and smoother and eliminates all sorts of problems. However, whether people cooperate with or resist officers often depends on how they perceive law enforcement or jailers in general. Perceptions can come from many sources. These include:

- Their own interactions with law enforcement/corrections, and/or those of their family and friends
- Stories or anecdotes told by one person to another, based on their own interactions with law enforcement or jail officers and/or those of their acquaintances
- Rumors based on the stories or anecdotes people have heard about others’ interactions with officers

In other words, an encounter between an officer and a citizen or an officer and an inmate can have a definite “ripple effect.” It can influence many other people’s perceptions about corrections and law enforcement, which in turn will influence how they respond to officers. A negative interaction can make it harder for the next officer who has to deal with that person or those close to him or her. Conversely, an officer who is both professional and a skilled communicator can make it easier for the next officer. “Word gets around” for the good as well as the bad.

**Strategies for Staying Positive**

At the beginning of this section, we said that a professional is expected to demonstrate a positive attitude and to be a positive representative for his or her employer. Staying positive is not always easy. You will deal with difficult and even downright nasty people regularly, and you will see many frustrating and discouraging situations. It would be easy to become cynical and negative. A negative attitude is not only unprofessional, it makes good communication difficult, and it is hard on you personally because it can increase stress. It’s important to stay positive. Here are some strategies for keeping a positive attitude:

- Recognize that you are a "volunteer"; you chose to be an officer. Revisit your reasons for choosing this career.
- Take pride in what you do as a professional; do the best work you can.
• Remember that you have chosen a career in public service. As a public servant you have a responsibility to deal with all people you encounter on the job in a professional manner.

• Understand your goals and your role as a professional. Keep in mind that you are in a position to make a positive difference in the lives of people in your community.

• If someone is trying to provoke you or get a rise out of you, recognize this behavior and use stress-management techniques to help you deal with the situation in a professional way. These techniques may include things such as controlling your breathing, positive self-talk, visualizing, etc. Remember that YOU have final control over your moods and emotions. YOU are ultimately responsible for the way you react and respond to others.

• Pursue professional development opportunities, in terms of training and other career enhancement options to help you become a better and more effective professional officer.

• Strive to maintain good physical and mental fitness.

• Try to live a balanced life by staying involved with family, friends, and outside activities.

Keep in mind that what works for one person to maintain a positive attitude will not necessarily work for the next person. The important thing is to find what works for you.
GENERAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Before learning the specific communication skills that you will use as an officer, you will learn about some basic communication skills that you can use in all aspects of your life. They lay the foundation for the communication skills specific to jails and law enforcement.  

THE BASIC PROCESS OF COMMUNICATING

The basic process of communicating includes the following steps:

- A message must be conveyed
- The message must be received
- There must be a response
- Each message must be understood

A Message Must Be Conveyed. This sounds simple. You know what your thoughts are and you know how to translate them into words, but can you convey the message in a way another person can understand? Will you use words that are clear to the other person or will your words mean something different to the other person? You need to be clear about why you are communicating and what you want to communicate.

Before you start communicating, take a moment to figure out what you want to say and why. Too often people just keep talking or writing because they think that by saying more they’ll surely cover all the points. Often, however, this confuses the people they are talking to. To plan your communication:

- Understand your objective. Why are you communicating?
- Understand your audience. With whom are you communicating? What do they need to know?
- Plan what you want to say and how you will send your message.

A Message Must Be Received. The second step in the communication process is that the message be received and understood. When you know what you want to say, decide exactly how you will say it. You are responsible for sending a message that is clear and concise. To do this, you need to consider not only what you will say, but also how you think the recipient will perceive it.

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2 Some of the material in this section is based on concepts and techniques presented in Interpersonal Communications in the Correctional Setting: Instructor’s Guide, U.S. Department of Justice, 1983 (public domain).

We often focus on the message we want to send and the way which we want to send it. But if our message is delivered without considering the other person’s perspective, it is likely the part of the message that will be lost. To communicate more effectively:

- Understand what you truly need and want to say.
- Anticipate the other person’s reaction to your message.
- Choose words and, if appropriate, use body language that helps the other person really hear what you are saying.

With written communication, make sure that what you write will be perceived the way you intend. When writing, take time to do the following:

- Review your style.
- Avoid jargon or slang.
- Check your grammar and punctuation.
- Check also for tone, attitude, nuance, and other subtleties. If you think the message may be misunderstood, it probably will. Take the time to clarify it.
- Familiarize yourself with the various reports you will have to complete.

**There Must Be a Response.** The goal of all communication is to obtain the desired response. You want to say something correctly and have the other person understand what you mean by it. You also want the other person to do something in response. You will have in mind actions or reactions you hope your message will get from the other person(s). Keep in mind though, that each of these individuals enters into the communication process with ideas and feelings that will influence their understanding of your message, and their response. You should consider these before delivering your message and act appropriately.

The other person(s) that you are communicating with will respond to your message with verbal and/or non-verbal reactions. Pay close attention to these reactions because these responses will let you know if the person(s) understand your message or not. If you find that there has been a misunderstanding you have the opportunity to send the message a second time.

During the other person’s response you should:

- Look at the person.
- Pay attention to his or her body language.
- Avoid distractions.
- Nod and smile to acknowledge points.
- Occasionally think back about what the person said.
- Allow the person to speak, without thinking about what you will say next.
- Do not interrupt.

You need to watch and listen to the person’s response to ensure he or she understands your message. A verbal response is important, but watching the other
person’s body language is perhaps the most important source of clues that your message is being understood. By watching their facial expressions, gestures, and posture you can spot:

- Confidence levels.
- Defensiveness.
- Agreement.
- Comprehension (or lack of understanding)
- Level of interest.
- Level of engagement with the message.
- Truthfulness (or lying/dishonesty).

**Each Message Must Be Understood.** Once a message has been delivered, received and responded to, it is time to take stock of what each person has communicated. The cycle of communication is complete only when you come away with a clearer understanding of the person with whom you communicated with. You may not always agree with the other person, and the other person may not always agree with you, but it is important that you understand each other.

**A COMMUNICATION MODEL**

Verbal communication is something that we all do every day, but we do not always understand how communication works. As discussed in the introduction, in any verbal communication situation involving two or more people, four key elements affect that situation. Taken together, they comprise a theoretical model of how communication works. The four elements are:

- The **sender** of the message—the person who is talking
- The **message**—the content of what is being said
- The **atmosphere**—the tone of the communication situation
- The **receiver** of the message— the person who is listening

The way in which these four key elements combine very much affects the success (or lack of success) of any verbal communication situation.

**Components of Messages and the Importance of Congruence**

When you verbally give a message to another person, that message contains two basic components: verbal and non-verbal. The verbal content is what you say; the actual meaning of the words. The non-verbal content includes other elements that convey information to the receiver. These non-verbal elements include:

- Voice, including the **tone of voice**, the **pace**, the **pitch**, and the **modulation**
- Facial expression
- Body posture or body movements
- Gestures, meaning movements of hands and arms, including pointing
- Physical distance from the subject
All these non-verbal elements convey attitude and emotion to the receiver about the sender and the message. These elements are present in every communication situation, whether the sender and receiver are consciously aware of them or not.

Communication is effective when the message received is the same as the message sent. In other words, whatever the sender wanted to convey comes across to the receiver without distortion. This is known as congruence. For communication to be effective and positive, the non-verbal content must be congruent with the verbal content. What you say must match how you say it.

For example, if you say “Good morning!” to someone, smiling and using a warm, friendly tone of voice and an open, non-threatening body posture, then the receiver understands you to be giving a nice, friendly greeting. The verbal content is congruent with the non-verbal content. On the other hand, if you say “Good morning!” and say it in a mean, snarling tone of voice, look angry and threatening, and stand with your arms folded across your chest in a closed, defensive posture, you send a very different message. Here, the verbal content is not congruent with the non-verbal content.

Research shows that people respond far more to the non-verbal content of a message than to the verbal content. In fact, when listeners judge how believable a statement is, only about 7% to 10% depends on what is said by the sender of the message. The rest is based on the sender’s delivery style—his or her voice, body posture, facial expression, and gestures.

In your role as an officer, this concept of congruence is critically important for two reasons. On one hand, you will be the sender of many messages. In that capacity, your goal is to do all that you can to ensure that the receiver(s) of such messages understand what you have said. This is true whether you are asking a question, trying to get information, giving an order or direction, or engaging in some other communication. On the other hand, you will also be the receiver of many messages, from inmates, citizens, co-workers, and others. You will have to try to determine what the sender of the message is really saying. You will have to pay careful attention both to the words that someone is saying and to the non-verbal elements of communication such as voice and posture.

If there is a difference between the verbal content of someone’s message and the non-verbal content, that could indicate that you need to get clarification—or it could indicate possible danger or threat. In extreme cases, your being able to determine whether a message is congruent might spell the difference between life and death for you or someone else.

**Importance of Atmosphere in Communication**

*Atmosphere* refers to the tone and the “environment” of the communication situation. In a communication situation, both the sender and receiver have roles and responsibilities for establishing the atmosphere of that situation. As the *sender* of a message, you are primarily responsible for establishing the atmosphere. Remember
that the *content* of what you say is only a small portion of what you communicate. How you present yourself and how you act in a situation conveys a great deal to the receiver(s) of a message and others. Your demeanor is very important.

For example, if you allow yourself to be angry or highly agitated, use obscenities, or otherwise act unprofessionally or disrespectfully to a subject, then you have created a *negative* atmosphere in the situation. On the other hand, if you conduct yourself professionally, do not use profane language, and treat people respectfully at all times (“sir,” “ma’am,” etc.), then you have created quite a different; and much more *positive*, atmosphere. You cannot control how the other person behaves but you can control your own behavior. As an officer, you have a duty to behave professionally.

During any contact you, the professional, are responsible to establish the atmosphere. That is not the responsibility of the subject or subjects, such as an inmate or suspect. A subject may scream, threaten, or use profanities. This may upset or anger you and may cause you to want to react toward him or her in a similar way. But to do so would be wrong. It is up to *you* as the professional to establish and maintain the proper atmosphere during the encounter. You do *not* take your cues as to how to behave from subjects. In fact, just the opposite is often true. Many times, subjects will take their cue from you; if they see you conduct yourself professionally (i.e. calmly and respectfully), they will be more likely to do so themselves.

The most important thing for you to do during a contact is to remain calm. This is not always easy, of course, but it is a key goal. The more you can appear calm and professional, the more likely it is that the atmosphere of a particular communication situation will be positive.

As the *receiver* of a message, you also have a significant responsibility for establishing a positive atmosphere. You can help establish such an atmosphere in several ways:

- By remaining calm
- By paying attention to the other person
- By listening actively and positively
- By showing that you are listening and trying to understand what other people are trying to communicate

These general communication skills include the following:

- Active listening
- Asking and answering questions
- Making requests and giving orders

In addition, you will review non-verbal communication in the context of how it affects these specific communication skills.
ACTIVE LISTENING

One of the most important communication skills you will use is active listening. Listening means hearing and understanding what people are saying. The term active listening refers to a specific way of listening very attentively and effectively to someone else. As a law enforcement or jail officer, you will need to use your listening skills in many different situations, ranging from getting basic information from someone who is calm and cooperative to dealing with an extremely agitated or upset individual. Active listening will help you in all contexts.

Active listening, which involves both non-verbal and verbal behavior, can be divided into three basic skills:

- Attending skills
- Following skills
- Responding skills

Attending Skills

The word attending means giving your attention—physically and mentally—to another person. It is a form of non-verbal communication that shows that you are paying attention—that you are interested in finding out what the other person is trying to say. Examples of non-verbal communication involved in attending include:

- Using appropriate body language to show that you are listening.
- Using appropriate body movement to show that you are listening.
- Maintaining eye contact.
- Minimizing environmental distractions.

Using appropriate body language to show that you are listening. Your body posture conveys a lot to a subject with whom you are communicating. This is certainly true when you are listening to someone. The following appropriate body language techniques can be used to show that you are listening:

- **Face the other person.** This helps show that you are paying attention. On the other hand, when you face away from a person who is talking to you, you communicate that you are not paying close attention.

- **Slightly lean your body toward the speaker.** This also communicates that you are paying attention and that you want to hear what the other person is saying. However, you do not want to lean too far toward the other person, because that may be perceived as being intrusive; an invasion of the other person’s personal space. Also, by putting yourself off-balance, you can lose your position of advantage. On the other hand, if you lean back too far or slouch when listening to someone, you often convey the message that you are not interested.
- **Maintain an open position, with arms and legs uncrossed.** When you cross your arms or legs in a communication situation, it often conveys the message that you are in a defensive or “closed” posture. You are in effect putting up a barrier to being a receptive listener. Be aware of your stance.

- **Maintain an appropriate distance from the other person.** When listening to someone, you should be neither too close nor too far away from the other person. If you are too close, you invade his or her “personal space” and cause discomfort. On the other hand, if you are too far away you give the message that you are uninterested, which impedes good communication. In American culture, an acceptable distance to maintain from another person in most communication situations is about three feet. However, be aware that personal space varies in different cultures—it can be more or less than the three feet normal for our culture. Remember also that officer safety concerns may dictate that three feet is too close.

**Using appropriate body movement to show that you are listening.** If you remain perfectly still while listening to someone, you may be perceived as cold, aloof, and uninterested. On the other hand, if you move around too much, or shift from foot to foot, or fidget with objects or things in your pockets, etc., you may give the message that you are too distracted or otherwise uninterested. It is best to move slightly while you’re listening, and to use appropriate body movements, such as nodding your head and other appropriate gestures, including facial expression. The key is to try to maintain a balance between appearing too controlled, aloof and unresponsive on the one hand, and overly animated or nervous on the other hand.

**Maintaining eye contact.** This is one of the most important guidelines. Your eyes convey a lot about your attitude in any communication situation, particularly when you are listening to someone. A person will tell from your eye contact whether or not you are interested in and receptive to what he or she is saying. However, be aware that cultural differences may mean that, for some people, direct eye contact may be perceived as hostile, threatening, or disrespectful. Or a subject may—for cultural reasons—not maintain eye contact with you. That does not necessarily mean that the person is not listening.

Effective eye contact does not mean that you stare unblinking into the other person’s eyes. Instead, it means that you generally focus on the other person’s eyes, but occasionally glance elsewhere, to the person’s gesturing hand or other part of his or her body. Do not constantly look away from the speaker, or stare blankly into space, or stare at his or her body rather than face.

Be sure that while generally maintaining eye contact, you also watch the subject’s hands, and periodically check on your surroundings.

**Minimizing environmental distractions.** In a listening situation, try to minimize such environmental distractions as televisions or radios, stereos, etc., because such background noises are barriers to effective communication.
To the extent possible, it is also a good idea to minimize physical barriers such as desks or other items of furniture between you and the other person. When a listener (receiver) sits facing a desk, for example, it too often conveys that the person behind the desk (the person sending the message) is in a position of authority in relation to the other person.

On the other hand, sometimes physical barriers can be useful in terms of officer safety; you may want barriers between you and a subject. Even though barriers may impede the free flow of communication, there may be times when your tactical evaluation dictates that a barrier is warranted.

**Following Skills**

A good listener is one who does the best he or she can to follow what the other person is saying, and then to encourage the other person to keep on talking, so that effective communication is fostered rather than discouraged. These techniques often work well:

- Using effective “door openers”
- Using simple words and phrases to encourage the person to talk
- Asking open questions
- Using silence effectively

**Using effective “door openers.”** Door openers are gentle invitations to get the other person to talk. They are good to use when you sense that the other person needs some encouragement to talk, or continue talking, about something. A door opener may be a comment on a person’s body language:

  Example: “You look like you’re not feeling well today.”

Or it may be a remark such as “Care to talk about it?” or “Tell me more” that invites the other person to keep talking. In other cases, simply by showing through posture and eye contact that you are interested, you can “open the door” and invite the other person to talk. Of course, you should take care not to use such door openers in a routine or mechanical way. They should fit into the flow of the communication situation.

**Using simple words and phrases to encourage the other person to talk.** You can use many simple words and phrases to indicate to the other person that you are listening and to try to encourage him or her to keep on talking. Here are some examples:

Examples:

  “Mmm-hmm”

  “Oh?”
“Go on”
“Really?”
“And then?”
“For instance?”
“I see”
“Tell me more”

These words or phrases are neutral; they do not imply either agreement or disagreement with the speaker. They just let him or her know that you are listening, and they are a way of urging the person to continue talking.

**Asking open questions.** Asking open questions is another way to show that you are following what the other person is saying and to encourage him or her to keep on talking. Open questions, which call for longer, more detailed answers, usually work better to encourage continued talking than do closed questions, which can be answered by a simple “yes” or “no.”

Examples of open questions:

“How did these cigarettes end up in your cell?”

“What can you tell me about your behavior?”

Examples of closed questions:

“Is that your pack of cigarettes?”

“Were you drunk at the time?”

Open questions are usually preferable because they encourage the other person to say more. In addition to providing needed information, a longer answer helps you to better gauge the speaker’s state of mind. You may, for example, be able to assess if the other person is emotionally disturbed or distressed, under the effects of alcohol or drugs, or perhaps even mentally ill. Open questions can also help you assess a person’s level of threat.

At the same time, there may be instances when all you need is information. In that case, a closed question is fine.

In general, you should avoid asking leading questions—those that lead the other person to a particular response. For example, “Was the car red?” or “Did Smith bring those drugs in?” are leading questions, because they suggest that the car might have been red or that Smith was responsible for the drugs found in the cell.
Leading questions can lead people to say “yes” even if they aren’t sure. On the other hand, asking, “What color was the car?” or “How did these drugs get in here?” are not leading questions, because they do not suggest answers.

There may be times when asking a leading question may be appropriate. For example, when questioning a suspect, you might ask a question such as, “Did you plan to steal the sweater or was it a spur-of-the-moment decision?” Because you have presented only two choices, the suspect (if guilty) is likely to answer, “It was spur-of-the-moment,” thus effectively admitting to the crime.

While asking questions is a good technique, be careful not to ask too many questions—unless, of course, you mean to interrupt the other person for a valid reason, such as to redirect his or her attention.

**Using silence effectively.** Many of us are afraid of silences during a conversation, feeling that they are awkward and uncomfortable. We too often feel compelled to fill any conversational gaps rather than endure an “awkward” silence. However, silence during a conversation can be a good thing. Sometimes just being silent gives the other person an opportunity to think and to collect his or her thoughts. It gives the other person the message that he or she need not feel pressured to respond immediately.

Silence may also make the other person feel awkward during your silence. He or she may then fill the awkward moment by giving you information you might otherwise not have received. During a short period of silence, a good listener should give attention to the other person, showing by body posture, eye contact and facial expression that he or she is “attending.” This may signal the other person that you expect further information to be forthcoming.

Of course, a period of silence cannot last forever. While it may be a good idea just to be quiet for a few moments, if the other person does not answer, then you may have to say something. Try rephrasing your question to trigger a response.

**Responding Skills**

*Responding skills* are also involved in active listening. As an active listener, you respond to the other person by showing him or her that you understand and accept what he or she is saying. As with other communication skills, the ability to respond to other people effectively is a matter of knowing the basic skills and of practicing these skills continuously.

Effectively responding to other people involves:

- Responding to content
- Responding to feelings
- Responding to content and feelings together
**Responding to content.** One of the ways in which you respond to other people is on the basis of the content of what they say. In this part, you listen carefully to the other person and try to let him or her know that you heard accurately and are reacting to what is being said. When a person feels that the listener hears accurately, the person will be more likely to talk freely. When that happens, you are more likely to get the information you need.

One of the best techniques for responding to the content of what a person has said is by *paraphrasing* it. Paraphrasing means summarizing in your own words what the speaker said. A good paraphrase should be concise (as short as possible) and should focus on the content of the speaker’s message, rather than on his or her feelings.

In paraphrasing, you put the speaker’s statement in your own words.

Examples of paraphrasing:

*Speaker:* “I’m just driving along, minding my own business, and all of a sudden this dog is in the road and I tried to brake but I couldn’t avoid hitting him.”

*Listener:* “You’re saying that you couldn’t avoid hitting your neighbor’s dog with your car.”

*Speaker:* “I just got a letter from my lady and she’s telling me she’s sick of my bullshit and never wants to see me again. Without her I might as well end it all.”

*Listener:* “So you’re feeling suicidal because your girlfriend wants to break up with you.”

*Speaker:* “I know they just asked me to leave, but I just put $3 worth of quarters in the jukebox and I ain’t leaving until they play.”

*Listener:* “So you understand that you have to leave at some point, but you want to hear your music first.”

Paraphrasing is a good technique to use, for several reasons. First, it helps reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings, by serving as a sort of accuracy check—it gives feedback to the speaker on whether his or her message is getting through accurately. Second, it helps the person feel that the listener is truly paying attention. Finally, it exposes exaggeration. When people are upset, they may make statements that are overblown; hearing those statements rephrased sometimes helps the person to be more accurate.
Paraphrasing is not the same as *parroting*—just repeating back the person’s own words.

Example of parroting:

**Speaker:** “*I feel bad because I just ran over the neighbor’s dog.*”

**Listener:** “*You feel bad because you just ran over the neighbor’s dog.*”

To use paraphrasing, follow these steps:

1. Take a moment to reflect on what you have heard. Then ask yourself: What is this person saying?

2. After you observe, listen and think about it for a moment, summarize—in your own words—what you think the other person has said. You may find some of these phrases useful in responding:

   “You’re saying _______________."

   “What I think you’re saying is _______________."

   “I hear you saying that _______________."

   “If I’m understanding you correctly, ____________________.”

3. Ask the other person to confirm that your understanding of their message is correct.

**Responding to feelings.** In addition to trying to respond to the content of what a person has said, you also need to respond to the feelings, or emotions, that the person seems to be expressing. Doing so is important for several reasons:

- If a person is experiencing difficult, negative emotions—sadness, depression, anxiety, etc.—your showing that you understand those feelings can help defuse them a bit, by helping the person to “talk out” feelings, rather than to “act out.”

- Conversely, you can reinforce positive feelings that a person may express. Such reinforcement may then lead to more positive behavior.

- The process can help the other person to better understand his or her own feelings. When someone else reflects feelings back to us, sometimes that process leads to insights that were not there before.
In responding to feelings, you should observe the person and listen to him or her. In
listening, try to be aware of two things:

- The *nature* of the feelings, or emotions, that the person seems to be
  experiencing—such as anger, sadness, fear, confusion, happiness, etc.
- The *intensity* of those emotions or feelings—for example, whether a
  person is feeling extremely angry or only mildly angry, or if a person is just
  somewhat sad because of a particular situation or seems extremely sad,
  perhaps even clinically depressed.

Just as paraphrasing is an effective way to respond to content by reflecting it back to
the speaker, an effective way to respond to feelings is to reflect back what you
perceive those feelings to be. When you are verifying these feelings, stick closely to
the speaker’s exact words. For example, when you are dealing with negative
emotions, encourage the speaker to be as specific as possible. The word “upset” is
too general to be useful. As you clarify what you are hearing, offer the speaker
words that are more specific, such as angry, afraid, guilty, ashamed, or frustrated.

Examples:

“You feel frustrated.”

“You feel very frustrated.” (to show your perception of the intensity of the
person’s feelings: not merely frustrated, but very frustrated.)

“You seem to be feeling angry about what happened.”

When you give such responses, you must use a calm, neutral tone of voice. Do not
be sarcastic or demeaning or judgmental. You are simply making an observation
with the purpose of telling the other person that you are tuned in to his or her
emotions. Naturally, you may in fact be right or wrong when trying to interpret what
someone else is feeling. However, whether you are right or wrong is much less
significant than that you tried to understand what the person was feeling. Most
people will appreciate that effort, because it is a form of human connection.

However, a person may become angry if he or she feels that you have
underestimated or otherwise misconstrued the nature or intensity of his or her
feelings. That is understandable—and it still gives the person a basis for talking
about things instead of acting out feelings. At times, improperly assessing the
intensity of another person’s feelings might cause the person to feel even more
agitated, because he or she might then conclude that you really don’t understand. In
such a case, you may have to re-assess and re-state your perception of their
feelings.
Example:

Person: “No, officer, I’m not a little frustrated… I’m REALLY pissed off.”

Officer: “Okay, you’re very frustrated and angry. I can see that.”

As noted, responding to a person’s feelings in this way can help defuse negative feelings—that is, it can help prevent negative feelings from being turned into negative actions. Additionally, responding to feelings at a verbal level may give you clues as to a person’s intentions. For example, if a person says little or nothing after you’ve responded to his or her feelings, it may be a clue that he or she intends to act out those feelings. However, if a person opens up and offers more information that may be a clue that he or she is ready to talk feelings out instead of acting them out.

Responding to content and feelings together. Ideally, you should try to respond to both the content (meaning) and the feeling (emotions) of what a person has said. By doing so, you again try to accomplish several goals:

- Encourage the person to talk things out rather than to act them out
- Get information about what the person is thinking or feeling, so that you will better understand his or her state of mind, emotions, and point-of-view
- Help defuse negative emotions

When you respond to both content and feeling, you should try to use a response along these lines: “You feel [a certain emotion] because [the reason that you think is behind the feeling].”

Examples:

“You feel worried because you think your wife will be mad at you for driving drunk and getting brought to jail.”

“You feel angry because your brother went out with your ex-girlfriend.”

“You are afraid because you think you’re going to lose your driver’s license.”

In making these statements, you are basically trying to rephrase the person’s message and feelings in your own words, in order to try to capture the importance of what happened to that person. This sort of statement may encourage the person to open up more, because he or she will perceive that you are trying to understand him or her. It can help build up trust. When a person feels able to trust you more, he or she may be more willing to answer your questions. Although not always successful, these techniques will make your questions more productive.
ASKING AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS

The ability to ask questions effectively is an important specific communication skill area. It may seem that asking questions is simple enough that anyone could do it properly. But it is not as easy as it looks. We saw that asking questions effectively is an important part of being an active listener. We discussed the importance of asking “open” questions, rather than “closed” questions as a way to encourage the other person to talk.

When you ask questions of a person, it is usually for one of several purposes:

- To obtain specific information: who, what, when, where, why, how and how much
- To obtain a person’s opinion or viewpoint about something
- To elicit truthful responses from a subject
- To obtain more detailed answers
- To encourage a person to keep on talking (as discussed above)

Guidelines for Asking Questions

When you ask questions of another person, you will be more effective if you keep these guidelines in mind:

- When appropriate, explain the purpose and direction of your questioning.
- Maintain good eye contact with the other person.
- Keep your tone of voice neutral and professional, but interested.
- Make sure your body language and other non-verbal cues match your words.
- Be polite and respectful. Use “sir” and “ma’am” and do not be afraid to thank the other person for cooperating by answering your questions.
- Speak slowly and clearly, and try to use language that the other person is likely to understand.

When appropriate, explain the purpose and direction of your questioning. This is a common courtesy and may increase the likelihood that the other person will answer your questions honestly. It’s a good idea to introduce yourself and identify your agency at start of your contact as well.
Examples:

“Good evening, Mr. Johnson. I’m not sure we’ve met, I’m Officer Peterson. I noticed that you were in your bunk for the after dinner count. I think you know our rules require that all inmates have to stand for every count. Is there some reason you didn’t get up for the count?”

“Good morning, sir. My name is Officer Jones of the Blue County Sheriff’s Department. The reason I’ve stopped you today is that you were going 68 miles per hour on highway 18…Is there some reason you were in a hurry?”

Maintain good eye contact with the other person. As noted in the last section, eye contact indicates to the other person that you are being attentive. But be careful not to stare. Also, while maintaining eye contact, be sure to stay aware of other things that are going on around you. Don’t get so focused in on the person you are questioning that you lose track of your environment.

Keep your tone of voice neutral and professional, but interested. Your tone of voice is very important. If your tone of voice is perceived as sarcastic or uninterested, or suggests that you do not believe what the other person is saying, then he or she is less likely to answer honestly, or at all. Try to keep your voice neutral and try to give the impression that you are truly interested in hearing what the other person has to say. Try to minimize your emotion when asking questions.

Make sure your body language and other non-verbal cues match your words. As with tone of voice, if your non-verbal cues—body posture, facial expressions, physical distance, etc.—convey a negative message to the other person, he or she will be less likely to cooperate, however positive your words. If there is any inconsistency between what you are saying and how you are saying it, the other person will pick up on that.

Be polite and respectful. Use “sir” and “ma’am” and do not be afraid to thank the other person for cooperating by answering your question. As noted elsewhere, simple courtesy can go a long way toward encouraging good feelings and, hopefully, voluntary compliance. It’s human nature to respond more positively to someone who is polite and respectful rather than demanding and rude.

Speak slowly and clearly and try to use language that the other person is likely to understand. You must know your audience. If you use words or phrases that the other person cannot readily understand, then he or she will certainly be less likely answer your question properly. However, using profane or obscene language is never appropriate, even if you think that such language will be readily understood. Remember that others will be listening, including citizens, media representatives, and so on. Your use of profane or obscene language, even if done with good intentions, can seriously harm your and your agency’s relationship with the community.
Unless you, as an officer, have a strong basis of experience with a particular subgroup, avoid using idioms and slang phrases that are specific to that subgroup. It is very important to have rapport with a particular subgroup before using their language. Such rapport can take a long time and a lot of experience to develop. For example, an African-American officer talking to African-American subjects may be able to use certain phrases that might not be accepted if used by a white officer. Use of cultural idioms or slang phrases by officers not of that culture could be perceived as highly unprofessional. If in doubt, avoid culture-specific language.

Responding to Requests or Questions

As an officer, you will often receive requests or questions from people. The way in which you handle such requests or questions can make a significant difference in the outcome of your interaction. Some requests or questions will be legitimate, while in other cases people may be trying to “play games” with you or even mislead you. When someone asks a question or makes a request, you have two fundamental tasks:

- Evaluate the question or request.
- Respond to the question or request.

**Evaluate the question or request.** When someone asks a question of you or makes a request, try to be non-judgmental, but try to get as much information as you can. Follow these steps:

1. *Using your active-listening skills, give the person your closest attention.* Listen carefully to the words that the person says, and pay careful attention to body language and other non-verbal cues. Never assume that a person’s words alone convey intent or meaning.

2. *Evaluate the request or question, and ask follow-up questions, if necessary, to get further information.* Often, if you respond too quickly (before thinking about what the person has said and weighing your response) you will say the wrong thing. Your too-hasty response might, for example, be just an emotional reaction rather than a reasoned answer.

**Offer a response.** Your response should be polite and respectful, even if the request or question was silly, or the person was rude or otherwise disrespectful. Remember: you always have the responsibility to act professionally. Follow these guidelines:

- *Make your response brief, direct, and to the point without being abrupt, sarcastic, or rude.* If you do not know an answer, or have to say no to someone, do so directly but always politely and respectfully. In some instances, it will be appropriate to check on the right answer and get back to the person with that answer. If you say you will do that, always follow through.
- Whenever possible, explain why you are responding as you are. Your reason should be direct and to the point, so that the person can easily understand. This is particularly important if you have to say no to a person. If you just say no without explanation, the person may feel you are using your authority capriciously.

Examples of not enough explanation:

“That’s the way it is”
“That’s our policy”
“Because I said so”

Without more information, these responses sound rude and abrupt.

- Be sure that your reason is truthful and valid. Your reason may be based on the law, a rule, department policy and procedure, a safety issue, or some other valid reason, such as to ensure safety. Giving a reason may help generate voluntary compliance from a person. Remember, getting voluntary compliance is always your goal.

- Start your response with an appropriate word, such as “sir” or “ma’am,” to show respect.

Examples of appropriate responses:

“I’m sorry, sir, but you can’t enter the building at this time because the Fire Department has told us it’s not safe.”

“Sir, I don’t know if your P.O. is coming to see you today. If I hear from him, I’ll let you know.”

“The reason I’ve stopped you, sir, is because we received a report of a suspicious person in the area and you fit the description.”

“I’m sorry, ma’am, but you can’t go to rec until the regular time scheduled for your pod.”

Sometimes, a person will continue to ask “Why?” even after you have given a response to his or her request or question. At some point, you may then have to end the interaction, quickly and decisively.

Example:

“Sir, I’ve answered your question and told you why. Now you need to move away from here.”

In such a situation, if the person refuses to cooperate even when you have been polite and respectful, you will probably have to use a different approach, about which
you will learn later. Remember, if you don’t know an answer, it’s okay to say, “I don’t know why…” or “Here’s where you can find that out,” and refer the subject to a supervisor.

MAKING REQUESTS AND GIVING ORDERS

As an officer, you will often have to get people to do things that you want them to do. These situations will range from simple, straightforward occasions in which you want someone to do a small, easily-understood task, such as sign a form, to more complex incidents in which you will use a series of specific commands to get people to comply. As with other communication settings, the way in which you make a request or issue an order can very much affect the outcome. The degree to which you show respect and consideration to others often affects their reaction to you, and in turn, the amount of aggravation or stress that you experience.

Making Requests

It is usually (though not always) better to ask someone to do something rather than to tell someone to do something. People almost always prefer being asked rather than given orders, because they feel that this puts them on a more equal level with the other person. If a request is not complied with, you can always escalate to issuing orders. On the other hand, it’s difficult to go the other way; to issue an order and then, if the person does not comply, to make a request.

Here are some guidelines for making requests:

- Make direct eye contact with the person.
- Make your request politely but firmly, using words and phrases that are simple and most likely to be easily understood. Use the word “please.”

Examples:

“Ma’am, would you please get out of your car and close the door behind you?”

“Sir, would you please get your things together so we can move you to the holding cell?”

“Sir, could you please stay here for a minute while I check on this information?”

- Say “thank you” if the person complies. Sometimes, it may even be a good idea to say “thank you” before the subject actually complies with what you’ve asked. This gives the impression that you expect them to comply, and they may then do so.
Examples:

“Sir, please place your hands on the steering wheel. Thank you.”

“Ma’am, please place your hands behind your back. Thank you.”

Remember: Your goal is always to obtain willing cooperation. If you can accomplish that with a polite request, you win and you allow the subject to retain his or her dignity.

Jail officers should be especially mindful of how they make requests of inmates because they are more likely to deal with the same individuals repeatedly over a period of time. Inmates talk with each other and they will tell others about how you treat them. Inmates recognize and remember if you treat them respectfully. This doesn’t mean they will love you, but it does often mean that they will respect you more and will be more likely to cooperate and comply with you in the future. Remember that you are not on the job to be loved, but it is to your advantage to be respected and to be regarded as a professional who shows basic respect to inmates. Your actions toward one individual could affect your ability to gain cooperation in the future not just from him or her but from other inmates as well.

Giving Orders

There are times when you will need to tell someone to do something rather than ask them to do so. For example, you might do so if a subject does not comply with your request, or, based on your tactical evaluation, if it would be clearly inappropriate to make a request. The context of the situation dictates whether you will give orders.

As with asking questions, the way in which you give orders is very important. If you are sarcastic or authoritarian or otherwise disrespectful, the person will be less likely to comply with your order—and voluntary compliance is always a main objective.

When you issue an order, follow these guidelines:

- When you can, make direct eye contact with the person.
- Start with the word “sir” or “ma’am” as a way of showing respect.
- In a calm, firm tone of voice, tell the person what you wish done. Use simple, direct language. Some people find the phrase “You need to…” or “I need to…” helpful in gaining cooperation.

Examples:

“Sir, you need to come out of your cell now.”

“Ma’am, move over to the side of the room.”
“Sir, get out of your car and kick the door shut.”

“Ma’am, you need to show me your hands right now.”

“Sir, I need to see your hands.”

- If you wish, use appropriate gestures to help clarify your orders, such as pointing to where you want the other person to go.

- Jail officers should note that many inmates will posture before they submit to an order. It is common for an inmate to strike a pose of being tough or macho through verbalizations, gestures or body language before they submit. Posturing is a way for an inmate to save face with other inmates or to maintain their own self-image. When handled properly most people will submit after posturing for a period of time. Generally, a jail officer does not lose anything by allowing inmates to posture for a bit.

- If the person does not comply, and your threat assessment indicates the need, use heavy control talk to issue an order. Heavy control talk involves issuing short, very direct commands in a loud authoritative voice, repeating the command as necessary. Here, the need to get the subject to immediately comply with your orders outweighs the need to be polite. At this point, the safety of those involved (officers and others) is more important than social courtesy.

Example: “Ma’am, DROP THAT KNIFE...NOW!”

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

As you learned, communication consists of two basic components: verbal and non-verbal. Both are needed to transmit messages effectively from the sender to the receiver. Your words alone do not convey your message. Even when you say all the right things, your non-verbal communication can give the person to whom you are speaking a message that may be different from the words you have said. Research has shown that when verbal and non-verbal messages are in conflict, the non-verbal message carries more weight.

Guidelines for Non-Verbal Communication

You must be sure to pay attention to the non-verbal components of your communication. These include the following:

- Facial expression
- Eye contact
- Body language and posture
- Physical distance
Follow these guidelines:

**Use a neutral facial expression.** Not showing any emotions that you may be feeling, such as anger or even fear, gives you the advantage in a communication situation. A neutral facial expression does not reveal what you are thinking or feeling; information the subject might try to use to his or her advantage. Also, the subject may misinterpret your facial expression. For example, if your face is tight, and your jaw is clenched, the other person may feel that you are angry and threatening, even if you are not feeling those emotions. That perception may cause the subject to react in an undesirable way.

Of course, it is not always easy to maintain a neutral facial expression, particularly when you are actually experiencing such feelings as anger or disgust or even fear. However, as a professional, it is important for you to try to overcome your feelings and act professionally.

**Maintain proper eye contact.** It is usually best to maintain direct eye contact with the person to whom you are speaking. This shows that you are attending to him or her, and are listening. It is also a key element of your command presence. However, remember that in some cultures, direct eye contact is perceived as threatening or disrespectful, so with some people, direct eye contact may not be appropriate. It is not always possible to know how a particular person will react to direct eye contact, but it is helpful to be aware of how members of different cultures perceive such contact.

**Use appropriate body language and posture.** Your body should be relaxed yet alert. You want to communicate to the subject that you are in control, are ready to react to anything and are interested and receptive but not hostile. Usually, the best position is with your body bladed at a slight angle to the subject, with your gun protected by being turned away from the subject. Your feet should be about shoulder width apart, so that you react quickly if necessary. Your arms should not hang limply at your side, but should be held with your hands at waist height or higher, so that you can react quickly if attacked and can be ready to protect your weapon.

**Maintain proper distance from the person to whom you are speaking.** Proper distance is that at which you feel safe and in control. Naturally, the proper distance will vary with the person and situation. A friendly interaction with a witness to a crash may make you feel comfortable and you may stand relatively close to the person (maybe only three or four feet away), whereas a difficult interaction with a hostile drunk may make you want to put much more distance between you. In general, you should maintain a bit more distance from people than you would in a normal social interaction. Because you represent authority, sometimes people react in unpredictable ways. You need to have enough space to respond appropriately.
Questions for Discussion:

1. Which qualities do you already have that make you a good listener? What skills, strategies, and qualities do you think you need to develop? How do you plan to improve your ability to listen?

2. Describe a situation in which you felt that you were receiving a mixed message. What conflicting messages do you think were being communicated? Why do you think the person was sending a mixed message?
OFFICER ROLES IN COMMUNICATION

While the ability to communicate is a universal skill, it is applied differently in different situations. In the context of corrections and law enforcement, communication is part of the range of tactical skills officers use in dealing with people. This section provides the framework to understand the basis for Professional Communication as you carry out your day-to-day responsibilities.

PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Several key principles underlie Professional Communication. As a professional, you will communicate more effectively if you keep these fundamental principles in mind:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Show empathy.
- Be a team player.
- Remember that your goal is willing cooperation.

Treat Everyone with Dignity and Respect

As a public servant in a democratic society, you are employed by the people. This means you have an obligation to treat citizens, whom you have volunteered to serve, appropriately. That includes suspects and inmates. As a professional, you will treat everyone as you would like to be treated. That is part of your duty as an officer.

Moreover, it is always to your advantage to treat people politely, respectfully, and considerately. It is not always easy to do this. After all, the nature of your job means that you will inevitably encounter a number of disagreeable people who are behaving badly or who have done terrible things. You will encounter people who will call you names, threaten you and your family, act abusively, and so on. You will personally dislike some people with whom you come into contact.

However, whatever you may feel about a person, you are expected to behave professionally. You must treat all people with dignity and respect, regardless of how you personally feel about them or what they may have done. Citizens do not have to earn your respect. They are entitled to your respect just because they are human beings. Remember you were not hired to judge people for who they are or what they did. You were hired to enforce the laws, to protect citizens, to operate a jail, and to serve the public. You serve the public; the public does not serve you.

On a practical level, treating people appropriately will benefit you. When you treat people with respect and dignity, they are more likely to show you respect in return, and to comply voluntarily. This is not always true, of course, but it usually is. On the other hand, when you treat people disrespectfully and harshly, they are less likely to show you respect and are less likely to cooperate.
For many citizens whom you will encounter, receiving respect from other people, including officers, is a top priority. When they perceive that they have been treated disrespectfully (whether or not they actually were), they get angry, upset and less cooperative. Sometimes, people are less upset at being stopped or arrested per se than they are about being treated “disrespectfully” by jail staff or the police.

You show respect when you are polite and considerate, when you listen carefully, and when you use the communication skills you will learn about in this part of your training. For example, you will learn that using a more formal style of speaking, including using titles such as Mr. or Ms. and calling people “sir” or “ma’am” consistently, even when they are behaving badly or being uncooperative, is an important way of showing respect.

**Show Empathy**

The word *empathy* is defined as “identification with and understanding of another’s situation, feelings, and motives” (*American Heritage College Dictionary. 3rd edition*). In other words, when you show empathy to another person, you show that you are trying to understand what they are going through, what they are experiencing, and what they may be feeling. Remarks such as, “That must be hard” or “You must feel sad about that” are ways of demonstrating empathy.

*Empathy* is different from *sympathy*. Sympathy is “a feeling or an expression of pity or sorrow for the distress of another” (*American Heritage College Dictionary. 3rd edition*). When you show empathy, you simply show that you understand the experiences of another. You are thus on an equal level with them. When you show sympathy, however, you indicate that you are feeling sorry for someone else. That puts you on a different level from them; a higher level, in a way. Remarks such as “Oh, you poor thing” or “I feel sorry for you,” show sympathy, not empathy.

Showing empathy to others has important benefits for you as an officer. When people feel that you relate to their experiences and feelings, they are more likely to cooperate and less likely to be hostile or difficult. Showing empathy also gives you an opportunity to show that you are a caring human being, not some cold and aloof authority figure. This helps to establish a bond—and in turn more likely to lead to voluntary compliance and to reduce the likelihood of friction.

Two cautions with regard to showing empathy. First, do not say, “I know how you feel,” to someone, because you really don’t know how anyone else feels. Second, don’t one-up other people in regard to their unfortunate experiences. For example, if someone tells you his mother has died, don’t say, “Losing your mother must be hard. I know how I felt last year when I lost both my parents in a horrible car accident.”

**Be a Team Player**

As an officer, you are always a member of various “teams.” One such team consists of members of your own department or agency. Another consists of officers or representatives of various departments or agencies. Another consists of
representatives of the criminal justice system; prosecutors, judges, defense attorneys, court officers, citizen groups, and so on. As an officer, you are a representative of all such teams; your specific agency, law enforcement, and corrections and criminal justice professions.

Two important consequences flow from this. First, you always represent more than just yourself as an individual. Your acts reflect on your profession and on other members your team. Second, much of effective law enforcement and jail action depends on teamwork. If you act on your own you may endanger yourself or other officers. Always remember that you are part of a team and be a team player.

Remember That Your Goal Is Willing Cooperation

As an officer, you often need to get people to follow your orders or directions. If you can get people to do what you want them to do quickly and with a minimum of “hassle,” it makes your job easier, it reduces the need to use physical intervention tactics, and reduces the likelihood of someone getting hurt.

If you can use professional communication skills to get people to choose to comply voluntarily, it becomes a win-win position for everyone involved.

KEY CONCEPTS OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

In addition to the basic principles just addressed, several important concepts are at the core of professional communication skills. These concepts are:

- Shared responsibility
- Contact Officer Override
- Deflection of verbal abuse
- Representation

Shared Responsibility

As an officer, you are part of a team. This means that you share responsibility for the way that incidents are handled and for the outcomes of incidents. When you are working with other officers in any situation involving contact with citizens or inmates, you share responsibility with them for what happens during that contact, for better or worse. This includes verbal communication. In other words, if another officer makes an inappropriate statement, you share the responsibility.

Contact Officer Override

This concept grows out of the contact-cover principle, a mode of police/jail operation that gives officers different roles. In this mode, one officer serves as the contact officer (making actual contact with a subject) while another officer (or more than one) serves as a cover officer (observing to ensure that all goes well and ready to intervene if necessary).
Contact officer override is a corollary of the concept of shared responsibility. It means that cover officers have the proactive responsibility to intervene in a situation if the contact officer behaves inappropriately, or is otherwise not handling the situation effectively. One of the ways in which a contact officer might behave inappropriately is through verbal communication to a subject. Inappropriate communication might involve unwarranted anger, use of profanity, threats, or other unacceptable and unprofessional responses. In other words, there are no innocent bystanders. As professionals, we are responsible for each other.

In such a situation, the cover officer must intervene and override the contact officer. The cover officer might do so by stopping the contact officer from his/her behavior, taking the contact officer aside to talk to him or her, taking over the contact officer’s role, and so on. Sometimes the cover officer may simply need to step in and take over for the contact officer because the contact officer is not being effective or is not getting through to the subject.

Because officers share responsibility for what happens during incidents and for their outcome, cover officers must sometimes step out of their normal role of providing back-up and support and override the contact officer even when outranked.

Deflection of Verbal Abuse

As an officer, you will sometimes be subjected to verbal abuse by people. That is simply part of the job, and there is no way to avoid it. Such abuse may range from impersonal angry or profane remarks to extremely personal comments and even threats.

When you receive verbal abuse, you have options as to how to respond. You can either ignore it or deflect it. What you must not do is to take it personally and respond to it, because that is counterproductive and unprofessional. When you take verbal remarks personally and respond in kind, you place yourself on the same level as the subject, rather than in the position you should be in—one of control. And you potentially place your fellow officers in an untenable position.

Deflecting verbal abuse is a good option. This means that you use certain words or phrases to deflect the verbal remarks and to redirect the person’s attention away from his or her agenda, and back to yours. These phrases avoid escalating the encounter and help to channel the conversation back to the issue at hand. Here are some examples:

Deflection Examples:

“I understand, sir, but I need you to…”

“I appreciate that you feel that way, ma’am, and…”

“I hear you, but…”
"I got that, and…"

“I hadn’t thought about that, but…”

“You might be right, but…”

Be sure to finish up with a specific directive telling the subject what to do (such as present ID, step outside, etc.). Through use of such remarks (or similar ones), you give the other person the message that you will not take their verbal abuse personally, yet you have heard them, and you want to get on to the business at hand—your agenda, not theirs. In this way, you avoid unprofessional and counterproductive confrontations and simply get on with your purpose; to accomplish what you need to during the contact and to get the subject to cooperate with a minimum of hassle or aggravation.

Another option is to say nothing in response to verbal abuse. You can ignore a remark, and just get on with your agenda. This tactic can work well with people who are trying to “get a rise” from you. If you do not react, they have failed in their objective.

Jail officers need to be careful not to ignore an inmate who speaks in a derogatory manner. Ignoring derogatory comments could leave the impression with other inmates that they, too, can speak to you in the same manner. A tactic that may work in these instances is to directly but respectfully confront verbal abuse. Example:

“Sir, I speak to you with respect and I would appreciate it if you would stop talking to me that way.”

This message sets forth your standards and expectations. Such messages should be delivered quietly and in a neutral tone of voice. Do not yell because that is not professional communication.

**Representation**

In your professional work as an officer, you always represent more than your individual self. People with whom you come into contact always see you not just as an individual but also as a representative of larger entities, such as

- Your department or agency
- Your employing jurisdiction
- Law enforcement/corrections in general
- The criminal justice system

This is a significant responsibility. It means that the way in which you conduct yourself in your work reflects not just on you as an individual person but also on your department, your jurisdiction, and so on. This means that you have a responsibility to think of yourself as a professional and to conduct yourself as a professional at all times.
OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

You learned many techniques to help you communicate effectively with people. Nevertheless, you will not always succeed in communicating effectively and achieving your goal of voluntary compliance. Even if you are very skilled, you may be faced with barriers that make communication difficult.

Some of these barriers you can control; they have to do with the way you think and react to the subject. Those you can actively work to change. Some of them are not under your control, and you simply have to manage them the best you can. This section addresses three categories of barriers to effective communication:

- Officer-generated barriers
- Physical barriers
- Interpersonal barriers

OFFICER-GENERATED BARRIERS

To effectively apply the communication skills and techniques you learned earlier, you have to make sure that you do not unintentionally undermine the communication process by your own assumptions and actions. Key ways in which officers sometimes make effective communication more difficult are:

- Believing the fight-or-flight fallacy
- Falling prey to presumed compliance
- Using police jargon;
- Indulging in actions that provoke other people
- Reacting to “hot buttons”
- Time constraints

Believing the Fight-or-Flight Fallacy

We have all heard that when faced with a dangerous or threatening situation, a person will do one of two things; either flee or face their “enemy” and fight. Officers, therefore, often believe that when they give a person a verbal request or order using proper communication skills that the person will either comply or resist by fighting or running. While many people do in fact choose one of these responses, these are not the only choices.

Some people, when requested or ordered to do something by an officer, will appear to comply, to give the officer the false impression that they are cooperative. In reality, they are not complying. Instead, they are attempting to put the officer at ease so that they can gain a position of advantage. They can then use that position of advantage to overpower the unsuspecting officer, or to escape
Other people feel that they must *posture*, or strike a pose of being tough or macho, either to save face with their peers or to maintain their own self-image. If you maintain your composure and use your Professional Communication Skills, you can provide the subject an opportunity to save face and still voluntarily comply.

Believing the fight-or-flight fallacy undermines effective communication because it only addresses two options for a subject’s behavior. Officers must learn to recognize that feigned submission and posturing are possible responses to a situation, and they should be prepared to respond accordingly.

**Falling Prey to Presumed Compliance**

A somewhat related (and equally wrong) concept is that of *presumed compliance*. According to this concept, if an officer does everything right, as trained and according to policy, then the subject will comply. The problem is that what the officer does is only one piece of the puzzle. Many other variables affect the outcome of an encounter. People behave as they do for a variety of reasons, not all of which are readily apparent.

You cannot tell from the outside what is going on inside a person’s head. What thoughts or motivations drive his or her behavior? People act based on motives or drives that are complex and mysterious. Even more confusing are the motivations of a person who is emotionally disturbed, under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, or mentally ill. Such a person does not process information normally and can be very unpredictable.

Jail officers need to be especially wary because of their potential familiarity with inmates. When escorting an inmate according to trained methods, an officer may presume that the particular inmate is not dangerous because he or she has never been a problem previously. However, presuming compliance because of past history and because you are doing everything right could be a mistake in any escort situation.

For that reason, never assume that people will comply just because you did a good job of applying professional communication skills. For a variety of reasons, they may not. On the other hand, using professional communication skills always gives you the best chance of achieving your main goal of voluntary compliance.

**Using Jargon**

Every profession has words and phrases specific to it that are commonly used by people within that profession. This is true of doctors, lawyers, accountants, and certainly law enforcement and jail officers. These words and phrases are often referred to as “jargon.” For example, here are some common jargon words and phrases used by officers:
Examples:

“*You’re going to the hole*”

"*I ran a 10-28 on you.*”

“*Lawyer up*”

"*We found a shank*"

"*We’re going to Chapter 51 him.*"

Using jargon can pose a barrier to effective communication because people outside of corrections or law enforcement may not understand them. For example, suppose you encounter a possible suspect and order him to “Freeze!” meaning “Stop!” If the person does not understand the term, and therefore does not stop, you will take it as a refusal, and act accordingly—which could lead to major problems.

Jargon can cause problems even when communicating with other officers. 10-codes can be problematic because different agencies use different codes. Try to avoid using jargon whenever you are communicating with people who are not law enforcement or corrections officials. This will help prevent someone misunderstanding your message.

An example of when jargon may cause problems is when using the *incident command system (ICS).* The ICS was developed to ensure that various resources operate in an orderly, united fashion to accomplish a task. It can be used for a wide variety of emergencies. It is especially useful in emergencies involving multiple casualties because of its ability to handle several emergency situations at the same time. It is a common system that can be easily understood by different agencies working together at the scene of an emergency.

Because a number of agencies come together to respond to the emergency, you should not use law enforcement jargon (10-Codes, etc) when talking with other responding agencies. Use plain English and make your descriptions and information clear and concise to ensure there are no misunderstandings.

**Actions that Provoke Other People**

Saying or doing things that provoke other people can lead to a number of negative effects:

- It can escalate negative emotions, such as anger or fear, even to the point of provoking a fight. This could mean that you have to use physical intervention tactics to gain or regain control.

- Especially for jail officers, it can negatively affect future contacts or interactions with that person.
• It can put other officers at risk. If a subject is angry at you, he or she may take out that anger on other officers. Remember, you always represent law enforcement or corrections in general.

• It can lead to citizen complaints and result in negative consequences for you.

• It can cause resentment and disrespect toward corrections and law enforcement in general, and toward you as an individual.

• It could even cost you your life.

Some of the more common ways in which officers (often unintentionally) provoke other people include:

• Physical actions, such as:
  - Facial expressions showing disgust, anger, disapproval, etc.;
  - Body postures communicating a sense of superiority, disgust or indifference;
  - Gestures such as pointing the “parental” finger or inappropriate touching; or
  - Crowding (invading a person’s personal space).

• Verbalizations, such as:
  - Using profanity;
  - Calling people names, particularly using racial or ethnic or sexual epithets or slurs;
  - Lecturing people, particularly when using an authoritarian manner or tone of voice;
  - Making derogatory or insulting remarks about a person’s personal qualities, intelligence, personal problems, criminal justice system involvement, background, alcohol or drug abuse problems, sexual orientation, and so on;
  - Using a sarcastic, hostile, or condescending tone of voice; or
  - Giving “parting shots” at the end of a contact, such as little insults, or “digs,” or other remarks which put a person down or are insulting.

None of these are necessary. Indeed, they are unprofessional and disrespectful. Worse, they suggest that the officer is not fully in control of his or her own responses. As discussed earlier, these are the types of situations in which contact officer override may be appropriate.

Therefore, avoid saying or doing things that provoke other people, so that you foster positive, rather than negative, interactions with them. Remember, your goal as an officer is to generate voluntary compliance with the minimum amount of stress or aggravation or risk of physical injury to yourself, other officers, and citizens.
Reacting to Your Own “Hot Buttons”

Finally, you must be aware of the things that other people do which upset or anger you, and learn to try to control your response. The nature of your job as an officer is that you will have to deal with many people who are difficult, abusive, and sometimes violent. You will deal with people who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, are mentally ill, and emotionally distraught. You may also deal with people who have had negative experiences with jail officers and law enforcement officers. You will inevitably have confrontations with people who will challenge you, insult you, and otherwise “press your buttons.”

You are expected to speak and act professionally and courteously and do your best to generate voluntary compliance. However, the people with whom you come into contact are under no such obligation, and they will sometimes say things that “piss off” you and other officers.

You need to be aware of your own “hot buttons” (the things that people may say to you that are most likely to upset you or anger you). These “hot buttons” vary from person to person. They may include the following:

- Racial or ethnic remarks or insults;
- Remarks about your sexual orientation or physical appearance;
- Comments about your intelligence;
- Remarks about your family or other loved ones;
- Threats toward you or your family members;
- Demeaning or insulting remarks about officers;
- Challenges to your authority; or
- Intentional and knowingly provocative statements such as, “I'm glad your _________________ is sick and may die.”

Think about what kinds of remarks or insults would be most likely to upset you. Knowing ahead of time where your “hot buttons” are puts you in a better position to control your behavior. You can desensitize yourself and develop the ability to “keep your cool.” When you are the recipient of insults or demeaning remarks, you are in control of how you respond. You always have choices, as you learned earlier in this training. These remarks and insults are purposely said to you to try and get a rise out of you. Realize the person is saying these things to try and make you mad or make you lose your cool.

An untrained and unprofessional person might react to such insults by getting angry, defensive, upset, and so on. Such behavior is unprofessional and unacceptable for an officer. Acceptable options include:

- Listen to the other person’s remarks but do not react to them. Just deal with the situation at hand. You can choose not to let yourself be upset and not to respond in a negative way. Sometimes no response is the most effective.
Deflect the other person’s remarks with the redirection techniques and phrases that you learned about earlier. These phrases are effective because by acknowledging the other person’s emotions, but not validating them, you can often stop the other person’s outburst long enough to take back control of the contact situation.

Time Constraints

Time constraints can be a barrier to effective communication. Officers may feel too rushed or busy or may simply be unwilling to take the time to resolve a situation. Try to manage your time so that you can complete necessary tasks without unintentionally sending the message to an inmate or citizen that you don’t care or cannot be bothered. If you always seem rushed or snap in response to a question, you could limit your ability to communicate effectively.

PHYSICAL BARRIERS

Physical barriers to effective communication are just as much a fact of life in jails and law enforcement as are difficult people. Some of the physical barriers include:

- Telephones
- Radios
- Security glass, intercoms, squad cars
- Email communication (due to shift work, etc.)
- Environmental factors

Telephones

Talking to someone over the telephone makes effective communication difficult for several reasons:

- You cannot see the other person and he or she cannot see you. Neither of you can assess the other’s non-verbal behavior or give non-verbal feedback. Additionally, it is difficult to assess the context in which the other person is speaking. You cannot evaluate physical conditions, level of threat, role of disabilities, and so on, over the phone.

- It is easier to be sarcastic, demeaning or rude over the telephone than it is in-person, because it is less personal. It is also easier for the other person to misinterpret your tone or intent because of the lack of non-verbal feedback.

- There may be a poor connection, background noise, or other deficiencies in the quality of phone service which hamper good communication.

Use special care to maintain a positive, respectful tone of voice. When answering the
telephone at work, always be polite and professional. An excellent phrase to use is:

"Good morning. _____________ County Sheriff’s Department. Deputy _____________ speaking. How may I help you?"

This phrase shows politeness and indicates a willingness to help which can be particularly valuable when the person calling is angry or upset about something. If the person answering the phone is polite, respectful and helpful, it helps defuse the anger and sets a positive tone for the interaction.

Make an extra effort to be polite and respectful. Never speak rudely or sarcastically to the other person. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that you are anonymous when talking on the phone.

Be aware that in some situations a face-to-face conversation is more appropriate than a telephone conversation. If you encounter such a situation, you might want to arrange a face-to-face meeting if possible.

Radios

Talking on the radio poses even more of a challenge than talking on the telephone. As with the telephone, you have no opportunity for non-verbal feedback. You cannot see the other person’s facial expressions, body language, and so on. Even more often than with the telephone, the transmission quality may be poor. Unlike the telephone, however, radio has some problems unique to the medium:

- Radio transmissions commonly use codes as shorthand for words and phrases—for example, 10-4, meaning “message received.” Sometimes these codes cause confusion, particularly between different jurisdictions that use different codes.
- Radio traffic is inherently short and not intended to include detailed discourse. With less opportunity for explanation, there is more opportunity for confusion.

To minimize problems caused by radio use, observe the following guidelines:

- Key the microphone for one second before talking and keep it keyed for one second after you have finished.
- Always speak slowly, clearly, and distinctly.
- Keep the microphone close to your mouth until you are done talking.
- Use proper radio procedures as taught by your agency.
- If you don’t understand something, request clarification.

In addition, remember that you must never say anything inappropriate or unprofessional over the radio. This includes comments that could be interpreted as racist, sexist, or otherwise demeaning, insulting or insensitive. Do not make jokes. Always assume that others are listening in, and that anything you say, no matter your
intent, could come back to haunt you. Citizens and members of the media listen in on police radio broadcasts. Remember, the answer to the question “Who is listening?” is everyone.

**Security Glass, Intercoms, Squad Cars**

Actual physical barriers such as security glass, intercoms, squad cars, and so on, do interfere with effective communication. Jail officers need to be especially aware of these issues because they are often in a control room behind security glass and use intercoms as the primary mode of communications with inmates. These barriers can interfere with communication for the following reasons:

- They can make it difficult to hear. The parties may have to talk louder than desired, while around other people. This can be awkward and even embarrassing.

- Like the telephone and radio, they make communication less personal. If you cannot see the other person (as with an intercom), you cannot see and assess non-verbal feedback.

- A partitioned squad car and a glass enclosed control room create not only physical barriers, but also psychological barriers because they are such symbols of power and authority.

As with the other physical barriers, always be as polite and respectful as you would when talking in person. Do not allow the barrier to serve as an excuse for being rude or abrupt. Always speak slowly, clearly and distinctly so that others can understand you. Additionally, if the discussion is sensitive or better handled in person, try to arrange to talk face to face.

**Email Communication Due to Shift Work**

Officers and agencies need to realize how important their email communications are. Since law enforcement is a twenty-four hour a day job, many officers must use email as their main source of communication with others due to shift work. Many officers send email replies late or not at all, or send replies that do not actually answer the questions that are asked. Furthermore, agencies need to educate officers as to what can and cannot be said in an email. This will protect the agency, and officers, from awkward liability issues.

Officers should use the following basic rules because by using proper email language your agency will convey a professional image, emails that get to the point are much more effective than poorly worded emails, and officer awareness of email risks will

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protect the agency. The following are some basic etiquette rules and guidelines for using email.

- Begin each email with a greeting. No matter how pressed for time you are, a simple greeting such as “Good morning X,” “Hello,” or “Dear X,” is good etiquette. Otherwise, if you launch into your email without a greeting or introduction you run the risk of seeming impolite or impatient.

- Take the time to ensure your subject line accurately reflects the contents and nature of your email. This will go a long way to ensure that your email gets the attention and consideration it deserves.

- Be as concise as possible. Your recipients will appreciate it if you keep your email short, sweet and to the point, and you will also increase your chance of getting a timely reply. A long email can be very discouraging to read.

- Ask permission before forwarding another person’s email correspondence. Even if you are confident that the other person will not mind if you forward their email to someone else, it is good etiquette to check first so you do not run the risk of violating their trust.

- Reply to emails in a timely fashion. If you know in advance that you cannot give an email the attention it deserves at the moment, give the sender a quick heads-up that you have received their email but have not had time to review it yet.

- Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation. Improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression of you and your agency, it is also important in conveying the message properly. Do not type emails without punctuation or without starting sentences with capital letters. Emails with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text. And, if your computer program has spell check, why not use it?

- Avoid using abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations and in business emails these are generally not appropriate. The same goes for emoticons, such as smiley :). If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

- Do not write in all CAPITALS. Writing in capitals in an email constitutes yelling or demanding something from someone.

- Read the email before you send it to ensure it makes sense and does not contain typos. Apart from this, reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.
• Send personal emails from your non-work account. Sending personal emails from work is generally “frowned upon” in business, but occasionally we all need to send a personal email during work hours. In this instance, use a web-based email account such as Yahoo or Hotmail. Check your agency policy for personal use of the work computer.

• Do not send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks or content.

• Remember that your work email, both the address and all correspondence, is the property of the agency you work for. Anything you have ever sent or received, even if you have deleted it, could potentially be retrieved from the system by a database administrator at any time.

Environmental Factors

Noise in the environment can also pose obstacles to effective communication. Outdoor noise-related factors may include weather, a construction area, heavy traffic, an airport area, and so on. Indoor factors may include the pod television, loud bars, and other noisy areas. If possible, take the conversation to a quieter area. Sometimes that is not an option, in which case your only choice is to talk more loudly. Take extra care to be sure that the other person understands what you are saying; if necessary, ask the person to repeat key information back to you.

INTERPERSONAL BARRIERS

Some barriers are not tangible, but they can be every bit as difficult as physical barriers. These barriers result from differences between people that affect their perspectives and interfere with understanding. These include the following:

• Cultural barriers, including language, different expectations for body language and eye contact, and different views of authority figures

• Gender or sexual orientation differences

• Generational or age-related differences

• Physical disabilities and medical problems

• Substance abuse

• Developmental or cognitive barriers

• Mental disorders

Being aware of some of the communication barriers that you are likely to encounter may help you to understand why an interaction is difficult or problematic. Applying the skills taught in this course will enable you to deal effectively with them.
Questions for Discussion:

1. How might an angry citizen “bait” an officer? Why would they do that? What principles should the officer keep in mind to maintain control of the situation?

2. Recall a time when you felt mistreated. List the emotions you remember feeling at the time. How did those emotions affect your thinking and behavior? How might they affect a crime victim trying to cooperate with a police investigation?
COMMUNICATING ON THE JOB

As an officer, a great deal of your communication will involve contacts outside your workplace. These include contacts with inmates and jail visitors, ordinary citizens asking directions or offering information, witnesses to crimes, and suspects. You will need to use specific communication skills in a variety of types of contacts. These contacts fall into five general categories:

- Basic/Initial Contact
- Dispute/disturbance Resolution
- Crisis Intervention
- Physical Intervention
- Debriefing

These situations (except for debriefing) are presented in increasing order of control, and are, therefore, appropriate for situations of increasing levels of threat. Most contacts between officers and citizens will be handled at the level of a Basic/Initial Contact. If initial contact communication skills do not resolve the situation, the officer must move to a higher level of communication skills. Dispute Resolution includes specific tactics for dealing with uncooperative individuals and those involved in disputes. Crisis Intervention describes ways to manage people who are disturbed, extremely upset, or otherwise in crisis.

If an officer’s words are not working to resolve an issue, the officer may need to use physical interventions, which are tactics learned in Defensive and Arrest Tactics (DAAT) or Principles of Subject Control (POSC) training. Even when physical force is used, it is important to “come full circle” and end the encounter with verbalization. In other words, “be nice until it’s time not to be nice, and then be nice again.” Debriefing includes skills used to bring a high-level interaction back down to a more normal, verbal level, and to calm those persons involved.

BASIC/INITIAL CONTACT MODEL

As an officer you may have contact with someone for a variety of reasons:

- A citizen or jail visitor may approach you to ask for help;
- You may initiate contact with someone in the course of a traffic stop or while walking in a neighborhood; or
- You may be dispatched to a call where you have contact with someone.

Jail officers will have most of their contact with inmates and jail visitors. Regardless of the reason for the contact, the same basic principles apply.

A key concept of professional communication is that an officer should attempt to generate voluntary compliance from a subject, using tactics that are most likely to accomplish that goal with the least amount of aggravation, stress, or danger to officer or subject(s). When you first encounter and deal with a subject following the
basic/initial contact model is critical in reaching the goal of voluntary compliance. It is the point at which you will resolve most situations, but even if the situation is not immediately resolved, how you handle contact directly affects how the encounter plays out and whether or not your safety is jeopardized.

Your basic/initial contact with a subject should follow the same general pattern, regardless of how the contact came about, providing that your threat assessment indicates little or no apparent threat or conflict. Obviously, if you perceive a higher level of danger, you will use tactics appropriate to the situation. If there is conflict, you will attempt to employ conflict resolution strategies. Some of these strategies you will learn in later sections of this course. The reality is, however, that the great majority of contacts that officers have with people do not involve any use or threat of force. Most contacts between officers and subjects consist of three stages, known by the acronym OIR (see Figure 1):

- Opening
- Information-Gathering
- Resolution

![Figure 1: Basic/Initial Contact Model](image)

**Opening**

In the opening phase of an encounter, your goals are to introduce yourself and explain the reason for your contact in a way that sets a positive tone for the interaction. Start off by greeting the person in a courteous and respectful way and by giving your name and agency. Make this opening as positive as possible, by

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5 A 2005 national survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics showed that less than 1.6% of contacts involved police use of force. U.S. Department of Justice (April 2007) *Contacts Between Police and the Public: Findings from the 2005 National Survey*, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ 215243.
speaking sincerely, smiling if that is appropriate, and using a respectful form of address, such as “sir” or “ma’am.”

Examples:

“Good afternoon, sir. I’m Officer Jones of the Fishville Police Department.”

“Good morning, ma’am. I’m Deputy Smith, a jail officer here.”

It may seem unnecessary to identify yourself by title and agency, especially if you are wearing a uniform. However, it is a good idea for two reasons; it helps establish your command presence, and it also helps to personalize the encounter. If the other person sees you as an individual, instead of just a symbol of authority, he or she is generally less likely to be verbally abusive toward you. It should be noted that there may be times when it is not necessary to identify yourself based upon personal knowledge or past contact with an individual. In which case, you may begin the contact with a simple greeting.

The second part of the opening is to explain why you are making contact. Naturally, the reason you give will vary with the situation and with whether you are initiating contact or were dispatched to a call. Keep your explanation short and to the point. If needed, you can add detail later. At this point, you are simply setting the context for the interaction. Continue to be polite and respectful.

Examples:

“The reason I’m talking to you, sir, is that the judge asked to see you in her court this morning.”

“The reason I stopped you, sir, is that I observed you going through a red light at the intersection of 4th and Main.”

“I’d like to talk to you, ma’am, to see if you can tell me more about an incident in the pod earlier this evening.”

“I’ve stopped you, ma’am, because the clerk said she saw you taking some merchandise without paying for it.”

**Information Gathering**

The middle phase of your interaction is the time that you gather the information that will allow you to resolve the call. Naturally, the specific questions you ask will depend on the reason for your contact, but they should be designed to give you what you need to decide what action to take.

**Understanding the context.** If you have been dispatched to a call or summoned to a corrections pod, it’s always a good idea to ask a question to find out about the
situation. Sometimes the information provided is sketchy or incorrect, so you should not assume that the call description you were given is accurate or complete. Use this opportunity to make sure you know what you have.

Examples:

“We received a 911 call from here. Is everything ok?”

“Another inmate asked for an officer in this pod. What’s going on?”

If you have initiated the contact, give the person an opportunity to explain the behavior that prompted your action.

Examples:

“Is there some reason that you were exceeding the speed limit today?”

“Is there some reason that you didn’t make your bed today?”

“Sir, is there a reason you are in the building at this hour?”

Asking questions like these is a good idea for several reasons:

- There may, in fact, be a justification for the behavior. For example, a person could be speeding because of a medical emergency. By asking, you get this information out in the open right away.
- It shows respect to give a person an opportunity to offer an explanation rather than for you to assume the reasons behind the behavior.
- You may get information about other offenses or situations that you would not otherwise have obtained.

Examples:

“Well, I might have hit a parked car when I was coming out of the parking lot, and I wanted to get away before anyone saw me.”

“I’ve got a terrible headache. I was hoping to be able to return to bed and rest.”

Do not ask a person if he or she had a “legal” justification for behavior or conduct, because that is too narrow. There may be justifications that have nothing to do with a legal basis. Also, not everybody has a similar understanding of what a “legal” justification is. In short, that is too restrictive a term and should be avoided.

Just because you ask for an explanation, does not mean you have to accept the reason given. It’s still important to ask and to listen carefully to what the person says. Whether the explanation actually justifies the behavior or not, it provides you with an opportunity for threat assessment. By listening to the subject’s explanation,
including noting the tone of voice, body language, and other non-verbal cues, you can get a sense of the subject's state of mind, level of agitation, and mental status.

**Asking for ID.** The information-gathering phase is when you should ask for identification. Because asking for ID is such a common part of contacts with citizens, it is often the first thing that an officer does. It is better to wait until you have established some rapport with the person; it makes the request seem less authoritarian and less threatening. Waiting a bit may diffuse the person's anxiety and defensiveness and deflect possible confrontations.

In a jail setting, you can begin by asking an inmate for his or her name if you are not familiar with the individual. Depending on the size of the jail and the number of inmates, you may need to go further and check the inmate's bracelet or other form of identification. You should always follow your jail's procedures for making these checks in the safest manner possible.

When asking for identification, always be polite and respectful but straightforward. Remember that it is better to ask than to order, at least initially. A statement such as “Show me your driver's license” during basic contact in which there is little apparent threat may unnecessarily antagonize the subject.

Examples:

“May I see your driver's license and proof of insurance, Sir?”

“Ma'am, could I please check your ID bracelet?”

Remember to maintain your command presence and to use good tactics. If it is a traffic stop, do not reach through a car window to accept a driver's license or proof of insurance. Make the subject hand it to you outside the window. And when you are examining a driver's license or other form of identification, do not forget to continue to pay attention to the subject and your surroundings.

**Follow-up questions.** After looking at the person's identification, you may need to obtain clarification or get further information either about the ID or about other issues.

Examples:

“Sir, is this your current address?”

“Ma'am, is this your assigned living area?”

“You say this is your girlfriend's car. What's her name and where does she live?”

“Why are you in this corridor, sir?”
In some cases, your request will simply be to obtain more information or to verify facts. In other cases, you may ask for more information because you suspect that the person’s identification or answers are inaccurate or false.

**Giving verbal directions.** During a basic/initial contact, you may need to give a subject specific verbal orders, as to what you want him or her to do. Here, you are not asking questions to solicit information or to try to assess a subject's state of mind. Instead, your clear purpose is to get the subject to comply with your orders.

Examples:

"Sir, please put your hands on the steering wheel so I can see them."

"Ma’am, please wait in your cell until I can talk to you."

"Sir, take your hands out of your pockets and keep them in front of you."

"Ms. Jones, please stay here while I call the control room about this."

Keep your verbal directions short, clear and specific. Always use words and phrases that are as simple and straightforward as possible to help ensure that the person will understand what you want him or her to do. Always be firm but also polite. Call people "sir" and "ma'am," as a form of respect, and do not be afraid to say "please" and "thank you." Remember that use of these terms usually helps solicit voluntary compliance.

Remember also that there should be congruence between your verbal communication—what you say—and your non-verbal communication—how you say it. For example, if you are giving someone a simple, straightforward direction, you do not need to yell or scowl or be disrespectful. Your goal is achieve voluntary compliance.

**Resolution**

The final phase of the contact is the resolution phase, in which you decide what action you will take and how you will end the interaction. The nature of your action will, of course, vary depending on the circumstances. If the situation is a vehicle contact, for example, your decision will probably involve whether to give a warning or a citation, whether to arrest the driver, whether to escalate to handling it as a higher-risk contact, etc. In other situations, you may be deciding whether to simply question a person, to take information for a report, to take a person into custody, or to take other action.

**Making your decision.** Make your decision as soon you can, after considering all relevant information known to you. Once you have made your decision, inform the subject in a straightforward, matter-of-fact manner.
Examples:

“Sir, I’ll find out about your request for the visit, and I’ll let you know.”

“Ma’am, now that you’ve been sentenced your classification has changed. I’m going to move you to Pod D. Please get your things together.”

“Sir, I’m going to issue you a citation for speeding.”

“Ma’am, I’m going to have to place you under arrest for carrying a concealed weapon.”

Be prepared for the subject’s reaction. Depending on the person and your decision, that reaction may range from compliance to verbal abuse directed at you to anger to physical violence. You must be prepared to respond appropriately.

**Ending the contact.** After telling the person what action you are going to take, you should end the contact quickly and harmoniously, in a way that minimizes the subject’s negative reaction to the contact. Your closing is critically important. It can make all the difference in the outcome of the incident, and in the subject’s emotional reaction to it.

The key to ending a contact positively is to be polite and respectful. This is not always easy particularly when you have dealt with a difficult or threatening person, but it is the professional thing to do. Feel free to thank a subject for his or her cooperation, even if such cooperation was only marginal. This shows respect and consideration.

Examples:

“Thank you for your cooperation, Ma’am. Please drive carefully. Your safety is important to us.”

“I appreciate your time, Sir. Take care.”

“Thanks for taking a few minutes here, Sir. If you have this problem again, please let us know.”

When appropriate, give the subject your business card or provide other written information about follow-up contact. Depending on the type of contact, you may also need to pass information on to other staff members or document it in a log.

**Tips to remember.** Once you have made your decision and informed the subject of it, your goal is to end the encounter as positively as possible. Sometimes that can be more easily said than done. Here are a few tips on ending contacts.

- **Avoid saying, “Have a nice day” as a form of closing.** This comment may sound sarcastic, even if you did not mean it that way. After all, if you have
given a person a citation or taken similar action, it is probably not a “nice
day” for that person.

- Avoid responding in kind to sarcasm or verbal abuse. A subject may be
sarcastic or verbally abusive toward you because the person is angry or
upset. Avoid the temptation to be angry or sarcastic or authoritarian in
return because it may escalate the situation, and at best, it will end it on a
bad note. Be professional, and don’t react inappropriately just for your own
ego gratification. Use either silence or deflector comments in response to
a subject’s verbal abuse.

Examples:

“I understand that you’re upset, Sir.”

“I appreciate that, Ma’am, but this is a major rule violation and I must
write you up. You do have the right to appeal this decision.”

- Do not feel that you have to have the “last word.” Do not feel that you have
to meet confrontation with confrontation. Sometimes it’s best just to let the
person vent. A significant number of citizen complaints about police have
to do with the way in which officers ended a contact, rather than anything
else, including the enforcement decision. Remember, the subject may
have the last word, but you have the last act. Do not give someone
grounds for a complaint about a verbal jab or “parting shot.”

COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Effective verbal communication is, of course, very important when officers deal with
subjects during official contacts. However, such skills are also critically important when
law enforcement and jail personnel deal with each other in the workplace. The better
we can get along with each other and deal effectively with each other, the more
effective our organizations will be.

Day-to-Day Communication

Most of us spend more time communicating with our co-workers and others in the
workplace than we do with our families—at least during the workweek. It stands to
reason that communicating well in the workplace would have significant benefits.

Benefits

Good communication can have both organizational and individual benefits. Some of
them are as follows:

- Promoting understanding of organizational goals and enhancing
efficiency
- Resolving conflicts
- Increasing job satisfaction and reducing stress
- Improving workers’ personal communication skills

**Promoting understanding of organizational goals and enhancing efficiency.**
Good communication promotes an understanding of organization hierarchy, chain of command, and of organizational mission, vision, values and goals. When that happens, it is more likely that everyone in the workplace will be working together to accomplish common goals. Effective communication also enhances efficiency. When people receive clear directions and have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions, their work is more likely to get done right the first time. Things usually get done faster and better when there is good communication.

**Resolving conflicts.** Workplace conflicts are inevitable. Good communication encourages people to get problems out in the open where they can be addressed. Conflict resolution is particularly important with the increasing diversity of the workforce. People of different backgrounds have different beliefs, priorities and expectations—making conflict likely. Left unresolved, such conflicts can lead to complaints of discrimination and harassment, and charges of a “hostile work environment.” Good communication makes it easier to resolve problems before they become serious.

**Increasing job satisfaction and reducing job-related stress.** Job satisfaction has a great deal to do with whether people in the workplace feel valued. Good communication can help by keeping people informed and by making it easier for managers and supervisors to convey their appreciation for a job well done. Without clear communication, confusion and rumors can dominate, leading to resentment and dissatisfaction. Corrections and law enforcement are, by definition, stressful jobs. Poor workplace communication can increase the stress level significantly—and can lead to a number of negative outcomes, including health problems, substance abuse, anger, and other inappropriate and/or unhealthy manifestations.

**Increasing workers’ personal communication skills.** Communicating effectively in the workplace may help individuals to apply those communication skills to their personal lives, improving and strengthening their relationships with family and friends. Officers need to have strong personal support systems to help them cope with the stresses of the job.

**Barriers**
As noted earlier, there are always obstacles to good communication that need to be overcome. Some of these are unique to the law enforcement and jail environment. Here are a few of the barriers to good workplace communication:

- Rank structure
- Need to appear invincible
- The us-against-them syndrome
- Lack of team thinking
- Labor vs. management
The rumor mill
- Schedules

**Rank structure.** Because many agencies follow a paramilitary model, rank is an inevitable part of the workplace structure. Some officers may feel reluctant to talk freely to those with higher ranks, fearing reprisals or being considered insubordinate. This is too often true even when supervisors and administrators proclaim an "open door" policy or say that rank is unimportant.

**Need to appear invincible.** Officers have a public image of being able to cope with anything and knowing what to do in any situation. As a result, many officers feel that they are expected to be invincible—ready and capable at all times, and not vulnerable or weak in any way. This is compounded by the fact that officers know that their peers depend on them to back them up when necessary, and they don't want their peers to have any doubts about their abilities. Because of this, some officers may fear making themselves vulnerable by talking openly with others, particularly about feelings or emotions—especially those that they think make them seem "weak," such as fear or anxiety.

**The us-against-them syndrome.** Over time, some officers begin to see themselves as different from civilians. They may feel that others do not understand or appreciate their work, or understand their experiences. They often feel very different from the subjects they encounter on the job, many of whom are criminals or otherwise unsavory. As a consequence, some officers feel they can only really identify with other "cops." When that happens, they may be reluctant to appear different in any way from those peers, for fear that they will lose the only group that they identify with. But that means that they cannot communicate entirely openly or honestly with their peers.

**Lack of team thinking.** Some officers tend to view themselves as autonomous—not team players. This view is natural, since officers may work alone for long periods of time and have to exercise wide discretion as to what to do. Also, many managers do not do much to foster and encourage a sense of team feeling and cooperation. Even though officers cooperate with each other as needed, for example, backing up other officers, they may perceive the workplace "game" as one-on-one competition, rather than a team sport. Hence, some may feel reluctant to share information or feelings with other officers whom they view as competitors.

**Labor versus management.** Some officers tend to respect good colleagues and to distrust managers in general. Even if their managers are or were uniformed officers, there is often a tendency to feel that when they became manager, they started to forget what life is like in the pod or on the street, and can no longer appreciate the line officer's experiences. This is particularly true in agencies in which the management style is "top down"—that is, one in which management personnel tend to go to meetings and to issue memos or policies without consulting or involving the line officers. In such cases, officers sometimes feel that management is not in touch and they do not feel valued as individuals. This can limit good, honest communication, because of the sense of distrust, or even animosity, between labor and management.
The rumor mill. Officers are curious, some might say "nosy." They are always looking for intelligence and are often suspicious by nature. Thus, the "rumor mill" in an agency can be quite active. Rumors thrive because officers have limited contact with each other—they often work alone and on varied shifts—so there is little opportunity to "debunk" rumors. For this reason, some officers may be reluctant to talk much—or at all—about certain issues so as to avoid having their words spread in distorted form.

Schedules. Officers may work different shifts and may have different day-off rotations, which makes it difficult to do face-to-face communication. In larger agencies, they may have different work locations entirely. Many officers may not have convenient access to e-mail, and the result is that there is endless "telephone tag" or scribbled notes or relayed oral messages—providing ample opportunities for miscommunication.

If not addressed, these barriers can turn an agency into a larger version of a dysfunctional family—one in which poor communication leads to patterns of interaction that are difficult and counterproductive.

CONTACTS WITHIN AGENCIES

Within any agency, officers will have verbal contacts with a variety of people. These generally include the following:

- Other officers
- Jail visitors (including professional and volunteers)
- Subordinates and non-sworn personnel
- Supervisors and command officers
- Trainers, including field training officers and other trainers or instructors
- Affiliated personnel (including clerks, dispatchers, housekeeping and maintenance workers, and so on)
- Representatives of other agencies

Whenever you interact with people in your workplace, remember the key word respect. You must always treat everyone in the workplace environment with respect and consideration, regardless of their relationship to you. Unless we can treat each other with respect, how can we expect to do so with others?

No matter whom you are talking to remember to be professional. Inappropriate or harassing behavior is never welcome in the workplace. Always be aware of lifestyle and sexual harassment issues. Know and follow your policies and procedures on this issue, and act in ways that will minimize the chances of sexual harassment charges. Avoid telling offensive jokes or making offensive or sexual comments. Be cautious about giving compliments regarding a person's appearance. Even when offered sincerely, such comments can too easily be misconstrued.

Never—even in jest—request or suggest giving sexual favors in return for something of value. Do not show or put up sexually suggestive or erotic or otherwise offensive pictures, cartoons, posters, etc., in the workplace setting.
If someone tells you that your comments or behavior are unwelcome, take that seriously. Do not argue. Stop saying or doing what was considered unwelcome. The first objection to either you or a supervisor regarding perceived offensive behavior puts you "on notice." The other person does not have to repeat his or her objections. Remember: It is how the other person perceives the behavior that counts—not how you perceive it or intend it. What may seem innocent to you may be offensive to someone else.

Contacts with Other Officers

As you interact with other officers, keep these guidelines in mind:

1. Avoid constant, unproductive negative discussions with your peers about such issues as prior shifts (what they did, what they did not do, their perceived shortcomings, etc.), other individuals on the department, lack of funding, lack of equipment, and so on. Such comments serve little purpose and make for a generally negative work environment.

2. Be cautious about using potentially-offensive humor, sometimes known as "police humor," in the squad room, over the radio, via e-mail, over mobile data terminals (MDT's), and in public. There have been many instances in which such use of such humor has backfired, and has caused significant embarrassment, or worse, for officers. Remember that the answer to the question "Who is listening?" is Everyone.

3. Additionally, be careful about what you say or post on any social network (even if it is a discussion or inside joke with another officer). Social networks like MySpace, facebook, etc., are not a place to air your grievances about work or about another officer, nor are they the place to put any inappropriate information regarding work, cases, suspects, etc.

4. Remember the concept of override, the idea that there are times when one officer may have to step in and override another officer if he or she is saying or doing something inappropriate or wrong. Be prepared to step back if you hear "override."

If you have a problem or "beef" with another officer, handle it in a straightforward, adult manner. Instead of sulking or complaining or backbiting, approach the other person and ask to talk with him or her. Present your grievance or perception of the problem, and indicate that you would like to resolve the problem and put it behind you. Then try to come up with a mutually acceptable solution or resolution.

One especially difficult problem is the peer who is a constant complainer and malcontent. If you must deal with such a person, try to address the issue directly with him or her—politely and respectfully but in a straightforward way.

Example: "Joe, we're friends, but it bothers me to hear you griping all the time. I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't do that when we're together."
If you cannot talk directly to a peer, do not be afraid to seek mediation by someone within the department, such as your supervisor or a senior officer. If you cannot resolve the dispute, you may need to let it go, or even request reassignment. In any case, do not let these disputes or problems fester because that can only lead to bigger problems. Do what is necessary to resolve your issues in an adult manner, and then move on.

**A special note about part-time personnel.** Many agencies rely on part-time personnel to fill out the ranks of full-time officers. Sometimes, relations between full-time and part-time officers become strained. Here are some guidelines for relating positively to part-time officers:

1. Do not criticize them in the presence of others. To do so is unprofessional and counterproductive.
2. Do not make them feel inferior just because they are part-timers.
3. Always try to be a positive role model and/or mentor.
4. Offer assistance with departmental policies and procedures. Keep in mind that knowing policies and procedures is not as easy for part-time personnel as for full-time personnel.
5. Show patience. Part-time personnel may be—at least at first—less proficient than full-timers.

**Contacts with Visitors to the Jail**

Dealing with visitors to inmates, professionals such as attorneys, probation agents or clergypersons, and volunteers who work with inmates is a large part of a jail officer’s job. Sometimes, such people can be difficult to deal with: they may be impatient, frustrated, or even angry.

When interacting with such people, it is critically important to remember that you are a professional and should act like one, and that you are a representative not only of yourself but also of your employer. It is also important to maintain a good customer service perspective—that is, the people with whom you dealing are, in a sense, customers of your jail. They deserve to be treated respectfully and courteously—the hallmarks of good customer service.

Here are some guidelines to consider:

- **Be professional at all times, even when a visitor or other person is being a challenge.** Remember that **YOU** set the tone for the encounter, not the other person. However the other person acts (angry, upset, impatient, etc.), you need to be the one who stays cool and maintains a professional demeanor. Do not take the position that you will treat them the way that they treat you. Instead, treat them right no matter what. Do not lower yourself to the level of someone acting inappropriately.
• Treat people with respect at all times, while letting them know that you expect the same treatment in return. If a person is upset or angry and is taking it out on you, or is otherwise talking to you in a disrespectful or inappropriate manner, the best response is to tell that person, politely but directly, that you expect to be spoken to in a respectful manner at all times.

• Use deflectors during communication situations.

• Respond in a timely manner to questions or requests. This is a key part of good customer service. If someone is waiting to ask you a question and you are busy, or it’s not visiting time yet, do not just ignore them. Be polite and explain that it is not visitation time yet, and that you will take care of them as soon as you can. Then follow through.

• Explain the situation, to the greatest possible extent. If an attorney comes to the jail to see their client, but you cannot get that client (inmate) right away, provide a reason for the delay. Avoid saying, “I’ll get him when I can” or “We’re busy now”. It would be better to explain the delay, “Sir, we’re feeding lunch right now. As soon as that’s done, I’ll get you in to see your client.” If possible, provide a time frame (“It will be about twenty minutes, sir.”)

• Answer telephones in a professional manner. Visitors and professionals often call correctional facilities - requesting information, providing information, and so on. Remember that telephones can be a barrier to good communication. Do not let that happen. Answer phones in a professional manner (“X County Jail. Deputy Jones speaking. How may I help you?”) and to respond to questions in a similar fashion. If a person is upset or angry, use deflectors and Professional Communication techniques just as you would in a face-to-face situation.

• Treat volunteers well. Remember that programs keep inmates busy, and reduce their capacity to behave in negative ways. Be polite and respectful with volunteers. If you feel that a volunteer is doing something that is inappropriate, such as bringing in unacceptable items for inmates or getting too friendly with an inmate, either let the volunteer know about that problem directly but respectfully, or let a supervisor know about the problem. Do not just complain but address the issue somehow.

Contacts with Subordinates/Volunteers

Subordinates to officers in a law enforcement agency or jail setting might include ride-alongs and volunteers, or young people, such as Explorer scouts, interns, etc. Here are some guidelines for each group:

Interns, volunteers or ride-alongs

1. Explain your expectations to them, as clearly as possible. These may, for example, be policy limitations or requirements as to what activities they can or cannot be involved in.
2. Again, avoid any tendency to "air the department's dirty laundry" in their presence.

3. Avoid either "bad-mouthing" or embellishing the job.

4. Always model professional behavior—both as an adult and, specifically, as a law enforcement or jail professional.

5. Do not show off or "grandstand" for interns or ride-alongs. Just be yourself and act professionally.

6. Honor confidentiality issues as well as political concerns and any issues regarding investigations—past, present, or future.

7. Monitor their work and performance, and provide feedback—in the form of information and constructive suggestions if appropriate.

Young people

1. Remember their age and maturity level, and take that into consideration when dealing with them. Specifically, remember that young people do not have the level of experience and good judgment that adults do, and may say or do foolish things.

2. Realize that you, as an adult, are a respected authority figure in their eyes. You must take care to be a good role model in all ways—both as a person and as a professional officer.

3. Always use appropriate language in their presence.

4. Always avoid airing the department's "dirty laundry" in their presence.

5. Avoid either "bad-mouthing" the job or embellishing it—that is, making it seem more dangerous or glamorous than it really is.

6. Do not make them feel inferior or unimportant. (Many departments appropriately have such people do meaningful, department-related tasks as parking lot security, filing, and so on).

7. Honor confidentiality issues as well as political concerns and any issues regarding investigations—past, present, or future. Do not discuss or share information inappropriately.

Contacts with Supervisors and Command Officers

Supervisors and command staff (managers) have job duties and responsibilities that are different from those of line officers. They have to take a broader view. Because of that, line officers may not always understand or appreciate actions taken or the reasons for such actions. If possible, managers should explain the reasons behind their decisions, but that is not always feasible. Sometimes, there are managerial
reasons for *not* doing so. You must recognize that reality and try to maintain a positive
tone when dealing with supervisors and commanders, even if you think you would
handle a situation differently. Here are some guidelines:

1. Address supervisors and managers by rank during work, in public settings.
   You may be friends with a supervisor or command officer, but on the job,
   particularly in public settings, it is not appropriate to allow your friendship to
   supersede the need to maintain and honor departmental rank structure.

2. Understand when and how it is appropriate to question supervisory orders,
   and behave accordingly. It is *not* appropriate, for example, to do so in
   public, in front of inmates or at an incident scene. It *would* be appropriate to
   do so in private, or perhaps during a debriefing meeting in which a stated
   purpose is to discuss what happened during an incident.

3. If you receive an order which you think is inappropriate, but the order is not
   unlawful or unethical, and carrying it out will not place you or others in
   immediate danger, carry out the order—you can question it later in an
   appropriate way. If you fail to carry out a legitimate order, negative
   consequences can result. When questioning supervisory orders, do so in a
   calm, respectful and straightforward manner. Never do so while angry or
   upset. Indicate clearly your reason for questioning an order, whether that is
   based on policy, tactics, etc.

Understand that supervisors will inevitably make decisions with which not
everyone will be happy. Yet such decisions need to be carried out. That is
the nature of every organization.

4. If you receive an order you believe is unlawful, unethical, or would place
   you and/or others in immediate danger, you need to make your opinion
   known immediately. You should do so in a straightforward and respectful
   manner. You have a right to refuse to carry out the order—keeping in mind
   that you may be subject to consequences and will have to justify why you
   refused.

5. Understand the roles and duties of supervisors; to monitor employee
   performance, to direct employees in the performance of their duties, and so
   on. This means that supervisors must communicate with employees both
   verbally and in writing. You may not always have face-to-face contact with
   supervisors. If the meaning or tone of a written comment is ambiguous,
   seek clarification.

By the same token, if you communicate in writing to someone, try to be as
clear and complete as you can. Avoid making negative or sarcastic
comments. That is unprofessional.
Contacts with Trainers and Instructors

While you are undergoing basic training and later during in-service training, you will frequently need to communicate with your trainers and instructors. Treat your instructors with courtesy and respect—they are trying to help you do your job better and more safely. Regardless of whether a trainer is assigned full-time to training or brought in “off the street or out of the cellblock” for a particular occasion, every trainer deserves your respect and attention. You can learn something from everyone. Here are some guidelines for dealing with your trainers:

1. Always act professionally and treat instructors with respect. Be punctual and pay attention—do not chat, wear your baseball cap, read newspapers, or work crossword puzzles during a period of instruction. Ask yourself if you were in front of a class, how would you want students in the class to behave? Then behave accordingly. Avoid criticizing your agency's policies or procedures during such training sessions. To do so is inappropriate and unprofessional.

2. If you disagree with something that an instructor has said, be respectful and professional when questioning or disagreeing with him or her. Remember that you represent not just yourself, but also your department or agency.

A particular kind of trainer unique to law enforcement is the field training officer (FTO). FTOs are experienced officers who serve as coaches and mentors to rookie officers just out of the academy. Their role is to teach, to give constructive criticism and feedback, and to evaluate new officers. Here are some specific guidelines for communicating with your FTOs:

1. Accept criticism and feedback graciously and learn from it so you can do your job better. Recognize that you will make mistakes sometimes feedback from FTOs regarding your performance may not be all that positive.

2. Understand and accept the field training evaluation process—that you as a trainee must perform specified tasks to a certain level of competency, and will be evaluated on your ability to do so.

3. Understand that the FTO may have to override the officer in training—he or she may have to step in and take over a police contact if allowing the trainee to continue would be unsafe, or illegal, or could cause embarrassment to the department.

Contacts with Affiliated Personnel

As an officer, you will deal regularly with people affiliated with your agency. Some of these may be employees of your department or jurisdiction, such as clerks and maintenance people. Others, including dispatchers, may or may not have the same employer as you do. Regardless, always strive to maintain good relations. Here are guidelines for each.
Clerical and maintenance staff

1. Treat them with respect, not as servants or second-class citizens. Remember that they are part of the same team you are on.

2. Keep in mind that your work, such as typing your report, is not the only thing they have to do. They have many duties, and must prioritize.

Dispatchers

1. Recognize that dispatchers are often very busy and under stress, and have to deal with situations which are sometimes difficult and demanding. Even if a dispatcher sounds abrupt with you, be courteous in return.

2. Be aware that dispatchers depend upon you to give accurate and thorough information in order for them to do their jobs correctly. When initiating or responding to radio contact, be sure to speak clearly and slowly enough, and provide full information.

3. Be sure to keep dispatchers updated as situations evolve or change. Again, they depend upon you to provide them with proper information to guide them in directing you and other units, and to provide supervisors with appropriate information. Remember—they cannot send you help if they don’t know where you are.

4. If you do not understand what a dispatcher has said, it is your responsibility to request clarification or additional information. But do not complain to the dispatcher about the call you are being sent on. That is unprofessional.

Contacts between Law Enforcement and Jail Personnel

1. Remember that law enforcement and jail personnel are members of the same criminal justice system "team." They are peers and should always be treated with respect.

2. Remember that multi-tasking is required of both jail and law enforcement professionals. When delivering a subject for jail booking - be patient. A jail officer will get to you as soon as possible. Have your paperwork done completely and correctly when bringing a person to jail. Doing so will save time and avoid possible confusion. Jail officers should follow facility procedures to quickly and properly take control of an arrestee so the street officer can return to his or her other duties within a reasonable period of time.

3. Respect the procedures of the jail or detention facility. Do what they request you to do, and expect you to do, and do not complain or make
negative remarks. Remember that they are in charge of their facility, and that you are a visitor there. If jail officials decline to accept a prisoner pending medical clearance of that prisoner (for injury, illness, substance abuse problem, etc.), do not complain or argue. Follow their procedure.

4. Respond to classification questions, or other questions about a prisoner, professionally and thoroughly. Specifically, if you have any relevant information about a prisoner, such as, health problems or concerns, suicide risk, assault risk, etc., be sure to share that with jail officials whether or not they specifically ask for such information.

5. Never antagonize a prisoner while in the jail, or before bringing the prisoner to jail. When you do so, you create unnecessary problems for your colleagues in the jail—they will have to deal with an angry person who may stay angry long after you are gone.

Contacts with Other Agencies

Officers are likely to have contacts with representatives of a number of public and private agencies. Some or these are human services agencies, school officials, mental health workers, medical professionals, juvenile authorities, prosecutors, private investigators, court personnel, and media representatives. The following guidelines apply.

1. Remember that you always represent your agency and your profession. Act professionally at all times.

2. Treat people with respect at all times, despite any negative personal opinions of them or their profession.

3. Respect and comply with their procedures and paperwork requirements.

4. Assume that nothing you say is "off the record." You are accountable for everything you say to a representative of an outside agency, including members of the media. Therefore, think carefully before you speak. Avoid saying anything that could come back to haunt or embarrass you or your agency.

5. Do not violate confidentiality regarding such things as medical problems (e.g., that someone has AIDS or similar disease), information on juvenile matters, on-going investigations, undercover operations, and so on.

COMMUNICATION OFF DUTY

One of an officer’s most valuable assets is waiting at home. Families are an integral part of an officer’s life during and after their law enforcement careers. At times family members need help to understand what your life as a law enforcement officer is like,
or just need others for support during difficult times. Sometimes officers find it difficult to talk to their family and friends because they feel like their family and friends do or will not understand. Communications can break down between families and friends due to this lack of understanding, due to isolation, or due to a break down in general communication styles.

“Occupational socialization” results from immersion in the vocabulary, definitions, values, attitudes and beliefs of the organizational environment. Law enforcement officers become “acculturated” which is a process of observance, modeling, reinforcement and repeated behavior that shapes their attitudes and values. Officers sometimes get so immersed in their work and the culture that it becomes hard for them to communicate or relate to others who do not work in law enforcement.

Officers from two separate parts of the country can meet and have an instant connection of shared experiences. The two officers can share war stories and genuinely understand how the experience felt. As a survival, defensive and effectiveness mechanism, officers stay on alert. They remain highly energized and ready for quick action. New officers often want to keep on working rather than going home at the end of their shift. When they do “power down,” the reciprocal of the high they get from work can take effect. Officers may experience a loss of energy, apathy, detachment and a feeling of isolation.

Conversations with friends, neighbors, or spouses about one of their co-worker’s production at work may seem intolerably boring. Even the officer’s spouse, if he or she has not been in the field, may find difficulty in engaging the officer in lively conversation. In social settings, officers may find others wanting to recount details of receiving their last traffic citation and complaining about police actions. As a result of all these factors, officers may become socially isolated from all but co-workers on the street.

Because officers confront the stressful and ever-present risk of being injured intentionally, a natural defense mechanism is to “take control” of situations and exert their police authority as needed. Being an authoritarian brings a sense of stability and order to what is otherwise perceived as chaos and danger. Over the years, routinely hurrying into dangerous circumstance from which everyone else is fleeing must affect the officer as an individual and the shared police culture. The resulting values, perspectives, and beliefs will shape the individual’s approach to human relations.

Good communication skills are important to building positive relationships with people in your community, at your agency, and in your personal life. The following are general guidelines to serve as targets for guiding your human relations approach to others. You may not achieve every item on the list every day with every person, but using these as goals may make your journey safer, more effective and more predictable.

- **Greet people:** Look in their eyes and offer a warm hello.
- **Smile at people:** This demonstrates self-confidence, not weakness.
- **Treat each person as an individual:** Stereotypes are frequently incorrect.
• **Be polite:** What is polite from the other person’s perspective?
• **Maintain a positive demeanor:** Show you respect others and are approachable.
• **Be helpful:** People remember when you go above and beyond to help.
• **Be genuine:** Let people develop trust in you.
• **Show interest:** Do not give the impression that you think someone is a nuisance.
• **Listen to people:** Use active listening to get the real message.
• **Respect other people’s opinions:** You are not required to agree with them.

**A Positive Attitude**

Monitoring your attitude each day is one of the best ways to communicate effectively. The ability to maintain a positive outlook despite the ups and downs of life and work will do much to help you maintain good relationships with the important people in your life.

Honesty is an effective communication tool. Besides helping your mind and body deal more effectively with stress, it builds bonds with other people, both on and off the job. Do not deny facts and feelings. Do not smother them with food, drown them in alcohol, project them onto your family or fellow officers, or blast them away with macho street talk. Allow yourself to acknowledge the inevitable fears and frustrations of your job. Develop relationships with others who deal honestly with their feelings. Do not pretend you are a lone crusader for justice, untroubled by doubts and fears. When negative feelings are denied, they turn into monsters whose destructive power can ruin your health, family, life, and career.

An important strategy for maintaining a positive attitude is to forge strong connections with the larger world outside law enforcement. The criminal justice field often focuses on people at their worst. If you spend most of your time with law breakers and officers, you may rapidly lose your perspective. Good alternatives include family time, health clubs, community organizations, church activities, and socializing with friends in other professions. Resist the “I don’t have time” excuse. Exploring new ways to spend your leisure time will benefit you much more than sitting in front of the TV, or in a bar. Your morale will improve, you will win new friends for your agency, and you will be sharing your gifts and knowledge with an ever-widening circle of people.

Research suggests that one of the best weapons against negativism is an activity you do regularly for enjoyment. You will know you have found the right activity if you lose track of time when you are focused on doing it. Unfortunately, many people talk themselves out of activities they enjoy because they feel tired and drained after working. The result is increased fatigue, boredom, depression, and emptiness. Missed opportunities can lead to a rapid deterioration in a love relationship. You are at high risk for disease or divorce if you life gives you nothing to look forward to.

Recreation – preferably with family and friends outside law enforcement is not a luxury. It is a necessity for anyone who works hard. Clear a space for your favorite activities and enjoy them as much as you can.
Questions for Discussion:

1. Why might officers be tempted not to “tell the truth” about their own stress factors?
2. What communication skills might encourage officers to “tell the truth?”
3. Why might some officers lose contact with the world outside of law enforcement?

Communicating With Your Spouse/Significant Other.

Communication is words, tone of voice, time, pace, body language, symbols, and effective listening. Communication is a two-way street. Effective listening involves paying close attention, never interrupting, and asking questions that show you understand. Good face-to-face communication includes being clear and precise, appropriate eye contact, receptive body language, and the appropriate voice tone.

“You” statements, lecturing, giving orders, giving too much advice, making fun of others, and not listening are roadblocks to effective communication. “I” statements, reflecting and expressing our feelings honestly, openly, and without attacking others are keys to effective communication. When your spouse/significant other or you are angry, stay calm, talk in a quiet voice, acknowledge the other person’s feelings and stay on task.

Accept the fact that conflict will always exist. Tension and stress are the basis of most marital/couple conflict, and law enforcement generates a particular kind of stress because of shift work, temporary assignments, overtime, and the nature of the job. Learn to focus on one issue at a time during a discussion and think before speaking. Keeping a cool head goes a long way toward solving problems.

During a confrontation with your spouse/significant other, allow him/her equal time to speak his or her mind. An argument is essentially a debate and a debate cannot be successful unless both sides get a chance to express their views. There should be no winners and no losers. When your spouse/significant other is talking, listen to what he or she has to say. This is not the place or time to use your law enforcement skills to control the situation. Your spouse/significant other is not a suspect, witness or victim. He or she is a partner in your life and should be treated as such.

Eliminate verbal weapons such as “I do not love you” or “You do not love me.” Such tactics amount to emotional blackmail and can only foster resentment and anger. Law enforcement demands 24-hour availability, which makes it easier for family members to feel as if the officer is more attached to the agency than to the family. Never say “I told you so.” Help your partner save face if you should “win.” Remember that a problem solved is a win for both of you.

Do not try to settle a big issue in one sitting. Take your time and try to resolve conflict one step at a time. When angry avoid comparing your spouse/significant other with
someone else or bringing up past situations. Stick to the issues at hand and remember that you are dealing only with the person in front of you.

Do not hit below the belt. “Beltline” remarks often concern something in your spouse’s/significant other’s appearance that he or she is sensitive about. Learn to deal with jealousy. A conflict common in law enforcement/corrections marriages/relationships is caused by the recognition awarded to the officers for his or her dedication while the spouse/significant other goes unrecognized for her or his efforts and support.

**Communicating With Your Children**

It is easy to spend time with your family and not talk at all. Many parents and children often are attached to cell phones and iPods and, although, just a few feet from each other, never exchange a word. Research suggests, however, that just talking about school can have a significant impact on your child’s achievements. Talking with your children is one of the most critical steps of healthy parenting. To a small child, your words are important, comforting, and soothing.

Take personal time with your children, such as arranging a “date” with each child. Keep the child’s age and communication abilities in mind. Praise children for what he or she accomplishes and acknowledge their feelings; allow them to talk about feelings. Talk with your children and listen to what they have to say.

Remember though, communicating thoughts and ideas is not a skill you or your children are born with. Give your children ways to talk about how they feel. Let them know how important they are and that you want to hear what they have to say. Include your children in family discussions when appropriate. When talking is part of a daily routine, it becomes easier with difficult subjects.

After working a tough shift, the last thing you may want to do is talk with your family. Your focus may be to grab a bite to eat and relax in front of your computer or TV. If your children come to you with problems or ask you for help with homework it may not be what you want to do, but you should take the time to listen or help them. They value your input and want you to be a part of their lives.

When your children want to talk, stop everything. If you continue what you were doing, they will think you do not care and do not have time for them. Avoid jumping in and not letting them vent or discuss their concerns, worries, and fears. Your job as an officer is to solve problems. However, in life, sometimes we all need a shoulder to cry on. At times, we do not want advice or comments. Other times, we just want to be heard and feel like someone shares our pain. A silent and sympathetic ear is sometimes the best thing you can give your children. In these cases, resist controlling the situation and let your child express what they need to express.

When you are talking with children, give them a choice whenever possible. Allow them to feel you are talking with them and asking them rather than talking at them and telling them. Make conversations a two-way street rather than a power struggle. Your
children will learn to listen and believe when you speak to them truthfully and calmly. Trust and respect come from honesty and sincerity. If you do not mean it, do not say it.

Sometimes officers speak in a loud, commanding voice without being aware of it. This may make your child think that you are angry with him or her or give the appearance that you are unsympathetic. If you look bored, worried or annoyed while your child is talking they will soon stop talking. Encouraging noises, nods and smiles show that you are interested.

Some words that show you are listening include:

“Tell me more.”

“I know.”

“Wow!”

“That is just awful.”

“I am here.”

“Go ahead; let it out.”

As with adults, ask open questions to encourage your children to express their own ideas and to talk about their feelings. Asking closed questions that only require a “yes” or “no” answer will cause the conversation to come to a stop which will cause you to start the conversation again with another question. Examples of open questions are: “What happened next?” “What would you like to tell me about that?” and “What did you do then?”

Leading questions, such as “Do you agree?” may be hard for children to answer. Most children would find it hard to say “no” when the question is worded this way and say “yes” even if they do not agree. They may feel that you do not want to hear about any negative feelings or worries.

Comments about what the child is telling you during the conversation will also show that you are listening and trying to understand him or her. These comments encourage the child to continue and show that you are interested in what you are being told and are actively listening.

Be a source of encouragement for your children. When your children confide in you, they should feel relieved, inspired, and recharged, rather than guilty or that they are a source of disappointment to you. When they come to you with a problem or situation, offer your ear as well as words of encouragement. The following are words of encouragement:

“I know you can handle it.”
"Every problem has a solution, even this."

"Think it over, you will figure this out."

"I am here to help you."

"I went through this at your age, like when…"

Try to step away from being the parent, and the role as an officer (whose tendency may be to control the situation), and put yourself in your child’s shoes. Think about how difficult the conversation may be for your child and think before you react. Try not to take over the conversation. If children share something with you and feel like they are being scolded, interrogated, or like they are a disappointment to you, they probably will not let it happen again. As a parent, there will be times when you must address an issue your child discusses with you; be sure you address the behavior or action, not the child.

Make a point to initiate conversation with your child from time to time. Out of the blue, follow up on a previous subject of interest before your child comes to you. This reinforces for your child that you care and also brings you into your child’s circle. If you say something or do something you probably should not have, say you are sorry. Admit that you too are human and make mistakes.

Children model the behavior of their parents. How you express and handle yourself will usually determine how your children will as well. Being open and taking the effort with your children may go against the normal behaviors you use on the job as an officer. But remember, you are not on the job when you are at home with your family. Your family members are not suspects, witnesses or victims. You should not use the same communication techniques to control conversations with your family as you do on the job. Speaking honestly and clearly, responding calmly, and listening carefully will occur only if children are provided with models and opportunities to practice.

The chart on the following page reviews common behaviors and skills officers exhibit while on duty in the left hand column. The right hand column discusses behaviors and communication skills officers should use while off duty, with friends and family.
# Police Officer Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An Officer on the Job</th>
<th>An Officer at Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses the tools and authority of the criminal justice system to catch criminals</td>
<td>Does not use the tools of the criminal justice system to control family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be trusted to watch a partner's back</td>
<td>Is trusted by family members at home to be fair and supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses a variety of informational resources against suspects</td>
<td>Does not use law enforcement resources against family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is familiar and skilled with law enforcement equipment</td>
<td>Does not use equipment to intimidate family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows how to track down suspects</td>
<td>Does not stalk family members, intimate partners, or former intimate partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is suspicious</td>
<td>Trusts intimate partners, and works to earn their trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows how to interrogate</td>
<td>Does not interrogate spouses or intimate partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds others accountable when they don't follow the rules</td>
<td>Holds him or herself accountable for actions at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't wait until attacked to use force</td>
<td>Does not physically intimidate or hurt a loved one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses command presence to overcome opposition</td>
<td>Does not use violence or intimidation in an argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses the power of the voice to overcome opposition</td>
<td>Does not shout down family members in arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets help when he/she needs it</td>
<td>Gets help when he/she needs it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNICATION TRAINING AS PART OF UNIFIED TACTICAL TRAINING

Training in communication skills is an integral part of Wisconsin’s *unified tactical training*. The term “unified tactical training” means that recruit officer training in Wisconsin is all based on certain common concepts and techniques. Two of the most important are *Incident Response or the First Responder Philosophy* and *Disturbance Resolution*.

Incident Response/First Responder Philosophy

Incident Response and the First Responder Philosophy are the basic models for how officers should respond to a wide variety of circumstances, generally unusual or potentially-serious situations that require a prompt, proper and systematic response.

The model used by law enforcement officers is a systematic approach based on the acronym RESPOND. In corrections, a similar model known as the First Responder Philosophy is used. Most correctional emergencies fall into one of four categories: disturbance, medical, fire or miscellaneous, such as a power outage.
INCIDENT RESPONSE

R  Report
- Become aware
- Plan response
- Arrive/Assess
- Alarm/Inform

E  Evaluate
- Look for dangers
- Determine backup needs
- Enter when appropriate/tactically sound

S  Stabilize
- Subject(s)
- Scene

P  Preserve
- Life
  - Conduct an initial medical assessment (as trained)
  - Treat to level of training
  - Continue to monitor the subject(s)
- Evidence

O  Organize
- Coordinate additional responding units (if necessary)
- Communicate with dispatch and others
- Organize the collection of evidence (if appropriate)

N  Normalize
- Provide long-term monitoring (as appropriate)
- Restore scene to normal
- Return radio communications to normal

D  Document/Debrief
- Debrief self, other responding personnel, subject(s), other persons
- Document incident appropriately
# THE FIRST RESPONDER PHILOSOPHY

## The Proper Way to Respond to Correctional Emergency Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>RESPONSE CUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ARRIVE on the scene</td>
<td>Become aware of the emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ASSESS the situation</td>
<td>Determine type of emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ALARM is given.</td>
<td>Notify dispatcher or control center / get back-up responding, if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. EVALUATE the situation</td>
<td>Do so when you have sufficient backup and it is appropriate to enter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ENTER the emergency site</td>
<td>Do so when you have sufficient backup and it is appropriate to enter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. STABILIZE subject and scene</td>
<td>Restrain subject(s), if appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. INITIAL MEDICAL ASSESSMENT</td>
<td>Remember that you need to stabilize the subject(s) before proceeding to this step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Determine level of consciousness (yes/semi-conscious/no);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Check ABC’s (check airway, breathing, circulation);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Perform a body check for severe bleeding, gross deformities, etc.;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Provide treatment to your level of training; activate emergency medical system (EMS) if appropriate;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Continue to monitor the subject (stay close, watch closely).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. LONG-TERM MONITORING</td>
<td>Determine if the subject has “special” needs which require additional care/supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>Determine: What do you have? What type of assistance is needed? Who is responding? Who is bringing in the emergency equipment? When do you have enough assistance on the scene? When the emergency is over? Etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. DOCUMENTATION / DEBRIEFING</td>
<td>Prepare detailed report(s) on what led up to the situation, what occurred during the emergency, as well as the findings of any investigation which follows the emergency. Remember: if staff members do not discuss and evaluate their responses, they will keep making the same mistakes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As an officer, you will follow the basic RESPOND or First Responder steps regardless of the type of call, although, depending on the nature of the encounter, some may be emphasized more than others. As you can see, communications skills are key to following the Incident Response models.

**Disturbance Resolution**

The foundation for unified tactical training is Wisconsin’s system of Defensive and Arrest Tactics (DAAT) in law enforcement and Principles of Subject Control (POSC) in jailer training. The conceptual foundation of both systems is *Disturbance Resolution*. This model outlines the framework within which officers make decisions to respond to disturbances, take action and attain control, and it also outlines an officer’s responsibilities once control has been established and a subject is in custody.

Disturbance Resolution consists of three major components:

- **Approach Considerations**—the issues an officer must address before making contact.
- **Intervention Options** (including use of force) he or she may use to obtain control.
- **Follow-through Considerations** include the actions and custodial care an officer must perform after achieving control.

The Intervention Options are specifically delineated as key elements of the DAAT and POSC systems. This sets forth the range of force options, ranging from presence (the “least serious” application of force) to deadly force (the “most serious” application of force.)

Disturbance Resolution, including the Intervention Options, is integral to all of the specific tactical subject areas that are taught in basic recruit training, including

- Defensive and Arrest Tactics (DAAT)/Principles of Subject Control (POSC)
- Firearms (law enforcement only)
- Emergency vehicle operation (law enforcement only)
- Vehicle contacts (law enforcement only)

In all of these specific subject areas, the same basic foundational concepts govern training of officers. Officers learn to make decisions on proper use of force and to apply specific use-of-force techniques based on uniform principles, concepts, and guidelines.
DISTURBANCE RESOLUTION
(December 2006)

1) APPROACH CONSIDERATIONS

A. Decision-Making
   Justification
   Desirability

B. Tactical Deployment
   Control of Distance
   Positioning
   Team Tactics

C. Tactical Evaluation
   Threat Assessment Opportunities
   Officer/Subject Factors
   Special Circumstances
   Level/Stage/Degree of Stabilization

2) INTERVENTION OPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODE</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>To present a visible display of authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialog</td>
<td>To verbally persuade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Alternatives</td>
<td>To overcome passive resistance, active resistance, or their threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective Alternatives</td>
<td>To overcome continued resistance, assaultive behavior, or their threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadly Force</td>
<td>To stop the threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) FOLLOW-THROUGH CONSIDERATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODE</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stabilize</td>
<td>Application of restraints, if necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor/Debrief</td>
<td>If appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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How Does Communication Fit In?

POSC and DAAT are defined as “a system of verbalization skills coupled with physical alternatives.” The systems are designed to enable officers to gain control and achieve compliance from subjects as needed to accomplish legitimate jail and law enforcement objectives. The basis of DAAT/POSC is that non-physical means (presence and dialog) are always the preferred means for officers to gain control and compliance. Physical force is used only if non-physical means are not appropriate or not effective.

National data on police contacts with citizens show that 98% of contacts involve no force at all—they are handled solely through presence and/or dialog. Of the 43.5 million people who had contact with police in 2005, an estimated 1.6% had force used or threatened against them during their most recent contact, a rate relatively unchanged from 2002 (1.5%). This reinforces that an officer’s primary skill is communication.

Within this framework, communication training is critical. As noted, Disturbance Resolution is based on the idea that officers should always try to achieve control through presence and dialog if possible. Clearly, training officers to use effective communication skills will make it more likely that they will succeed in gaining control without having to resort to physical force. And as the data shows, 98% of an officer’s job involves no use of force.

Even in tactical incidents and incidents involving use of force, communication is critical. Consider these examples:

- During a vehicle contact or contact with an inmate, an officer will use his or her communication skills to calm the subject, to reduce tension/anxiety, to set the tone for the contact, to obtain needed information, and to convey information on what needs to be done and what will happen as a result of the contact.

- During any situation in which use of force is possible, an officer will use specific communication skills to first try to persuade the subject to comply voluntarily—and to explain what will happen if the subject does not comply.

As you can see, the professional communication skills that are the focus of this training are integral to Wisconsin’s system of unified tactical training. The key word is system. The communication skills that you will learn and practice are not isolated from other skills you will learn in basic training, such as compliance holds, or driving, or shooting, or decentralization techniques but are instead one element—a key element—in the overall system of unified tactical training.

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DISPUTE RESOLUTION CONTACTS

A basic/initial contact is certainly the most common type of contact for officers, and most situations are satisfactorily handled and resolved at that level. However, some situations call for a higher level of communication tactic. This section covers two strategies for dispute resolution, *mediation* and *arbitration*. These involve verbal techniques rather than physical intervention, but they represent a higher level of verbal control than basic/initial contacts. (See Figure 2.)

![Conflict Model Diagram]

Figure 2: Conflict Model

Mediation

Conflict is part of the human condition. Officers often encounter people who are going through conflict situations and must work to resolve them. These can range from simple disagreements to large-scale conflicts among several people. When dealing with people who are experiencing conflicts you, as an officer, can use basic mediation skills to try to help resolve the conflict in a peaceful and constructive manner.

In this context, *mediation* refers to a conflict resolution process involving the intervention of an acceptable, impartial, and neutral third party to assist contending parties to voluntarily reach their own mutually-acceptable settlement in a dispute. The neutral third party does not impose a decision, but rather leaves the decision-making in the hands of the people in conflict. Thus, mediation is not like a court hearing, in which a person may be ordered to do something.
As an officer, you rarely have time to engage in a full-blown mediation process as a professional mediator might. You are not expected to act as a professional mediator. However, there will be times when it is very appropriate for you to engage in mediation on a smaller and shorter-term scale to try to resolve a minor conflict between subjects and to keep a situation from escalating further, perhaps to physical violence.

**When should you use mediation?** You might decide to try to use mediation tactics when you are dealing with two subjects who are having a conflict of some sort that they cannot resolve on their own and your communication with them during initial contact has not resolved the conflict. However, you need to keep several things in mind when you are considering mediation:

- Officer safety must not be compromised.
- Subjects must be willing to talk.
- Subjects must remain rational.
- Subjects must be willing to compromise.
- Subjects must not get physical.

**Officer safety must not be compromised.** You should only consider using mediation if your safety and that of other officers is not at risk. For example, if you are dealing with an angry or threatening subject or subjects, mediation may not be feasible, at least immediately. Do not attempt mediation until your threat assessment indicates that it is safe and that there is no apparent physical threat to officers or other subjects.

If your threat assessment indicates possible danger to officer safety, you must either escalate to another disturbance resolution tactic; arbitration or crisis intervention, or (if needed) to use of physical intervention tactics. You may be able to use mediation later, when the subject is calm, but you cannot use mediation when people are angry or very upset.

**Subjects must be willing to talk.** This is key to effective mediation. Unless both subjects are willing to talk the process cannot work. Before beginning mediation, ask both subjects if they are willing to talk to try to resolve the situation. Get both to indicate their willingness to do so. If they are not willing, do not proceed. Either keep on talking with them until they indicate that they are willing to talk or choose another option for proper response.

**Subjects must remain rational.** Both subjects must be calm and reasonable for mediation to be possible. If they are not, the process cannot work. Mediation depends on the ability of both involved parties to think clearly and be able to understand a situation and arrive at an acceptable solution; usually a compromise. When a person cannot think and act calmly and rationally, that is not possible. If it seems to you that a subject is either under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or long-term EDP (emotionally disturbed person), then mediation is probably not an option.
Subjects must be willing to compromise. As noted above, compromise is usually the key to effective mediation. If one or both subjects is unwilling to compromise, then mediation cannot work. Ask people directly if they are willing to compromise before entering into a mediation process. Get agreement from both subjects on this issue.

Example:

"Joe, you’ve told me you’re willing to talk about this problem so we can work it out between you and Pete. Are you willing to compromise if we can work something out here?…Good…Pete, how about you?"

Subjects must not get physical. As noted, you cannot enter into mediation unless officer safety is not threatened, and both subjects are calm and rational. Similarly, once a mediation process has started, there can be no physical violence initiated by either party. If there is, the process must cease and other tactics used to gain control. You should make the ground rules clear to both parties in advance.

Basic mediation tactics. The mediation process follows a pattern. It begins with setting the ground rules and then continues with specific steps.

Ground Rules. Before starting the actual mediation process, it is important for you to take a few minutes and set the context for the mediation, to explain your role, and to set the basic ground rules for the process. This is to minimize misunderstandings and to try to get both parties to agree to the process and the outcome of the process.

Follow these steps; however, remember that mediation may be informal, especially in a jail setting.

1. Introduce yourself, if you have not already done so, as well as anyone else—such as another officer or officers. If the subjects do not apparently know each other, introduce them. Also, express your appreciation for their cooperation.

2. Explain your role as a mediator. Explain that you will not take sides for either party, and that the people involved must make any decisions.

3. Make clear that everything that is said during the mediation process will remain part of a professional police contact.

4. Go over the mediation process, in a basic way. At a minimum, go over the following points:
   - Only one person may speak at a time.
   - There are to be no interruptions. When one person is talking, the other person is just to listen, not interrupt or disagree.
- The subjects must work together toward their own agreement. You, as the mediator will not impose or order or direct them to do anything.

- The agreement that they come to will be noted in your officer's report. That is, there will be documentation of what has been agreed to.

5. Ask for questions. If people have questions, try to answer them.

6. Try to get verbal agreement to use the mediation process to try to resolve their conflict.

*The mediation process.* Next, you are ready to go ahead with the actual mediation process. This process is done according to a specific series of steps. These are as follows:

1. Person #1 speaks to you (the mediator) without interruption, telling his or her story. You may want to let the participants, such as inmates, decide who will speak first.

   You use your active listening skills, and specifically use *paraphrasing* to try to obtain clarification. As an active listener during mediation, it is especially important for you to try to remain neutral, non-judgmental, and patient. Remain calm, and try to focus on the issues the parties bring up. Try to be empathetic. Try to see things from the perspective of the person talking; even if that is not how you might react to the same situation.

   Try to be comfortable with silence. If a person is struggling for words, or is having difficulty expressing himself clearly, be patient. Silence is okay. Use the techniques you learned about to try to get the person to continue talking.

   Do the best you can to maintain a calm and rational presence. Do not react to the emotions of the disputants. The disputants may become enmeshed in the emotional aspects of their dispute to the extent that they cannot think and react very clearly. If you appear strong and rational, your strength may help them to work through their emotions to the key issues underneath, and may give them the confidence to move toward agreement. This sounds idealistic, but do not underestimate the effect of strength and calmness particularly on someone experiencing volatile or difficult emotions.

2. When person #1 has finished, person #2 speaks to you (the mediator) without interruption.

   Again, you use your active listening skills, and use paraphrasing to try to obtain clarification.
3. The disputants then speak directly to each other, giving their side and indicating how they would like to see the situation resolved.

The mediator's job during this phase is to use active listening skills and to try to get both parties to understand each other's situation. Be aware of feelings and the intensity of feelings, and ask questions as necessary to try to clarify issues.

4. Work toward a mutually acceptable resolution.

Try to make sure the agreed-upon solution is realistic, balanced and specific. Try to ensure that neither side feels unfairly pressured to reach agreement. At the same time, however, make it clear to both parties that a resolution of some type needs to be reached. In some cases, they may need to understand that if they cannot reach an agreement, another intervention, even arbitration, police action or formal court intervention, may be necessary.

5. Create an agreement based on what the two parties have agreed to.

Keep it simple and brief, and specific. Ideally, the agreement should be written out, if you have time. At a minimum, you should take notes on what they have agreed to and then read this back to them to be sure that they both understand and agree with what you have written.

6. Close the session.

Thank the parties for their work and efforts. If an agreement has been reached, congratulate them. If an agreement has not been reached, offer your congratulations for their efforts anyway.

In a jail setting, if documentation in the jail log is required, tell the subjects that you will be taking that step. Once you have used mediation as a tactic with two or more inmates, consider encouraging them to use the same principles and techniques to resolve future disputes on their own. Let them know they can resolve minor disputes and disagreements on their own using mediation rather than involving a staff member as mediator. While not always feasible, these are skills that will help inmates resolve issues once they have left the facility.

Post-Mediation Issues. Following the mediation, there are still several considerations to keep in mind:

- The mediation process may not have succeeded.

You have to be prepared for failure despite your best efforts. After all, you cannot control how other people are going to react and behave. If the mediation process fails to result in an agreement, despite your best
efforts, do not take it personally. Even when people agree to a resolution, they may not live up to it.

- Be prepared to "change gears."

As noted, the mediation process may or may not work. You must be prepared to "change gears" at any time to do something different if things are not working out as hoped. You may, for example, determine that it is appropriate to escalate to arbitration or crisis intervention (discussed below) if a person becomes very upset or is otherwise unable to communicate rationally. You may even need to escalate to use of physical intervention tactics (discussed below) if a subject cannot be controlled through other means.

- Consider referring the parties to professional mediation, if it is available and seems appropriate.

If mediation services are available, you should indicate that to the disputing parties, perhaps giving names of organizations and phone numbers. Most likely, the parties will not be familiar with professional mediation. You might try to explain to them the advantages of such mediation. If possible, you might even try to get them to agree to try such services.

**Arbitration**

Arbitration is a process by which a person in authority makes decisions about what actions are to be taken in order to stabilize a situation, once attempts to seek cooperation prove ineffective and/or safety is compromised.

In a general sense, arbitration is a means of settling disputes by submitting the dispute to a neutral arbiter, who is given the power to decide the dispute. As used here, it is a method to try to gain compliance from someone who appears is initially non-compliant. The officer, like an arbiter, has the power to force compliance, but the specific technique presented here may achieve voluntary compliance, which is always the goal. If arbitration does not work, you will escalate to using physical intervention to gain compliance. As with the other dispute resolution tactics, you must always be prepared to use a different tactic if arbitration does not succeed.

**Arbitration technique.** Arbitration does not depend on the subject’s agreeing to the process, nor does it give the subject control over the resolution. Instead, with arbitration, you have a specific outcome in mind, and if the subject does not voluntarily choose to comply, you will generally have to force compliance as necessary. Nevertheless, even in arbitration, the goal is voluntary compliance, so the technique provides the subject with limited choices.

The process works like this. You make a request for a subject to do something, explaining why that action is needed. If the subject refuses, you then offer limited
choices (usually only two) and give the subject a moment to decide. If the subject does not make it clear what alternative he or she has chosen, you check to make sure what the choice is, and then you take appropriate action, depending on what the subject chose. For example, here’s how a brief arbitration session might go. The situation is a man refusing to leave an apartment in which he is no longer welcome.

**Officer:** “Sir, please leave now. The resident here wants you out, and the law gives him the right to decide.”

**Subject:** “I’m not leaving.”

**Officer:** “Sir, you have to leave. If you don’t go voluntarily, I’ll have to arrest you for trespassing and forcibly remove you. It’ll be a lot easier if you just leave on your own.”

**Subject:** “I’m not leaving.”

**Officer:** “Sir, that’s not one of the options. You have to leave. The only question is whether you go voluntarily. Will you leave or do we have to arrest you and take you to jail?”

**Subject:** “OK, I’ll go.”

**Officer:** “Thank you. I’ll walk you out. I appreciate your cooperation.”

A similar type of arbitration can occur in a jail setting.

**Officer:** “Sir, would you please get your things together and come with me to your new pod. Thank you.”

**Subject:** “I’m not going anywhere.”

**Officer:** “Sir, you have to come with us. We need to move you to Pod G for a few days because of your disciplinary violation. You can come out of your cell right now, and there won’t be any further disciplinary action. If you don’t come out on your own, you may force us to come in. It’ll be a lot easier if you just come out on your own.”

**Subject:** “Screw you. I ain’t coming.”

**Officer:** “If you don’t come out voluntarily, you know that we will come in and that could lead to more charges. You don’t want that, do you? I’d like to think you want to make it easy on yourself.”

**Subject:** “I already said, I ain’t coming. Fuck you!”
Officer: “Is there anything I can say to get you to comply? I’d sure like to think so.”

Subject: “Awright, awright. I’m coming.”

Officer: “Thank you. I appreciate your cooperation. Let’s head to Pod G.”

Of course, if the subject had refused, the officer would have had to make good on the promise to arrest or use force and remove the person. Let’s take a closer look at the parts of this arbitration session. An easy way to remember the sequence is to remember the acronym REACT:

- Request cooperation
- Explain reason
- Allow choice
- Check decision
- Take action

Request cooperation. Remember that our goal is always to gain voluntary compliance. Consequently, even with someone who appears to be non-compliant, we will begin with a positive approach; asking the subject to cooperate.

Examples: “Sir, please leave now.”
“Sir, please get your things together and come with me.”

Here the officer has made a polite request for the subject to leave. Whether the person cooperates or not, he will be leaving, but it costs nothing to start with a positive, courteous approach.

Explain reason. No one likes to be asked (or ordered) to do things without some explanation.

Examples: “The resident here wants you out, and the law gives him the right to decide.”
“We have to move you to Pod G for a few days because of your disciplinary violation.”

Again, while the officer has the authority to make the subject leave, it costs nothing to provide a reason—and may go a long way toward gaining cooperation. After all, it is a way of showing respect.

Allow choice. Another way of showing respect for someone is to permit the person to save face—to give the impression that he or she chose to do what in the end he or she would have to do.
Examples: “Sir, you have to leave. If you don’t go voluntarily, I’ll have to arrest you for trespassing and forcibly remove you. It’ll be a lot easier if you just leave on your own.”

“You’ll need to get your things together so we can move you Mr. Jones. Your classification has changed so, by policy, we need to move you into a different housing area. I’d like you to come with me so we don’t need to come in and move you.”

In these examples, the subjects are given the option of going voluntarily or going in handcuffs or by force. While neither of these alternatives is what the subject wants, they do provide the appearance of choice—and an opportunity to save face.

Check decision. Sometimes the subject will choose one of the options presented right away; other times, he or she will not respond or insist on doing something other than the options you’ve presented. This step gives you an opportunity to be sure that you understand what the subject has chosen, or to bring the subject back to the decision at hand—a decision that is his or hers to make.

Examples: “Sir, that’s not one of the options. You have to leave. The only question is whether you go voluntarily. Will you leave or do we have to place you under arrest?”

“Staying in this Pod is not an option. If you cooperate, you’ll move to a regular unit, Mr. Jones, where you’ll get to watch TV and get canteen. I know how important that is to you. But if we have to come in, then you’ll go into seg where there’s no TV or canteen.

In these examples, the subjects strayed from the options presented, and the officers had to bring them back on track.

Take action. The final step in the arbitration process is the resolution. In a way, the outcome was never in doubt; you will use arbitration only when you already know that compliance with your request is the only acceptable outcome. On the other hand, our goal is voluntary compliance, and that outcome is never guaranteed. In this example, the subject agreed to leave. The officer then could act accordingly, by maintaining a polite, respectful, courteous tone but also making sure that the subject carried out his promise to leave.

Examples: “Thank you. I’ll walk you out. I appreciate your cooperation.”

“Thank you for cooperating. I’ll take you to Pod G.”

What if these subjects refused a second time? The officer would have immediately taken the enforcement action promised; arresting the subject for trespassing and forcibly removing him or a cell extraction. When individuals are not complying with
what you are asking them to do or telling them to do it is time to stop talking and start acting.

**Advantages of arbitration.** While arbitration is more controlling than a basic contact, it still has the goal of resolving a disturbance or dispute as peacefully as possible. In particular, arbitration has three advantages:

- It provides the subject with the clear opportunity to voluntarily comply before the officer escalates to using physical intervention to gain compliance.
- It provides a framework that maximizes the subject's feeling of being treated with respect, even while being required to comply.
- It gives the subject a chance to save face.

Arbitration provides a consistent standard for how officers should handle common situations. If it turns out that the officer needs to use physical force, the arbitration technique makes it easier to defend that use of force should it be questioned.

**CRISIS INTERVENTION**

Crisis intervention refers to dealing with anyone who is not thinking clearly and rationally, making it difficult to use reasoning and logic to encourage compliance. People may be irrational for many different reasons, including:

- Chronic mental illness. People with chronic mental illness are often referred to as long-term EDPs (emotionally disturbed persons).
- Chemical abuse. This term covers both alcohol and other drug abuse, and can include those who are chronic abusers as well as those who are presently under the influence of alcohol or another drug, but not necessarily long-term chemical abusers;
- A person who is going through an acute mental or emotional crisis, or is very upset for any reason. Such people may normally be rational, but have been pushed past their limits by events or circumstances. They are sometimes referred to as short-term EDPs.

*Why* someone is irrational is not our primary concern, because you would use the same basic crisis intervention techniques, regardless of the cause of the crisis. Again, the Basic/Initial Contact Model is adjusted to the situation. (See Figure 3.)

**Pre-Intervention Preparation**

Situations in which you need to use crisis intervention tactics are often difficult, volatile, sometimes even scary. You are often dealing with subjects who are
unpredictable and potentially violent, and your usual communication skills may not work well. Before intervening, take some time to prepare yourself and to form a basic plan. The following are recommended as steps to follow in pre-intervention preparation:

- Calm yourself.
- Center yourself and get focused.
- Develop a strategy for the intervention.

**Figure 3: Crisis Model**

*Calm yourself.* For you to help calm someone down, you yourself need to appear calm. A good way to calm yourself is with *autogenic* breathing, in which you take slow, deep, full breaths. Breathe in for a four-count through your nose, pause for a four-count, exhale for a four-count through your mouth, and pause for a four-count. Repeat this several times. Doing this exercise will help supply oxygen to your system, which helps to calm you.

*Center yourself and get focused.* Do what you can to focus on the task at hand and prepare yourself to deal with a potentially difficult situation. People use different ways to focus. Some people visualize the coming event and how to respond to it. This is a form of crisis rehearsal. Others use positive self-talk. This involves affirming to yourself (silently or aloud) your abilities and determination to handle the situation effectively. Whatever technique you use, your goal is to prepare yourself to use your skills effectively in responding to a person or persons in crisis.

*Develop a strategy for the intervention.* Plan how you will respond to the situation. That is, try to decide in advance what you will say and do, how you will position
yourself, whether backup is required, and so on. Try to decide what level and type
of intervention is called for, taking into consideration your safety and the safety of
others. Consider all the options. For example, it may be that medical intervention is
called for. A person who appears to be in crisis may be behaving oddly because of a
medical problem, such as insulin reaction, stroke, or Alzheimer’s Disease. You will
not always have the time to plan your response, but when you can, it will boost your
chance of success.

Avoid taking on an EDP alone. EDPs sometimes react violently and unpredictably,
with little warning, so backup is extremely important. Additionally, if you have to use
physical intervention, some EDPs can be difficult to control because the chemicals,
endorphins and adrenaline in their systems, as well as the fact that they often feel
very focused and determined, can make them very strong. However, it’s best to
keep your backup in a cover-officer role, so that you can get the subject to focus on
you.

Crisis Intervention Format

When intervening with a person in crisis, keep these guidelines in mind:

1. Try to get the person’s attention.
2. Check on the person’s perception of reality.
3. Try to establish rapport with the person.
4. Explain your perception of reality.
5. Move toward resolution of the situation.

Try to get the person’s attention. You will not be able to make any progress with
a person in crisis unless he or she is paying adequate attention. Keep in mind that a
person in crisis is more likely to see you rather than to hear you, at least initially. At
first the subject may literally not be able to hear or understand the words that you
are saying, but will see you and will gain an impression of you from what he or she
sees. Position and body language are therefore critical in trying to get the subject’s
attention. Follow these guidelines:

- **Come into the person’s line of sight.** Be careful to avoid standing directly
  in front of the person, as this may be perceived as threatening. Stand at
  an angle to the person (“bladed” stance), rather than square to the person.
  This will be less confrontational, and will allow you to react more
  effectively if threatened.

- **Avoid crowding the subject.** If you crowd the subject, you may appear
  threatening or as if you are blocking the subject’s “escape” route.

- **Remove the person from the scene of the crisis, if possible.** Getting a
  subject away from disturbing people or activities can provide some privacy
  and could reduce his or her embarrassment.
• If dealing with a child or someone who is shorter than you or a seated person, you may wish to lower yourself. Sometimes if you kneel or stoop you will appear less threatening. However, do this only if you feel it is safe. Remember that people in crisis are unpredictable.

• Control distance and bailout routes. People in crisis are likely to have expanded “intimate zones,” meaning that the “bubble of space” they need around them is larger than for most people. If you get too close, they may feel threatened or upset and may lash out. How close is too close may change during an encounter; increasing if the person becomes more agitated, decreasing as he or she calms down. Pay attention to the person’s body language, posturing, facial expressions, and so on. These non-verbal cues can tell you a lot.

• Remain alert, but try not to appear tense. Instead, project that you are calm; speak in a calm tone of voice and keep your body relaxed. Try to maintain a neutral but interested facial expression, and keep your palms open, not closed. Your calm appearance may help the subject to feel safer and therefore calmer, because he or she will perceive that you are in control of the situation.

In trying to get the subject’s attention, remember that what you say and how you say it is very important. The subject will remember your initial interaction with him or her and that memory will affect future interactions with you and with other officers. Here are some guidelines:

• Use your given name, rather than a title. This will make the encounter seem less formal, and thus less frightening, to the subject. It makes you seem like a person first.

Example: “Good morning. I’m John Jones.”

You can add your title, if you wish, after you’ve given your name. If another officer subsequently enters the scene, perhaps to assist you, take time to introduce that officer.

• Ask—do not order—the subject to look at you. Be polite about this. If needed, wave your hands slowly to get the other person’s attention.

Example: “Joe, please look at me.”

If the person does not look at you, keep trying; it’s important.

• Get the subject to focus on you, not at you. Talk softly and slowly. One technique is “reverse yelling,” which means that instead of talking loudly when you feel so inclined, you deliberately speak softly and slowly. This unexpected behavior may be effective in getting the subject’s attention.
• Use simple commands, using the subject’s first name if you know it. If your orders or commands are too complex or abstract, the subject may not understand them. It is therefore very important to keep your commands as simple as possible.

Examples:

“Joe, please move three steps that way.” (pointing the way)

“Susan, walk toward me.”

• Take your time. Do not rush the encounter. If you try to rush, the subject may get upset or feel threatened, and may be less cooperative. Remember that time is your friend. The longer you can keep things in a verbal mode, the less likely it is that you will have to escalate to physical intervention and the more time you give the subject to calm and become compliant.

Check on the person’s perception of reality. A person in crisis may or may not perceive reality accurately. Here are some guidelines for checking on a person’s perception of reality:

• Ask the person basic questions to determine his or her orientation to reality. Ask basic questions like, “Who are you?” or “Where are you?” See if the person is oriented to time by asking, “What time is it?” “What is the date today?”

• Ask the person what he or she is seeing. This is a direct question, which is very appropriate, particularly if you have reason to believe that the person is not perceiving your identity or the situation correctly. For example, an EDP may perceive that you are someone other than an officer, or even a devil or a monster, etc. He or she may be experiencing visual hallucinations.

Example: “Joe, what are you seeing?”

The person may not answer you directly, but many will. The answer may provide clues to what the person is experiencing.

• If the person does not answer, tell him or her that you cannot hear what he or she is thinking. Some EDPs—particularly individuals with mental disorders—may believe that other people can hear or read what they are thinking, and therefore do not verbalize all of their thoughts. This is known as “thought broadcasting.” Some believe others control their brains.

Example: “Joe, I can’t hear what you’re thinking. Please talk to me.”
- Recognize that the person may feel the need to touch you to determine if you are real. Some EDPs may not be sure whether you are a real person or a hallucination. A person may want to touch you as a “reality check.”

On the other hand, some mentally disordered individuals may want to touch you for other reasons as well. They may have distorted perceptions of boundaries between themselves and others.

Your choice of how to respond will depend on the situation and your threat assessment. You have several options:

1. Allow it to happen, as a calculated risk, remembering that you are putting your safety at risk.

2. Do not allow the person to touch you. Step back.

3. While verbalizing that you are real, establish the physical contact yourself.

**Attempt to establish rapport with the person.** To try to alleviate the person’s fears and get him or her to trust you, tell the person these things:

- **Tell the person directly that you are here to help and to protect him or her.**

  Example: “Joe, I’m here to help you.”

  In doing so, use positive words and avoid words that could have a negative connotation. For example, if you say “Joe, I’m not here to hurt you,” the person may only hear the word “hurt” and may completely misunderstand your intent and think that you are going to hurt him or her.

- Ask the subject what is going on. Try to get the subject to talk with you. Then use your best listening skills. You are not there to judge the person, but to listen and try to get a handle on the crisis. Ask questions, paraphrase, reflect and summarize.

- **Acknowledge the person’s sensory or emotional experience.** For example, if a person says that he is seeing something frightening, such as a devil or a monster, an appropriate response might be: “Joe, that must be terrifying.” As always, be sure not to sound sarcastic or condescending when you say something like this. Instead, simply speak in a neutral, even tone of voice. And remember that your body language also conveys messages.

- **Acknowledge that you too would feel upset if the same thing were happening to you.**
For example: “Joe, if I saw what you’re seeing, it would be very upsetting to me.”

This way, you give the person the message that you empathize with his or her experience, and that he or she is not that different from you.

- **Sometimes, establishing physical contact with a person can help establish rapport.** Touching can overcome barriers between people. Even a light touch on a person’s arm, for example, can have a significant effect on establishing a connection with another person; particularly a troubled or frightened individual. Use a gentle, firm touch, and maintain the contact for a little while. But at the same time, remember that touching can sometimes be threatening to EDP’s. For that reason, be cautious and go slowly. Always ask for permission to touch a person.

  *Example:* “Joe, would it be okay for me to touch your arm?”

If the person does not grant such permission, do not touch him or her. You may also wish to try to get the person to take slow, deep breaths to help calm him or her. This works best when you model such breathing for the person.

  *Example:* "Joe, take some deep breaths. Here, watch me and do this…"

**Explain your perception of reality.** At the same time that it is important for you to try to understand the perception of reality of a person in crisis, it is also important for you to try to make clear your perception of reality to him or her. This helps the other person to distinguish between what he or she is experiencing and what you are experiencing. That is useful information to them.

Some people are uncertain as to what is “real” and what is not. On the one hand, a person may hear or see something, but on the other hand may know or suspect that what they perceive is not real. For that reason, a reality check from another person may be useful. Tell the other person directly what you are seeing.

  Examples:  
  “Joe, I see you standing there.”
  
  “Jane, we are in your cell and no one else is here. You’re safe.”

It is also appropriate for you to tell them that you are not seeing or hearing, or smelling, what they say they are perceiving. This also serves as a reality check for the other person.

  Examples:  
  “Joe, I don’t hear those voices you’re talking about.”
  
  “Jane, I don’t see that snake you’re talking about.”
In doing this, you are not *denying* the other person’s reality (what people in crisis experience is real to them) you are simply stating your reality. According to mental health experts, you should avoid telling an EDP that what he or she is experiencing is not real. Doing so undermines the person’s ability to believe you.

**Move toward resolution.** Finally, you need to try to move toward a resolution of the situation. What that resolution is depends on the reason you are there. You may have been called to resolve the crisis and that is all. Or, resolving the crisis may be just the first step, you may then need to do something else, such as taking the person to a hospital or other care facility, either voluntarily or via an emergency detention. Here are some guidelines for trying to resolve a situation:

- *If possible, separate the person in crisis and his or her “audience.”* This will help prevent “grandstanding” and embarrassment of the person. It is almost always easier to resolve a situation more effectively when you can work just with the person, rather than with a lot other people around.

- *Try to allow the person to “save face.”* Do not make statements that will embarrass or demean the other person. Remember that there is a stigma about mental illness. Do not add to that stigma. Do not label someone as mentally ill. For example, you may need to handcuff a person in crisis, but, if possible, do so out of sight of his or her family members or other people. Similarly, if you need to take the person to a mental health facility, it may be better to do so when you are alone with that person, rather than in the presence of others.

  *Example:* “Jill, would you let us into your apartment to talk with you, so that everyone doesn’t have to hear?”

- *Do not lie or make promises that you cannot or do not intend to keep.* Sometimes we have a tendency to say anything just to get through a difficult situation. In a jail setting, a lie – even one told to bring a prompt end to a crisis - could affect your credibility and, thus, your future relationship with inmates.

- *You may need to ask the person for help in reaching a resolution.* This depends on the particular situation. In some situations, you may be able to offer options to a person. If you can give a person options, he or she gains a sense of control by being able to choose.

  *Examples:* “Joe, where would you like me to take you? Do you need to go to the hospital?”

  “Jill, what can we do to get this matter taken care of?”

But be aware that what the person wishes to do may not be acceptable, and you may then have to make the choice as to what to do.
• You may use the technique of “creative confusion” to move toward resolution. With this technique, you appear as though you do not understand something and ask the other person to help you.

Examples: “Joe, you just lost me with what you’ve been saying. Can you try to make it more clear for me?”

“Bill, you need to help me understand this.”

This technique does not always work, but it often does. It allows you to ask the other person to slow down and seem to be helping you. In so doing, you encourage the person to work with you to achieve resolution.

In some cases, a person may be trying to manipulate you and/or the system, and you can use this technique to try to reveal that manipulation attempt. For example, a person may talk about seeing “red men from Mars” one moment and “green men from Mars” the next moment. You may call him or her on that contradiction by asking a question such as, “Joe, what color were those men from Mars? I thought you said a moment ago that they were red.” Even if there are apparent discrepancies and you suspect manipulation, do not call the person a liar. Just take appropriate action in light of the information you have.

• Be directive and supportive. Explain each step you are going to take. Sometimes people are overwhelmed when in the midst of an emotional crisis. They feel incapable of handling things or making good decisions. You may help by telling him or her what to do, at least until the person feels better and can think and act more clearly.

Example: “Tom, I see you’re pretty upset. I know you’re worried about your wife so here’s what we’ll do. First, we’ll call the hospital to see if she’s okay and see if you can talk with her. Then we’ll get in touch with your sister to see if she can take care of your kids. Next, we’ll …”

• In a jail setting, once an inmate calms down, encourage him or her to talk with you and to express their feelings about the situation. The opportunity to talk after a crisis can help people to cope more effectively. Doing what you can to help diffuse intense feelings can help inmates get through a challenging time.
WHEN TO TAKE ACTION

Despite your best efforts, words will not always accomplish your goals. Even if you apply the techniques you learn in Professional Communication Skills flawlessly, you cannot assume that a subject will respond as you would hope and voluntarily comply. There can be many reasons for non-cooperation. Sometimes, there’s just too much going on. You may say all the right things to try to calm someone and get him or her to comply, but other factors affecting the other person’s behavior are a stronger influence.

For example, a person may be mentally ill, intoxicated by alcohol and/or drugs, undergoing a medication reaction, or have some other significant problem or situation which affects his or her behavior. Your words may not have the desired effect simply because there are too many complicating factors affecting the subject.

Sometimes a subject will actively choose not to cooperate with you because complying means going to jail or leaving some place he or she wants to stay. When words do not work to achieve compliance from a subject, it is time to act, which means that you either disengage and/or escalate to using physical intervention skills. You will learn in Principles of Subject Control (POSC) or Defensive and Arrest Tactics (DAAT) training how to make such decisions and what the options are.

In any case, how do you know when to stop trying verbal skills? Remember the acronym DONE. It identifies the four conditions in which you are done talking, and it is time to act.

- **Danger**
- **Overriding concern**
- **No progress**
- **Escape**

**Danger**

Whenever you or someone else is in imminent danger of being assaulted, hurt, or killed, it is time to act. Your assessment of when that is the case is based on your training, experience, and the particular situation that you are in. Similarly, whenever property under your control, such as evidence or a crime scene, equipment, weapons, or vehicles, are threatened it is time to act.

**Overriding Concern**

Whenever you think that a matter of a higher priority requires your immediate attention or your presence, it is time to act. For example, you may be talking to a witness at a crash scene, when you observe that a car is leaking gasoline—it’s time to stop talking and act.
No Progress

Whenever you feel that you have exhausted all of your verbal options and the subject is still not complying, it is time to act. The point of no progress will vary with officer, subject, and the situation. You don’t want to cut short the opportunity for a subject to cooperate if a little more talking will bring it about, but at the same time, you don’t want to go over the same ground again and again without any progress. With experience, you will learn when you aren’t getting anywhere verbally, and it’s time to act. Remember that at any time, if what you are trying is not working, you have the option to disengage or escalate.

Escape

Whenever a subject unlawfully flees your presence, it is time to act.

Thus, the acronym DONE provides a context for your decision-making as to when you are justified in taking appropriate actions—to disengage or escalate.

Remember, “presence and dialog” are part of the Intervention Options. As you will learn, even if you have made the decision to take physical action, you will eventually come back “full circle” to using the verbal techniques you learned earlier in this course.

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

If talking does not work to gain control of a subject in a jail or law enforcement context, you may have to escalate to use of physical intervention options. You will learn more about these tactics in Defensive and Arrest Tactics (DAAT) or Principles of Subject Control (POSC). You will learn how and when to use them and will practice the specific psychomotor skills involved in each technique. But the physical techniques are only part of the equation of establishing and maintaining control; the other part is communication.

To learn to integrate verbal and physical skills you first need to review the reasons professional and skilled communication is important within the context of law enforcement and corrections. Then you must develop an understanding of the additional importance your verbal skills take on as you integrate them with physical intervention.

As discussed earlier, effective communication makes you safer on the job because it minimizes the possibility of a physical confrontation. Any physical intervention carries with it the risk of injury to both officer and subject. Our goal is always to gain willing cooperation from the subject. Good verbalization gives the subject a final opportunity to comply before force is applied.
Remember that the answer to the question “Who is listening?” is everyone. Your use of effective verbalization could also help to maintain compliance or cooperation with any peripheral subjects as they view your interaction with the subject at hand. By virtue of your uniform, vehicle, radio noise, etc., your very presence may draw a crowd. If you can use words instead of force, not only are you protected from injury, but so is the subject being contacted, and anyone else (officer or civilian) that may intervene. Whether the communication is directly conveyed (to a subject), or is overheard by the public, media, officials, or other officers, the message can have a positive impact during the current contact and even future contacts.

You are also protecting yourself legally. Anyone injured due to an officer’s use of force will have less of a basis to challenge the appropriateness of the officer’s conduct if the officer was using proper verbalization before, during and after the use of force. Remember the public, media, and other officials that have directed their attention and focus on you and your efforts with a particular subject. Their perception of your decision making and justification for use of force is very much affected by your verbalization before, during, and after any use of physical force. If the bystanders hear your continual efforts directing the individual to “stop resisting,” “put your hands in the air,” “get down on the ground,” “put your hands behind your back,” etc. they will be more likely to understand your physical actions. A bystander’s perception that an officer was not justified in his or her actions may result in a complaint against that officer, even if the subject did not complain. On the other hand, bystanders may be critical in supporting the appropriateness of an officer’s actions in the case of an unsubstantiated complaint.

**Verbal Communication within the DAAT and POSC Systems**

Wisconsin’s DAAT and POSC systems are the foundation for proper use of force by officers. Within the DAAT and POSC systems, *Intervention Options* are the guideline that assists an officer in analyzing a subject’s behavior and determining a reasonable level of force to use in response. The Intervention Options specify the trained force modes, tactics and purposes for those tactics in Wisconsin’s DAAT and POSC systems. The first two modes of the Intervention Options are *presence* and *dialog*.

*Presence* refers to the impression conveyed by an officer’s demeanor, appearance and body language. An officer should always exhibit professionalism, authority, and control. Additionally, through the three stances taught in POSC and DAAT (open, ready, and defensive), the officer can convey a range of responses to a subject’s behavior.

*Dialog* refers to verbalization skills, taught in this course. As you know, POSC and DAAT are defined as “a system of verbalization skills coupled with physical alternatives.” This means that verbal skills are always the preferred choice. Only if talking does not work (or would clearly be ineffective under the circumstances), should an officer resort to physical intervention options.
Physical intervention are the third, fourth and fifth modes of the Intervention Options. Specifically, these are:

- Control Alternatives
- Protective Alternatives
- Deadly Force

**Communication Tactics During Physical Intervention**

During intense and potentially violent situations, you need to continue to communicate with people, even though you may be required to use force to gain and maintain control. Whenever possible, you will make sure that physical intervention is your only remaining option. You can do so by following the formal arbitration pattern **REACT**, or immediately by issuing a loud command such as "Drop the knife!" then quickly evaluating the subject’s actions. When force becomes necessary, including deadly force, you still need to verbalize with subjects if you can. You will typically do so with short, high-intensity commands, like "Stop resisting!"

When a subject’s resistance decreases, your level of force decreases to the level required to maintain control. Your verbal directions also lower in intensity as the focus changes to directing the subject to a stable situation. Much of the time, you will direct a subject through a "surrender ritual," in which the subject is handcuffed, but you may also need to use more intense commands.

**Officer Coordination**

When two or more officers are present at a scene, as is often the case when force is used, they must coordinate their activities to operate safely and efficiently. Officer tasks include:

- Effective coordination
- Professional discipline
- Legal and ethical conduct

The officers must talk to each other to be sure that everyone understands and agrees on the action to be taken and their roles. They must also talk to each other to help ensure that everyone is behaving appropriately and professionally, because they have a shared responsibility for the outcome.

Officer coordination is based on the *contact-cover* concept; one officer has the primary responsibility to talk to the subject, while other officers observe and provide needed back up and support. In addition to carrying out assigned roles in a use-of-force situation, cover officers also must intervene in any situation in which the contact officer is being inappropriate or clearly ineffective.
DEBRIEFING

The term *debri*efing refers in general to steps taken following an incident to calm those involved, to provide needed medical, psychological, and custodial care, and to learn from the incident how best to handle similar situations in the future.

Incident Debriefing

By discussing incidents in an incident debriefing, either formally or informally, we can identify where improvements are needed in policies, procedures, or training. Some incident debriefings take the form of a *critical incident stress debriefing*, in which all personnel involved in an especially traumatic or stressful incident can come together to share their feelings and experiences as a way of diffusing the stress and bringing closure to the incident. Others are *tactical debriefings*, in which the purpose is to review the course of the incident, identify what went well and what did not, and learn from the incident to improve future performance.

Subject Debriefing

Subject debriefing serves two important psychological functions:

- Enabling the participants to *come full circle*
- Completing the transaction.

To *come full circle* means to return to the point at which you started. As you learned, nearly all police contacts start with verbalization. Many contacts remain at that level throughout but some escalate to physical intervention. If that happens, it is important to bring the level back down to verbalization at the conclusion. This coming full circle helps both officers and subjects regain their composure and return to normal.

Debriefing also helps to complete the transaction and provide proper closure to each contact. This way, you can ensure that the emotional and physical aspects of the encounter are dealt with appropriately, and proper follow-through procedures completed. (See Figure 4.)
Tactics for Subject Debriefing

Subject debriefing involves five specific actions to take:

1. Calm yourself and your partner.
2. Calm the subject.
3. Provide initial medical assessment.
4. Reassure the subject.
5. Rebuild the subject's self-esteem.

_Calm yourself and your partner._ It is natural to feel a range of emotions following a contact or incident—particularly if it involved conflict or required physical intervention. You may find yourself feeling fear, anxiety, depression, apprehension, and so on. Additionally, you may have experienced an adrenaline rush. It is important to calm yourself, as best you can. You can do so by using autogenic breathing and positive self-talk.
Examples:  “I'm okay…I'm safe.”
“Breathe…Focus.”
“Things are under control.”

If possible, you may find it helpful to spend a few minutes by yourself away from the immediate scene focusing on your own needs.

You may also need to calm your partner, if he or she is upset or angry. You can use variations of the same techniques you use to calm yourself; telling your partner to breathe deeply and slowly (perhaps even modeling such breathing), advising your partner to use positive self-talk; or even removing your partner temporarily from the scene. If your partner is unusually volatile or upset, you may need to be very directive.

Example: “Tom, you need to sit down over there for a minute and relax.”

**Calm the subject.** Similarly, you may have to help calm a subject following a contact incident—particularly an incident in which emotions have run high. Your own attitude and demeanor are key. If you yourself are upset or angry, you cannot expect a subject to become calm at your request. On the other hand, if you appear calm and under control, then you are more likely to be effective when trying to calm someone else. In addition to verbal directions to relax or take it easy, you may need to help someone to slow his or her breathing. A useful technique is to say, “Here, breathe with me,” and then model deep breathing, having the other person breathe along with you.

**Provide initial medical assessment.** After any contact involving a possibility of illness or injury—which certainly includes contacts involving physical intervention—you must conduct an initial medical assessment to find out if anyone requires medical care. As you will learn in DAAT/POSC and your emergency medical training, the steps in an initial medical assessment are as follows:

1. Determine level of consciousness.
2. Check ABC's (airway, breathing, circulation).
3. Perform a body check for injury.
4. Activate the emergency medical system if appropriate and/or provide any necessary treatment, to your level of training.
5. Continue to monitor the subject.

**Reassure subject.** You may have to verbally reassure a subject following a contact situation—particularly if the person is upset or frightened. You may need to tell a person that he or she is okay, or if the person is injured, that medical care will be provided for the injury. Alternatively, you may need to reassure a person that someone else will be okay or will be cared for. For example, a subject may be concerned about another person who was injured. Or a subject who is under arrest and going to jail may be worried about who will take care of his or her child. In trying to reassure someone, be careful never to lie or to make promises that you cannot keep or have no authority to make. Doing so is unethical and unprofessional.
When appropriate, do not be afraid to apologize to a subject. For example, if you have stopped and questioned someone as a possible suspect in a crime, and it turns out that he or she clearly is not the suspect, by all means, explain the situation and apologize for the inconvenience. You are not apologizing for doing your job—you are simply acknowledging and expressing regret for the necessary inconvenience to the person. Making an apology does not weaken your authority. On the contrary, it makes you appear stronger, because it shows that you are not afraid to be human and consider the feelings of others.

**Rebuild subjects’ self-esteem.** Finally, you may have to take steps to help a subject regain his or her sense of dignity and sense of control. Here are some ways to do that:

- Help a person sit up, stand, or otherwise resume a more normal and comfortable physical position.
- Offer a drink of water, if it’s available.
- Simply talk to a subject, to help him or her to calm and regain a sense of normalcy.
- If the subject is handcuffed, check to see if the cuffs are too tight. Ask specifically if the cuffs are causing pain or cutting off circulation.

By taking the time to do these things to help rebuild subjects’ self-esteem and help them feel more dignified and in control, you may accomplish several objectives:

- The subject is less likely to feel resentment toward law enforcement or corrections in general, and toward you as a representative.
- The subject is more likely to cooperate during the rest of the contact, thus enhancing officer safety.
- The subject may be less likely to register a complaint about his or her treatment.

**ARTICULATION OF POLICE ACTION**

A key communication skill in the workplace setting is *articulating* actions taken by jail and law enforcement personnel. Articulation refers to the ability to professionally describe actions taken and explain the reasons for them. Being able to properly articulate and explain actions taken is critically important for several reasons:

- It documents what was done and the logical steps taken into consideration to arrive at a decision.
- It allows supervisors and command staff to be aware of what happened and why in use-of-force and other incidents.
- It allows supervisors and command staff to be in a better position to determine the need for changes in agency policy, additional training, or corrective measures.

- It allows other agency personnel to be familiar with what happened during an incident.

- It assists prosecutors in making appropriate decisions about prosecution of suspects.

- It enhances the agency’s ability to manage risk in the area of professional liability.

Officers must be able to professionally articulate and explain their actions both orally and in writing.

**Oral Articulation**

As an officer, you must be able to explain your actions orally, when asked to do so. Some of the situations in which you might be asked are:

- When talking with supervisors and others in your agency to let them know about what occurred during an incident. You might be asked by a supervisor or commander to tell about an incident, or you might initiate the explanation.

- During meetings, either within your agency or involving outside agencies.

- During debriefings, formal or informal.

- In community meetings (Neighborhood Watch, etc.).

- In various legal settings, including these:
  - **Charging conferences** with prosecutors, in which you will explain an incident in detail—usually as a follow-up to your written report on that incident—so that the prosecutor can best determine whether or not to charge a suspect, and/or what offense to charge the suspect with.
  
  - **Depositions**—one of the formal stages in a lawsuit, in which you answer questions under oath.

  - **Testimony** during a court proceeding, such as a hearing or trial.

  - **Telephone conversations** with anyone, during the official course of business.
When you are called upon to orally articulate your actions or those of others, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Your voice inflection and tone should convey neutrality and professionalism.
- Your gestures and body posture should appear open, relaxed, and non-threatening.
- Your facial expression should convey interest, neutrality, and professionalism.
- Use positive words, and avoid the use of negative terminology, such as profanities or racial or sexual epithets (unless you are quoting directly). Minimize use of jargon or acronyms and/or technical terms, particularly when speaking with people who may not understand these words or terms.
- Use your active listening skills: pay attention to what others are saying, maintain good eye contact, and seek clarification as necessary.
- Answer questions clearly, accurately and thoroughly. If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification. In a legal setting, such as a deposition or hearing or trial, only answer the specific questions that you were asked, as clearly and concisely as possible. Do not volunteer additional information.
- Never lie or try to shade the facts to make yourself look good.
- Be matter-of-fact. Do not glamorize the incident, brag, or otherwise be unprofessional.

**Written Articulation**

In addition to orally articulating your actions, you will also frequently need to articulate them in writing. Some ways in which you will articulate actions in writing include these:

- Incident reports
- Use of physical force reports
- Memorandums
- Documentation for disciplinary matters
- Evaluation reports
- *Interrogatories*—written responses to specified questions from an attorney in the course of civil litigation

You will learn and practice report-writing skills in a separate instructional segment.
Keep these guidelines in mind in regard to proper and professional written articulation of your actions:

1. Be organized; a chronological listing of events is frequently used.

2. Pay attention to proper grammar and spelling in written documents. Correct use of language demonstrates professionalism. As discussed earlier, avoid using abbreviations such as TBD (to be determined) and LKA (last known address) these are not appropriate in official documents.

3. Know and observe the proper format for reports or other documents, as specified in policies and procedures and training.

4. Use the active voice.

5. Use words correctly.

6. Distinguish between facts and opinion. Set forth the facts of an incident, as clearly and completely as you can.

7. Include in your report appropriate information on the five W's and two H's:
   - Who
   - What
   - Where
   - When
   - Why
   - How
   - How much

8. Use Incident Response or the First Responder Philosophy as your guide to what to include.

Incident Response and the First Responder Philosophy are systematic approaches to proper police or jail action. These systems can be used as a basic outline for your report.

You should include information on each of the response steps as they apply to the situation you are documenting. In your Report Writing training, you will learn specific guidelines for documenting different sorts of calls or actions, including documenting use of force, but the First Responder Philosophy and Incident Response are good general guides.
COMMUNICATION IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

DEATH NOTIFICATIONS

The moment of a death notification is one that most people remember very vividly for the rest of their lives – sometimes with pain and anger. Some survivors hear the news first through the media or a reporter calling, and then have flashbacks of that moment for years. Others tell how they were stunned to hear the person who was killed referred to as “the body” only minutes after death. Most families in which someone was killed say that the most traumatic moment of their lives was the notification of the death of their loved one.

Likewise, most people who are required to deliver death notifications say it is the most difficult part of their jobs. Death notification is acknowledged to be one of the most arduous, demanding and challenging tasks faced by law enforcement officers and other professionals. The following pages suggest ways to notify survivors effectively and sensitively, including tips on what not to say.

Notification is an exceedingly important duty. Besides being sensitive, notifiers have to be prepared in case a survivor goes into shock or requires emergency medical treatment. Notifiers also can provide important information to survivors, including details about how the death occurred. They can volunteer to notify others and provide other invaluable support.

Notification should be done with certainty, without delay, in person, in pairs whenever possible, in plain language, and with compassion. The recommended procedures listed on the following pages were developed by people with much experience in death notification, and with help from survivors who have been through it. As one survivor put it, “Please remember you are assisting innocent victims of circumstance.”

During a death notification, use of the words “dead” or “death” should be used; but euphemisms like “is gone” or “passed over to the other side” or “passed away” should be avoided because they cloud the meaning and purpose of the notification. Ethnicity, culture, and language can be significant factors in the process of telling someone of the tragic death of another. The notifier needs to know this information before going to the place of notification, especially if it is in the home. It may be necessary for the notification team to determine when unusual difficulties might occur in communicating the news of the tragedy. If serious difficulties are anticipated, an effort should be made to have an interpreter or other person of competence in the situation accompany the team.

7 This entire section on death notifications is based upon the Successful Death Notifications Training Manual developed by the La Crosse Area Law Enforcement Chaplaincy, Inc. provided in June 2010.
Telling people that a loved one has died elicits very intense emotional reactions. You should prepare yourself to see and assist the survivor upon notifying them of their loved one’s death.

Some common reactions to receiving a death notification include:

- Denial
- Shock
- Numbness
- Enormous sense of loss
- Bewilderment, embarrassment, psychic numbing
- Anger, hostility
- Loss of self-esteem
- Dependence and easily led by suggestions
- Experience a feeling of running through a never-ending fog
- Feeling of sinking or being overwhelmed
- A need to say good-bye
- Need to view, touch, bathe, dress, or rock the deceased
- Disbelief
- Hysteria – uncontrolled crying
- Blame
- No response at all

Some physical reactions to expect (not all may occur and not in any special order):

- Waves of emotion that feel hot and overwhelming
- Shortness of breath
- Lethargy, fatigue, exhaustion
- Impaired psychomotor function, poor responses to stimuli
- Psychic numbing or closing off
- Perspiration
- Dilation of the pupils, tearing, crying and sobbing
- Sleeplessness, amnesia
- Poor salivation, loss of appetite, empty feeling in the abdomen
- A pain in the chest akin to an ache
- Empty feeling or ache in the arms
- Sighing with each respiration
- Physical or verbal attack
- Passing out
- Running
- Vomiting, nausea
- No response at all

The person(s) making a death notification should expect any of these NORMAL reactions from the person(s) being notified.

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Steps to a Successful Death Notification

Step 1: Go with certainty – gather the facts and confirm them
Before the notification, move quickly to gather the information.

Is the victim really dead? Has the victim been declared officially medically dead? Hearsay, unchecked secondary sources by persons not on scene must be carefully investigated before the notification team proceeds. For example, a telephone call by itself from a relative, friend, media reporter, especially if the call comes from another city, is not sufficient proof that a death has occurred. Only a call verified by the police or hospital would be sufficient to proceed with a notification. Only when there is verifiable evidence should the notification team proceed.

Has a positive identification of the victim been made? A positive identification must be made before the team proceeds. This may be difficult and take time depending on the circumstance of death (i.e. burn victim or multiple victims). The police must be very careful in such cases.

The identification phase includes the names and address of the victim(s). The notification team should make every effort to find all the names and addresses of those to be notified, the status of the relationship between the victim and survivor, as well as their race, ethnicity, language, nationality, citizen status, possible religious traditions concerning the survivors to be notified, and whether other people are likely to be present at the notification. A prepared agency list of other resources including interpreters, health personnel, and clergy/rabbis/religious leaders should be available.

Be absolutely certain of the identity of the deceased. This is especially important if the death occurred in another jurisdiction as information may be sparse. Before making the notification ask the investigator:

- How the investigating agency is sure of the identity.
- When and where the death occurred.
- How the family can obtain more information (out of state agency contact information, name of investigator or officer at the scene, etc.

Be informed about the whereabouts of the deceased and what the family will need to do following notification (i.e. funeral home information, medical examiner contact information). Verify the correct address on the next of kin of the deceased.

People may have questions. A sample of questions that people may ask include: When? Where? What happened? How? Who was present? Who do I get a hold of?
Step 2: Go without delay – be timely!

Make the notification within one hour or as soon as practical after death. Do not delay; writing other reports can wait. Do not leave this for the next shift. Beat the grapevine and news reports; nothing is worse than hearing by rumor. Never take death information over the police radios. Too many scanners, news media, friends, etc. are listening. As soon as the information is gathered and confirmed and the proper personnel are assembled, the notification should be made.

Step 3: Go in person – be present.

Always make a death notification in person, not by telephone. If a phone call is the only alternative, the person to be notified may go into shock without support, or worse. It is very important to provide the survivor with a human presence or “presence of compassion” during an extremely stressful time. Your presence and compassion are the most important resources you bring to a death notification. Notifiers who are present can help the survivor(s) move through this most difficult moment.

Arrange for the notification to be in person even if the survivor lives far away. Contact the law enforcement agency, a medical examiner, or chaplain in the survivor’s home area to deliver the notification in person. Also, ask them to confirm with you once the notification has been delivered.

Never take death notification information over the police radio. Get the information over the telephone or it might leak out to family through the media or private parties listening to a police radio. If radio dispatchers start to give information over the phone, stop them and call in.

Step 4: Go in pairs – with another person.

Go “in pairs.” Always try to have two people present to make the notification. Ideally, the team making the notification would be a law enforcement officer in uniform and the medical examiner or other civilian such as a chaplain, victim service counselor, family doctor, clergy person, or close friend. A female/male team often is advantageous.

It is important to have two notifiers. Survivors may experience severe emotional or physical reactions. (Some even strike out at notifiers.) There may be several survivors present. Notifiers can also support one another before and after the notification. If one notified person is home alone, DO NOT LEAVE THEM ALONE. Wait until other family or friends arrive for support.

Before arriving at the scene where the notification is to be made, the team should plan their strategy. Just before going to make the notification, be sure to discuss with your partner who’s going to say what. Who’s going to make the actual
notification? That needs to be determined before knocking on someone’s door in the middle of the night. In some cases, medical back up may be located near the scene. In rare situations, neighbors or nearby relatives might have to be consulted or go with the team to gain entry. If the scene is a workplace, then the team should consult with the employer/supervisor on how and where best to make the notification. Privacy is of the utmost importance.

Step 5: Make the approach.

1. Confirm you are at the proper address.

2. Knock and identify yourself. If the family is not at home, you may contact a neighbor first, but do not tell the neighbor about the death before making contact with the family. Tell neighbors you are trying to locate the family about a family emergency.

3. Present credentials if not in uniform, and if at all possible, do not make the notification through the door. Ask, calmly, if you can come inside. Introduce yourselves and let them know you have some important information to share with them. (Do not be too formal in your introductions.) Every effort must be made to get inside and have the one who came to the door sit down. It is important that everyone in the home at the time be assembled before the tragic news is revealed. Even the children should be present. To fail to do so may have repercussions at a later time. The children, especially older ones, may feel that they were excluded and not allowed to join in the immediate family grief.

4. Verify that you are at the correct address, with the correct family, and that they are next of kin of the deceased. Notification is made to the victim’s next of kin. This is usually a spouse, but could be a child, parent(s), sibling, or other legally responsible person. The team MUST determine if the person they are notifying is, in fact, the proper recipient of the notification. Ask the person(s) to be notified to sit down, and be sure that you are speaking to the next of kin.

Step 6: Deliver the notification in plain language.

The lead officer on the team, after identifying himself/herself and the other member(s) of the team, makes the announcement. Begin by saying, “I have some very bad news to tell you,” or a similar statement. This gives the survivor an important moment to prepare for the shock. After this, do not make “small talk.” Be specific be tactful at the same time. Relay the message directly and in plain language. Survivors usually are best served by telling them directly what happened. The presence of the team has already alerted them of a problem.
**Key Thought:** You cannot soften the blow, so be kind but be direct.

- Look them right in the eye, speaking kindly and loudly enough to be easily heard.
- Speak right to the point; slowly and carefully, in plain language, in small doses:
  - Do not use words like “expired,” “was lost,” “passed away,” “went to be with the Lord,” “bought the farm,” “is in a better place,” etc. Avoid vague expressions such as “Sally was lost” or “passed on.”
  - Examples of plain language: “I am sorry to tell you that there was an automobile accident tonight, and your son James was killed,” or “Your father had a heart attack at his workplace, and died.” Continue to use the word “dead” or “died” throughout the ongoing conversation and continue to use the victim’s name. If a suicide, don’t say that they “committed suicide” or it was a “successful suicide,” say rather, “he/she took his/her own life.”

Inform the survivor of the death, speaking slowly and carefully, giving any details that are available. Then, calmly answer any questions the survivor may have. Be careful to give only the known facts. Conjecture and hypothesizing are not to be made. The statement, “We do not know at this time” may always be given and the statement “We will try to find out the information that you are requesting” is also proper to give.

**Let Information “Soak-In”:** Remember, you are there to assist the survivor(s) of this circumstance to meet and work through their initial trauma. Do not be too quick with questions of your own. Example: “Do you have any questions?” “Is there anything else I can do for you?” Do, however, make sure before you leave that they understand the message you have just delivered to them.

Expect Any Type of Response: Persons react in unique and different ways. Some are quiet and reserved. Others vent their emotions. Intense reactions are normal, not abnormal. They are difficult to cope with, but generally healthier than controlled emotions. It is not our job to “hold back” whatever emotions that the bad news will produce. Be a calm presence, a stable rock for these co-victims. Expect fight, flight, or freeze responses. Understand that these reactions are normal and only harmful behavior to self or another are to be restrained.

Do not take reactions “personally.”

- Accept the response unless there is physical danger.
- Never try to talk survivors out of their grief or offer false hope:
  - By denial, “Now, now, you shouldn’t feel that way.”
  - By imposing your own beliefs
  - By encouraging them to be strong or saying “it will be alright.”
A note of caution must be mentioned. Children are deeply affected and often unable to express their feelings and needs verbally. Frequently, they will cry and then want to play. Again, older teens have the most to lose when tragedy strikes. In the case of a parent’s death, their entire life is suddenly turned upside down. Future plans are threatened. The family economy is usually drastically diminished. They may or may not immediately express their feelings at the initial announcement.

There are few consoling words that survivors find helpful, but it is always appropriate to say “I am sorry this happened,” or simply, “I am sorry.”

Step 7: Demonstrate compassion and gather support.

- Plan to take the time to provide information, support, and direction. Never simply notify and leave.

- Do not leave them alone (go with them – walk, follow, protect, ensure their safety).

- Do not take the deceased person’s personal items with you at the time of notification. Survivors often need time, even days, before accepting the victim’s belongings. Eventually, survivors will want all items, however. (A victim’s belongings should never be delivered in a trash bag.) Tell survivors how to recover items if they are in the custody of law enforcement officials.

- Patiently answer any questions about the cause of death, the location of the deceased person’s body, how the deceased person’s body will be released and transported to a funeral home, and whether an autopsy will be performed. If you do not know the answer to a question, do not be afraid to say so. Offer to get back to the survivor when more information is available, and be sure to follow through.

- Call the victim by name, use past tense; but NEVER say “the body.”

- Avoid gruesome details. It is okay to allow the medical examiner/coroner to provide additional information regarding the death.

- Offer to help the next of kin make telephone calls to other family members and friends if they ask for your help.

- Ask if they have a pastor/priest/rabbi, etc. that they would like you to call.

- Ask if they would like a Kleenex, a glass of water, or any medication they may need.
If they need to view the body of the deceased, offer to transport them. (Explain the procedure.) Explain the procedure if identification of the deceased is necessary. Explain about autopsy or organ donation, if appropriate.

Some family members may want to see the body of the deceased. Give family members an informed choice. If the are told about the condition of the body, he or she will know whether or not they can handle the viewing. Even being allowed to touch a hand is helpful if the entire body cannot be viewed. The tendency of many professionals is to overprotect. The refusal (to see the body) only enhances the fear and feelings of powerlessness already overwhelming the family. Give them choices.

Support them with appropriate choices:
- What they need to do next (nothing immediately).
- Explain the role of Medical Examiner and what he/she will be doing.
- Explain about funeral home selection and notification.
- Assure them that they do not need to make a lot of decisions right away, only immediate needs.

Other information:
- Source of further information, i.e. Medical Examiner, Detectives, etc. (telephone numbers, contact information).
- Sources of future support, i.e. Survivors of Suicide, SIDS support group, Victim Services

If the death occurred in another county or state, leave the name and phone number of a contact person at that location. Be patient. Most survivors are confused and some might feel abandoned after the initial notification. Many will want clarifications or may need more direction on arrangements that are necessary. Always leave a business card with your contact information on it with survivors. Remember, your presence and compassion are the most important resources you bring to a death notification.

**Step 8: Provide closure and follow-up.**

Once the notification has been presented and understood and the survivor has had their questions answered and has a support system present (relatives, close friends, clergy, etc.) it’s time for closure.

1. Assure the survivors that they are in good hands with those now around them.
2. Offer condolences on your own behalf and behalf of the agency you represent. (Remember, it’s never wrong to say, “I am sorry.”)
3. Ask if they have any other questions for you at this time.
4. Present your business card with the offer that they can call you for further assistance if needed.
As you leave, do not linger with others outside the door. If the desire is present to discuss the notification, the details of the incident, the family’s reaction, etc… this should be done at another location away from the family and others in the immediate area for confidentiality.

Report the Results: What happened today may be in court tomorrow:

- Make notes of your contact for any further reference needs.
- Report the completion of the notification to the requesting person or agency.
- File the appropriate reports.
- Clear any follow-up assignments that need to be carried out.

Some notifiers choose to make follow-up contact with the survivor(s). This is usually a very personal and individual decision. This may include a phone call the next day, a future visit, attending a wake, funeral or memorial service, or simply sending a card or note.

**Step 9: Exercise Self-Assessment and Care**

Performing death notifications is physically and emotionally exhausting and is, without a doubt, stressful, difficult, and sometimes very depressing. You may be affected as much as those you notify. Caring and compassion are costly.

- Be honest with family and yourself.
- It is okay to feel (empathy).
- Feelings are not a sign of weakness (it shows that you really care).
- Give yourself time to recover.
- Share your feelings with others, one-on-one, or in defusings and debriefings.

The team should debrief the situation as soon as possible afterwards. This could be informal or at a formal type of “organized” debriefing. Do not hesitate to seek outside help if you become deeply affected. This may be true especially when children and young people are the innocent victims. Also, review the notification; what went right, did anything go wrong, how could it be done better in the future?

**Special Situations**

There may be times you need to conduct death notifications in special situations. These include making notifications at a hospital, assisted living facility, etc. or having to make a notification in the work place. There may be times an individual dies in your jurisdiction but the survivors are too far away to be contacted in person or you may need to make a death notification for another agency. Suggestions for these special situations are located in Appendix B in this text.
While difficult, challenging, and seldom defined by anyone as an appealing prospect, providing death notifications are never-the-less our responsibility and can even be viewed as an honor. When done wrong, the notification can add to a person’s grief and trauma further damaging them and their view of law enforcement. When done appropriately, the delivery of a death notification, even though challenging for all involved, can result in dignity, mutual respect, and even admiration and appreciation. To be with a person at their lowest moment and to share with them the worst possible news is indeed an opportunity to “protect and serve.”
SUMMARY

Officers, perhaps more than any other group of people in society, depend on strong communication skills to do their job. As we have seen, 98% of the contacts that police make involve no force at all—just communication. Communication is integral to all that officers do, whether they are admitting inmates, talking to crime victims, investigating traffic crashes, registering jail visitors, interrogating suspects, making a death notification, or calming people in crisis. Good communication skills are also the hallmark of the professional. By communicating effectively, officers can enhance their professional image and encourage others to cooperate willingly with legitimate criminal justice goals.

At the same time, officers are charged with the duty and responsibility to use force when it is appropriate. Even then, communication remains a critical part of the officer’s duty. In Wisconsin, the system of Defensive and Arrest Tactics (DAAT) and Principles of Subject Control (POSC) that governs use of force is defined as “a system of verbalization skills coupled with physical alternatives.” In other words, talking is always preferable to fighting if it can be effective. However, if officers have to use force, they must still communicate while taking action and “come full circle” and return to verbalization to complete the interaction.

The general communication skills presented in this training can be used in all parts of an officer’s life—both at work and in personal relationships. Practicing active listening and learning how to make requests can be useful in many contexts. Identifying typical barriers to communication and how to overcome them is information that officers can apply in a variety of situations both professional and personal.

Additionally, we have learned communication skills that are specific to corrections and law enforcement. Some of these have to do with good communication within the context of the workplace, where officers have to interact with their peers, supervisors, and others both within and outside of their agency. Other skills are used in the jail dealing with inmates and visitors, or on the street dealing with people in a variety of settings. Learning how to make a basic/initial contact in a professional way can go a long way to achieving our eventual goal of willing cooperation. In specific instances officers may need to use dispute resolution techniques such as arbitration or mediation, or even use crisis resolution techniques to defuse dangerous situations. When the emergency is over, officers need to apply debriefing skills to calm those involved and to find ways to handle the next emergency even more skillfully.

Communication is at the heart of the officer’s job. More than any other skill, communication pervades everything an officer does. From responding to the dispatcher when the call first comes in to documenting the actions taken in a report when it’s resolved, communication is key. Today’s professional officer must have mastery of Professional Communication.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SELF-EVALUATION

To help you become more aware of your communication habits, complete the following communication self-evaluation by checking either “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neutral,” “Agree,” or “Strongly Agree” for each statement. After you take the quiz, follow the scoring and interpretation grid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I tend not to listen to people with whom I disagree.</td>
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<td>2. I find it difficult to fully participate in conversations where the subject is not of interest to me.</td>
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<td>3. When I feel I know the message the talker is trying to get across, I stop listening.</td>
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<td>4. I find it easy to listen to others’ views even if they are different from my own.</td>
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<td>5. I ask people to clarify things I do not understand.</td>
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<td>6. I usually form a rebuttal in my head while the other person is talking.</td>
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<td>7. I often look as if I am listening when, in fact I am not.</td>
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<td>8. I sometimes daydream when I should be listening.</td>
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<td>9. If I am not listening, I will tell the person.</td>
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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I listen for the main ideas not the details.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>I recognize that words mean different things to different people.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>If I don’t like or believe the other person, I block out what is being said.</td>
<td>☐️</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>I look at the person who is talking.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>I concentrate on the other person’s message rather than on physical appearance.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>I know which words and phrases cause me to react emotionally.</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>I preplan my communications with others to accomplish my goals.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>I anticipate others’ reactions to my communications.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>I take into consideration how others want to receive my information.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>I try to determine the mood of the other person (angry, frustrated, worried, etc.) when communicating with them.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>I feel that I am able to communicate my ideas to others so that they can understand my meaning.</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>I often feel others should have known my meaning.</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>I am able to receive negative feedback without getting defensive.</td>
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<td>23. I practice my listening skills on a regular basis.</td>
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<td>24. I find it hard to concentrate on what someone is saying when there are noise distractions.</td>
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<td>25. I often judge the content of others' messages when they are communicating with me.</td>
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<td>26. I restate information given to me to make sure that I understand it correctly.</td>
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<td>27. I let others know that I recognize the emotional level they are in when speaking to them.</td>
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SCORING

Circle the number that corresponds to your checkmarks for each question. Then add up these numbers to reach a total score.

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<th>Question #</th>
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Total = ______ ______ ______ ______ ______

Grand Total = ______

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ANALYSIS

Total Score

109-135  You have an excellent understanding of the communication process and use it effectively. Keep up the good work!

82 - 108 You have a strong understanding of the communication process and often use it effectively. You have a few areas that could use some work. Choose a particular communication weakness area and practice those skills.

54 - 81  You have a general understanding of the communication process and may occasionally use it effectively. You frequently get into trouble when communicating with others and have a number of areas that could use some improvement.

27 - 53  You have many opportunities to improve your communication effectiveness. Your skills are not what they should be in order to consistently get your message across clearly to others. Others may frequently misunderstand your meaning.
APPENDIX B: DEATH NOTIFICATIONS IN SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Hospital/Assisted Living Facility, etc. Many of these institutions and organizations have their own on-staff chaplains to assist with these cases. However, law enforcement officers and medical examiners may be called on to do death notifications at a hospital after a traffic crash or a shooting, for example.

It is a good idea for hospitals and other officials to determine general procedures and protocols in advance, so all parties are familiar with their duties and roles. It is best, whenever appropriate, to turn the notification responsibilities over to these staff members and possible be present to assist them as many times they have already established a relationship with those about to be notified. Here are a few points to be sure to remember:

- Find a quiet room for the notification, and be sure survivors are seated (Do not notify in a crowded hall or waiting room).
- Arrange for a doctor to be present or available shortly to answer medical questions. Doctors should be in a clean uniform.
- Inform simply and directly.
- Provide assistance and guidance:
  - If appropriate, ask if survivors wish to spend time with the body of the deceased (use the victim’s name – not “the body”).
  - Explain the procedure if identification of the deceased is necessary. Explain about autopsy or organ donation, if appropriate.
  - Volunteer to help notify others. Make a list of any calls made.
  - If there are media calls, refer them to the investigating officer or (if available) a victim service advocate.
  - Do not leave survivors alone. Be sure someone is there to accompany them.

School or workplace notification. Survivors often must be notified at their workplace. Here are several tips to help apply the basic principles to a workplace or school notification.

- Introduce yourself.
- Ask to speak to the manager, principal, supervisor, human resources director, or employee assistance coordinator, and inquire if the person to be notified is available. (It is not necessary to divulge any details regarding the purpose of your visit.)
- Ask the supervisor to arrange for a private room in which you may make the notification.
- Follow the basic notification procedures: with certainty, without delay, in person, in pairs, in plain language, with compassion.
- Allow the survivor to react, and offer your support.
- Ask if there may be a co-worker or classmate that they are especially close to. See about bringing them in.
- Transport the survivor to his or her home or to identify the body, if necessary.
- Arrange for their vehicle, if necessary.
- Let the survivor determine what he or she wishes to tell the supervisor regarding the death. Offer to notify the supervisor, if that is what the survivor prefers.
- Offer to inquire about the survivor taking the rest of the day off.
- Do not leave the person alone. Make sure that they have a support system in place.
- Give them contact information for future questions.

Notification of survivors outside of your area. When an individual dies within your jurisdiction and their survivors are too far away to be contacted in person, every effort should be made to contact the law enforcement agency in their area asking them to perform the notification. All information deemed appropriate and necessary should be forwarded to assist them in the process including contact information for the medical examiner, investigator, officers involved, etc. A teletype may also be sent from dispatch. A follow-up call should be requested to confirm the notification has been completed.

Performing notification for another agency. When a deceased party’s next of kin resides in your jurisdiction, and another official agency request your assistance to notify them, follow the basic notification procedures. All information should be confirmed via telephone and/or a teletype. All information concerning the circumstances surrounding the death should be compiled. Also, compile all contact information for the agencies and personnel involved. When the notification is completed, a report should be directed back to the requesting agency.

* A special note would be a death that takes place in a foreign country. In such a case, survivors should be presented with contact information for the U.S. State Department and possibly the U.S. Consulate and/or Embassy in that nation. Language barriers may be anticipated. Information concerning foreign travel may be helpful.
APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY

ACTIVE LISTENING: Using an effective method of hearing what people say in an attentive manner that uses both non-verbal and verbal behavior, and asking additional questions for clarification or more detail.

ADVERSARY: A person that opposes or attacks; in this context, a subject who is placing you in danger of bodily injury or death by his or her actions.

APPROACH CONSIDERATIONS: The issues an officer must address before making contact.

ARBITRATION: A dispute resolution strategy (REACT) used with one non-compliant individual.

ARTICULATE: The ability to express oneself readily, clearly and effectively.

ATMOSPHERE: Perception and environment surrounding the communication model.

ATTENDING SKILLS: A component of active listening that uses non-verbal communication to demonstrate attention to what people say.

AUDITORY EXCLUSION: A kind of stress-induced deafness that may occur as part of the fight or flight response to danger.

BARRIERS: Barriers are obstacles to effective communication that can be physical, officer-generated, or interpersonal.

BASIC/INITIAL CONTACT: A model for law enforcement and corrections contacts with citizens and inmates.

COME FULL CIRCLE: Concept integrating verbalization and physical intervention.

COMMUNICATION MODEL: A process in which a message moves from sender to receiver.

CONGRUENCE: The message received is the same as the message sent.

CONTACT OFFICER: Primary responsibility is to talk to the subject contacted.

CONTACTS: People you interact with.

CONTROL PROCESS: Achieving control of a contact or situation through presence and dialogue, or, if necessary, through physical intervention.
CONTROL: The purpose of an officer’s use of Defensive and Arrest Tactics or Principles of Subject Control is to gain control.

COOPERATIVE SUBJECT: A non-resistive subject who is controlled by the use of verbal direction.

COVER OFFICER: a second officer (or additional officers) who observe(s) to ensure that all goes well and who is (are) ready to intervene if necessary.

CRISIS INTERVENTION: A method of dealing with anyone who is not thinking clearly and rationally, making it difficult to use reasoning and logic to encourage compliance.

DAAT: See Defensive and Arrest Tactics.

DANGER ZONES: Distances at which an officer is subject to an attack.

DEBRIEFING: The procedure used after the use of force or a critical incident to apply closure, treatment, and/or evaluation. Also a technique used to calm self, partner, and the subject.

DE-ESCALATE: To decrease in intensity, to select another, less extreme alternative.

DEFENSIVE AND ARREST TACTICS: A system of verbalization skills coupled with physical alternatives.

DEFLECT: Redirect a person’s attention from his or her agenda using verbalization.

DISENGAGE: To remove oneself from a situation; to cease involvement in a course of action.

DISTURBANCE RESOLUTION: A higher level of verbal control than a basic contact. Examples are arbitration and mediation, which are used to defuse dangerous situations. Also, the conceptual model for officer’s use of intervention options.

D.O.N.E.: An acronym describing the conditions under which disengagement and/or escalation to physical force would be appropriate. Danger, Overriding concern, No progress, Escape.

DOOR OPENERS: Comments that encourage dialogue.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS: Signals or certain behaviors provided by the subject that are often associated with a high level of danger to officers.
EMPATHY: To have understanding of and identify with another’s situation and feelings.

ESCALATE/DE-ESCALATE: To increase/decrease the intensity or move to a higher/lower level of force or control.

FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT FALLACY: An officer-generated barrier that provides only two options of behavior for a contacted individual.

FIRST RESPONDER PHILOSOPHY: A system approach for proper officer action in a correctional emergency. The model provides a general framework of officer activities and response cues to be followed during any emergency situation.

FOLLOWING SKILLS: A component of Active Listening that uses verbal techniques to encourage a person to continue talking and provide additional information.

FOLLOW THROUGH CONSIDERATIONS: The actions and custodial care an officer must perform after achieving control.

HOT BUTTONS: Actions, remarks, insults, or challenges that provoke an emotional and less than professional response from an officer (officer-generated barrier).

INCIDENT RESPONSE: A model of systematic approach for proper police action (RESPOND).

INITIAL APPROACH: Considerations of an officer before making contact.

INTENT: The act or fact of intending, as to do something; intent is a necessary element in most crimes.

INTERVENTION OPTIONS: An element of Disturbance Resolution.

JARGON: Specialized or technical language used by a profession. Officers should avoid the use of jargon, including acronyms.

MEDIATION: A conflict resolution strategy to assist disputants in voluntarily reaching a mutually acceptable decision.

O.I.R.: The basic contact communication model. Opening, Information-Gathering, Resolution

PASSIVE RESISTANCE: Non-compliant and non-threatening behavior.

PERCEPTION: (1) Awareness of objects and other data through the medium of the senses, and (2) having insight or intuition as an abstract quality.
PERSONAL DISTANCE: Within 10 feet distance from a subject.

POP: "Provoke Other People"; an officer-generated barrier.

POSC: See Principles of Subject Control.

POSITION OF ADVANTAGE: Provides the officer the ability to escalate force in order to maintain control.

PRE-ATTACK POSTURES: Behaviors that may indicate imminent danger of physical assault.

PRECLUSION: The elimination of all other viable alternatives.

PRESENCE: A person’s bearing which appears self-assured and effective and commands respectful attention.

PRESUMED COMPLIANCE: An officer-generated barrier exhibited by officer complacency when dealing with human behavior.

PRINCIPLES OF SUBJECT CONTROL: Used in corrections, a system of verbalization skills coupled with physical alternatives.

PROFESSIONAL: An individual that exhibits behavior and traits expected within their profession.

PUBLIC EYE/PUBLIC RECORDS: Revealed to or open to knowledge or judgment of community.

REACT: A systematic dispute resolution strategy [see arbitration] (Request cooperation, Explain reason, Allow choice, Check decision, Take action).

RESISTIVE TENSION: Level of agitation in a subject’s body.


RESPONDING SKILLS: A component of Active Listening using verbal skills to illustrate understanding of what people are expressing and feeling.

SHOULDER SHIFT: Pre-attack posture.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Factors or situation that may justify rapid escalation of force or selection of higher force options: availability of backup, injury or fatigue, presence of innocent people, availability of cover, availability of proper equipment.
SUBJECT DEBRIEFING: A procedure to calm and attend to an individual after the use of physical intervention.

TEAM TACTICS: Unity of effort between two or more officers attempting to control a subject.

TOTALITY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES: Represents all information known to the officer at the moment action is taken and the facts used to judge the reasonableness and appropriateness of the action.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE: The sum total of an officer’s life experiences and training.

UNCOOPERATIVE SUBJECT: A person who will not comply with verbal direction.

UNIFIED TACTICAL TRAINING: Wisconsin’s integrated system of training in verbal and physical skills and concepts.

VERBAL CONTROL: Compliance with directions issued by the officer to command the adversary what to do.

VERBAL STUN: A short, very loud, shouted verbal command that serves as a warning and may impede the subject’s neuro-muscular function.

VERBAL WARNING: A clear command, followed by a contingency, which is a statement of your intended actions if your order is not obeyed.

VISUALIZATION: A process of mental rehearsal similar to directed daydreaming. In visualization, the officer imagines realistic situations that might occur and how he/she might best respond to them.

VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE: Willingly submitting or yielding.

WARNING SIGNS OF DANGER: Your reaction in a tactical situation depends on your perception of warning signs such as the subject’s sudden escalation of anger or the subject’s suddenly reaching for or drawing a weapon.
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