

# The International Association of Ethics Trainers

---

## Police Ethics Training- How We Now Do It

Established in 1995 by past IACP President Chief David Walchak, continued under IACP President Darrell Sanders, and under the guidance of Fourth Vice President Chief Bill Berger, the *Ad Hoc Sub-Committee on Police Image and Ethics* has generated a tremendous amount of positive interest and anticipation for the final report.

With two years of research and numerous meetings between Chairman Bill Berger, and Co-chairmen Neal Trautman and Michael Cosgrove, who oversaw the workings of over 60 members who comprised the ad hoc committee, the following is a final compilation of the committee report to the IACP members, along with a list of the ad hoc recommendations and a detailed analysis of the first-ever IACP ethics survey.

During the spring of 1997, the most extensive ethics training survey ever conducted by law enforcement was undertaken by the committee. Over 4,500 surveys were distributed to members of IACP and of that, 20% or 900 completed surveys were returned.

Though on the surface, this percentage may seem low, private sector marketers will tell you that anything over 10% is considered extraordinary. The large response was collected and the results analyzed. This has produced solid recommendations for change in how we as a profession must address ethics today and in the future.

The survey research instrument utilized both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It was believed that by using these two distinct research designs, the special demands of this specific project could be met.

Such other methods as role play (26%), computers and games were used much less often (about 7% mentioning these methods of delivering ethics instruction). Sixty-three percent (63%) of the responding departments said that they employed a "standardized lesson plan" for ethics instruction which means that over a third of the agencies did not equip ethics instructors with planned teaching materials.

The survey results regarding Field Training Officers (FTOs) ethics instruction were not as overwhelming as the reported statistics for instructors in general. Sixty-three percent (63%) received some formal training, while only 52% indicated they were trained in adult learning theories of education.

Quite unexpectedly, only about a third (34.4%) of the agencies said they had an ethics category for the evaluation reports completed by FTOs on their trainees. In

other words, among the categories used to assess qualifications and skills of recruits, ethics related categories were not included in about two-thirds of the agencies surveyed.

One point that was clearly revealed in the survey was that a vast majority (83.3%) of the departments were engaged in some form of ethics training for newly sworn officers. Over 505 of the respondents saw this training as fulfilling a "high" need among officers, among supervisory personnel, and among command-level staff.

These item responses clearly suggested there were important concerns about ethics training and an emphasis on ethics should be a top priority for all levels of the organization. To address this need, 72% of the agencies said that they provide some ethics-related training beyond the basic academy experience.

What was interesting was the hourly breakdown regarding these issue areas. More time was spent discussing issues related to the use of force and cultural diversity than the other areas. This emphasis probably reflects major concerns in most agencies over the past several years in which the issues of racial discrimination and use of force incidents were highly publicized, not to mention highly expensive concerns related to defending against civil litigation.

One major finding was that the amount of time devoted to ethics training did not appear to be consistent with how important the needs were based on the responses. There seems to be a recognized demand for expanded training hours, more quality training resources and greater involvement with ethics training at all levels of the organization, but the number of hours remains rather insignificant in terms of this recognized demand.

It is possible that the gap revealed in this survey between "high need" and training hours devoted to ethics actually reflects changes that are occurring and there is simply a resource lag while the gap closes. Whether this is the case, only time will tell.

Generally speaking, these survey results support the general conclusion that ethics training is considered important by law enforcement agencies and they are continuing to commit training resources, seek outside assistance, and generally provide some ethical training to recruits, in-service, and management personnel.

## **Issues Considered Most Critical By IACP Members**

Cultural Diversity/Racism/Sexism  
Corruption/Gratuities  
Public Trust  
Morals/Personal Values of Officers/Lack of Values in New Officers  
Honesty  
Abuse of Force/Abuse of Authority  
Decision-making  
Code of Silence  
Off-duty Issues/Behavior  
Poor Work Ethic of New Recruits  
Lack of a Sense of Responsibility  
Lack of Role Models

## **Issues Considered Critical By IACP Members**

Honesty in Official Reports  
Police Unions Supporting Unethical Officers  
Fabricating Evidence/Honesty in Official Reports and Embellishing Testimony  
Temptation to Embellish Testimony or Belief that the Truth Needs Help  
Proliferation of Drugs with Money Available to Corrupt the Police  
Lowered Standards  
Professionalism  
Respect  
Loyalty  
Media

**An overwhelming number of agencies (80.3%) reported they commit resources to train instructors offering ethics courses and over sixty percent (62.4%) reported they also provide their ethics trainers additional training in adult learning theory.**

**The major approaches these agencies employed in teaching ethics were reported as:**

Lecture (78%)

Readings/Discussion (67.3%)

Videotapes (53%)

Video Scenarios (49%)

**In resource commitment for ethics training, 56.9% of the agencies said they sought external assistance in developing their ethics programs. Only about a third, 30.4%, however, invested in formal training in ethics for their FTOs; while almost two-thirds, 60.5%, provided ethics training for narcotic and undercover officers.**

**Whether this percentage for drug enforcement activities should be higher is difficult to decide. Perhaps it does reflect a concern about the ethical temptations inherent in this kind of work and represents an effort by at least some agencies to aid in preventing more serious difficulties.**

**Other findings came from the items asking departments whether they addressed ethical issues in specific areas, such as;**

gratuities (81% said "yes")

conflicts of interest (76%)

abuse of force (90%)

abuse of authority (78.9%)

corruption (68.6%)

discretion/public trust (78.2%)

off-duty ethics (70.9%)

personal values (61.4%)

management of ethics (64.9%)

**Ethics training methods such as role playing was used (36%), computers and games were used much less often (about 7% mentioning these methods of delivering ethics instruction). Sixty-three percent (63%) of the responding departments said that they employed a "standardized lesson plan" for ethics instruction.**

***Article by Neal Trautman***

**February 03, 2004 13:00 dw**