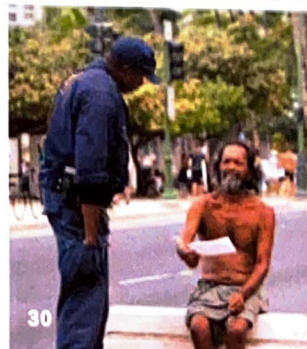


CONTENTS



MEET OUR NEW PRESIDENT
Dwight E. Henninger



30 Increasing Empathy Through Trauma-Informed Policing

Training officers in trauma-informed policing and the correlation of adverse childhood experiences and crime increases empathetic approaches and reduces negative outcomes.

BECKY HAAS, ANDREA D. CLEMENTS, WADE GOURLEY

38 Interacting with Individuals Who Have Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Police officers should receive training to better understand I/DD, different modes of communication, signs of I/DD, and how to de-escalate situations involving an individual with I/DD.

RACHEL A. MINKOFF, CARLOS E. GERENA

44 Building a Unit to Bridge the Gap

The LMPD VSU professionals keep victims engaged in the criminal justice process; meet the needs of the community; and provide on-scene response, enabling officers to focus on investigations.

NICOLE CARROLL, JOSH HASCH

50 Changing Minds to End the Opioid Epidemic

Motivational interviewing, viewing drug addiction as a disease, providing access to recovery and treatment resources, and utilizing diversion programs can heal communities affected by the opioid epidemic.

JOSEPH DANIEL REMY, MELISSA ANN O'MARA, COLLEEN MCKAY WHARTON, TIMOTHY SEPLAKI

BY
Becky Haas, ETSU/Ballad Health STRONG Brain Institute, East Tennessee State University; Andrea D. Claments, PhD, Department of Psychology, ETSU/Ballad Health STRONG Brain Institute, East Tennessee State University; and Wade Gourley, Chief, Oklahoma City Police Department, Oklahoma

EMPATHY FOR THOSE SERVED, FOR ONE ANOTHER, AND FOR ONESELF CAN ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THOSE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT.

Further, empathy is enhanced through understanding why many people behave as they do, which is a central tenet of being trauma informed. In 2019, the IACP adopted a resolution encouraging all law enforcement agencies to become well informed about the correlation between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and numerous negative outcomes, which is the central focus of trauma-informed care training, but, so far, this information has not been systematically disseminated in law enforcement settings. Thus, efforts should be undertaken to inform law enforcement of both the importance of ACEs and the potential impact of law enforcement becoming what is known as “trauma informed,” with one central outcome being a significant gain in empathy for those trained in this philosophy.

By training their officers in trauma-informed policing, law enforcement agencies can increase empathetic approaches supported by ACEs science. Trauma is a term used to describe anything

that causes extreme or prolonged stress. Secondary trauma is when individuals (including police officers) are affected by witnessing traumatic events experienced by others. Understanding trauma can support law enforcement’s efforts to develop age-appropriate responses for reducing trauma on scene, reduce race-based community trauma, and encourage prioritization of resources addressing secondary trauma experienced by officers. For some in law enforcement, transitioning from traditional law enforcement responses to using a trauma-responsive lens will be a significant shift, but infusing greater empathy in police settings will allow the profession to reap the benefits experienced in multiple other settings such as health care and education.

The CDC-Kaiser Permanente ACE Study was one of the largest and most publicized investigations of the relationship between childhood abuse, neglect, household challenges, and later-life health and well-being ever conducted. The study showed that toxic stress (ongoing unbuffered stress) during childhood can derail healthy brain development; affect attention, impulse control, decision-making, and learning; and increase



Understanding trauma can aid law enforcement in developing appropriate responses to race-based community trauma.



By training their officers in trauma-informed policing, law enforcement agencies can increase empathetic approaches supported by ACEs science.

emotional responding. Children growing up in the absence of nurturing, supportive relationships that protect against toxic stress have demonstrated a struggle to learn and be successful in school. This increases children's risk of becoming involved in criminal behavior and engaging in health-risk behaviors, such as early sexual activity and unhealthy alcohol or drug use. Using trauma-responsive tools can assist those in law enforcement in their interactions with those who have histories of adversity, as well as prevent or buffer the stress that results from witnessing traumatic experiences in the line of duty. Increasing awareness of the adversity-health-behavior connection can provide communities with an "upstream" approach to solving issues, increase organizational and community resilience, and even enhance police effectiveness on the job. For example, understanding behaviors that are normal responses to trauma can assist officers in discerning truthfulness in such areas as intimate partner violence.

Over the course of three years between 2013 and 2016, Becky Haas, of the ETSU/Ballad Health STRONG Brain Institute, directed a grant-funded police crime prevention program aimed at reducing drug-related and violent crime in neighborhoods in a small community in Tennessee. Community partners were engaged on a regular basis to discern and address the causal factors of crime. Over time, these efforts yielded 19 crime prevention programs implemented by 35 different community agencies. Crime was reduced by 40 percent in one neighborhood, and crime prevention partners pioneered the first probation program of its kind in the state to reduce recidivism. Overseeing development of this probation program for felony offenders with addictions showed that most people involved in the justice system have histories of childhood trauma. When that grant ended in 2016, the state department

of corrections acquired the probation program for replication statewide. These collective crime prevention efforts twice received national recognition and were listed by the U.S. Department of Justice as a "success story." While working toward crime prevention goals, partnering agencies were simultaneously trained in trauma-informed care, which is a way of interacting with individuals who have experienced ACEs and other adversity. Training materials primarily consisted of content from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING TRAUMA IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

The day-to-day roles police play as they fulfill their oath to faithfully serve and protect often resemble social work more than the popular TV images and police recruitment videos portray. The overwhelming majority of officers spend only a small fraction of their time responding to violent crime. In a June 2020 article in the *New York Times*, crime analysts dug through call data for 10 police agencies that had made such data available, including places with relatively high rates of violent crime. Data revealed that incidents that met the FBI Uniform Crime Report definition of violent crime made up only around 1 percent of calls for service. More commonly, calls included working with individuals experiencing homelessness; making welfare checks; investigating property crimes; investigating traffic crashes and other noncriminal calls; and, infrequently, responding to incidents coded as actual violence.

A significant percentage of calls are for family offenses, some of which are classified as domestic violence, often with children present. Domestic violence calls are potentially some of the most violent

or lethal calls to which LEOs respond. The interpersonal nature of such calls requires special skills and dispositions—including the ability to understand possible roots of behavior, which often stem from an individual's past trauma, and the ability to show empathy while not compromising the duties of the job. In many scenarios, police serve as navigators for situations that may be the most traumatic life event the people involved have ever experienced. However, in a review of officer training, a 2016 national study of the training of 135,000 recruits across 664 local police academies found little training to prepare officers for such navigation. On average, officers each received a great deal of training in firearms, self-defense, use of force, and other related topics to address violent crime, while only a minimal amount of training was spent on topics like navigating nonviolent family offenses, mental illness, conflict management, or homelessness. Three primary areas of trauma are central to trauma-informed policing training: (1) on-scene trauma for children; (2) community trauma; and (3) vicarious trauma.

On-Scene Trauma for Children

As officers respond to calls for service, children are often on scene. Such events can be highly traumatic for children, but if officers are equipped to understand the child's feelings and responses and have tools to buffer the child's stress, negative outcomes can be reduced. It's important the officers are trained to understand that appearing angry or withdrawn is a normal reaction to fear or stress in a child. Solutions can be as simple as calmly explaining what is happening, reassuring the child that he or she is safe, and explaining what will happen next.

Community Trauma

In recent years, an emerging form of trauma related to police work has been labeled community trauma. Community trauma is increasingly evident as tensions escalate in response to incidents of perceived police corruption and misuse of force against black persons in the United States. This historical, race-based trauma is not only experienced by children and adults of color, but the effects are also felt by communities as a whole. Widespread outcry for police reform demand that steps be taken to prevent brutality and that measures be put in place to rebuild police and community relationships. However, it is not only black individuals who are impacted by this community trauma. The stress caused by police misconduct, or even just the perception that misconduct is occurring, greatly impacts officers and their families who are subject to tensions caused by association with the profession.

Vicarious Trauma

Another observable kind of trauma prevalent in police work is vicarious or secondary trauma. The trauma to which officers are exposed on a daily basis can cause great physical and mental stress and can undermine health, well-being, and judgment. In 2009, a police psychologist with the New York City Police Department estimated that police officers are likely to be exposed to at least 900 potentially traumatic incidents over the course of a 30-year career. The prolonged, ongoing exposure to potentially traumatic incidents, loss, and extreme stress may come at the cost of police officers' health and well-being, and resources available for addressing such secondary trauma are often inadequate. Effects of secondary trauma often extend beyond officers to their loved ones and family members. There is often a cultural implication that officers must "soldier on" no matter what they encounter or what human sufferings they witness. Officers are impacted by what they witness, and their health may suffer if they try to maintain the pretense that they are not affected. There is evidence that support for officer mental well-being and stress is inadequate, including the alarming statistic that more officers took their own lives in 2019 than were killed in the line of duty.

EMPATHY THROUGH TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICING

It is essential to provide those in law enforcement with more than just an understanding of ACEs science by also including training in the use of a trauma-informed lens in order to facilitate practical application related to the knowledge of ACEs science. The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing and the Leadership Conference Education Fund's *The New Era of Public Safety* advocate for the use of community policing and a leadership commitment to creating a culture that supports officer health and well-being. Both community policing and officer well-being align naturally with incorporating a trauma-informed lens, which includes enhancing empathy as one of its central tenets.

Community confidence in law enforcement personnel is the foundation for community policing. Police officers earn trust—and restore trust—through actions that reflect the principles of community policing. Creating genuine relationships through collaborative partnerships that include equitable representation from the community helps residents feel safer and increases the likelihood they will cooperate with police. It is not uncommon for precincts that practice community policing to have an

“As conversations around police reform occur, applying ACEs science through training in trauma-informed practices, known to enhance empathy, is a proactive step to take.”

increased bandwidth for strengthening diverse community relationships. As an example, during the previously mentioned crime prevention grant in which community policing was implemented, the local NAACP president invited the Johnson City, Tennessee, police chief to take proactive steps to strengthen community partnerships with police. This led to the birth of a program aimed at equity and diversity. Police invited leaders from community organizations to meet each month. Participants included the NAACP, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ+ leaders, Latinx leaders, faith-based leaders, government officials, university representatives, and others. The police publicly advertised meeting times so any community member could attend. Monthly meetings invited transparent conversations about ways to strengthen police and community relations. This resulted in launching an annual Martin Luther King Jr. Unity March, as well as a Coffee with a Cop program. Coffee with a Cop events, where officers made themselves available for casual conversation, were held anywhere police were invited, such as the senior center, downtown businesses, churches of color, and at-risk youth programs. An annual event was also created there, in festival-like fashion, area first responders and their families were invited along with the general public for a day of food, games, and live music in a downtown park.

These successful programs enhanced communication and deepened relationships just by providing an opportunity for individuals to get to know one another. Laying the groundwork over several years through educating both law enforcement officers and community organizations in trauma-informed principles facilitated a willingness to participate in these activities and likely enhanced their effectiveness as many of the participants sought to understand and empathize with people from whom they differed. This human connection is central in the application of ACEs science and trauma-informed care. Knowing someone's story and background can reduce tensions and enhance empathy in policing and many other settings.

Training on ACEs and trauma-informed care began in earnest in 2016 in many organizations across northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia. Nearly 4,000 professionals were trained in three years, and there was a realization that members of law enforcement should be included due to the trauma-heavy nature of their work. As frontline service providers, members of law enforcement are present during traumatic events, and it is important to know not only how to identify trauma but also how to respond in ways that do not re-traumatize individuals.

TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICING TRAINING

Police are often more accepting of information received from their peers, including the recommendation that they learn about trauma. To meet the need for a cohesive training program on this content for law enforcement, Trauma-Informed Policing training was developed by incorporating ACEs science with existing materials developed within the law enforcement field. Trauma-Informed Policing training includes several recommendations from the IACP and others, including practical tools and resources to assist law enforcement agencies in building or enhancing effective operational responses to children exposed to violence and creating a trauma-informed law enforcement system.

Trauma-Informed Policing training includes several objectives, many of which directly relate to enhancing empathy. Participants are taught to understand that early traumatic stress causes actual changes to the brain and is the root cause of many behaviors such as combativeness, withdrawal, difficulty following instructions, flight, and other behaviors that may be thought of as resistance or purposeful misbehavior. Once officers understand the origin of some of these behaviors, they can understand that the person may have limited coping skills or may be exhibiting survival skills and thus be less likely to interpret them as hostile. Training also covers applied strategies that officers can use themselves or with others, such as tactical breathing and de-escalation techniques.

APPLICATIONS AND IMPACTS OF TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING

The first iteration of Trauma-Informed Policing training was delivered to the Greenville, North Carolina, Police Department over two days by Becky Haas and Andrea D. Clements. The community in which the crime reduction grant was implemented also received training during

TABLE 1. KNOWLEDGE CHANGE ATTRIBUTED TO TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICING TRAINING

	Mean	SD
My understanding of the impact of trauma on the people I serve	1.391*	1.043
My understanding of the impact of trauma on me	1.087*	1.029
My knowledge of the principles of trauma-informed care	1.609*	1.145
My ability to implement the principles of trauma-informed care	1.565*	1.109
My knowledge of strategies to prevent the use of seclusion, restraint, and coercive interventions	1.222*	1.042
My overall experience attending the training	1.568*	1.659

*LEOs Indicated that knowledge increased significantly ($p < .001$) on every item due to training

roll calls. Officers from these trainings overwhelmingly indicated that their understanding of trauma and trauma-informed principles was increased (see Table 1). Qualitative feedback for recent trainings has been just as positive.

A testimonial from the Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Police Department senior leadership emphasized how this training enhanced the ability to “understand people,” which is the definition of empathy. Deputy Chief Jeff Becker stated,

The training was informative and compelling and very well received. Trauma-Informed Policing can make first responders more effective by providing very practical tools to help understand people and circumstances encountered by members of law enforcement. In the process, officers further benefit by better understanding reactions to trauma experienced personally or by those served. The training emphasis on officer wellness and reviewing local resources for staff underscored the need to reduce the stigma surrounding officer well-being.

One easily implemented practice for reducing trauma for children with justice involvement is being widely adopted in West Virginia and Tennessee. The West Virginia Center for Children’s Justice Initiative, commonly referred to as Handle With Care, involves a police-school partnership in which school personnel are made aware of a child’s interaction with law enforcement. No details are shared, but school personnel who are also aware of the effects of childhood trauma may be able to buffer any effects of that

encounter just by having an awareness that something occurred. After the Johnson City, Tennessee, Police Department received Trauma-Informed Policing training, they launched the Handle With Care program, thus confirming that the trauma-informed lens was being used. Additionally, in that community, officers requested that three hours of additional training on self-care and mental wellness be included in their annual in-service training, confirming that empathy toward themselves and their coworkers was valued.



“Becky Haas was a very good instructor and presented the material in a straightforward realistic approach for law enforcement. Based on my experience as a crisis negotiator, it is easy to see the correlation and application of these principles to situations officers deal with on a daily basis. More importantly, officers need to recognize the indicators of trauma they experience as part of their job to prevent destructive behaviors in their own lives.”

—Wade Gourley, Chief of Police,
Oklahoma City Police Department, Oklahoma

“This police/school/community initiative is evidence that trauma-informed policing is a critical component for strengthening police-community relationships. When operating under this policing philosophy, relationships have been strengthened on all levels. This police-school-community partnership works to change the odds for students and their families who may have experienced trauma. This program has seen tremendous value in offering mentoring for students and, through increased visibility in classroom visits, police are serving as positive role models.”

—Margaret Kursey, Director,
The Martinsburg Initiative

The Martinsburg, West Virginia, Police Department, which had already been implementing Handle With Care in a successful police and community partnership program called the Martinsburg Initiative (TMI), received Trauma-Informed Policing training in the summer of 2020. TMI has already engaged in mentoring students, motivated by their understanding that supportive, caring relationships can mitigate the effects of trauma in the life of a child.

Educating police with the Trauma-Informed Policing training on an even larger scale began in December 2020 in partnership with the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police (TACP). TACP is utilizing a Victims of Crime Act grant and is working on behalf of the governor to reduce childhood trauma through launching the Handle With Care initiative. To support that effort, Trauma-Informed Policing is now available to all members of law enforcement in Tennessee through assistance from the TACP.

As conversations around police reform occur, applying ACEs science through training in trauma-informed practices, known to enhance empathy, is a proactive step to take. Moving beyond understanding the significance of childhood adversity to practical application is an important next step for law enforcement agencies. Not only will this empower law enforcement professionals with the skills they need to reduce trauma on scene, especially for children, but it will create a blueprint to become proactive in equitably addressing community trauma with greater empathy and prioritization for officer self-care. ○

IACP RESOURCES

- Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV)
- Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Children Exposed to Violence Toolkit

theIACP.org

- “Trauma-Informed Policing: Responding to Children Exposed to Violence” (article)

policechiefmagazine.org