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NH Law Enforcement Accountability, Community and Transparency

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Honorable LEACT Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important work.

Randy Means is an international Law Enforcement Consultant and Principle for “Police Community Training”. I have heard him present a couple of times and hopefully, some of you have as well. Mr. Means once said something that resonated with me for years; Many Police departments have minimal training requirements after certification in order to remain certified, he said. In NH, of course, that requirement is just 8 hours. Mr. Means pointed out that we should spend those precious few training hours learning and acquiring skills that we utilize most every day as police officers ~ but we don’t. We typically shoot on those days. So we train in what we do the least and have little training in what we do most often which is interacting with the public. Without continually acquiring human relations skill sets, obviously our job becomes more difficult. The PSTC guidance is that a Police department require 8 hours of training “exclusive of firearms, CPR / First Aid and Defensive Tactics” and leaving the subject matter up to the determination of the department, but the same subject is not to be repeated in a subsequent year.

Question: A. Does the Police Standards and Training Council audit this requirement?

B. If a member of the public filed a 91:A request of a police department inquiring ONLY of the training subjects provided to its department in the last 3 – 5 years, would it be provided?

Director Scippa in his presentation yesterday acknowledged that improvement is needed. It is not clear on how “significant funding” would be required to include crisis intervention training for academy and in service training modules. I am confident that the community would fully support including the Director’s strong consideration to include “EPIC – Ethical Policing is Courageous” training. Embracing experiential learning and utilizing adult learning strategies is also encouraging. Respect for Diversity indeed should be a theme of all police training. Director Scippa’s recommendation to re establish the State Level Police Agency Accreditation Program only shocks the conscious to realize that currently there is no accreditation program.

The Police Academy recruit syllabus is not available to the public citing safety and security issues if the content is known. The public is well aware that the Police academy instructs in defensive tactics, for an example, the specific of which is unknown in order to keep confident certain techniques, which is understandable.

Question: In the interest of transparency, why can’t the **topics of instruction** on the police academy syllabus be made public as long as specific details of the content of the subject are not?

Having recently completed a 32 year Correctional career in NH I managed the processing and housing an average of 1500 inmates per year. That is 48,000 inmates. According to the National Institute of Corrections and my direct observation, 10% of those individuals are a serious threat to public safety, which would be about 4800 inmates. I estimate that 5% of that group (240 people) was very violent and required physical intervention during their confinement often on more than one occasion. I personally got involved with these interventions and through that experience developed a course of instruction that is proven to deescalate violent situations. What I have learned and instruct has prevented serious injury to staff and inmates as well as avoided litigation. This training and philosophy did not require significant resources to provide. It does require sound and consistent leadership and oversight at all levels. Alarming, such a curriculum is absent from the County Corrections curriculum and likely the State Correctional and Police curriculum to the specificity required of positive results.

To highlight some of the performance objectives in this curriculum, it would **identify the common triggers in aggressive human behavior** and specifically examine the **continuum that an aggressive person experiences** and how to respond to that. Law Enforcement personnel should understand the **difference between an instinctive response and a trained response**. They should know the **difference between control and management**. Law Enforcement should understand that **when we are at the peak of aggression with individual behavior, force options are not always required**. We must **understand the social science of aggressive behavior** if we have any hope to effectively manage it.

Law Enforcement Training Curriculum **should include the neuroscience of what an officer goes through when faced with aggression** and **what an individual experiences when exhibiting aggressive behavior and how best to predict and manage that behavior with the ultimate goal of a non violent outcome**. The **goal should be to gain voluntary compliance**, which in my experience, is almost always possible. There should be **intensive after action evaluations**, which then become **material for upcoming training** in order to consistently improve reaction and performance.

I am uncertain about the actual depth of study of managing aggressive behavior at the Police Academy. Certainly managing aggressive human behavior is a skill set and **requires experiential training** and learning in order to gain and maintain proficiency and I am delighted to hear that Director Scippa agrees with these concepts.

In the absence of mature and responsible peer support and supervision, lack of training hours multiplied with significant frustration of the job, our system unfairly places officers in situations that set them up for pack mentality behavior, poor personal decision making in stressful situations and intense scrutiny by the public and criminal justice system afterward. The NH Police, Correctional Officers and Public deserve better than this.

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