



# Law Enforcement Training on the Effects of Cumulative Trauma

Maintaining wellness and improving  
positive interpersonal interactions

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## Thanks to our partners

This project was funded by the Washington Health Care Authority and University of Washington for the purpose of teaching officers about the potential effects of cumulative trauma. The intention is to increase law enforcement officers' wellness. In so doing, it is anticipated that training will increase positive interactions with community members struggling with substance use disorder. Creating a project such as this takes commitment, knowledge, support and impetus, for which we can thank the University of Washington as the primary lead and resource for this project. Additionally, the Clallam County Sheriff's Department, Port Angeles Police Department and Sequim Police Department have contributed their expertise, time and support to make this project possible. Finally, we owe gratitude for those law enforcement officers who gave their time to participate openly and fully in this advance training pilot project. None of this research, development and feedback would have been possible with all the contributions of our partners who deeply care about the well-being of the law enforcement community and the public.

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## Introduction:

ESSB 5693 (105, pg 375) has allocated \$500,000 of the general fund-state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 for the authority to contract with the University of Washington Addictions, Drug, and Alcohol Institute (ADAI). This funding must be used to develop, refine, and pilot a new, advance, evidence-based training for law enforcement to improve interactions with individuals who use drugs. It is funding from the Blake response bill through the HCA.

The training must be developed so it can be adapted and used statewide to decrease stigmatizing beliefs among law enforcement through positive contact with people who use drugs and improve officer well-being and effectiveness by providing skills and techniques to address the drug overdose epidemic. The institute must develop and refine this training, leveraging prior work, and in partnership with a steering committee that includes people with lived experience of substance use disorder and criminal legal involvement, researchers, clinicians, law enforcement officers, and others.

The training must complement, but not duplicate, existing curricula already provided by the criminal justice training commission. The institute must pilot the advanced training in a subset of regional law enforcement agencies and evaluate its acceptability and feasibility through participant interviews and pre-training and post-training ratings of stigmatizing beliefs. The institute must incorporate feedback from the pilot training sessions into a final training program that it must make available to law enforcement agencies across the state.

It is dependent on the participating officers, treatment providers, criminal justice system, available services, and safety net of each community to create a methodology for “improving interaction”.

This pilot serves as an opportunity for officers to be able to share their own “lived experience” and “trauma” sometimes caused by responding to so many incidents, including overdoses and deaths, which involve alcohol and/or drugs. There is a perception amongst some that law enforcement is “at war” with people experiencing substance use disorder. The hope is that when people get a chance to learn more about what is happening on the street today, from the perspective of law enforcement always having to respond to pick up the pieces, perhaps there will be learning and change in all directions.

There is no sense in developing training if we don’t have a place to start! The lessons learned from our region will be captured by the UW research team to see if there is a possible statewide model or guide which can be developed that improve officer wellness and our response to community members suffering from substance use disorder.

The Clallam County pilot project training will take place over the course of 12 weeks. It will meet every other Monday from 1300-1500 hours in a location selected by the steering committee.

## Vision:

This project attempts to bring a shared understanding of cumulative trauma to law enforcement officers that emphasizes value-based leadership, skill building to reduce the impacts of trauma, promotes healing and wellness, and provides a safe, open forum to explore concepts and methods for behavioral change

## Goals:

1. Provide law enforcement (LE) participants with knowledge that will create a shared understanding of the emotional, psychological, and physiological impacts of trauma over time.
2. Increase effectiveness in recognizing trauma reactions and using skills that reduce the stress response and result in more positive interactions.
3. Reinforce the positive results of values-based leadership that lead to constructive outcomes.
4. Share ideas with colleagues in a welcoming, safe setting.

## Objectives:

1. Learn about the fundamental brain science of trauma.
  - a. Define and clarify the concept of cumulative (complex) trauma.
  - b. Understand the physical, emotional, and behavioral impacts of cumulative trauma on personal wellness, relationships, family, long-term health, longevity in a LE careers, and effects on community members.
2. Understand the nature and nuances of values-based leadership.
  - a. Define values-based leadership and what it looks like in the field of LE.
  - b. Gain insight into personal values and how they guide one's life and influence leadership style.
  - c. Discuss values-based leadership and what it brings to the community.
3. Participate in activities that demonstrate the nature of stigma and learn how to reduce it in regards to personal wellness at the intersection of LE and community members.
4. Learn a number of strategies, tools, and techniques to identify cumulative trauma, how to talk about it, and ways to reduce the effects of cumulative trauma on one's self and others.
5. Be part of a visionary pilot project during which learning, questioning, discussing, and professional development can take place safely and confidentially with like-minded participants from law enforcement.
6. Measure the increase in knowledge, awareness and any behavioral change related to new learning about cumulative trauma, personal wellness, and values-based leadership.
7. Increase the effectiveness of LE interactions and relationships with community members whose own cumulative trauma is manifest in substance use disorders and mental health disorders.
  - a. Understand how underlying trauma has a correlation with substance use, homelessness, domestic violence, and mental health problems.
  - b. Learn ways to reduce emotional, psychological, and physical harm to one's self and others in community interactions while effectively enforcing WA State laws.

“Policing is a complex profession, far more complex than most people understand. What other job requires you to be combat ready at the same time you are called upon to be a counselor, a priest, a lawyer, and a social worker? What other profession authorizes you to use deadly force and then mandates that you attempt to save the person you just tried to kill?” (Kirschman, 2017)

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## Understanding the Impacts of Trauma Course Schedule

What is trauma and how does cumulative trauma happen? How does it affect you and the people around you? What can you do about it to increase wellness, maintain a LE career longevity, and foster positive interactions?

Program Outline	Date	Meeting Time	
Session One	March 13, 2023	1300 - 1500	Welcome. Build a sense of safety and cohesion through shared group norms. Introduction to the brain science and the nature of trauma as a complex phenomenon.
Session Two	March 27, 2023	1300 – 1500	Learn to recognize trauma symptoms. Learn the difference between PTSD and cumulative trauma. Practice trauma reduction strategies and learn tools to improve wellbeing. Find ways to use this new knowledge in your work.
Session Three	April 10, 2023	1300 – 1500	Introduction to values-based leadership in LE. Identify personal values and how they influence LE. Identify ways to use values-based leadership to improve community relations.
Session Four	April 24, 2023	1300 - 1500	Introduction to the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study. Learn how ACE may increase cumulative trauma and understand the correlation with anger, shame, powerlessness, PTSD, negative self-worth, poor health and avoidant behaviors like addiction.
Session Five	May 08, 2023	1300 – 1500	Understand stigmatization and its impact on seeking personal wellness. Understand how stigma influences behavior. Brainstorm ways to reduce stigma inside and outside of the workplace.
Session Six	May 22, 2023	1300 - 1500	Introduction to Trauma Informed Care. Reflect, Review, Improve, Implementation. Celebrate success.



# Session One – Trauma and the Brain/Body Connection

Facilitator: Emma Jane Watson, M.Ed., MSW, LICSW

Guests: Brian King, Sheriff, Brian Smith, Chief of Port Angeles Police Department, Jenna van Draanen, University of Washington

## Materials

Handouts: Notebook Section One

## Objectives:

- Welcome and Introduction.
- Learn about brain science and the nature of trauma as a complex phenomenon.
- Build a sense of safety and cohesion through shared group norms.

## Agenda

- Short introduction of the collaborating partners and facilitator.
- Pretest knowledge of stigmatizing beliefs regarding trauma, cumulative trauma and impacts on mind, body, emotions, behaviors, and relationships.
- Self-introductions – name, how long you have been working in LE, and why you chose this career.
- Paradigm activities: Solve this problem. How do you fold a sheet of paper?
  - Short debrief.
- Setting group rules and boundaries.
- Introduction of neuroscience of trauma:
  - The brain, polyvagal system, sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, gut brain.
  - Amygdala, Hippocampus – what does it feel like to be safe and unsafe?
    - Fight, flight, freeze, feint, submit – you tell me, provide examples.
  - Accumulated trauma and wellbeing: define the difference between PTSD and cumulative trauma specifically for law enforcement.
    - Am I going to die? What is your greatest fear?
- Closure – zipping back up:
  - Using the breath and visualization for grounding and safety.

## Activities

Paradigms: Solve this problem juxtaposed how do you fold paper?

Setting group rules.

Discussion: What is the feeling of safety and the feeling of threat or feeling unsafe?

Group examples: Actions of the sympathetic nervous system.

Small group discussion: What is your biggest fear? Do your fears change over time? When do you feel safe? With whom do you feel safe and why?

Closure visualization and breathing for grounding.

## Closure and metrics

Session One Feedback form



## Session Two – Difference Between PTSD and Cumulative Trauma in Law Enforcement

Facilitator: Emma Jane Watson, M.Ed., MSW, LICSW

### Materials

Handouts: Notebook Section Two

### Objectives:

- Learn the difference between PTSD and cumulative trauma.
- Learn to recognize trauma symptoms.
- Practice trauma reduction strategies and learn techniques to improve wellbeing.
- Learn ways to apply this new knowledge in your personal life, work life, and in the community you serve.

### Agenda

- Welcome and opening
  - Mindfulness activity – grounding in the present moment.
- Presentation on the nature of PTSD and Cumulative Trauma and symptomology.
  - Stories from the frontlines.
  - Just a few facts: LE and suicide, mental collapse, physical collapse, and long-term effects.
  - Discussion.
- Learn and practice effective strategies and techniques:
  - The power of breathing to reset the sympathetic nervous system.
  - Mindful practices to re-orient; from dissociation to the present moment, harm reduction, finding help from within, restraining escalation of emotion mind.
- Understand the power of trauma informed care.
  - Practice examples.

### Activities

Mindfulness grounding—awareness of self and mind, noticing and describing physical and mental state in the present

Story of acute trauma and PTSD and story about cumulative trauma collapse

Discussion with Q & A

Learning breathing, imagery, internal locus of wisdom, exercise, thought diffusion, and other techniques

Understand emotional response vs. trauma informed care

### Closure and Metrics

Session Two Feedback form

# Session Three – Introduction to Values-Based Leadership in Law Enforcement

Facilitator: Emma Jane Watson, M.Ed., MSW, LICSW

## Materials

Handouts: Notebook Section Three

## Objectives:

- Introduction to values-based leadership in LE.
- Identify personal values and how they influence LE.
- Recognize the power of resiliency coupled with personal traits.
- Identify ways to use values-based leadership to improve community relations.

## Agenda

- Welcome and opening:
  - Present moment awareness activity
- What is organizational values-based leadership?
  - Define values-based leadership.
    - Small group discussion on their thoughts and how they picture it.
  - Learn what sets it apart from other types of leadership models.
    - Present current concepts of values-based leadership.
- Clarify your own personal values.
  - Write a list of personal values that guide your life and narrow them down to three.
    - What are they? What do they mean?
  - Understand how personal and organizational values influence behaviors in policing.
    - Experiential activity using examples from group.
- Construct a model for developing an atmosphere of value-based leadership in your team, department, and broader organization.
  - Group brainstorm.
- Closure – zipping up
  - Using the breath and visualization for grounding and safety.

## Activities

Bringing awareness to present moment using senses

Discussion on definition of values-based leadership

Use examples from the group and reframe the interaction based on what they learned

Write a short list of five personal values that guide their lives and narrow down to three with short discussion on how to incorporate them into work

Brainstorm the “how” of creating a values-based workplace

## Closure and metrics

Session Three Feedback form

# Session Four – How ACE and Resiliency Impact Physical Health and Well-Being Over Time

Facilitator: Emma Jane Watson, M.Ed., MSW, LICSW

## Materials

Handouts: Notebook Section Four

## Objectives:

- Introduction to the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study.
- Learn how high ACE scores may add to increased cumulative trauma.
- Recognize the correlation between high ACE scores and their impact on occurrences of anger, shame, powerlessness, PTSD, negative self-worth, serious health issues, and avoidant behaviors like addiction.
- Understand how ACE influences your everyday behavior.
- Consider and develop ways to reduce the effects of ACE on health, mental well-being, and interpersonal interactions.

## Agenda

- Welcome and opening:
  - Mindfulness activity.
- Administer ACE and LEC-5 surveys to measure current stress.
  - Grounding and return to present moment using five senses.
- History and value of ACE and LEC-5. Complete the assessments. What do these surveys tell us?
- ACEs Documentary: *Resilience*
- Present the correlation between ACE and potential for cumulative trauma in LE.
- Return to definition of cumulative trauma and reflect on how ACE can lead to this condition.
  - Group discussion.
- How does a person's ACE and LEC-5 score impact an individual's everyday behavior?
- Recognize signs of low resilience and learn how to build resiliency.

## Activities

Bringing awareness to present moment using visualization

Complete LEC-5, PCL-9 and ACE Surveys

Group Q & A on ACE scores impacts on cumulative trauma

Group Discussion on cross section of resilience and ACE and adult behavior

Work on building resiliency

## Closure and metrics

Session Four Feedback form

## Session Five – Learning How to Deal with Wellness Without Stigmatization

Facilitator: Emma Jane Watson, M.Ed., MSW, LICSW

Guests:

### Materials

Handouts: Notebook Section Five

### Objectives:

- Learn the value of mindfulness.
- Understand stigmatization and its impact on seeking personal wellness.
- Discuss and experience how stigma influences behavior.
- Work on a plan to reduce stigma inside and outside of the workplace.

### Agenda

- Welcome and opening.
- Learn the value of mindfulness.
  - Mindfulness activity “The Helium Stick”.
  - Debrief the influence of mindfulness in our work.
- Create a shared understanding of stigma.
  - Answer the question: What kinds of stigma do LE officers face? How does that impact wellness?
- Experiential learning activity (Labels) to demonstrate how stigma influences behavior.
  - Being labeled, how stigmatization influences how we feel and how we behave?
  - Discussion.
- Discuss a plan (personal, at work, in the community) to reduce stigma?
  - Two small groups.
  - Reconvene into large group.
  - Facilitator will collect ideas and shape a document to be given out at next session.

### Activities

Mindfulness activity: The Helium Stick

Discussion about stigma—what it is and how it is experienced by LE? How is it experienced by those with mental illness or drug use disorder? How does stigma shape our behavior?

Experiential activity to demonstrate how stigma feels, how it affects behavior, and how to manage and change it.

Labels

Debrief and return to calm, grounded state.

Create a workable plan based on experience.

### Closure and metrics

Session Five Feedback form

## Session Six – Reflect, Review, Improve, Implementation and Celebrate

Facilitator: Emma Jane Watson, M.Ed., MSW, LICSW

Guests:

### Materials

Handouts: Notebook Section Six

### Objectives:

- Trauma informed care can
  - improve self-awareness,
  - reduce the trauma burden, and
  - increase positive interpersonal interactions.
- Praxis, the art of reflection and review.
- Complete Post-test
- Provide in depth feedback.
- Celebrate success.

### Agenda

- Welcome and comments from our sponsoring agencies.
- Mindfulness Activity.
- Trauma informed care for law enforcement.
- Activity: Review the content of the six sessions.
- Individual Reflection and group comments.
- Closure.
- Post-test on covered material.
- Celebrate success with our partners.

### Activities

Mindfulness

Review of six sessions

Individual Reflection

Closure

Post-test

### Closure and metrics

Post-test

Session Six Feedback form

## Sources by Topic

### Adverse Childhood Experiences

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