

## Ethics Training Outline

### Tulare County Sheriff's Office

- **Introductions / Overview of Course**
- **Describe what being a professional law enforcement officer means.**
  - A shared sense of purpose
  - A common body of knowledge
  - Standardized training
  - Being vital to the well-being of society
  - A system of certification of licensing
  - A code of ethical conduct
    - Group discussion – Does this fit the role of the LE officer?
- **Define Ethics**
  - Ethics is the accepted principles of conduct governing decisions and actions based on professional values and expectations
    - Ethics plays a role in an officer's daily conduct and personal choices
    - A core ethical concept found in all enduring cultures is that of reciprocity. The Golden Rule. Our actions should be aligned with what is good for others, just not ourselves.
    - The Gold Rule helps to establish an essential spirit of ethical conduct. A professional L.E. officer should:
      - Put themselves in the position of others
      - Recognize how their actions affect others
      - Seek help when possible
      - Refrain from causing avoidable harm
      - Intervene to prevent unethical behavior by others.
- **Principles are the individual beliefs that a person relies on in order to make the personal decisions in his/her life**
  - Our personal values are shaped by our upbringing, events occurring in our lives and the influence of others. Parents, teachers and friends have played a central role in developing our understanding of who we are and how the world affects us.
  - It is important to remember that the values of one person or group may differ widely from another group or person.
- **Professional values are beliefs that are fundamental to and characterize a specific vocational group or discipline**
  - Question: What makes a person ethical?
- **Explain ethical violations you might see in a law enforcement setting**
  - Excessive use of obscene language
  - Harassment of persons
  - Fraternalizing with fellow officers or other staff
  - Covering up for a fellow officer
  - Making derogatory remarks about an officer or other staff
  - Sleeping on the job

- Falsifying a report
- Small rule breaking such as giving suspects special treatment
- Drug use
- **Continuum of Compromise (Dr. Kevin Gilmartin PHD)**
  - Here is one theory on how it can happen
  - Acts of omission
  - Lack of productivity (traffic stops, field interviews)
  - Acts of commission – Administrative
  - Breaking small rules (lunch breaks)
  - Acts of commission – Criminal
  - Breaking the law (Stealing from employer)
  - Entitlement vs. Accountability
  - I'm above the law!
  - Loyalty vs. Integrity
  - Blind Support of your partners
- **Mentally prepare yourselves for the ethical dilemmas you might face. Don't wait until it happens, know that it will happen**
- **Explain why law enforcement officers, on and off duty, should exemplify the highest ethical and moral standards**
  - **Promote Professionalism – Officer**
    - Self-esteem and personal worth
    - Personal and professional satisfaction in doing the right thing
    - Gaining respect and confidence of co-workers
    - Establishing a higher personal and professional reputation in the community
  - **Promote Professionalism – Agency**
    - Improved morale
    - Improved agency respect within the profession
    - Reinforcing the standard of performance
    - Improving agency reputation
  - **Promote Professionalism – Community**
    - Receives equitable public service
    - A sense of security and trust
    - Increased community partnerships
    - Fosters community mobilization
  - **Gain Public Support for Corrections Operations**
    - Public trust is the foundation of our authority and power. This trust is based on officer performing their duties ethically and competently. The public must be confident that we will perform our duties in respect of that trust.
    - Factors impacting public trust
    - Previous experience with corrections/law enforcement
    - Police and community partnerships

- General public apathy and prevailing attitudes
- Impact on family structure
- Social and/or economic conditions
- Situations that promote high levels of fear or a sense of collective victimization
- Earn the respect and confidence of peers
- Peers expect technical competence, support and integrity
- Maintain a sense of self-worth and pride
- Do you want to be proud to look in the mirror each day?
- **Discuss the Best methods for Handling Unethical Situations**
  - **Peace officers have a legal and ethical obligation to uphold the law no matter who is breaking it**
    - Minding your own business is never a valid excuse for remaining silent. It is a peace officer's responsibility to intervene to stop offenses by other officers.
  - **Intervention is the act of attempting to prevent or attempting to stop the inappropriate or unlawful behavior of another**
    - Appropriate intervention allows peace officers to maintain or restore professional control over a given situation or improve the professional quality of future interactions.
  - **Factors inhibiting intervention**
    - Friends with the coworker or fellow officer involved
    - Inexperienced or unfamiliar with the proper action to remedy the situation
    - Feels that intervention is someone else's responsibility
    - Peer pressure
    - Fears consequences, such as being ostracized
    - Believes there will be no support from administration, senior officers, field training officers or supervisors
    - Psychologically unprepared to intervene (e.g., erroneous notion of how peace officers should behave, possibly due to influence of movies, and television)
- **Examine the problems associated when a law enforcement officer violates the law, for example**
  - Incurs public disrespect for the law and the Law Enforcement professional
  - Provides mixed messages to the public as to the meaning and the application of law to all
- **An officer is guilty of having failed to intervene and prevent other officers from violating anyone's rights while having reason to know**
  - Unreasonable force was being used
  - A member of the public was unjustifiably arrested
  - Any constitutional violation has been committed by any law enforcement officer
  - The officer had a reasonable opportunity to prevent harm from occurring
  - Inappropriate language is being used

- Other unlawful, unethical or inappropriate behavior (e.g. theft)
- **Why is it necessary to take positive action**
  - Maintains public trust
  - Prevent further misconduct
  - Permits corrective action to be taken
- **Types of Intervention**
  - **Verbal Intervention**
    - Verbally offering to take over or assist the situation or reminding fellow officers of appropriate behavior
  - **Physical Intervention**
    - Touching – touching the officer on the shoulder or arm and offering a tactful reminder to calm down or to take over
  - **Stepping In**
    - Stepping between the offending officer and the other person (if this can be safely accomplished) and diffusing the situation with a calm statement such as “let me talk to him”
  - **Restraining**
    - Physical restraint of the offending officer may be necessary if the officer is using unreasonable physical force
  - **Delayed Instruction**
    - It can be beneficial to discuss the improprieties of unprofessional behavior. This may be an appropriate follow-up if a fellow officer was verbally condescending to someone. May inform a fellow officer that this type of behavior is not acceptable and may provoke a situation
  - **Referral / Training**
    - Referring to a supportive organization or a supportive third party within the agency. Suggest additional training to improve conduct
  - **Reporting**
    - Factual documentation in a report; following the chain of command; urging self-reporting; directly reporting to a supervisor
- **Ethical Decision Making Strategies**
  - There are several strategies or models available as “tools” to facilitate peace officers in making the right ethical decision in a difficult and challenging law enforcement environment. In almost every model there are common steps incorporated as part of the strategic process. Officers should adopt, understand and use an effective decision making process to guide and assist them throughout their career
    - **Common Steps**
      - Identify the issue(s), relevant facts and/or ethical question(s)
      - Determine the stakeholders – Who may be affected by a decision?
      - Consider your option is most appropriate – What should you do?
      - Decide which option is most appropriate – What should you do?
      - What are the consequences of your decision?

- Implement the option and course of action.
- Reassess and make new decision, if necessary.
- What would your Captain think of the decision?
- **Bell, Book and Candle**
  - The Bell – Do any “bells” or warning buzzers go off as I consider my choice or alternative?
  - The Book – Does it violate any laws, ordinances, policies, procedures, etc.?
  - The Candle – Will my decision be able to withstand the light of day, spotlight of media attention, publicity, and family?
  - (Adapted from Josephson Institute of Ethics)
- **Legal, Ethical and Effective**
  - Is it legal?
  - Is it permitted by your agency policy, procedure, code of conduct?
  - How would it be viewed by your agency, community and fellow peace officers?
  - Does your personal code of ethics give the choice a “thumbs up”
  - Is it a true ethical dilemma? Do both choices appear to be right?
  - Will it accomplish desired outcomes and be consistent with the traits and competencies of an ethical peace officer?
- **Hand Out Peace Officer Code of Ethics**

