

Report to / Rapport au:

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE BOARD
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICE POLICE D'OTTAWA**

27 April 2026 / 27 avril 2026

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO INQUIRY I-26-01 – FRAMEWORK FOR TRAUMA
INFORMED RESPONSE**

**OBJET: RÉPONSE À L'ENQUÊTE I-26-01 – CADRE POUR UNE APPROCHE
TENANT COMPTE DES TRAUMATISMES**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Police Service Board receive this report for information.

RECOMMENDATIONS DU RAPPORT

**Que la Commission de service de police d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du
présent rapport à titre d'information.**

INQUIRY

Framework for Trauma Informed Response

In 2024, the Canadian Framework for Trauma-Informed Response was adopted by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACCP). This adoption served as a national call to action for police services and police leaders to adopt and embed the trauma-informed framework in policies, standards, and practices. The framework is intended to better prepare police members to respond to and manage traumatic situations in an effective, appropriate, and professional manner, while also supporting member well-being.

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) participated as a member of the national working group that developed this framework, alongside the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and police services from across Ontario and Quebec.

The Board has requested an update on how the Canadian Framework for Trauma-Informed Response has been applied within OPS, including the policies, programs, training, and practices that have been implemented.

What follows is a synopsis of how trauma-informed principles, and the framework, have been embedded within OPS training, investigative practices, and interviewing practices and standards, as well as examples of community outreach and partnerships.

RESPONSE

OPS Training: Professional Development Centre

While many trauma-informed concepts had already been present within OPS training prior to 2020, members were formally introduced to Trauma-Informed Policing, as understood in the framework, beginning in 2020. The Trauma Informed Practice Principles are Trustworthiness and Transparency, Peer Support, Collaboration and Mutuality, Empowerment Voice and Choice, and Cultural Historical and Gender Issues (Intersectionality considerations). These principles have been systematically integrated across multiple training streams, including Use of Force, Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW), de-escalation, and investigative training. The OPS strives to be a leader in this field while working with other organizations such as Carleton University, CACP and other community groups.

Specific instances where the framework and / or principles are referenced in OPS member training include:

1. Using a Trauma-Informed Approach (Online Course)

This mandatory two-hour online course was launched in 2020 and is required for all new recruits and serving members. The course introduces trauma, its biological and psychological impacts, and trauma-informed investigative practices.

Learning objectives include:

- Understanding the biological impacts of trauma on the brain;
- Identifying different types of trauma and associated responses;
- Recognizing the range of trauma reactions following critical incidents;
- Understanding the role of police members in trauma-impacted interactions; and
- Recognizing how trauma affects diverse populations differently.

2. Ontario Public–Police Training Aid (2023)

Implemented in 2023, this mandatory in-person training applies trauma-informed principles through a focus on relational communication, de-escalation, and understanding mental health crises.

3. Use of Force Training

Annual Use of Force requalification training includes an in-person lecture and facilitated discussion addressing procedural justice, police legitimacy, communication barriers, de-escalation, and intersectionality. Members are provided with practical examples of interacting with people affected by trauma and are encouraged to apply these principles in scenario-based training.

4. Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW) Training

CEW training emphasizes de-escalation and reinforces that the CEW is not a default response when attending to persons in crisis. Aligning CEW instruction with trauma-informed principles supports balanced decision-making, increases officer awareness, and reinforces OPS's commitment to minimizing harm to the public that we serve.

5. De-Escalation Training

OPS communication and de-escalation training emphasizes empathy, perspective-taking, and an understanding of how prior trauma can influence public interactions with police. This training combines classroom instruction with live scenarios using diverse role players, reinforcing procedural justice and adaptable communication strategies.

6. Recruit Training

Although the Ontario Police College does not offer a standalone course in Trauma-Informed Policing, trauma-informed principles are embedded throughout multiple OPC courses. Upon completing OPC training and returning to OPS, recruits participate in de-escalation training and live-action scenarios that allow them to apply these concepts in practice.

External Training

1. Investigations and Trauma-Informed Interviewing

Trauma-informed training extends beyond frontline operations and is embedded across investigative courses attended by members who work in OPS specialty sections, including:

- Sexual Assault and Child Abuse;

- Sexual Assault Response Officer (SARO);
- Intimate Partner Violence;
- Human Trafficking;
- Internet Child Exploitation;
- Victim Support Unit.

OPS is also developing a Domestic Violence Response Officer program, similar to SARO, which will incorporate internal and external trauma-informed response training.

2. Trauma-Informed Interviewing and Tiered Interview Program

Members of the OPS Polygraph Unit have developed and delivered internal training focused on trauma-informed interviewing, supported by a Tiered Interview Training Program. Tiered training is developed for patrol officers as well as investigators. Tier 1 is designed specifically for patrol officers while Tier II is designed for new investigators or more experienced investigators.

3. Trauma-Informed Interview Course

This three-hour introductory course uses case studies to examine the impact of trauma on interviews and introduces evidence-based techniques to support reliable information gathering from trauma-impacted individuals. This training is applicable and available for anyone within the organization including Civilians and includes:

- Informal feedback that has previously been collected from officers; and
- Formal data collection on officer perceptions and credibility assessments.

4. Tiered Interview Training Program (in collaboration with Carleton University)

The tiered model was developed in response to identified gaps in interview standards that contribute to re-traumatization, interview contamination, and improper techniques. As above, Tier I is aimed at frontline patrol and Tier II is aimed at newer investigators or experience officers who have dated training.

- **Tier I – Patrol-Level Training**

Focuses on foundational statement-taking skills and trauma-informed practices.

- First course scheduled for March 23, 2026
- Intended to become mandatory for all patrol officers

- **Tier II – Established in 2025**
Provides core interview skills and evidence-based techniques to support effective information gathering.
- **Tier III – Specialized Interview Training (Planned)**
Advanced training in child interviewing, suspect interviewing, and witness/victim interviewing, with entry and certification requirements based on demonstrated proficiency.
- **Tier IV – Feedback and Quality Control (Planned)**
Addresses ongoing performance feedback and quality assurance, a critical gap in traditional interview training.
- **Tier V – Strategic Advisory Level (In Development)**
Provides program oversight, research collaboration, and subject-matter expertise.

Interview Practices and Standards

OPS has determined that some legacy interviewing practices are no longer supported by contemporary research and may negatively affect trauma-impacted individuals.

Transitioning to evidence-based, trauma-informed interviewing practices is essential to:

1. Reducing re-traumatization and contamination;
2. Improving information quality and investigative integrity;
3. Strengthening court outcomes and public trust.

Community Outreach and Partnerships

1. Partnerships with Carleton University

OPS has collaborated with Carleton University for the past two years on trauma-related research and training initiatives. A practicum student specializing in trauma research is currently embedded with the Polygraph Unit, and work is underway to formalize a long-term partnership to support sustainable research, training, and program development. The practicum student is assisting with development of interview training and acting as a liaison between OPS and Carleton University. The practicum student is also completing research on police perceptions of interviewees experiencing trauma.

2. Indigenous Women’s Safety Table Workplan

Since 2022, OPS has worked closely with the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition through the Indigenous Women’s Safety Table Police Working Group. Education sessions have been delivered to frontline patrol, Neighborhood Resource Teams, and investigative

units, focusing on trauma-informed responses to Indigenous communities. This work will continue, with expanded education planned for call-takers and dispatchers.

3. National Leadership and Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) Trauma-Informed Training

Superintendent Heather Lachine participated on the CACP Victims of Crime Subcommittee that finalized the Canadian Framework for Trauma-Informed Response. She now co-leads the development of national trauma-informed training with York Regional Police Service and the Canadian Police Knowledge Network. This training is designed for frontline officers and smaller police services and will be mandatory for OPS frontline members.

CONCLUSION

The Ottawa Police Service has embedded trauma-informed principles, and the framework, within its training, investigative practices, interviewing standards, and community engagement. Through mandatory education, evidence-based program development, national leadership, and academic partnerships, OPS continues to align its practices with the Canadian Framework for Trauma-Informed Response. This ongoing work strengthens investigative integrity, enhances public trust, reduces the risk of re-traumatization, and supports both community safety and member well-being.