

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD  
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

**26 September 2016 / 26 septembre 2016**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

**Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service / Chef de police, Service de police d'Ottawa**

**Contact Person / Personne ressource:**

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**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO OUTSTANDING INQUIRY #I-16-04:  
SUPPLEMENTARY TRAINING**

**OBJET: RÉPONSE À LA DEMANDE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS NO I-16-04 :  
FORMATION SUPPLÉMENTAIRE**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Services Board receive this report for information.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

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

**BACKGROUND**

At the Polices Services Board meeting on July 25<sup>th</sup> 2016, Board Member Smallwood tabled an inquiry requesting information about the training on de-escalation provided to Ottawa Police officers. This report outlines the OPS program.

**DISCUSSION**

The Ottawa Police Service undertook a proactive plan in bringing formalized de-escalation training to all of its sworn members in 2014. The program is based on the Justice Institute of British Columbia's Crisis Intervention Training. This was in part to assist officers in responding to mental health calls which are increasing as a proportion

of overall calls. The OPS communication and de-escalation training covered strategies for dealing with people in crisis, with mental health issues and suicidal intent or actions. Although the training delivered was extensive, it was widely recognized that officers already do an excellent job at de-escalating most of their interactions with the public.

The course was offered as part of each officer's annual block training and use of force re-qualification. It is also offered to all new recruits and direct entry officers.

In modern police training, communication skills have always been a key pillar in an officer's tool kit. In the current use of force model (adopted in 1993-1994), communication and officer presence is one of the major components in all use of force interventions. Officers are trained to use their communication skills at the very onset of their training as recruits at the Ontario Police College (OPC). These skills are continually assessed every year during their annual use of force re-qualification. All sworn officers must re-qualify all of their use of force skills at the Professional Development Centre. One of the major skills assessed is their ability to communicate with the role players. A large emphasis in all live scenarios training is placed on dealing with a person crisis, with mental health and/or suicidal intent/action.

Communication and de-escalation skills have always been utilized by officers. This block training formalizes this instruction. The de-escalation model is a guideline to help officers work through a situation and help them organize and articulate their actions. The communication and de-escalation training also exposed the officers to various mental health issues commonly encountered in the community. Officers gained a better understanding of how mental health can manifest itself as well as how to recognize specific behaviour exhibited during an incident of crisis. The training emphasized communication skills needed to deal with these specific issues in order to help reduce the instance of a situation escalating.

Officers are trained to work with both the use of force and de-escalation models. As in every situation an officer encounters, their perceptions, training and experience are all factors in their decisions. Both models are intended to help guide them through these complex and difficult situations. Officers are not psychologists, psychiatrists or social workers. They rely on their experience and de-escalation tools to help them resolve situation.

The expectation that an officer is an expert in the minutiae of all incidences relating to mental health is unrealistic. Despite that, officers resolve most of their encounters peacefully without the use of force. The current OPS communication and de-escalation training model was presented at the 2015 OACP conference and is viewed as a model for others to follow.

**CONSULTATION**

Staff consulted with police colleagues when developing the training strategy.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The training is offered as part of an officer's annual block training cycle and does not require an additional allocation of training days.

**CONCLUSION**

The Ottawa Police Service created a de-escalation training program in 2014 which has been delivered to all its sworn members. It is seen as a model for others to follow.