Lesson Purpose: The purpose of this block of instruction is to address and introduce principles of professional and ethical conduct in the law enforcement community.

Training Objectives: At the end of this block of instruction, the student will be able to achieve the following objectives in accordance with information received in class:

1. Define the following terms as they relate to the law enforcement role in the community:
   a. Ethics and morals
   b. Professionalism
   c. Duty to the citizenry

2. Discuss the concept of professionalism as it relates to law enforcement.

3. Describe what factors or influences are present in making law enforcement ethical decisions.

4. In a classroom exercise, discuss and then recite the following:
   a. The Law Enforcement Code of Ethics
   b. The Canons of Police Ethics
   c. An Oath of Office.

5. Given specific ethical dilemmas, correctly choose the appropriate law enforcement response.

6. Utilizing the ethical inventory form, complete and conduct a self-evaluation of personal, unethical judgments.

Hours: Four (4)

Instructional Method: Lecture/Conference
Ethics for Professional Law Enforcement

Training Aids:
- Handouts
- VCR/Monitor
- Video:
  - Ethics for Professional Law Enforcement, NCJA (1995)
- Instructor Guidebook: The Ethical Dilemma Video Training Series

References:

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Date Reviewed: December 1998
Ethics for Professional Law Enforcement

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October 2001

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Date Revised: November 2000
November 2001
Ethics for Professional Law Enforcement

TITLE: ETHICS FOR PROFESSIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT - INSTRUCTOR NOTES

1. The instructor who teaches this block should read Joycelyn M. Pollock-Byrne’s book, Ethics in Crime and Justice, Dilemmas and Decisions, Third Edition, 1997. It realistically describes the basic concepts discussed in this block of instruction on ethics, morals, professionalism, and duty while applying these concepts directly to the law enforcement profession.

2. Additionally, as described in the introduction and closing of the lesson plan, it is especially important for instructors to emphasize to their students that new officers must self initiate a “socialization” process into the law enforcement profession by first understanding what expectations are being imposed upon them, and then by understanding the responsibilities they have accepted by choosing this profession.

3. When introducing the Ethics video, the instructor should advise the students that the dilemmas depicted are situations frequently encountered by law enforcement personnel. How they decide to deal with such dilemmas will determine whether they will be professional officers or destroy their careers and their lives.

4. In order for the students to get the most out of this block, the demeanor of the instructor should be professional and realistic, not idealistic or cynical in delivery.

5. Instructors should inform students that the lessons learned within this block can be applied to all BLET topics and taken with them into their professional careers as law enforcement officials.

6. To promote and facilitate law enforcement professionalism, most BLET lesson plans include three (3) ethical dilemmas for classroom discussion. They are located in the instructor notes sections or as an attachment to this lesson. Students must be presented with each dilemma as directed. Instructors are encouraged to create additional dilemmas as necessary.

7. If time is available, it is recommended for the instructor to show and discuss the original 1954 movie of the Caine Mutiny by RCA/Columbia Pictures, after the block of instruction is covered. It offers many topics of discussion covered in this lesson plan. The showing of this movie should not substitute for the NCJA video or discussing the dilemmas outlined in this lesson plan.
TITLE: ETHICS FOR PROFESSIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

I. Introduction

A. Opening Statement

NOTE: Show slide, “Ethics for Professional Law Enforcement.”

Ethics and professionalism have always been of critical importance to law enforcement. To achieve the goal of providing the highest quality service to the public, law enforcement agencies depend on the actions of each individual officer. The actions of the individual officer reflect on every other officer. As you interact with the public, you as an individual become the agency that you represent. The people you come in contact with will base their opinion of law enforcement and other officers on their experience with you.

Each officer has the responsibility of having high personal and professional standards. You must live up to them and strive to have those around you live up to professional standards. This may appear to be a goal which will be hard to achieve. However, it is a matter of making one decision at a time and carefully weighing it against the standards you have set.

This block of instruction will not change unethical or immoral people into ethical, moral people. It is taught as a basis of information to give you an understanding of expectations and to solicit the discussion of concepts involved in the law enforcement profession through the process of making ethical choices.

B. Training Objectives

NOTE: Show slide(s), “Training Objectives.”

As you can see by the objectives, this block of instruction introduces you to the principles which guide law enforcement officers’ conduct and how you can utilize these concepts.

C. Reasons

Law enforcement has traditionally been a “pedestal” profession. Society generally expects law enforcement personnel to exemplify right and moral conduct. Citizens fail to realize officers are chosen from the general public, that they are just human beings and are subject to all of the human emotions and weaknesses.
Although the law enforcement community realizes this perception exists, some officers view themselves as being "above" the law. At times some officers come to believe that since they deal with situations and people that society, in general, "does not want to have to address," they deserve special privileges. Because of their actions and attitudes, assaults on law enforcement officers and charges of excessive force have resulted in increased internal investigations and lawsuits against officers over the last decade.

In law enforcement we are now called on to do more than interpret and enforce criminal law. Not only does the public expect officers to perform professionally, they also expect law enforcement to address issues that in the past would have been considered the job of other social service agencies. The ability to make sound and ethical decisions is necessary now more than ever.

To address these issues, law enforcement officers need additional training, not in the academic field of law, but in the overall socialization into the law enforcement profession.

II. Body

A. Defining Ethics

NOTE: Show slide, “Ethics and Morals.”

1. The terms "moral" and "ethical" in our daily conversations are almost synonymous. Generally, morality is the measure of conduct and ethics is the study of morals.¹

People are thought of as "moral in character" or "doing unethical deeds." Regardless of the term used, what we are referring to is an individual's behavior and how it affects others.²

We are not usually concerned with the way people think or feel unless it has some bearing on what they actually do about their beliefs. So, it is behavior that is judged by others, not beliefs.

We address human behavior in this manner, as opposed to animal behavior or behavior of natural elements. A dog may be judged to be a good dog or a bad dog based on whether he bites or not; the weather may be judged to be good or bad based on whether it is raining or not. Animals and natural elements would not be compared in terms of ethics or morality to humans. However, humans have one distinction nothing else possesses. That is the
thought capacity of choice, the ability to reason and select. (This does not include the insane or minors who do not have the mental faculties to make choices.)

2. As law enforcement officers we have to abide by the moral codes or "rules" of the society in which we work. This is classified as "professional ethics."

The term "professionalism" is considered the most important moral parameter for all law enforcement officers. If an officer is professional, then the officer is an example of one who stays within the rules of the law enforcement profession while at the same time enforces such laws.

These codes or rules are laid out through the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, Canons of Police Ethics, and the department's written and unwritten policies and procedures.

B. Parameters of Decision Making

NOTE: Show slide, “Parameters of Decision Making.”

1. Society's beliefs are changing to look at all areas of responsibility, not just the means to justify the ends, or just the ends.

Everyone has freedom of choice and behavior. The old belief that life's circumstances override voluntary actions is quickly fading. We are influenced to some extent by limitations of birth and circumstance.

However, there are always choices to make, whether or not we recognize them or choose to examine them.

Everyday we choose whether or not to get up in the morning, take a bath, go to work, the route to take to work, what we eat, what we wear, who we talk to, etc.

The available choices may not always be to our liking, but the choices are there, and we make a selection from those choices based on our own free will.

2. We measure behavior in terms of acceptability and unacceptability based upon the beliefs and rules of the society.

The different "social" parameters influencing our behavior can include our:
NOTE: Show slide, “Social Parameters.”

a. Immediate family
b. Entire family
c. Church
d. Neighborhood
e. School
f. Work environment
g. Our city or nation

3. We make our decisions from the selection of choices based on our "social surroundings," or our "scope of circumstances." Each society has its own set of rules by which the society members are expected to abide. If a member violates the rules, the member is judged to be unethical or immoral.

An example may be the comparison of your immediate family practices and church practices. When family members gather to eat a meal, the family may not necessarily say grace prior to eating. When church members gather to eat a meal, you wouldn't start eating without saying grace. Neither is right or wrong. Your decisions are just different, based on the scope of immediate circumstances around you.

4. Many times officers find ways of violating the spirit of ethical standards while complying with exact wording. It's a game we play to justify our conduct when facing tempting choices that may not be acceptable within given social rules.

5. One way to recognize and examine our choices is to discuss our options and reasonings with others. Others can help us define our "scope of circumstances" or help us to consider our options within the boundaries of our profession.

Veteran officers are aware of this concept and many times express this by limiting the people they choose to receive input from or allow to influence them.

Before taking an action, ask yourself the following questions:

NOTE: Show slide, “Ask Yourself the Following Questions.” Then discuss each with students.

a. What are all the alternatives?
b. What solution would do the most good?
c. What are all the consequences of the solution?

d. Is the solution legal?

e. Is the solution morally right?

If we choose to not discuss our situations with others, what is the reasoning behind that?

**NOTE: Question for discussion: Is what is right always best; is what is best always right?**

C. The Attitudes of a Professional Officer

**NOTE: Show slide, “The Attitudes of a Professional Officer.”**

1. "One of the marks of a true profession is the inherent need for making value judgments and for exercising discretion based upon professional competence. To deny that discretion gives support to those citizens who maintain that the job of a police officer is a simple one, that it requires little judgment, and that it is not worthy of professional status." Goldstein in Saunders' *Upgrading the American Police.*

Taking into consideration the previous quote, officers must understand that merely wearing a distinguishing uniform does not "entitle" them to respect. Although a certain amount of respect is given to a uniform, officers must earn and develop respect past that point since "first appearance" respect is short lived.

2. Some of the factors in professionalism are:

**NOTE: Show slide, “Professionalism Factors.”**

a. Attitudes: how the officer views himself and others; how the officer treats others based on his views; and how the officer's prejudices affect his ability to deal with others.

b. Ethical conduct: what choices the officer makes based on his morals and ethics; are his morals and ethics in conflict with the ethics of his profession?

c. Good communication skills: does the officer have the ability to properly relay messages with words and body language, and not misinterpret or prejudice others?
d. Knowledge through education and training: self initiated as well as departmentally offered.

3. Duty is a concept law enforcement officers are most proud of displaying to their professions, and usually one of the most difficult for officers to explain. Duty is skilled performance, commitment above personal interests, and self sacrifice.

Duty is a moral commitment an officer makes to his department and to the citizens the department serves. The officer promises and is dedicated to fulfilling his oath of office, through complying with all the rules and guidelines imposed upon him by governments, the citizens, the department and his own profession. **Along with this is the officer’s commitment that his own personal interests are secondary to his duty.**

When law enforcement officers proudly take their oaths of office, the citizens expect the officer to commit to duty. When law enforcement officers take their oaths of office, they are in fact committing to that duty.

**NOTE: Refer to “Oath of Office” handout and discuss.**

D. Ethical Conduct of a Professional Officer

**NOTE: Show slide, “Professional Officers Live By:”**

1. Ethics is a standard of conduct and moral judgment governing an individual or a profession. The great professions have long recognized the importance of subscribing to and living by rules of official conduct for their membership.

The most noteworthy has been the Hippocratic Oath founded by Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, sometime before 400 B.C. This oath is still taken by practicing physicians today. The American Bar Association subscribes to "rules of professional conduct." These associations have means of disciplining the unethical elements in their professions.

2. Law enforcement also has codes of conduct called the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics and the Canons of Police Ethics.

**NOTE: Refer to “Law Enforcement Code of Ethics” handout and discuss.**
NOTE: Refer to “Canons of Police Ethics” handout and discuss.

Are these sets of principles enough? A code is a set of ideals which may be very difficult to live up to in absolute. Problems are not always presented with clear-cut choices.

E. Ethical Dilemmas

NOTE: Show slide, “Ethical Dilemmas.”

NOTE: Show video Ethics for Professional Law Enforcement (23 minutes).

NOTE: Utilizing the video, show each ethical dilemma. At the end of each scenario, stop the video and discuss with students. NOTE: Read the two scenarios below and discuss them with the students. Have students tell how they would deal with each situation. Encourage active and honest discussions.

F. Ethical Dilemmas (Read/Brief)

**Scenario #1**

A rookie officer while patrolling his zone finds a break-in at a local business. He notices that his supervisor’s police car is already there and begins to wonder why the supervisor has not called for back-up. As he is getting out of his car, he sees the supervisor coming out of the back door of the business with a small television set. The supervisor laughs and tells him that if he wants anything he needs to hurry up and get it so they can get it home, get back here, call this in and get the reports done so they can go home on time. The rookie is nervous and tells the supervisor that he does not want anything. The supervisor tells him that it is okay because they (the business) will report it on their insurance and will get reimbursed for the merchandise . . . no one is out anything. The supervisor then tells him “he who steals the most has the most” and laughs.

That rookie officer has been a police officer twenty years and never reported the incident to a superior officer for fear of being ostracized by the other officers. He truly believed that all the other officers participated in activities such as this and was afraid of losing his job.

**Scenario #2**
A young officer while still on probation with the department is called by another officer to come to the location of his traffic stop. Thinking that the officer needed some type of assistance with the stop, he expedited his response to the scene. After arriving on the scene, he finds the officer and the supervisor with two people standing outside the vehicle. The young officer quickly learned that the reason he was called to the scene was so he could see and participate in the ridiculing of two homosexual males. The officer executing the stop had recognized the subjects and had decided to “give them a hard time.” The young officer tried to diplomatically intervene and was asked if he “was queer” and was told that there was no room in police work for “queers or bleeding hearts.”

Although the officer did not participate in the ridiculing of the subjects he did nothing further to stop it and did not report it. He felt like he would be accused of being gay and fired if he tried to report this incident. He figured that most people would agree with the other officer that it was just a little “innocent fun” and that “queers are used to it.” This officer says that he has been with three departments and has seen similar incidents with gays, blacks, and Hispanics since this particular incident. He says that he still has not found the right way to deal with this type of conduct and still feels like his job would be in jeopardy if he reported it.

G. Application of Concepts

1. Taking into consideration all the concepts and values presented in this lesson plan, consider the question:

What makes law enforcement different from most other businesses or professions?

Answer: The basic difference is public trust. The citizens trust us to know the laws they have to follow and they trust us to follow them. Our Oaths of Office, Code of Ethics and Canons of Ethics give us the basic guidelines to perform our duties without jeopardizing the public’s trust.

2. Ethical Inventory

NOTE: Refer to handout, “Ethical Inventory.”

After completion, discuss with the class:

- their answers to the questionnaire
- their feelings about having to answer these questions about themselves
3. Self assessment for law enforcement students

**NOTE:** Have the students write answers to the listed questions. Ensure students their answers will not be collected or viewed by anyone else.

After each question are additional questions or comments for the instructor to offer in discussion with the class.

**NOTE:** Show slide, “Self Assessment Questions.”

a. Do I really like working with people?

**NOTE:** Do I really like people or did I get into law enforcement to feel self important or other reasons?

b. Is my approach to the public offensive?

**NOTE:** Do I mean to be offensive in an attempt to get respect, or have a show of authority?

c. Do I respect people? Do I recognize the dignity of others and show it?

**NOTE:** The young, the poor, and minorities cite lack of respect from law enforcement officers as a major cause of disenchantment.

What must others do for me to get me to show respect for them? Do I apply the same standards to myself as I apply to others?

d. Do I explain my actions?

**NOTE:** Many times officers believe they can bark out orders and expect people to blindly follow them. Citizens deeply resent not being told the reasons for an officer’s actions, especially when the circumstances provide an opportunity for such an explanation.

e. Am I understanding with others?

**NOTE:** Do I listen and try to learn from those I don’t agree with, or do I argue until someone agrees with
me? Could I learn more about others, or do I just want others to learn about me and what I want?

f. How do I treat my fellow employees? My supervisors?

NOTE: Everything covered in the lesson plan has been focusing on the relationship between officers and the public. Discuss with officers to apply the concepts of ethics, duty, integrity, and professionalism in dealing with their fellow employees, their supervisors, and application when they become supervisors.

III. Closing

A. Summary

In this block of instruction, we have discussed definitions and concepts of ethics, morals, duty, and professionalism. We have reviewed and discussed the long established parameters of the law enforcement profession in the Code of Ethics, and Canons of Ethics. Understanding these concepts and understanding that law enforcement has strict parameters in which to work, we have discussed specific dilemmas. There are many choices for action. It is each officer’s responsibility to evaluate all the choices and then take the action which is morally and ethically correct.

Last, you have taken a personal inventory for self judgment on your personal ethics. This gives the you a better awareness of your own moral standing so you may consider this information when issues present themselves.

NOTE: Show slide(s), “Training Objectives.”

B. Questions from Class

C. Closing Statement

New law enforcement officers must "socialize" themselves into the law enforcement profession. Always be mindful of the parameters set by the Code of Ethics and Canons of Ethics and remember the commitments you made through your oath of office.

As you go through the different blocks of instruction in basic law enforcement training, apply the information from this block to all the others. Ethical and moral dilemmas present themselves everyday, on
duty and off duty. Through self awareness, understanding, and your professional commitment you should have a sounder basis for making good decisions. Good luck in your careers.
NOTES


2. Ibid.


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.