Chapter 1
Introduction & Overview

MEETING THE TRAINING CHALLENGE

Dispatching is one of the most critical functions within law enforcement. Public safety dispatchers play a vital role in the public safety community. Public safety dispatchers are the first point of public contact in receiving calls regarding crimes, traffic incidents, medical emergencies, safety hazards, and miscellaneous requests for service. They are responsible for facilitating an appropriate and timely field unit response, monitoring field activity, and providing information that is often critical to both citizens and field officers.

Public safety dispatchers realize the importance of their role in the agency's infrastructure, respond well to challenges, and take great pride in a job well done. Along with this pride they understand how vital teamwork is to their job performance. Every public safety dispatcher wants to work within a fully trained and qualified team. However, to achieve that efficient team, trainees must receive comprehensive training. An important aspect of this training includes the on-the-job training provided to trainees by Communications Training Officers (CTOs).

Communications Training Officers are selected for their knowledge, experience, and training abilities. CTOs are in a position of great responsibility and are trusted to follow the agency's designated training program. They possess the skills needed to meet agency standards and to train new personnel properly.

Being a CTO is a continual learning process that can be very rewarding. Every time the CTO has a new trainee, they inherently learn new information. This can place the CTO in the position of being an informal leader within the dispatch center. They may be sought out by their co-workers as a source of information and guidance and be recognized for their expertise and knowledge. However, making the transition from a "doer" to "teacher" is not always easy and can be stressful. Public safety dispatchers are usually quite comfortable doing their job. Many have done the job for years and it is second nature for them. However they are not trained teachers and usually have to master the role of being a CTO through trial and error. Patience and hard work will assist the new trainer in overcoming obstacles encountered while learning the art of teaching.

In summary, a CTO's dedication and enthusiasm is crucial to a successful training experience. Meeting the challenge of training a trainee and contributing to the continuing successful mission of the organization is an accomplishment of which the CTO can be extremely proud.

ADULT LEARNING CONCEPTS

People learn at different rates and in different ways. In general, the adult learner retains more when they understand the reasons behind the training. By discussing a policy background, lessons learned, or sharing a veteran public safety dispatcher's critical thinking processes, the trainee will begin to develop their own problem solving ability. Problem solving opportunities will enhance the retention of knowledge and prepare the trainee to handle real world situations throughout their career. The trainer should also allow the trainee as much hands-on experience as possible, since most people learn best by doing. By involving as many senses as possible in the learning process, the trainer increases the trainee's ability to retain the information.

Optimally, the trainer should teach from the simple to the complex and from the known to the unknown. Although training programs are organized using general sequencing guidelines, the trainer is afforded some necessary discretion to be flexible. Since the training officer is typically working in a one-on-one mode with the trainee, the training officer should adapt to the trainee's learning style to provide every opportunity for them to succeed in the program within the agency's standards. Small successes build motivation and contribute to a better learning experience.

Effective training provides the trainee with the opportunity to fail forward by learning from mistakes made in a safe instructional environment. As the trainee becomes increasingly confident, they develop the ability to perform at increasingly higher and more accountable levels. Instead of simply prompting the trainee to recall information, the CTO should encourage a trainee to assess the relevance, context, potential implications, and overall importance of information gathered.

Ultimately, the trainer must adapt their teaching strategy to the trainee's needs and individual progress. The trainer should avoid comparing one trainee's performance with another's. Rather, the trainer should only evaluate their trainee's performance against the performance standards set by the agency.

Some trainees can assimilate new information more quickly than others. This does not mean that a trainer should accept poor or substandard work. Expect a trainee to meet the performance standards of the training program and hold them appropriately accountable. Likewise, each success will motivate the trainee to repeat the desirable behavior and encourage them to continue with the training program.

The things I hear, I forget

The things I see, I remember

The things I do, I understand

The things I teach, I learn

— Confucius

TRAINING TIPS

The key to ensuring optimal performance of all dispatch personnel is intensive, consistent, and well-designed training. By following a formalized training program, the agency is providing the trainee with structured instruction, aimed at creating a competent dispatcher while also mitigating potential personal and organizational liability. The CTO is responsible for establishing and maintaining an environment that is conducive to learning and for representing their agency in a professional and competent manner. The CTO must also prepare the trainee to learn, just as the trainee must be prepared to learn.

Some suggestions to foster and maintain a positive training environment include, but are not limited to:

- Showing interest in the trainee's learning

- Paying attention to the trainee

- Being proactive in training

- Planning and organizing lessons, including study guides and quizzes

- Knowing training materials (i.e. training manual, study guides and quizzes) and use down time to review them

- Recognizing that all circumstances/situations can lead to teachable training opportunities

- Keeping personal business away from the training area

- Keeping time off to a minimum. If time off must be taken, addressing the following:

    - Selecting a replacement trainer
    - Communicating a trainer and schedule change (if applicable) with trainee
    - Providing the replacement trainer with the training plan and associated instructional materials

- Discussing the trainee's progress only with those authorized to receive the information

- Presenting material in a positive and impartial manner

- Resolving policy conflicts or questions in advance with management

EXPLANATION OF TRAINING TERMS

Action Plan	Used to outline the specific steps, goals, and time frames of the remediation plan. It may also be referred to as a performance improvement plan or strategy.
Critical Tasks	Activities deemed essential to the performance of a public safety dispatcher's job duties.
Daily Evaluation	A form of written documentation for tracking the daily performance of a trainee in specific categorized areas. The actual hours trained are also noted. A daily evaluation is designed to provide the trainee with consistent and timely feedback and to provide the agency with a means of accurately memorializing the trainee's performance.
Final Evaluation	The final evaluation serves as a summative assessment of the trainee's overall performance in the CTO program. The final evaluation is intended to document the trainee's readiness to progress out of a directly supervised or shadowed CTO program experience and into the realm of solo job performance as a probationary public safety dispatcher. As with other evaluations, the document may serve to highlight particular areas of trainee strength as well as areas identified as appropriate for continued growth and development. The final evaluation also verifies the trainee's ability to perform all applicable job elements at the minimum level of competence required by the employing agency.
Performance Category	Each area in which a trainee is to be evaluated. Each area is rated according to an established performance standard. For example, a trainee may be rated as Competent (C), Exceeding Training Expectations (E), Progressing Satisfactorily (P), Needs Improvement (NI), Not Observed (NO), or Not Responding To Training (NRT). *(Individual agencies may use different terms but in each case the ratings are intended to identify the trainee's level of performance.)*
Remediation	A specific process or action taken by the CTO or agency to improve and/or correct a chronic or substantive performance deficiency. The intent of remediation is to provide additional instruction in the specific areas of deficiency.
Summary Evaluations	A synopsis of the daily evaluations of the trainee's progress over a designated period of time (i.e., weekly, bi-weekly or monthly). The evaluation may also be used to set goals, communicate performance expectations, or otherwise describe the degree to which a trainee is currently meeting (or failing to meet) performance standards.

THE TRAINING PROGRAM

The Training Program is a structured training process specific to the job competencies required by a public safety dispatcher. These competencies are directly linked to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and tasks performed by public safety dispatchers within a communications center.

The first week of employment should provide the trainee with an orientation and overview of the agency's operations. During the orientation the trainee will learn how the program is structured, the purpose of evaluations, and the prevailing chain of command.

The trainee will receive a variety of training resources and job aids, including the communications training manual. The training manual contains a history of the jurisdiction(s) served, basic governmental structures, localized resource information, and other job specific materials the trainee will need to perform their job. It may also contain a communications system overview, reference charts, lists of codes, and abbreviations the trainee will need to learn. Additional training tools such as videos, audiotapes, flashcards, and POST workbooks may be provided.

The Communications Training Competency Sign-Off Manual (CTC) is a series of job component checklists documenting performance-related milestones over the course of the training program. The completed sign-off manual will be retained in the trainee's file.

Serving as a CTO is an intense and demanding commitment. To the extent possible, the CTO should avoid involvement with other ancillary duties which might interfere with the training process. The CTO needs to balance the needs of the trainee with officer and citizen safety, organizational priorities, and operational demands.

The final phase of training assesses the trainee's performance as compared to the standardized guidelines noted in this manual. The trainee must be rated as competent in all aspects of the standards during this phase. The CTC Sign-Off Manual (and all associated performance objectives) should have been completed prior to the trainee's entry into this phase.

To ensure the trainee performs effectively on their own, the CTO should observe the actions of the trainee from a "sit-along" position. The CTO does not take any action except in instances where intervention is necessary. A CTO intervention would typically occur under the following types of circumstances:

1. **Officer Safety Issue**

   If the actions or inactions of the trainee constitute a hazard or potentially dangerous situation to field units or citizens, the CTO must take whatever action is necessary to reduce the hazard and ensure proper safety practices are followed.

2. **Illegal and Unethical Activity**

   The CTO must ensure that the trainee's actions are legal and ethical at all times. Neither of these conditions shall be sacrificed for training purposes.

3. **Embarrassment to a Citizen, the Agency, or the CTO**

   The CTO must not allow an incident to get to the point where the trainee embarrasses or brings discredit to a citizen, the agency, the CTO, or trainee at any time.

EVALUATIONS

Documentation

One of the most challenging and vital responsibilities of the CTO is writing comprehensive evaluations that document and communicate information in an objective and precise manner. While CTOs may recognize traits in their trainee that can be either beneficial or detrimental to the agency, it is important to document only information that can be substantiated. CTOs should keep in mind that seemingly unimportant individual actions may reveal patterns which may be relevant to the trainee's overall performance. Evaluations must contain specific statements related to actual job performance and demonstrated job knowledge.

Documentation should include a detailed description of conduct exhibited by the trainee in the performance of specific tasks. Evaluative judgments may be supported with copies of printouts, recordings or other documents. If the trainee's performance or degree of progress is substandard, the evaluation must be written in such a manner as to clearly identify and describe the deficiency as well as the desired conduct and steps that will be taken to facilitate improvement. If the trainee meets or exceeds the guidelines set by the training program, it is important to identify the actions that prompted the specific rating. Likewise the narrative should support a substandard rating.

Trainees need to be regularly informed of their progress through timely evaluations. Feedback, whether positive or negative, is most effective when it immediately follows the observed conduct.

Daily Evaluations

Daily evaluations aid the CTO in assessing the daily progress of the trainee. They are used to keep a consistent, accurate and chronological record of the trainee's progress, and can be used as a vehicle to recognize satisfactory or exemplary performance as well as surfacing areas needing improvement or additional training.

When writing daily evaluations the following factors should be considered:

- Performance
- Interpersonal skills
- Knowledge
- Job readiness

SUMMARY EVALUATIONS

Summary evaluations are based on daily observations and provide a synopsis of the trainee's performance over a specific period of time. The content should reflect the trainee's overall progress, including strengths and weaknesses. Specific action plans should be developed that cite areas for improvement and determine whether goals have been achieved. These evaluations are more formal than daily evaluations and should be forwarded through the appropriate chain of command.

The daily evaluation documents how the trainee performed a specific task. The actual task taught is listed in the Communications Training Competency Signoff Manual.

COMPETENCY SIGN-OFF

After marking the appropriate rating categories it is necessary to write a brief narrative for each rating section. Unless the task performed is not listed in the Communications Training Competency Sign-off Manual (CTCSM), it is not necessary to list exactly which task was completed. The sign off in the CTCSM will serve that purpose. This narrative should explain how the trainee reacted to the task.

The training officer should not hesitate to mark a "needs improvement" category in any area of a trainee's evaluation. The trainer is not doing anyone a favor by overlooking a deficiency. If the trainee has a problem area, it is important to document the problem area along with steps necessary to correct the deficiency. The trainee should also understand that this is a daily evaluation, and there will be some normal fluctuation in the markings. The trainee should be more concerned with their overall performance as opposed to a single critical mark on any given day.

PRESENTING THE EVALUATION

After writing the evaluation, the CTO needs to meet with the trainee to actually present the evaluation. Trainee confidentiality needs to be maintained by meeting in a private setting free of distractions and which offers an appropriate degree of privacy to encourage a more candid and relaxed exchange of information.

Meetings should be structured. Reviewing the evaluation section by section offers a consistent format to follow. The CTO should not only cover the general section, but should also expand on each individual topic on the evaluation form and provide any supporting materials. Once the CTO has finished presenting the evaluation there should be a consistent opportunity for trainee input. Successful training interactions should validate the trainee's worth, address any relevant concerns, and allow the trainee to become actively involved in their own training experience.

Trainee success is dependent on open, honest, and direct communication. Meetings should provide an honest assessment of their current training level, permit the setting of specific goals, and continue the planning process for successful completion of the program.

Intentionally blank

CSU San Bernardino Police Department - Communication Center
TRAINEE EVALUATION

Trainee's Name *(Last, First)*	CTO's Name *(Last, First)*	Date

RATINGS: **NI** = Needs Improvement   **PS** = Progressing Satisfactorily   **E** = Exceeds Training Expectations   **C** = Competent
NO = Not Observed   **NRT**= Not Responding to Training

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate trainee's performance in the following categories:

A. Performance	NI	PS	E	C	NO	NRT
1. Written Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Verbal Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Listening Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Accuracy/Thoroughness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. CAD Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Stress Control	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Decision Making/Critical Thinking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Initiative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Call Taker and/or Radio Dispatcher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Versatility/Adaptability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Retention of Information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Officer and Citizen Safety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Interpersonal Skills	**NI**	**PS**	**E**	**C**	**NO**	**NRT**
1. Conduct toward Citizens	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Conduct Toward Co-Workers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Conduct Towards Supervision	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Acceptance of Criticism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Self Image and Confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Knowledge	**NI**	**PS**	**E**	**C**	**NO**	**NRT**
1. Laws, Policies, Procedures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. General Resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. CAD Manual	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Training Manual	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Communication Equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Call Types	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Geography	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Job Readiness	**NI**	**PS**	**E**	**C**	**NO**	**NRT**
1. General Appearance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Punctuality/Dependability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Mental Alertness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. Miscellaneous Skills and Traits	**NI**	**PS**	**E**	**C**	**NO**	**NRT**
1. Keyboarding/Typing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Ergonomic Awareness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

TRAINING HOURS

Call taker	Secondary	Primary	Study		Total training hours

▶
_____
Trainee Signature

▶
_____
CTO Signature

▶
_____
CTO Supervisor

Intentionally blank

ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan is used to identify and communicate problem areas to the trainee, the training officer, and supervisors. After the problem area(s) have been identified, the training officer develops specific training assignments which assist the trainee in overcoming the deficiency noted. Assignments are documented on the Action Plan.

The training deficiencies noted must be specific tasks clearly defined in the "Training Assignment" section of the Action Plan. The CTO is responsible for ensuring that the trainee has completed each specific task and that they have evaluated the trainee in that specific area. If the Action Plan task has not been completed to the satisfaction of the training officer, the trainee may be assigned a revised Action Plan. The Action Plan, including the results and relevant supporting materials, should be included in the written evaluations.

Of importance when using the Action plan is the need to provide the trainee with clearly defined goals and realistic time frames for goals to be achieved. Identified time frames must be achievable during the trainee's work hours. Most agencies specify that homework cannot be assigned without appropriate compensation being provided.

The following page contains a sample Action Plan form

Intentionally blank

CSU San Bernardino Police Department - Communication Center
TRAINING ACTION PLAN

Trainee's Name *(Last, First)*	CTO's Name *(Last, First)*	Date / /

Your training officer has identified one or more areas of performance difficulties that need your immediate attention for improvement.

You will be expected to fully complete the training assignment by: / /

A. Performance Deficiencies

Define the problem specifically, giving examples. Describe the training already conducted.

_____

_____

_____

_____

B. Training Assignment

Describe the specific assignments given to the trainee to correct the above problem.

_____

_____

_____

_____

C. Assignment Completion	Yes	No
1. Has the trainee satisfactorily completed the training plan? If *No*, but improvement is noted, go to 3	☐	☐
2. Is the trainee now performing at a competent level?	☐	☐
3. Has an additional assignment been given?	☐	☐

D. Comments

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

▶ _____   ▶ _____   ▶ _____

Trainee Signature   CTO Signature   CTO Supervisor

Intentionally blank