

Instructor Resource Guide



Elementary Educational Outreach Training

Course ID# 4203

Continuing Education

June 2024

ABSTRACT

The Elementary Educational Outreach Training, proposed by Representative Jarvis Johnson and funded by the 88th Texas Legislature, is designed to share best practices for peace officers to engage youth in a way that will promote positive interactions between children and law enforcement. The goal is to connect with children in an age-appropriate way that humanizes law enforcement, build trust so children are comfortable approaching an officer, and bridges any gaps between school resource officers and non-school-based law enforcement officers. In this course, students will learn about community engagement, child development, and building trust and rapport with elementary-aged children.

Instructor Resource Guide:

This is an Instructor Resource Guide (IRG), not a lesson plan. The purpose of the IRG is to outline the minimum state requirements of what must be taught for a course to be considered compliant and receive TCOLE credit. The learning objectives provided in this IRG are the minimum state requirements for the training and must not be changed or altered.

- A qualified instructor **shall** develop the IRG into a lesson plan that meets their organization and student needs and must be kept in a training file for auditing purposes.

Please note: It is the responsibility of the Academy and/or Contractual Training Provider to ensure the IRG is developed into a complete lesson plan based on the requirements outlined in the IRG for a particular topic.

Lesson Plan:

Each organization is charged with creating their own lesson plan for how the organization will disseminate the information in the IRG.

- The IRG is designed to assist the instructor/subject matter expert in developing comprehensive lesson plans. The use of current statistics, best practice models, and scenario-based training should also be included in the lesson plan development. Instructors are encouraged to add additional activities.
- The institutions and instructors will determine how much time is spent on each topic/module, how many/what kind of examples or exercises are used during their presentation, and how in-depth they review each topic in the course they present.
- Any activity that is **suggested** is just that, an example or suggestion, and is not mandated for inclusion.
- Anything that is **required** must be included in the instructor's lesson plan.

Note to Trainers:

It is the responsibility of the Academy and/or Training Coordinator to ensure this curriculum and its materials are kept up to date. Refer to curriculum and legal resources for changes in subject matter or laws relating to this topic as well as the Texas Commission on Law

Enforcement website at www.tcole.texas.gov for edits due to course review. Training providers must keep a complete training file on all courses reported for TCOLE credit.

Student Prerequisites:

- None

Instructor Prerequisites:

An instructor must be a subject matter expert in the topic, must have documented knowledge/training/education, and provide an instructor's biography that documents subject matter expertise. It is the responsibility of the training academy/training coordinator to select qualified instructors. A TCOLE instructor certification does not certify someone to teach any topic.

- If a documented subject matter expert does not hold a TCOLE instructor certification, the instructor must be approved in writing by the department's training coordinator or chief administrative officer and kept in the training file for the course.
- This course may be instructed by a law enforcement professional, preferably with experience working with youth or in the mental health field.
- The course may also be instructed by a licensed mental health professional who possesses a Master's degree or higher in a field of mental or behavioral health.
- If the instructor is a peace officer and does not have experience working with youth or in a mental health field, it is highly suggested to include a co-instructor in a mental health profession to assist with the development and instruction of the child development section of this course.

Length of Course:

It is the training coordinator's responsibility to ensure the minimum hours are being met. Students are required to attend all classroom hours as listed in this instructor resource guide, there is no 10% attendance rule. TCOLE Rule 218.1 (C)(4) states that failure to meet the minimum course length may be grounds for denial of training. This course shall be taught the minimum hours that are listed in this guide and the student shall attend the entire class to receive credit.

- 1 hour, minimum.

Assessment:

- Training providers are responsible for creating student assessments and documenting the mastery of all objectives in this course using various testing assessment opportunities.
 - Assessment opportunities include oral or written testing, interaction with instructor and students, case study and scenario, and other means of testing

student's application of the skills taught as the instructor or department deems appropriate.

- The minimum passing score shall be 70%.

Unit 1 Community Engagement

1.1 Identify benefits of community engagement with children.

- A. Positive interactions make children feel more comfortable.
- B. Children are more likely to cooperate with and listen to law enforcement or first responders.
- C. Children are more likely to engage with law enforcement or first responders during emergencies.
- D. Having a positive rapport with children will have a positive cascading effect in the community, including, but not limited to:
 - i. Fostering cooperation and respect.
 - ii. Counteracting anti-police sentiment.
 - iii. Improving officer safety.
 - iv. Prevention of future crime.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY:

- Have students participate in a group discussion to brainstorm additional benefits they have experienced surrounding community engagement. This could include specific events, programs, etc.
- After group discussion, have students create a list of community engagement opportunities shared with the class to take home.

Unit 2 Child Development

2.1 List the three main areas of brain development.

- A. Brainstem
 - i. Also known as “survival” or “lizard brain.”
 - ii. Responsible for heart rate, breathing, blinking, etc.
- B. Limbic system
 - i. Responsible for processing emotions, memories, and motivations.
- C. Neocortex
 - i. Responsible for executive functions such as:
 - 1. Problem solving
 - 2. Empathy
 - 3. Impulse control
 - 4. Learning.
 - ii. Development continues until an individual reaches their late twenties.
 - iii. Children diagnosed with neurodivergent disorders such as autism or ADHD, may need more support with executive functions.

- D. These areas develop sequentially.
 - i. Almost 80% of brain development occurs by the age of three (3).
 - ii. Brain development may be impacted by trauma, neurological conditions, and other environmental factors.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: See Appendix A for a guide outlining age-appropriate interview questions to get an understanding of age-specific cognitive capabilities.

2.2 Identify age-specific cognitive capabilities.

- A. Concept of time
 - i. Children between the ages of four (4) and eleven (11) are still learning the concepts of past, present, and future.
 - ii. Discrepancies regarding time in a story are not indicators that a child is lying.
- B. Ability to understand instructions
 - i. Prior to age five (5), children can only grasp one directive at a time.
 - ii. Between ages five (5) and six (6), children begin understanding instructions with more than one step.
 - 1. Regardless of age, anyone under stress responds better to simple commands.
 - iii. By age seven (7), the ability to comprehend complex instructions improves.
 - 1. At this age, they may also exaggerate stories to make them more exciting.
- C. Ability to understand context.
 - i. By age nine (9), they learn how to adjust their language to their audience such as:
 - 1. Using slang language with peers but not with adults.
- D. The younger the child, the more support they need in:
 - i. Understanding how their actions affect others.
 - ii. How to make responsible decisions.
 - iii. How to master self-control.
- E. Elementary-aged children seek approval, discipline, structure, and boundaries.

2.3 Recognize common behaviors of children.

- A. Children are unique individuals with distinct personalities, needs, and behaviors.
- B. Examples of common behaviors include:
 - i. Spontaneous hugging
 - ii. High energy levels
 - iii. Inquisitive
 - iv. Naturally quiet and introverted
 - v. Impulsive

- C. Trauma and stress have the potential to impact children’s behavior.
 - i. Children with extensive trauma are likely to have underdeveloped brains due to their overactive survival brains.
 - 1. They are less likely to have key skills in getting along with others such as:
 - a. Self-control
 - b. Empathy
 - ii. Children are not inherently bad; their actions may be a response to challenging circumstances.

Unit 3 Building Trust and Rapport

3.1 Identify ways to communicate with children in an age-appropriate manner.

- A. Verbal language
 - i. Talk to children, not at them.
 - 1. Actively listen.
 - 2. Engage in the conversation.
 - 3. Show empathy.
 - ii. Be honest and use reassuring language.
 - 1. Ex. instead of saying, "Don't be scared," try "It's normal to feel a little scared, but we are here to help."
 - iii. Avoid technical language for children under the age of nine (9). Ex.:
 - 1. If a child has a bathroom mishap and were asked if they had an accident, they would probably say “no” because the word “accident” doesn’t fit their definition of an accident.
 - iv. Keep conversations simple and on their level.
 - 1. Understanding vocabulary and using words that they can understand is essential.
 - 2. Children may miss things like sarcasm and are very literal with their understanding of vocabulary.
 - v. Avoid frightening stories or details.
- B. Body language
 - i. Pay attention to tone of voice.
 - ii. Have open body language such as:
 - 1. Uncrossing arms
 - 2. Smiling
 - 3. Offer high-fives and fist bumps
 - iii. Physically get down on their level.
 - 1. Do not tower over them, height can be intimidating to small children.

- iv. When officers maintain a calm demeanor, it often leads to a mutual sense of calmness in the people they interact with.
- C. Watching youth educational programming and utilizing the same vocabulary and speech can help teach age-appropriate language.

3.2 Identify best practices for building trust with elementary-aged children.

- A. Be visible, approachable, and a known presence.
 - i. Let them see you and get to know you.
 - ii. Meet the child where they are, physically and emotionally.
 - iii. Notice what the child is interested in and speak to them about it.
 - 1. Stay informed about trends and current interests popular amongst children such as:
 - a. Gaming
 - b. Sports
 - c. TV shows
 - d. Music
 - e. Positive social media trends and challenges
 - iv. Explain the role of law enforcement officers and how they are there to help.
 - v. Some officers carry child-friendly items to give away. Ex:
 - 1. Stickers
 - 2. Stuffed animals
 - 3. Coloring books
 - vi. Expect many questions from them.
 - 1. Be prepared to explain uniform details, such as belt gear.
 - a. This can be a good way to talk about firearms safety.
 - 2. Be prepared to explain details about patrol vehicles.
 - a. If possible, turn on lights and sirens if they ask.
- B. Always be truthful with students regardless of circumstances.
- C. Breaking promises, no matter how large or small, will break trust.
- D. Children who may have a lack of trust in law enforcement may present a challenge in building trust and rapport.
 - i. Don't give up on them.
 - ii. Even if they don't want to interact, always smile and greet them.
 - iii. Try to engage the students and get them to talk about or vent about why they have mistrust of law enforcement.
 - iv. Do not take their mistrust personally.

- v. Be understanding and gentle when responding during these conversations.
- E. Relationships built early last a lifetime.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Illustrate how being present and visible in schools has advantages during emergencies involving schools, as well as during everyday interactions with elementary aged children.

- Visiting schools could be an opportunity to get to know the layout of the property in case of an incident.
- Being a familiar and trusted presence will help students feel more comfortable when an incident occurs. Students are not as apprehensive as when they interact with an officer or first responder only when an emergency happens.

3.3 Identify opportunities to have routine positive interactions with elementary-aged children.

- A. Work collaboratively with school administration, teachers, counselors, students, and the community.
- B. Join or create mentoring/tutoring programs. Ex.:
 - 1. Rocket Rules – pre-k thru 2nd grade.
 - 2. Bigs in Blue
- C. Read to students.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Provide students with age-appropriate book titles to read or books that would be helpful to read about their profession.

- D. Co-present or co-teach safety classes with the school counselor.
- E. Eat lunch with students in the cafeteria.
- F. Play games during recess or PE.
- G. Participate in school events.
 - i. Be aware of and participate in both basic and large-scale drills.
- H. Attend school activities, such as:
 - i. Sports games
 - ii. Field days
- I. Participate in community events, such as:
 - i. Toy drives
 - ii. Bike rodeos
 - iii. Shop with a Cop
 - iv. National Night Out
 - v. Coffee with a Cop
 - vi. Sports games

vii. First Fridays or similar events

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Being seen at school events, especially those events with parental involvement, helps bring together positive relations between the student and their parents and may break down some of this lack of trust.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY:

- Explain the importance and elements of rapport building to positively interact with youth learned throughout the class.
 - Divide students into pairs or small groups.
 - Provide each group with a roleplay scenario that involves rapport building using the techniques discussed throughout the class.
 - Students should take turns playing different roles in their assigned scenario.
 - Facilitate a brief discussion on what went well and what could be improved.

APPENDIX A

Considerations for Age-Appropriate Interview Questions:

CONSIDERATIONS FOR AGE-APPROPRIATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS							
AGE	WHO	WHAT	WHERE	HOW	CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE	DURATION	FREQUENCY
2-4	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red
5-7	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
8-12	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
13+	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow

KEY

Green	Child Should be able to answer these questions.
Yellow	Child MIGHT be able to answer these question; interviewer should proceed with extreme caution.
Red	Child WIL NOT be able to answer these questions; interviewer should not ask.

Many factors go into a child's ability to answer questions including the child's developmental level, script memory, delayed outcry, and internal and external blocks to disclosure. This chart provides generalities and should NOT be considered valid in all cases.



COURSE REFERENCES

Wylie, Doug. (2017, August 4). *Cops and kids: Why the future of American law enforcement is 'child's play.'* Police1. Lexipol. <https://www.police1.com/community-policing/articles/cops-and-kids-why-the-future-of-american-law-enforcement-is-childs-play-SP9wr djTebu5xgqG/>