

**OFFICER SAFETY
ARIZONA SUPREME COURT
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS (AOC)**

History and Overview

In March 2001, Chief Justice Zlaket established an Ad Hoc Committee to study officer safety issues. The Administrative Order specifying committee responsibilities identified the following study topics: (1) Examine current probation department policies and practices; (2) Provide a written report and make recommendations to the Arizona Judicial Council; and (3) Conduct a national survey of policies, practices regarding use of force, and existing safety training. The Ad Hoc Committee was comprised of judges, chief probation officers, juvenile court directors, law enforcement officers, state legislators, probation officers and surveillance officers.

In August 2001, the Adult Probation Services Division appointed Kevin Jeffries as the Probation Safety Specialist. This position would staff the Ad Hoc Committee and oversee the development of a comprehensive, statewide Officer Safety Program.

In December 2001, the Ad Hoc Committee presented the following six recommendations to the Arizona Judicial Council:

1. Clarify the duties of juvenile officers pertaining to peace officer status;
2. All officers should have the option to request authorization to be armed if they satisfactorily complete the required training and meet prerequisite criteria;
3. Chief probation officers and juvenile court directors should be authorized to require arming of officers in certain positions who are performing certain duties;
4. The development and adoption of the Use of Force code;
5. The establishment of a standardized officer safety program that includes mandatory officer safety and safety equipment training and firearms standards and training; and,
6. Hiring standards to be established.

Arizona Code of Judicial Administration (ACJA)

The Ad Hoc Committee developed three ACJA sections which were approved by the Arizona Judicial Council and adopted by the Chief Justice:

1. Section 6-112: Use of Force;
2. Section 6-107: Safety Training; and,
3. Section 6-113: Firearms Standards.

One existing code section, Section 6-105; Powers and Duties of Officers was revised to conform to the officer safety program. Subsequent to the Ad Hoc Committee the Personnel Practices Code Section was developed which included drug testing guidelines.

Curriculum Development

In April 2002, the Committee on Probation Education (COPE) appointed the following work groups to develop the curriculum required by Safety Training and Firearms Standards code sections:

1. New officer orientation - chairperson Aaron O'Connell;
2. Expanded officer safety for the certification academies – chairperson Nikolee Nelsen;
3. Defensive tactics – chairperson Kevin Jeffries; and,
4. Firearms training – chairperson Ron Dominguez.

These groups worked in conjunction with the COPE's Curriculum Committee to establish the safety related curriculum.

Training Implementation and Program Structure

The defensive tactics and firearms programs were implemented through the utilization of trained volunteer instructors. The instructor base consists primarily of probation/surveillance officers and supervisors from all of Arizona's Probation Departments. Classes were held regionally to ensure consistency and quality of training to all officers. Typically, a defensive tactics or firearms class would have one lead instructor working with four instructors and 16 students. Lead instructors were responsible to maintain the integrity of the curriculum, which would guarantee statewide consistency.

Defensive Tactics

The Safety Training codes section requires that all (2000+) adult and juvenile probation and surveillance officers that have direct supervision over offenders satisfactorily complete a 40-hour Defensive Tactics Program. The code section further clarifies that the program must be COPE approved and include the following topics: use of force, verbal de-escalation, personal weapons, pressure points, control holds, impact weapons, handcuffing/searching, edged weapon defense, Oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray, weapons retention, and weapons disarming.

After an initial cadre of DT instructors were assembled, the program began implementation in March of 2003. By December 2004, all of the state's probation/surveillance officers had been trained. Currently the AOC conducts approximately 12 defensive tactics classes per year for newly hired officers.

Firearms Training

Officers wishing to be armed must first request authorization from their local department and meet all criteria outlined in the Firearms Standard code section. At a minimum these criteria include another background check, psychological evaluation and satisfactorily

completing the defensive tactics program. Once approved by the department officers can attend a 40-hour firearms training.

After an initial cadre of firearms instructors were developed, the program began implementation in June of 2003. All of the officers that requested authorization to carry a firearm have completed firearms training the AOC also provides firearms training to newly hired officers and current staff that have requested authorization.

Instructors

The Safety Training code section requires that only AOC approved instructors can teach defensive tactics or firearms. Probation staff wishing to become an instructor must fit the guidelines outlined in AOC Policy for Instructors. Requirements include department approval, minimum two years experience as a probation or surveillance officer, certification in first aide/CPR and completion of the AOC's Faculty Skill Development (FSD) training. Interested parties that meet those requirements must then attend a Train The Trainer (TTT) course. The TTT is a 40-hour course that enhances the candidate's skills and emphasizes the ability to teach the techniques and curriculum.

On-Going Training

The Safety Code Section also mandates a minimum 8 hours annual training in both defensive tactics and firearms. Departments use their own AOC certified instructors to conduct this training. In September of 2004, the AOC purchased a Firearms Automated Training System (FATS) for departments to use as part of their on-going firearms training.

Procurement

All equipment and subsequent training efforts were financed with existing state funds. Purchase and distribution items included: safety-related equipment such as body armor, handcuffs, expandable batons, OC spray, flashlights, training mats, training gear, targets, eye and ear protection, ammunition, duty belts, holsters, and firearms.

Support and Guidance

In August 2002, a standing advisory committee to the Committee on Probation (COP) was appointed to continue to review the implementation of the probation officer safety program. The Staff Safety Advisory Committee (SSAC) will continue to research and advise COP on safety, training and equipment concerns of all probation staff throughout the state.

To date, this program has gained national attention and recognition as a model for probation, parole, and community corrections agencies across the country. The National Institute of Corrections has cited two of the adopted codes in their recent publication on how to implement officer safety programs.

If you have any questions regarding this program or probation officer safety feel free to contact

Kevin C. Jeffries at:

kjeffries@courts.az.gov or (480) 496-5952