

# Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, and Community Relations

*GPSTC Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, and  
Community Relations Curricula*

## Online Training Course

### Program of Instruction



Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Instructional Services Division

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# Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, and Community Relations

2 hr

## Purpose

The purpose of this Program of Instruction is to provide other training entities a reference document related to the design of, and resources used in, the GPSTC Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, and Community Relations Curricula.

## Instructional Goal

The instructional goal for Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, and Community Relations is to provide officers with the information to apply the concepts of police legitimacy and procedural justice in order to build trust and ensure a stronger focus on positive community relations.

## Intellectual Property Notice

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## Evaluation Plan

A written examination must consist of 20 multiple-choice questions designed by the agency instructor. The questions will follow the prescribed method of test development according to POST Uniform Academy Rules and Regulations.

The quality and effectiveness of this course should also be evaluated through feedback from course participants using course evaluation forms, observation by instructional supervisors, and feedback from graduate.

## Terminal Performance Objective

Given an encounter with a non-compliant or violent subject, the officer will apply an objectively reasonable level of force to stabilize the situation, in accordance with state and federal statutes and current case law.

## Enabling Objectives

1. Discuss the principles of police legitimacy and principles of procedural justice and their implications on officer safety and community relations.
2. Differentiate lawfulness and legitimacy and the control officers have on each.
3. Discuss the benefits of police legitimacy and procedural justice and its effectiveness in building trust between the police and the community we serve through more effective communication.
4. Discuss how to apply the tactics of procedural justice to various police-citizen encounters.
5. Discuss the concept of nobility of policing and the positive impact it can have on community relations.

## Topical Outline

- I. Principles of Police Legitimacy and Procedural Justice
  - A. Officer safety is always first priority. Never sacrifice officer safety.
  - B. Goal is to improve community relations and understand the actions and perceptions that form how the public views of our role.
  - C. Principles of Police Legitimacy and Procedural Justice.
    1. Be fair.
    2. Be respectful.
    3. Be impartial.
    4. Be vigilant.
    5. Establishing trust is a duty of law enforcement.
      - a. Begins when you are sworn.

- b. Continues throughout your career.
      - c. Applies both on and off duty.
    - 6. Discipline
      - a. Any citizen contact should be handled in a fair and respectful manner.
      - b. Officers must adopt a fair and respectful demeanor and hold other officers to the same standard.
  - D. Loss of Legitimacy
    - 1. Controversial events surrounding citizen encounters can foster a lack of confidence in the police.
    - 2. This loss of legitimacy can evolve into encouragement of violence, or direct hostilities against police.
    - 3. Can cause those who need help to refrain from calling.
  - E. A Return to Confidence
    - 1. Positive encounters
    - 2. Needed across the board
    - 3. Built on the actions of individual officers
- II. Legitimate vs. Legitimacy
- A. Legitimate: “allowed according to Rules or Laws, real, accepted, official, fair or reasonable.”
  - B. Police Legitimacy: “the idea/belief that the police have the authority or right to dictate proper behavior and enforce the law.”

C. Police Legitimacy

1. The acceptance and confidence of the public is critical to maintaining police legitimacy.
2. With police legitimacy, the public views the police as justified/entitled to exercise authority to:
  - a. Maintain social order
  - b. Manage conflicts
  - c. Solve problems

D. Community Relations

1. Does your community support police?
2. Are they positive in citizen encounters?
3. Are they confident that your agency is there to help?

E. Elements that Affect Agency Legitimacy

1. Public trust
2. Willingness
3. Morality

F. Public Trust

1. Based on the belief that officers are:
  - a. Protecting the community
  - b. Honest
  - c. Sincere

J. Willingness to adhere and accept police authority.

K. Morality: Belief that the actions of officers are morally just, and reasonable.

L. Video Presentation

1. “The Importance of Mindset in Policing” by Chip Huth at TEDx Tacoma.

Accessed: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4\\_29TS6jjsA&t=73s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_29TS6jjsA&t=73s)

M. Four Pillars of Public Perception

1. Voice in the process.
  - a. Everyone wants their story to be heard.
  - b. Allow them to tell you their side of the story.
2. Transparency in the decision-making process.
  - a. People want to know what is happening, and why.
3. Neutrality in the decision-making process.
  - a. You must make decisions free of bias, cynicism, or prejudice.
  - b. Be fair in your treatment of citizens.
  - c. You must make decisions free of bias, cynicism, or prejudice.
  - d. Be fair in your treatment of citizens.
4. Respect for the person’s rights and dignity.
  - a. Treat others with dignity and respect.

N. Conflicting View Points of Police Legitimacy

1. May view the police as wrong in many situations.
2. May be looking for officers to be disrespectful.
3. May be looking for officers to be unjustified in their actions.

- O. Minimize Inaccurate Perceptions
  - 1. Remember, you are under constant scrutiny.
  - 2. Your actions are scoured over for any perception of mistake or injustice.
  - 3. Remain above reproach. Be just and unbiased in your actions.
- P. There is often a conflict between police procedures and the perception of the public.
- Q. Rebuilding the Trust of the Community
  - 1. The trust of the community must be built in advance!
  - 2. Once an incident occurs, you cannot immediately repair the damage.
  - 3. Recovery is possible, but the process is slow.
- R. Past Issues, Negative Impact
  - 1. Problems of the past leave a legacy behind.
    - a. Amadou Diallo
    - b. Rodney King
    - c. What local issues of the past have left a lasting negative impact in your jurisdiction?
  - 2. Reading Assignment: *Amadou Diallo Case Study*
    - a. Read the New York Daily News article about the Amadou Diallo shooting. The incident described had lasting effects on the public's perception of police locally and at large.  
Accessed: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/unarmed-amadou-diallo-shot-killed-police-1999-article-1.2095255>

- b. Read the Rutger's article, which is a continuation of the preceding article. Explain that this article includes the opinions of the writers, and the opinions demonstrated will differ from one section to another. These sections are from multiple sources, and are in response to the incident described in the preceding article.

Accessed: <http://crab.rutgers.edu/~goertzel/dialloverdict.htm>

- c. The New York Daily News article is a follow up from the first article. It is written a significant time after the second article was written. Advise students to pay close attention to any description of public reaction immediately preceding the incident, as described after the passage of time.

Accessed: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/amadou-diallo-mother-finally-peace-nypd-shooting-article-1.2519647>

## S. Effect of Positive Interactions

- 1. Can positive interactions have the same lasting effects?

- a. Individual positive encounters leave an impression.
- b. Agency positive actions encourage support.
- c. Strong, positive interactions build police legitimacy.

- 2. Video Presentation

- a. "Mending Broken Trust: Police and the communities they serve." By Chief Charles Ramsey, TEDx Philadelphia

Accessed:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbNCatXqcLw>

- 3. Reading Assignment

- a. "Woman delivers baby boy at Penn Station with help of MTA police."

Accessed: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/woman-delivers-baby-boy-penn-station-article-1.1420792>



### III. Benefits of Police Legitimacy and Procedural Justice

- A. “People are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have authority that is perceived as legitimate”.
- B. Police legitimacy is established through Procedural Justice.
- C. Procedural Justice
  - 1. Revolves around fairness and transparency. It requires an objective decision, clearly visible to the public. It is closely tied to due process.
  - 2. Is the set of procedures or practices used by Peace Officers, in which people are treated fairly, with proper respect, and a certain amount of transparency of action.
  - 3. Is based on how people perceive their relationship with legal authority and whether they were treated fairly.
  - 4. Core Principles of Procedural Justice:
    - a. Neutrality
      - i. The public requires decisions to be made in a just, fair, and equal manner.
      - ii. Our decisions must be objective.
      - iii. Not influenced by bias or prejudice.
      - iv. Extends beyond the initial encounter.
    - b. Respect
      - i. We must treat people with respect and dignity.
    - c. Trust
      - i. People react favorably when they view officers as trustworthy.
      - ii. Your actions should be beyond reproach.
      - iii. Established through positive interactions.

- iv. Be sincere
- v. Be approachable, yet professional
- d. Voice
  - i. People want their side of the story to be told.
  - ii. Grant people their “voice”
  - iii. Engage in active listening

D. Officer Safety and Community Relations

- 1. Concerns for police legitimacy, and the pursuit of procedural justice cannot be allowed to jeopardize your safety.
- 2. When the use of force is necessary and just, officers should not hesitate to act.
- 3. Procedural justice techniques used to establish police legitimacy can foster improved community relations, reducing hostilities toward officers.

F. Reading Assignment

- 1. “Executive order establishing a code of ethics. “  
Accessed:  
[https://gov.georgia.gov/sites/gov.georgia.gov/files/imported/vgn/images/portal/cit\\_1210/55/12/16721115801\\_10\\_11\\_04.pdf](https://gov.georgia.gov/sites/gov.georgia.gov/files/imported/vgn/images/portal/cit_1210/55/12/16721115801_10_11_04.pdf)

IV. Lawfulness and Legitimacy

- A. We are expected to operate lawfully.
- B. “Lawful” does not equal “legitimate”
  - 1. Lawfulness
    - a. Contributes to legitimacy
    - b. Is a conscious decision
    - c. Officers can control

2. Legitimacy
  - a. Based on the public's view
  - b. Officers can only influence
3. How can the individual officer influence legitimacy?
  - a. Maintain lawful operations.
  - b. Keep approach neutral.
  - c. Treat citizens with dignity and respect.
  - d. Establish trustworthiness.
  - e. Actively listen.

C. Scenario

1. While on patrol, you stop a speeder who does not have a driver's license.
  - a. Action 1: You have the vehicle towed, but do not take the time to provide the driver information on how to get the car back or why it is being towed.
    - i. Have you acted lawfully? Yes. *However*, you have not acted in a way that builds legitimacy. The driver will likely feel disrespected or that they have been treated unfairly.
  - b. Action 2: You explain to the driver why the vehicle is going to be towed, tell them what tow company is picking up the vehicle, what the typical process is for retrieving the vehicle, and contact information for the appropriate person to get this done.
    - i. Have you acted lawfully and legitimately? Yes, because you allowed the driver to feel respected and your treated them with dignity.

V. Benefits of Police Legitimacy and Procedural Justice

A. Governor's Code of Ethics:

1. "In order to maintain the public trust"...
2. all officers "must work solely for the public good"...
3. to "avoid even the appearance that their actions are motivated by private or personal interest"...
4. officers are encouraged to..."make objective, fair, impartial decisions"...
5. and "avoid any conduct...which might undermine the public trust"..

B. Oath of Office

C. Tactics of Procedural Justice

1. Every contact could affect public perception.
2. Respect is not a sign of weakness.
3. You can be respectful AND assertive.
4. Take time to listen.
5. You are under scrutiny.
6. Remember to:
  - a. Identify yourself.
  - b. Explain the reason for the contact.
  - c. Speak slowly, calmly.
  - d. Be patient and polite.
  - e. Use correct language (avoid profanity).
  - f. Repeat instructions and information.
  - g. Explain why.

7. Efforts to establish police legitimacy should in no way be allowed to interfere with officer safety!
8. Voice
  - a. Allows people to tell their story.
  - b. Encourages them to consider themselves part of the process.
  - c. Requires active listening.
9. Active Listening
  - a. Hearing is involuntary, effortless, recognition of sound.
  - b. Listening is an active process, focused, intentional receiving and analysis.
    - i. It is a practiced skill that is essential to successful interaction.
    - ii. Methods
      - aa. Show interest
      - bb. adopt a receptive stance.
      - cc. Use eye contact,
      - dd. ask questions to clarify.
  - c. Results
    - i. More information obtained.
    - ii. Speaker feels involved and respected.

## VI. Nobility of Policing

- A. "Policing is one of America's most noble professions. Service, justice, and fundamental fairness are the foundational principles in which every police action must be grounded. The nobility of policing demands the noblest of character." -Author Stephen Covey

- B. “No one is compelled to choose the profession of police officer, but having chosen it, everyone is obligated to perform its duties and live up to the high standards of its requirements.” - President Calvin Coolidge
- C. What the community expects of you, is based on their experience.
- D. Anticipated outcomes are based on what we have already encountered.
  - 1. Previous negative interaction or perceptions build negative expectations.
- E. What the community wants from you is a personification of nobility.
- F. Traits the public wants in a peace officer: service, honor, protection, justice, integrity.
- G. Police nobility is the combination of all the positive actions we as law enforcement officers take, and characteristics we demonstrate.
  - 1. Unsolicited good deeds
  - 2. Extra effort, higher levels of service
  - 3. These actions can have a large imprint on public opinion.
- H. To encourage the nobility of policing, practice respect.
  - 1. Treat people the way you want to be treated.
  - 2. Respect is an element of procedural justice.
- I. Positive interactions build police legitimacy.

## Instructional Guide

*This block of instruction could be enhanced by the use of additional videos, a practical exercise, role-playing, or demonstration.*

## Instructor References

*The instructor should identify current references for this block of instruction, including, but not limited to, the Peace Officer Reference Text, the Georgia Criminal and Traffic Law Manual, and the Georgia Criminal Procedure Manual for Peace Officers, as amended.*

*The following references were used in the original development of this course.*

Covey, Franklin. (2014, Jan 29). The Nobility of Policing. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/sne00005/the-nobility-of-policing>

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DeWine, Mike. (2016, Aug). Policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: 2106 course resource guide. (Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission Publication). OH, Columbus : Ohio Attorney General's Office.

Fisher, Craig (2014, March). Legitimacy and procedural justice: a new element of police leadership. Retrieved from [http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free\\_Online\\_Documents/Leadership/legitimacy%20and%20procedural%20justice%20-%20a%20new%20element%20of%20police%20leadership.pdf](http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free_Online_Documents/Leadership/legitimacy%20and%20procedural%20justice%20-%20a%20new%20element%20of%20police%20leadership.pdf)

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Gold, Emily. (2013, Sept) The case for procedural justice: Fairness as a Crime Prevention Tool. Retrieved from [https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/09-2013/fairness\\_as\\_a\\_crime\\_prevention\\_tool.asp](https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/09-2013/fairness_as_a_crime_prevention_tool.asp)

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[york/woman-delivers-baby-boy-penn-station-article-1.1420792](#)

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