

“Recognizing & Responding to Traumatized Youth”

Cleveland Division of Police Training

Pre- and Post- Training Survey Results, August 2020

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Abstract

Thirty-five (35) Recognizing and Responding to Traumatized Youth trainings (Youth Trainings) were held from July to November 2019. Of the approximately 1,375 Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) officers that were trained, 944 (69%) pre- and 871 (63%)-post surveys were completed. These surveys were analyzed to evaluate changes in CDP officers’ self-rated knowledge and beliefs of youth and personal skills related to youth interactions, and understand CDP officers’ manner to describe youth and expectations and feedback for the training. The survey results show that CDP officers gained functional skills as a result of the training, as evidenced by significant improvements in self-skill ratings from pre- to post- training surveys. Pre-training, CDP officers largely appear to have negative perceptions of youth based on the words used to describe youth. Some groups of CDP officers (e.g., role, years of experience), appeared to have differences on both pre- and post-training items, potentially due to different types of experiences with youth. Overall, the results derived from the pre- and post- training surveys demonstrate the value of the Youth Trainings, both in the objective gains in knowledge and skills and in the reflections from trainees. Based on trainee feedback, future trainings would be valuable, given small alterations to training activities and content, and could be most effective if organized based on sub-groups of CDP officers deemed to be meaningful from these survey results (e.g., role, years of experience). Despite methodological and technical difficulties in the training and administration of the surveys, the Youth Trainings appear to be an effective way to positively influence CDP officers’ knowledge, skills, and perceptions of youth. While it is beyond the scope of this training to assess whether these changes can be generalized to improved police interactions with youth on-the-job, this is the intention of the training and future study of this kind of training’s potential impact would be useful.

Introduction

The Mental Health Response Advisory Council (MHRAC), created as part of the US Department of Justice (USDOJ) consent decree with the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) and under the Cuyahoga County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board, recommended the inclusion of youth-specific policy guidance in the revised crisis intervention team (CIT) policies and training as part of ongoing CDP reform efforts. CIT policies with age-appropriate guidance were adopted in 2017 and in 2019. The MHRAC training committee engaged Strategies for Youth (SFY) to develop a youth-specific in-service police training. This report presents the findings and analysis of the pre and post surveys conducted during the SFY training, as well as some recommendations for future consideration.

* Survey data analysis and report drafting by Jessica Salley, MS, PhD Candidate and Policy Research Associate at the Schubert Center for Child Studies, under the supervision of Anastasia Dimitropoulos, PhD and Gabriella Celeste, JD. CWRU students Marykate Ford and Kathryn Liebler provided invaluable data coding and entry assistance, as well as with Lisa Kollins, Schubert Center Administrator. Thanks also to CDP Captain Purcell, Captain McPike and Sergeant Brigitte Dorr Guiser, and ADMHAS Board Training Director Carole Ballard, the MHRAC Training Sub-Committee and Lisa Thureau of Strategies for Youth for their efforts on the youth training in-service and feedback on the survey data analysis. Finally, we want to acknowledge the George Fund Foundation for their support of this work.

Background on the Training & Process

The CDP in-service training entitled: “Recognizing and Responding to Traumatized Youth” (hereinafter “Youth Training”) was a revised and condensed three (3) hour version of the SFY two-day “Policing the Teen Brain” training on adolescent development and effective strategies for police-youth interactions. The focus of the 3-hour Youth Training was on the rudiments of adolescent development as the basis for recognizing and responding effectively to youth chronically exposed to trauma.

The training consisted of series of PowerPoint slides, videos and handouts presented in-person by the trainers, using a lecture and discussion format, to classes that were on average 43 to 50 officers. The videos were short scenarios to illustrate and apply techniques presented in the lecture through an interactive format. Questions and discussion were encouraged throughout the training, with specific learning activities embedded in the training curriculum. See Appendix for an outline of the SFY Youth Training curriculum.

SFY prepared the customized training curriculum and materials and conducted a train-the-trainer in June, 2019 to training staff with the ADAMHS Board and a local group of children’s mental health providers. The Schubert Center for Child Studies at CWRU and the ADMHAS Board recruited the following children’s providers who willing to volunteer over the course of several months to present the in-service Youth Training to CDP: Applewood/Wingspan, Beechbrook, Bellefaire, Ohio Guidestone, Positive Education Program, and ADAMHS staff. The Youth Training curriculum was approved by the MHRAC, the court monitor, Dr. Dupont, and USDOJ attorneys and ultimately submitted to the court for final approval in June, 2019.

The Youth Trainings were conducted over the course of several months, from July through November 2019. A total of 35 trainings were held, with about 1,375 CDP officers, including supervisors, command staff, specialized units, community policing, administrators and patrol officers. Class size ranged from 43 to 50 officers. Volunteers trainers were joined by the CIT Coordinator, Captain James Purcell or his designee, to introduce the Youth Training as part of the ongoing CIT and CDP reform effort.

Survey Design & Administration

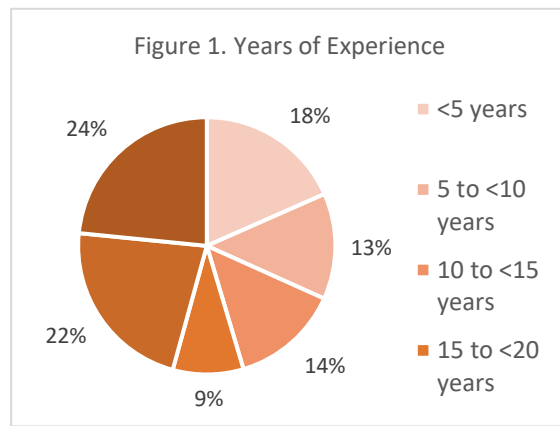
Before and after each training session, training participants were asked to complete an anonymous pre-training or post-training survey (pre and post surveys were not matched). Participants were given a few minutes at the start and end of the training to complete the surveys. The single page surveys included open-ended and Likert rating scale questions on knowledge and beliefs of youth, personal skills related to youth interactions, describing youth (pre-only), expectations for the training (pre-only), expected personal change after the training (post-only) and feedback on helpful training components, suggested improvements for the training, and overall usefulness of training (post-only). See Appendix for pre and post survey forms.

Survey Participants

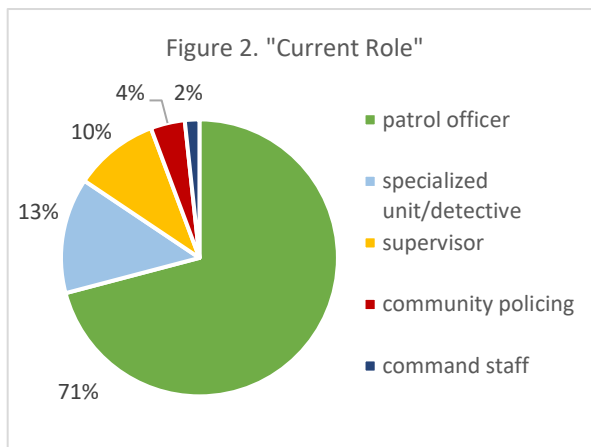
Trainee Respondent Characteristics

A total of 944 pre-training surveys and 871 post-training surveys were received by the Schubert Center for analysis. Using the estimated number of 1,375 total trainees, this suggests approximately 69% completed the pre-training survey and 63% completed the post-survey. Pre- and post- surveys were unable to be matched by respondent as the surveys did not include identifiable information.

On average, of those who completed the surveys, trainees had an average of 15.68 years of experience in police work (range= .5-38 years). When categorized by years of experience, most respondents were included in three groups: less than 5 years of experience (18% or 170 respondents); 20 to 25 years of experience (22% or 208 respondents); and greater than 25 years of experience (24% or 226 respondents). Categories of years of experience are depicted in Figure 1.



The category of “current role” was divided into 5 types of positions based on survey responses and groupings of roles used in police work:



- patrol officer (i.e., officers, administration, other),
- specialized unit/detective,
- supervisor (i.e., sergeant, supervisor, captain, lieutenant),
- community policing (school resource officer, community relations officer), and
- command staff.

“Patrol officer” was the most common “current role”, reported by 70.9% of survey respondents. The frequency of all “current roles” are depicted in Figure 2.

Survey Results

Trainees’ Interest in Specific Skill-Building

In the pre-training survey, respondents were asked what they were “hoping to gain from this training”. Their open-ended responses were grouped and categorized. Trainees most often responded with a desire to gain “knowledge” (46.1%) or “strategies and actions” (38.5%). “Youth development” and “trauma” were the most common “knowledge” topics that trainees wanted to learn more about. “Strategies and actions” that trainees wanted to learn more about specifically included:

- ways to help youth in crisis or who have experienced trauma,
- how to communicate with youth, and
- ways to better perform their job.

Less common responses for what they “hope to gain” included “anything” (5.2%), “not sure” (5.4%), and “nothing to gain” (3.8%).

Trainees' Ratings on Personal Knowledge, Beliefs and Skills

On both the pre- and post- survey, participants were asked to rate their 1) knowledge and beliefs, and 2) self-skills on a 4-point Likert scale, with 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, and 4= strongly agree. See results in Table 2.²

The average pre-survey rating of knowledge and beliefs was 3.18, or between “agree” and “strongly agree”. The average post-survey rating of knowledge and beliefs was 3.21, also between “agree” and “strongly agree”.² In analyzing the responses, consistent patterns of differences in pre- and post- survey trainee knowledge and belief did not emerge. Specifically:

- The pre- and post- ratings of the first item regarding adolescent brain development and reactions were not significantly different, indicating scores remained consistent.
- The pre- and post- ratings of the second item regarding holding youth to different standards were significantly different. Participants reported a greater need for adolescents to be held to different standards after the training, an expected difference given training participation.
- The pre- and post- ratings of the third item regarding the importance of police- youth relationships were significantly different. Participants reported less importance of building relationships with youth after the training, an unexpected difference given training participation.

Overall, the difference in the average total knowledge and beliefs ratings from pre- and post- surveys was not significant, indicating little to no change in overall knowledge and beliefs due to the training. Since pre-survey ratings were largely positive, using a scale with a greater number of response options might capture smaller changes in knowledge and beliefs, therefore allow for better understanding of the impact of the training, compared to the current scale in the survey.

Prompt	Pre-Training Rating Mean (SD)	Post-Training Rating Mean (SD)	Difference from Pre- to Post- Training Rating^a
Adolescents' brains make them perceive and react differently than adult brains	3.36 (0.57)	3.32 (0.55)	Not significant $t(1799) = -1.59, p = .11$
Adolescents need to be held to different standards than adults are	2.77 (0.68)	2.99 (0.66)	Significant $t(1775) = 6.79, p < .001$
It is important for someone in my role to build relationships with youth	3.40 (0.56)	3.32 (0.55)	Significant $t(1794) = -3.22, p = .001$
Knowledge & Beliefs Total^b	3.18 (.43SD)	3.21 (.45SD)	Not significant $t(1810) = 1.45, p = 0.15$

SD= standard deviation
^a An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare pre-training scores and post-training scores as survey results were not matched per participant.
^b The total does not include the fourth item on adolescents' racial and cultural background due to questions on the validity of the results.

² Table 2 does not include a fourth item on the survey, regarding adolescents' racial and cultural background, as the item was originally worded as a negative (i.e., “Adolescents' racial and cultural background don't affect the way they respond to police”). To allow for comparisons in this evaluation, the item was reverse scored to be on the same scale as the other questions. Due to the negative wording, participants could have rated the item on an incorrect or opposite scale, thus impacting the validity of the results.

The self-skills prompts, pre- and post- survey ratings, and differences between pre- and post- survey ratings are displayed in Table 3. The average pre-survey rating of self-skills was 2.70, or between “disagree” and “agree”. The average post-survey rating of self-skills was 3.04, between “agree” and “strongly agree”.

In analyzing the self-skills items, differences in pre- and post- training self-skills ratings were significant and expected given training participation. Participants endorsed greater skills after the training in the following areas:

- 1) interacting with youth with trauma;
- 2) preventing youth over-reaction; and
- 3) recognizing and working with youth with trauma.

Note, these averages do not include the fourth item regarding Behavior-Language-Timing©, as this item was not included on the pre-training survey since it is a Strategies for Youth specific professional skill taught as part of the training. As such, the participants would not have been expected to know of this conceptual skill prior to participation. Post-training, the average self-skill rating for Behavior-Language-Timing was 3.07, or participants “agreed” this idea would make them more effective in their interactions with youth. Overall, the difference in the average ratings from pre- and post-training surveys was significant, indicating greater endorsement of self-skills in working with youth after taking the training.

Prompt	Pre-Training Rating Mean (SD)	Post-Training Rating Mean (SD)	Change from Pre- to Post- Training Rating^a
I have the skills necessary for interacting effectively with traumatized youth	2.79 (0.62)	3.12 (0.52)	Significant $t(1771)= 12.14, p<.001$
I feel equipped to help youth regulate their behavior	2.72 (0.60)	3.01 (0.51)	Significant $t(1549)= 9.77, p<.001$
I feel equipped to prevent youth from overreacting in tense situations	2.62 (0.90)	2.96 (0.54)	Significant $t(1765)= 10.69, p<.001$
I feel equipped to recognize and work with you who have experienced trauma	2.65 (0.65)	3.03 (0.53)	Significant $t(1764)= 13.57, p<.001$
The Behavior-Language-Timing idea will help me be more effective in my interactions with youth	n/a ^b	3.07 (0.53)	n/a ^c
Self-Skills Total	2.70 (.54)	3.04 (.43)	Significant $t(1813)= 14.76, p<.001$

SD= standard deviation
^a An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare pre-training scores and post-training scores as survey results were not matched per participant.
^b This item was not listed on the pre-training survey.
^c With not pre-training score, a change score could not be calculated.

Youth Training-Specific Feedback from the Trainees

In the post-training survey, respondents were asked three open-ended questions and one close-ended question to rate the training: 1) what concepts in the training were helpful; 2) how would you improve this training; 3) what are you going to change as a result of this training; and 4) how useful will this training be for my future interactions with youth (i.e., 1= not useful, 2= somewhat, 3= very, 4= extremely)? For all open-ended questions, responses were grouped and categorized. Overall, respondents rated the usefulness of the training as 2.69 (SD= .81), or between “somewhat useful” and “very useful”.

Helpful concepts from the training included, by order of most common response:

- factual information (e.g., instruction on how the brain develops through adolescence) (37.8%),
- “everything” (i.e., all components were helpful) (20.2%),
- instruction on how to act around or interact with youth (19.1),
- how to recognize trauma in youth (13.5%),
- “nothing” (i.e., nothing was helpful) (6.2%), and
- provision of resources or programming for youth (3.2%).

Although 32.6% of trainees said nothing needed to be improved or that the training was good as-is, responses for possible training modifications included:

- changing the format or delivery (e.g., shorter duration, greater use of videos) (37.2%);
- using more examples or applications (e.g., having youth and police staff share their experiences, role playing scenarios as small groups) (15.7%); and
- including more content or factual information within the training (7.7%).

Of note, many trainers experienced technical difficulties (e.g., unable to play example videos) due to the age of the equipment in the training rooms provided by the police units. These difficulties could skew the responses of participants, but only 6.7% of trainees specifically noted “technical issues” in their suggestions for improvement.

Reflections on Personal Behavioral Changes by Officers Post-Training

When asked what they were going to change as a result of this training, trainees overwhelmingly indicated personal behavioral changes (63%). Many individuals shared specific modifications to their approach with youth including:

- slowing their actions (physical and speaking rate),
- using a calmer tone of voice,
- giving the youth greater time to respond, and
- acting with more patience.

Other personal changes included: considering and looking for signs of trauma in youth (8.5%); considering the developmental stage of youth during interactions (6.8%); and providing or referring to resources or programming in the community (1.4%). While 2.0% of the officers indicated they will change “everything” about their behavior with youth interactions, nearly 1 in 5 (18.3%) stated they would change “nothing”.

Analyses of Subgroups

Additional analyses were conducted to better understand patterns in results based on different categories of participants. Multiple statistical analyses were used based on the type of data (i.e., t-test, correlation, regression, chi-square). Sub-analyses were completed to look more closely whether years of experience on the job or the type of CDP officer responding to the training impacted the results.

Years of Experience on CDP

First, the relationship years of experience with pre- and post- training measures were analyzed. Complete results are presented in Table 4. Three relationships were significant with years of experience: 1) pre-survey self-skill score, 2) post-survey self-skill score, and 3) words to describe youth.

- Greater years of experience was significantly associated with lower self-skill ratings pre- and post- training. Various factors could influence this relationship, such as attitudes towards youth and working with youth, self-importance of skills with youth, or differing sense of challenges in working with youth. These relationships are depicted in Figure 3.
- Greater years of experience was also significantly associated with more negative average ratings of words to describe youth. That is, police with greater years of experience were more likely to use words categorized as “negative” (i.e. disrespectful, uncontrollable) to describe youth, when compared to police with fewer years of experience. Police new to the work-force appear to have more positive perceptions of youth.

Figure 3. Years of Experience & Pre- and Post-Training Self-Skills Ratings



Interestingly, years of experience was not associated with the pre-training knowledge and belief rating. It was expected that trainees with greater field experience might have more field-based knowledge or have completed more professional development and training.

The usefulness of training and the personal change post-training was not dependent on years of experience, indicating the training could be helpful and implemented by police staff with varying years of experience.

Table 4. Relationship between Years of Experience and Pre- and Post- Training Measures	
Finding	Statistical Relationship*
There were no differences, based on years of experience, on pre-training knowledge & beliefs .	Not significant F (1, 935)= 0.015, p= .901
There were no differences, based on years of experience, on post-training knowledge & beliefs .	Not significant F (1, 855)= .574, p= .449
Officers with greater years of experience rated themselves lower on pre-training self-skills , compared to officers with less years of experience.	Significant F (1, 930)= 9.679, p= .002
Officers with greater years of experience rated themselves lower on post-training self-skills , compared to officers with less years of experience.	Significant F (1, 854)= 15.42, p<.001
There were no differences, based on years of experience, on ratings of usefulness of training .	Not significant F (1, 748)= 0.78, p= .378
Officers with greater years of experience used more negative words to describe youth , compared to officers with less years of experience.	Significant ^a F (1, 764)= 10.32, p<.001
There were no differences, based on years of experience, on personal change due to training .	Not Significant R= 0.008, p= .846
*F scores are results of a linear regression. R scores are results of a correlation.	
^a The average rating of words was calculated, given 1= positive, 2= neutral or other, 3= negative.	

Type of Trainee Respondent by CDP Role

The current role of the trainee (i.e., patrol officer, supervisor, specialized unit/detective, command staff, community policing) was considered with pre- and post-training measures. Complete results are presented in Table 5.

Five relationships were significant with current role: 1) pre-training knowledge and beliefs score, 2) post-training knowledge and beliefs score, 3) pre-training self-skills score, 4) words to describe youth (pre-training), and 5) personal change due to training. A few general findings were identified:

- Patrol officers were more likely to have lower pre- and post-training knowledge and pre-training self-skill ratings than supervisors. This relationship could be exaggerated by the large number of patrol officers and small number of supervisors who completed the surveys.
- Community policing respondents were more likely to use positive words to describe youth (words categorized as “positive” like active, curious) compared to both specialized unit/detectives and patrol officers. This could be due to the type of interactions these groups have with youth, but may also be exaggerated by the discrepancy in the number of respondents for these groups.
- Patrol officers were more likely to state they were changing “nothing” than other groups. This relationship is likely influenced by the role of respondents who indicated “nothing” (78% of respondents who indicated they would change “nothing” were patrol officers). Despite this, a minority number (22%) of patrol officers indicated they would be changing “nothing” in their original responses.
- Somewhat surprisingly, the rating of usefulness of training and concepts endorsed as helpful were not significantly associated with any specific role. Some variation was expected due to the type and/or frequency of interactions with youth based on role. These results could indicate that all members of the police force could benefit from the variety of topics in the training including factual information, strategies for interacting with youth, and resources and programming recommendations in the community.

Finding	Statistical Relationship*
Differences in pre-training knowledge & beliefs were seen based on officers’ roles.	Significant F (4)= 4.644, p<.001
Differences in post-training knowledge & beliefs were seen based on officers’ roles.	Significant F (4)= 3.216, p= .012
Differences in pre-training self-skills were seen based on officers’ roles.	Significant F (4)= 4.644, p<.001
There were no differences, based on current role, on post-training self-skills .	Not significant F (4)= 2.276, p= 0.059
There were no differences, based on current role, on rating of usefulness of training .	Not significant F (4)= 1.277, p= .278
Differences in words used to describe youth were seen based on officers’ roles.	Significant F (4)= 2.394, p=.049
There were no differences, based on current role, on concepts endorsed as helpful post-training .	Not significant X ² (20)= 16.66, p= .675

Differences in personal change due to training were seen based on officers' roles.	Significant $\chi^2(20) = 38.01, p = .009$
*F scores are results of a linear regression. χ^2 scores are results of a chi-square analysis.	
^a Score does not include the fourth item on adolescents' racial and cultural background due to questions on the validity of the results.	
^b The average rating of words was calculated, given 1= positive, 2= neutral or other, 3= negative	

Opinions of Youth based on Words Used to Describe Youth

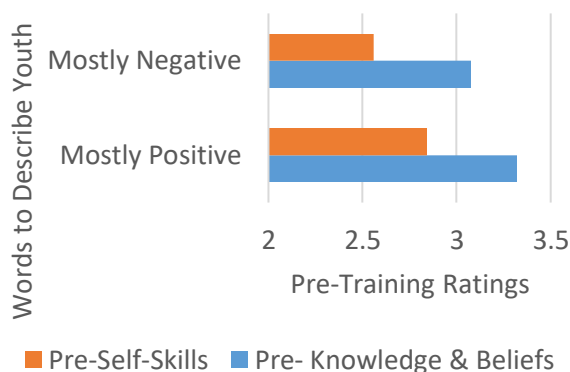
Lastly, the words respondents used to describe youth were dichotomized to create two groups:

- 1) individuals who used 50% or more positive words to describe youth, and
- 2) individuals with less than 50% positive words to describe youth.

Since pre- and post- training surveys are not matched by participant, only pre-training measures could be analyzed by their relationship with the two groups of words to describe youth. Complete results are presented in Table 6.

Both pre-training knowledge and beliefs total and pre-training self-skills rating were significantly associated with words to describe youth, as depicted in Figure 4. If individuals had at least 50% or more positive words, they were more likely to have higher knowledge and belief and self-skill ratings pre-training. This could indicate that, when police have more positive interactions or attitudes towards youth, they have a better understanding of youth's actions and feel more equipped to interact effectively with youth.

Figure 4. Words Used to Describe Youth and Pre-Training Knowledge & Beliefs and Self-Skills Ratings



Finding	Statistical Relationships
Officers who used more positive words to describe youth rated themselves higher on pre-training knowledge & beliefs , compared to officers who used more negative words.	Significant Welch's $t(286.5) = -3.627, p < .001$
Officers who used more positive words to describe youth rated themselves higher on post-training knowledge & beliefs , compared to officers who used more negative words.	Significant Welch's $t(301.1) = -4.346, p < .001$
^a Score does not include the fourth item on adolescents' racial and cultural background due to questions on the validity of the results.	

Limitations

Although valuable information was derived from the pre- and post- training surveys, some limitations pose difficulties in understanding, generalizing, or applying the results. As previously mentioned, surveys were unable to be matched by participant from pre- to post-training. Matching surveys by participants would provide more robust information on individual participant improvement and relationships with other measures. The questions on the survey were not exhaustive of the topics or skills covered in the trainings. The scales used to measure change in knowledge and beliefs and self-skills might not have included enough response options, therefore could not adequately capture change due to the training.

Additionally, the physical space allocated for narrative responses (e.g., “what are you going to change as a result of this training?”) was small, potentially limiting the length of responses that would otherwise provide more detail. As previously mentioned, one item (the fourth item on the pre- and post- training surveys on adolescents’ racial and cultural background) was worded negatively, requiring it be rated opposite of the rating scale for all other questions, potentially negatively impacting the validity of the results for this question. Also, as previously mentioned, the number of respondents categorized as “patrol officers” could have skewed the descriptive and statistical analyses of the results. Despite these limitations, the administration and analysis of the pre- and post- training surveys was valuable to understand the impact and perception of the training on the police force as well as to gain some insight on officers’ general perceptions of young people with whom they may interact in the community.

Conclusion & Future Directions

The results from the training surveys highlight unique opportunities for future investigation and practice and policy initiatives. For future trainings, using an identifying code to match pre- to post- training surveys and altering questions or the format of the surveys would provide novel information on the usefulness of the training to police staff. Gathering more information on the respondents’ level of engagement during the training and their personal background with youth (e.g., parenting status, history of interactions with youth) could further clarify patterns observed in the results. Given that a majority of words officers used to describe youth were classified as negative, asking questions to further understand the reasoning behind these words would be useful. Questions could include asking it in the post-survey to see if the training created any change in their perceptions or comparing and contrasting words to describe children or children in their personal circles compared to youth in the community they serve. Additionally, although most participants reported they will change some aspect of their behavior or mindset towards youth, investigating the behavior of police staff post-training, in real-time (e.g., on-the-job interactions), could shed better light on the functional change evoked by the training.

In practice, the trainings on youth behavior and trauma appear helpful in changing knowledge, beliefs, and skills in the police force and appear to match the expectations or desires of police staff receiving the training. Specifically, the kinds of skills officers noted they could improve in their interactions with youth included, among other things: slowing their actions (physical and speaking rate), using a calmer tone of voice, giving the youth greater time to respond, and acting with more patience. In addition, this kind of training on adolescent development appears to increase law enforcement’s understanding that youth need to be held to a different, age-appropriate standard than adults and that it is important for officers to build relationships with young people in the community. This offers a valuable opportunity to build upon these strengths. Continued initial and follow-up professional development would be valuable in improving police interactions with youth. Some training modifications, as suggested by trainees in narrative feedback, would increase the utility of the training and potentially increase the buy-in of police staff. Fellow police staff as co-instructors could provide unique insight and real-life experience for trainees. Involving youth in the trainings, such as sharing their experiences with police, would also provide unique and valuable insight for police staff and may also build empathy and understanding. Providing coaching and on-the-job training (e.g., having instructors participate in ride-alongs) and/or embedding realistic scenarios and role playing into off-site training could support police staff in applying the training to youth interactions. By conducting follow-up trainings with smaller, specific groups of officers, based on variables such as years of experience, current role, or perceptions of youth, material could be tailored to the specific needs of those groups, making it more valuable and impactful.