

CHAPTER 3
COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING OFFICER

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CHAPTER 3

COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING OFFICER

1. GENERAL. The Communications Training Officer (CTO) is vital to the success of the Communications Training and Evaluation Program (CTEP). Selection, training, and retention of qualified training officers are paramount to the program's overall success. An effective CTO understands, as a trainer, they must exhibit the combined skills of an experienced dispatcher, instructor, leader, and mentor. The CTO's responsibilities include: maintaining fairness, tact, diplomacy, and empathy towards the Public Safety Dispatcher (PSD) and Public Safety Operator (PSO) trainee.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. The CTO performs training and evaluation functions concurrent with dispatch responsibilities. Duties may be modified when the CTO is with a trainee. The CTO must ensure the trainee is performing at optimum levels and/or learning at all times. Although the CTO's dual responsibilities can become quite trying, they must be carried out with the highest level of professionalism and patience. The CTO must be aware of their image as a role model for the trainee. The instruction style and demeanor projected by the CTO will have a lasting impression on the trainee. The specific skills and duties of the CTO are discussed below.

a. Leadership. The CTO is the lead person for the trainee. Trainees will make mistakes, and it will be necessary to correct them during the training process. There will be times when the trainee will do something that appears minor but still requires a patient explanation and counseling. The CTO must respond to a trainee's mistakes immediately, but patiently, to ensure a positive learning environment.

b. Communication. Next to leadership skills, the most important ability required by a CTO is solid communication skills, both written and verbal. It is critical the CTO has the ability to accurately analyze situations, organize their thoughts, and express them effectively and tactfully.

(1) The CTO is required to complete and submit a CHP 157, Communications Training and Evaluation Program – Daily Observation Report, to the Area Training Coordinator at the end of every training shift. The honest, unbiased documentation of a trainee's progress provides support for the decision to advance, remediate, extend, or initiate a Rejection During Probation (RDP).

(2) The CTO is required to provide verbal instruction, direction, and explanation to their trainee. In addition, trainee performance shall be discussed during evaluation sessions. The CTO must be able to support

observations and recommendations concerning a trainee status to the Area Training Coordinator.

- c. Instruction. The most obvious function of the CTO is that of an instructor. The CTO assesses the training needs of the new PSDs/PSOs and applies various instruction techniques to effectively meet those needs. The CTO should maintain a professional teacher/student relationship at all times.
- d. Evaluation. Evaluation is an integral component of an effective training program as it provides critical feedback regarding a trainee's progress. To be effective, the evaluation must be an objective and honest assessment of the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the critical tasks of a PSD/PSO. Equally important, the performance must be documented on the CHP 157. The performance evaluation should include encouragement and positive reinforcement for above average performance and/or an adjustment in training strategy to overcome performance deficiencies.
- e. Counseling. The CTO must be able to help the trainee work through training related problems. By providing open communication, the CTO can help the trainee to develop strategies to meet the many challenges facing a new PSD/PSO.
- f. Recommendations. The CTO makes an initial recommendation on trainee advancement, remediation, extension, or initiating an RDP. Recommendations are formalized by the Area Training Coordinator and acted upon by the communications center (CC) commander. The CTO should articulate, thorough clear documentation on the CHP 157, acceptable performance and/or efforts used to resolve training issues. Decisions made regarding a trainee's status will be based largely on the recommendations and supporting documentation provided by the CTO. Occasionally, the decision to place the trainee with a different CTO may be prudent to further expand the options available to achieve optimum success.
- g. Operations. The CTO is often expected to perform routine operations duties while training. Although communications duties can add to the stress of training, the CTO must remember that it also provides an excellent, first-hand opportunity for the trainee to observe how incidents are properly handled. After performing the necessary tasks, the CTO should take the opportunity to discuss the trainee's observations and explain why a particular course of action was taken or what might have occurred under different sets of circumstances.
- h. Flexibility. The CTO must be flexible and adaptable. It would be impossible to list every aspect of the CTO's job in this manual because the duties and responsibilities change hourly, sometimes even by the minute. Therefore, CTOs must be flexible and adapt to meet each new challenge. A great deal of trust and

commitment go with this assignment. Each CTO must exhibit the flexibility to meet this responsibility.

3. COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING OFFICER QUALIFICATIONS.

a. Desirable Qualifications. Below are the qualifications for a CTO:

(1) The PSD/PSO should not be on probation. However, when circumstances dictate the need, a PSD/PSO on probation may be a CTO, but only after completing nine months as a PSD/PSO and with the approval of the CC Commander.

(2) Shall receive supervisory recommendation.

(3) Shall be willing to follow the standardized curriculum of the CTEP.

(4) Successful completion of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certified CTO Course shall be completed prior to training new PSDs/PSOs.

(5) Excellent punctuality and attendance record.

b. Other Criteria. Other criteria shall also be considered when selecting qualified applicants. Communications Training Officers must be capable and mature PSDs/PSOs who are willing to put in the time and effort to train a new PSD/PSO. The CTO should have above-average ratings in the majority of the critical tasks, be well-rounded and knowledgeable, and have expertise in all areas of departmental communications. The CTO candidate should display professional conduct at all times and should possess above average interpersonal and communications skills. When the Area Training Coordinator is not familiar with the CTO applicant, recommendations by current and past supervisors should be obtained. In these cases, keep in mind that CTOs require strengths and desirable characteristics which must be carefully scrutinized during the selection process. Only qualified applicants shall be chosen.

c. Selection Factors. Communications center commanders shall ensure the best possible candidates are selected as CTOs. The Area Training Coordinator may identify and recommend selection of candidates for the program's CTO positions to the CC commander. When no PSDs/PSOs express interest in vacant CTO positions, the CC commander may assign PSDs/PSOs to fill vacant CTO positions.

d. Other Considerations. One factor that is often overlooked when considering candidates for CTO positions is the number and type of collateral duties for which CTOs are responsible. The CTOs may become burned out because of the

workload placed on them. The potential for burnout must be considered not only when choosing among potential CTOs but also when assigning trainees to CTOs.

4. TRAINING. All CTOs shall successfully complete the POST-certified CTO Course prior to being appointed as a CTO. Additionally, CTOs shall complete the POST-certified Advanced CTO (ACTO) Course every three years. Any CTO who has not been actively training for the past 36 months should take the POST-certified ACTO Course prior to training new PSD/PSOs.

a. Communications Centers shall maintain, at a minimum, one POST-certified CTO. The number of POST-certified CTOs may vary by command. At any time, the CC commander may choose to augment the total number of POST-certified CTOs.

5. EVALUATION. As in the case of trainees, the evaluation of CTOs is also a mechanism for monitoring performance and providing feedback. In most instances, evaluation is intended to improve skills and foster personal growth of the CTO. Occasionally, the evaluation process is used to substantiate the removal of a CTO from the program. The evaluation of CTOs should be documented on the CHP 157J, Communication Training and Evaluation Program – Trainee Evaluation. The CHP 157J may be completed by the trainee for each of their CTOs.

a. File Maintenance. The Area Training Coordinator will oversee the maintenance, accuracy, and confidentiality of all program files.

b. Performance Appraisal. The Area Training Coordinator should utilize the many opportunities that are available for appraising CTO performance. Some examples of areas on which an evaluation may be based are:

- (1) Observations at briefings.
- (2) Observations of CC performance.
- (3) Review of CTO-initiated reports and training documents.
- (4) Discussion with trainees.
- (5) Review of completed CHP 157s.
- (6) Discussion with other CTOs.
- (7) Discussion with CC supervisors and management.
- (8) Observations at end-of-cycle meetings.

- (9) Monitoring assignment due dates.
- (10) Observations of teaching styles.
- (11) Discussion of program policies, procedures, and philosophies in both formal and informal settings.
- (12) Review of completed CHP 157Js.

6. TENURE. Communications Training Officers are to be assigned to the program on a permanent basis but may choose at any time to resign from the program. Communications Training Officers may also be removed from an assignment by the CC commander. Regardless of the reason, removal of CTOs shall be well documented by the Area Training Coordinator in a separation memorandum. This memorandum shall be retained in the CTO's field folder. Resignation is the usual avenue of departure from the CTEP. This option is strictly voluntary, and there is no expectation regarding the CTO's return to the program, although former CTOs may reapply.

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