

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A SIX-YEAR DATA EVALUATION OF
HIDTA LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS

by

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DEDICATION

“This is Dedicated to the One I Love”...#3 on Billboard, the Shirelles,
(Lowman & Bass, 1959)...even though Carla is expecting jewelry.

PREVIEW

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is fitting to recognize and acknowledge the contribution of ONDCP's Norvell; NHAC's Martin, Wells, Alfonso, Sosa, and Walters; PMP's Carr, Boulton, Pond, Epply, Okorie, and Pallutch; and the aid of contributing HIDTA Directors and Training Coordinators. I will be forever grateful to talented educators Sundt, Picus, Brewer, Moreno, and Agcaoili who gave freely of their decades of knowledge which added clarity and purpose to this research.

PREVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This is a nationwide six-year data study of law enforcement training and professional development in relationship to workplace productivity.

Why do we care about law enforcement training and professional development? Because the law enforcement environment is not standing still. Unlawful activity, and in particular drug trafficking strategies, change by the minute. System-wide law enforcement technologies, legislation, regulations and interdiction strategies are constantly adapting. Somehow what we learn from these adaptations has to permeate the law enforcement system. Failing to adapt to changing threats endangers the safety/security of our nation, communities, and officers. It also creates potential liability for law enforcement entities and municipalities (McDevitt et al., 2003; Ross, 1998; Sharpe, 1992). This liability is offset with “effective” professional development and training (U.S. Supreme Court, 1989; Ross, 1998).

What then is effective professional development and training? To help answer this question, this study is focused on the evaluation of training provided to High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program law enforcement task forces. Without proper evaluation it is difficult to determine if the professional development is arming officers with the knowledge they need to succeed. What was a successful training program yesterday may not be a cost-effective program tomorrow. This research brings to light the relationship between HIDTA sponsored professional development and effectiveness. It also shows to what extent students

agree the training improves job related knowledge, skills, and abilities and to what extent students transfer their new knowledge to the job.

This study analyzed six years (2005-2010) of HIDTA enforcement operational and training records to discover a strong (73%) performance predictive for forecasting future and/or past seizure rates based on the number of students trained per year and the number of hours provided. This study also analyzed 56,441 individual student records involving 683,456 training hours isolated from 2010 to find a positive confirmation of students ($m=89.54$) that the HIDTA sponsored training improved their job related knowledge and skills; and a positive finding ($m=79.97$) that the professional development is being transferred to on the job productivity.

What makes the context of this study unique is the autonomy with which individual HIDTAs operate. HIDTAs funded and operated 32 independent training programs in 2010. However, because the programs operate independently, participation ranged from 4 students being trained in one, to 5,510 students in another, with 56 training hours being sponsored in the first, and 73,866 training hours in the second. This study examines these and other findings, then concludes with a bottom-line discussion of what it all means, including: the strong correlation between professional development and work-related outcomes; the high satisfaction and transference of training into practice; individual HIDTA autonomy and independence; the potential influence of other non-training variables upon work success/ failure; and the need for further study.

PREFACE

*I am afraid that we know the cost of everything
but the value of nothing*

April 27, 2011, Mark A. Marshall, President
International Association of Chiefs of Police

Founded in 1893, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is the world's oldest and largest association of law enforcement executives. The IACP sets standards for law enforcement trainers, trainings, and practitioners based on these principles - the aggregate nature of learning comes from the interface between education and practical experience; and skill is acquired from the successive application of education to experience. (IACP, 2011)

PREVIEW

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

Crime and criminal activity have evolved and morphed themselves throughout history. Every such change requires a corresponding law enforcement reaction, not just in the technology, but also in the way crime prevention and detection education/training is structured and delivered (IACP, 2010). One of the biggest changes is in the old police standard of waiting for a centralized dispatch to relay service calls. The new model requires law enforcement officers to be proactive in protecting the nation and communities they serve (Raymond et al., 2005). The basic complexity of the police role has moved from narrowly focused crime fighting to a far broader and more complex role as peacekeepers and problem solvers who are asked to respond to an infinite range of social problems (Goldstein, 1977, 1979, 1990). Law enforcement personnel are being asked to create solutions and increase tolerance for risk-taking in problem-solving (IACP, 2010). In return they are given a significant amount of discretion to handle complex problems (IACP, 2010).

Developing new strategies in response to problem-oriented policing requires balance. Often the line between the criminal element and innocent “civilians” is not easily drawn. Intrusive types of investigative and interdiction operations have the potential to adversely affect the interests of innocent people, resulting in allegations of abusive searches and misapplication of authority. In contrast, proper interdiction operations can result in far fewer airline passengers being searched while the number

of drug seizures can rise. For example, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) units searched 9,008 of the roughly 80 million international airline passengers passing through customs in the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2010. That was a 61 percent drop from the 23,108 searched during the previous fiscal year. Even as searches went down, seizures of cocaine, heroin and ecstasy rose by 25 percent during the same period (CBP, 2011).

The “work smarter not harder” proclivity has led law enforcement administrators and policy makers to become increasingly aware of the benefits of having officers and federal agents participate in continuing education and professional development programs as a means of providing officers with the skills they need to stay current with the changing dimensions of law enforcement. Most police agencies set a goal for their personnel to participate in a minimum number of hours of continuing education and/or professional development (Raymond et al., 2005; Hickman, 2006). Law enforcement training now encompasses subjects that include responses to man-made and natural disasters, terrorism, and a host of other societal issues, including integrity and work related outcomes (Raymond et al., 2005). The need for effective professional development is especially evident within investigative and interdiction task forces, where public contact is a constant and mistakes lead to liability for both the officer and the employing agency/department.

In police phraseology the term “interdiction” refers to the intercept and seizure of illegal drugs, explosives/firearms, human trafficking, terrorism/terrorists or other illegal or harmful items which may be transported and/or smuggled across

international borders and/or state boundaries (Finckenauer, 2009; Banks, 2003; Alldrige, 2002; Stack, 1991; Guerra, 1973). Many intertwined law enforcement organizations, including those participating within High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA), are engaged in investigative and interdiction operational activity (ONDCP, 2011; Hawaii HIDTA, 2010). On an average day law enforcement personnel at U.S. international airports, seaports, and land border crossings process 989,689 individuals; 57,761 truck, rail, and sea containers; and 271,278 privately owned vehicles (Single day statistical snapshot from US Customs and Border Protection website: retrieved 02/16/2010).

Investigative and interdiction officers are often the first to make contact with arriving passengers and must decide in a matter of minutes who is detained and/or handed over to the criminal justice system (Younglove, Kerr, & Vitello, 2002). The extremes of not making the right decisions result in unlawful detentions, racial/ethnic profiling, baseless seizures and/or conversely illicit drugs, contraband, and guns/explosives, etc., slipping through the border. The power to decide comes with a corresponding legal responsibility. Officers, supervisors, departments, and municipalities can be held civilly liable for failing to adequately train their officers (McDevitt et al. 2003). Effective professional development and training are defenses against this liability (U.S. Supreme Court, 1989; Ross, 1998).

This study focused on the evaluation of the effectiveness of professional development provided to HIDTA law enforcement task forces in relation to output/outcomes...using seizure rates as a proxy. Evaluation of professional

development serves to better understand training so that it can be strengthened, and to determine what effects the training [on HIDTA law enforcement task forces] has had in terms of intended outcomes (Guskey, 2000). This study is not meant as a critique on the effectiveness of individual HIDTAs.

HIDTA Structure and Organization

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Reauthorization Act of 1998 authorizes areas within the United States which exhibit serious illicit drug trafficking problems as High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) (ONDCP, 2011). The HIDTA program provides assistance to Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies with responsibility for jurisdictions in critically impacted regions of the United States.

At the local level, the HIDTAs are directed and guided by Executive Boards composed of an equal number of regional Federal and non-Federal (State, local, and tribal) law enforcement leaders. A unique attribute of the HIDTA program is the autonomy given to Executive Boards to design and implement initiatives to address local and regional threats. This autonomy creates independence when establishing training and professional development needs. Each HIDTA continually assesses training needs in its area of responsibility, develops a training strategy to address those needs, and provides for implementation. Funding is attached to each training initiative and an annual report is produced to detail annual performance (Hawaii HIDTA, 2010; NHAC, 2006; ONDCP, 2010). The HIDTA program funds training initiatives in 45 States, as well as in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the

District of Columbia. The program's 57 Intelligence and Investigative Support Centers help HIDTAs identify new trends, develop threat assessments, and call attention to training needs.

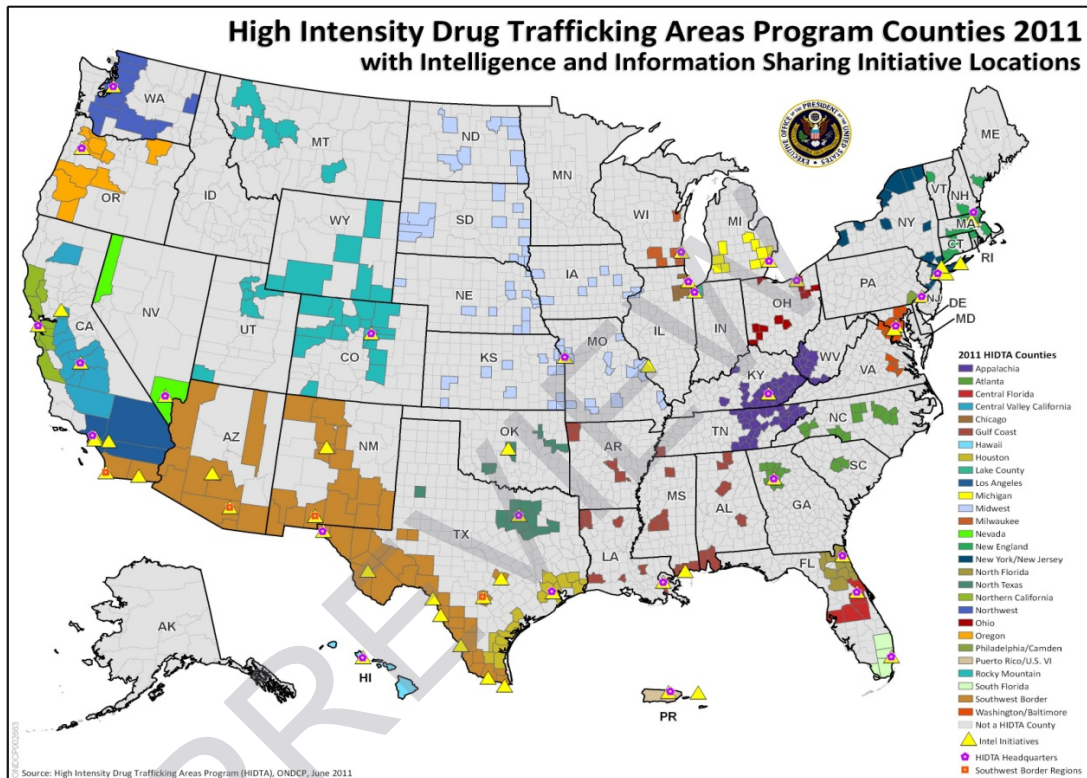


Figure 1.1. HIDTA locality map (ONDCP, 2011)

There are currently 32 HIDTAs, 5 forming the southwest border alliance, which include approximately 16% of counties and 60 percent of the U.S. population. Note: the five HIDTAs which form the southwest border initiative are often referred to as a single unit in ONDCP/HIDTA literature declaring 28 HIDTAs. For purposes of this study the individual 32 HIDTAs will be used.

HIDTA Performance Management Process

The Performance Management Process (PMP) monitors the extent to which individual HIDTAs meet performance goals, including self-directed and independent training programs. The central element of the PMP is a collection of 14 required core tables which standardize the collection of key data from individual HIDTAs for quarterly and annual reporting purposes. PMP data can also be reported in an infinite number of threat specific tables which are used in individual HIDTA annual reports and threat assessments to highlight local accomplishments or unique operations (ONDCP, 2011).

Performance data are compared to a baseline and a three year average for annual reporting purposes. As an example, core table data are collected for enforcement where the underlying seizure data represents the output/results of investigative and interdiction task forces. Only a nominal amount of data, usually totals by category, within the PMP database are used for annual reporting purposes. The information and data contained in the larger database within the PMP system will be used to support this study (ONDCP, 2011).

The PMP system also captures information from the HIDTA Online Training Tracker (HOTT) system. Data within the HOTT system includes, among other information, student data, training hours data, surveys, and an analysis of six month follow-up responses. The HOTT data are used for a specific core table within PMP, which is comprised of summarized totals of the data contained within the much

larger HOTT system data base. The data within the larger HOTT system will also be used in this study.

HIDTA Online Training Tracker

In order to populate the PMP, all HIDTAs must maintain personnel training records by using the HIDTA Online Training Tracker (HOTT). This tracking system enables each HIDTA to access the following features (NHAC, 2011):

- courses and course descriptions;
- printable calendar of events;
- description of course providers;
- student rosters;
- transcripts;
- training costs;
- tracking for Annual Report and PMP.

Both HOTT and PMP are incorporated into ONDCP's Program Policy and Budget Guidance for the HIDTA program to provide detailed, accurate, and timely information for auditing and accountability as required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) (NHAC, 2010). To meet this end the ONDCP adopted a standardized glossary of training terms created by the developers of the respective training courses and was accepted as the standard by the policy writers. "The acceptance of these terms will mean that everyone will be working within the same framework under a consistent vocabulary, which will ultimately help strengthen communication across the board," (p. 2) says Vikki Wells, Training

Manager at the National HIDTA Assistance Center (NHAC). Additionally, HIDTAs are required to have a separate training initiative and budget (NHAC, 2006). By separating the training initiative budget from other initiatives, it is much easier to keep track of costs and determine precise dollar amounts spent on training for each student hour. “With the stringent government accountability reporting and PMP requirements, this system makes it easier to accurately track costs and use funding that is earmarked specifically for training,” says Wells (NHAC, 2006, p.2).

All HIDTAs must specify the portion of their training budget dedicated to a training coordinator position. Many of these people are part-time coordinators wearing many hats and the time dedicated to the training function must be specified in the initiative’s budget (ONDCP, 2011).

Transitioning Training into Tactical Operations

Interdiction initiatives are purposely designed as a strategy to counter the transportation and smuggling of illegal drugs by forming officers and agents into HIDTA interdiction task forces (HITF) (ONDCP, 2009). Police Officers and Federal Agents assigned to HITFs are expected to modify their tactical operations to counter the constantly evolving pressures from a wide range of criminals and crime groups (Hawaii HIDTA, 2010; Ross, 1998). HITF personnel learn to modify tactical operations through a combination of informal communication among individual HITFs and formal in-service training...the most common being formal in-service training. The evaluation of some of that training is the subject of this study.

Personnel rotate in and out of HIDTA. Depending on their department's or agency's rotational policy, which varies widely across the nation, officers/agents can expect an assignment of 18-24 months (36 months for skilled investigative positions such as homicide, sex crimes and narcotics). At a minimum sixteen law enforcement departments and agencies participate in each of the individual HIDTAs; each with their own rotational calendars. Rotating officers among assignments and shifts help create a well-rounded and skilled work force, however it also creates a situation where officers, whether experienced or rookie, regularly need additional training and professional development (ONCP, 2011). In 2010, approximately \$4.4 million was invested in training and related activities, both within individual HIDTAs and at the NHAC. In 2010, HIDTAs trained or supported training for 56,441 law enforcement professionals and support staff. The vast majority of these students (46,481 students, or 82.4% of the total) received training related to investigative and interdiction activities. The remainder of the training involved intelligence and information sharing (4,478, 7.9%), management and coordination (4,228, 7.5%) and support activities, i.e., related to demand reduction and assisting drug-endangered children (1,254, 2.2%) (ONDCP, 2011; HOTT, 2011; PMP, 2011).

Despite the large amounts of time and resources invested in HIDTA professional development there remains limited evaluation of the training in relationship to implementation and the effect it has on enforcement outcomes. Rather than recognizing the need for sustained learning, most professional development efforts are seen as a simple updating of officer skills. Although there is

a need for a validated evaluation of professional development for officers, there has been little guidance as to how that professional development should be delivered, what content should be covered, or what constitutes excellence in professional development (Creswell, 2005). This shortfall led, in part, to the development of the PMP and HOTT systems. But, despite the large amount of training data collected, there are relatively few studies from which we can draw conclusions about the characteristics of effective professional development (NHAC, 2010). Most of the data collected focuses solely on participant reactions to the professional development experience; limited analysis has examined the relationship between professional development and changes in officer practice and/or outcomes (NHAC, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Law enforcement officers and agents hold the power to serve as a filter in determining inclusion or exclusion of individuals from induction into the criminal justice system (Younglove, Kerr, & Vitello, 2002). This power comes with a corresponding liability associated with training and professional development (McDevitt et al. 2003). In the *City of Canton v. Harris* (1989) the United States Supreme Court ruled that law enforcement supervisors, departments, and municipalities can be held civilly liable for failing to adequately train their officers. In failure to train cases, plaintiffs allege officers lacked the “skills, knowledge, and competency required in a range of situations” (Ross, 1998, p. 87).

In a study of 22 states from 1986 to 1991, the Gannett News Service found that 185 officers were defendants in 100 lawsuits where police paid \$100,000 or

more for each incident. Governmental entities paid \$92 million in monetary damages to plaintiffs in these 100 cases (Sharpe, 1992). Law enforcement organizations within HIDTAs assess drug trafficking problems and design specific strategies to reduce or eliminate liability and risk (Hawaii HIDTA, 2010). HIDTA training programs are one strategy for use by law enforcement to increase officer competency and generate greater efficiency within investigative and interdiction operations (ONDCP, 2010). To track training HIDTAs assemble and input statistical data on training activities, including follow-up surveys of usefulness, into the HOTT system, for population of the PMP. Despite the positive trends in the amount of training conducted and the number of student participants, the individual HIDTA and national annual reports are unclear about which components of the training/professional development contributed to the outcomes.

Difficulties of Evaluation

Key among the challenges of providing specialized training is measuring its effectiveness (Raymond, Hickman, Miller, & Wong, 2005). Many factors influence performance and have an impact on seizure statistics. Police training is often multifaceted, as with other professions, rarely is just one intervention put into practice (Guskey, 2009). Every HIDTA and task force is different; there are few generalizable best practices which will be effective for all. Because of the numerous outside influences and the perceived difficulty of measuring effectiveness, law enforcement rarely allocates resources towards evaluating professional development (Guskey, 2009). It is comparatively easy to count instances of group effort that

occur during professional development activities, but far more difficult to determine the quality and impact of those activities in the workplace (Guskey, 2000).

Joellen Killion (2008) in *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development*, also comments on the difficulty in the collection of relevant performance data. Killion refers to most evaluations as “black-boxes” which offer little information about how a professional development program worked to produce results. Most evaluation studies leave a substantial gap between the actions and results (measurements). Because of the gap, questions are unanswered about how or whether staff development influenced student achievement. The quality and value of an evaluation are determined by the usefulness of the results in improving the program’s design, efficiency, effectiveness, and results. The challenge for evaluators is to find out with a fair degree of certainty whether a staff development intervention produced the intended results (Killion, 2008).

Guskey (2000) also notes there is a lack of agreement on appropriate criteria for measuring effectiveness. The literature review (Chapter Two) confirms studies of evaluation of professional development are infrequent. Most evaluations of professional development rely solely on participants, responses to the learning experience (Kutner et al., 1997). This lapse in the research literature makes it difficult to compare results across studies.

Consequences of Not Evaluating

The law enforcement environment is not standing still. Technology, legislation and regulations are constantly changing. Failing to adapt to changing

threats endangers the safety and security of our nation, communities, and officers; and creates potential liability for law enforcement entities and municipalities (McDevitt et al., 2003; Ross, 1998; Sharpe, 1992). Without proper evaluation it is difficult to determine if the professional development is arming officers with the knowledge they need to succeed.

What was a successful training program yesterday may not be a cost-effective program tomorrow. When evaluation is not performed or an assessment developed to show how training funds and resources were used, scarce resources might be misapplied to training programs which are ineffective or wasteful. Advance planning is needed in developing quality evaluations which result in greater integrity and the likelihood of producing results for students (Killion, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to add to the body of knowledge on law enforcement training by exploring the relationship between professional development and the ability of HIDTA investigative and interdiction task force personnel to adapt to changing crime threats as measured by seizure rates.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this investigation are:

1. What is the relationship between participating in HIDTA sponsored training/professional development and HIDTA rates of seizure (effectiveness)?

2. To what extent do students agree HIDTA sponsored training/professional development improves job related knowledge, skills, and abilities?
3. To what extent is there agreement by students for the value of the professional development as it relates to application and transference to job productivity?
4. To what extent are best practices replicable throughout the HIDTA program? To what extent is there an increase (decrease) in rates of seizure following professional development?

Methodology and Theoretical Approach

This study measured professional development impact via mixed methodology using a theoretical approach to evaluate HIDTA interdiction task forces that draws upon the framework and four level model of Kirkpatrick's (2006) training evaluation theory. This study also used Birman et al.'s (2000) framework of three structural features of key factors supporting effective professional development as a crosscheck and to support the context of the evaluation.

Kirkpatrick.

Donald L. Kirkpatrick (1994, 2001, 2006) is the architect of a four-level evaluation model originally created to evaluate training programs for businesses has been adopted by educators to evaluate effectiveness of professional development (Guskey, 2000). The model progresses from the lowest level of student reactions to training through the highest level which evaluates the results the training had on organization outcomes.