

DATES

May 4-5, 2026

CLASS TIMES

8:30 – 4:30

HOST

Cardinal Criminal Justice
Training Academy



LOCATION

Cardinal Academy
917 Central Avenue
Salem, Va 24153

COST

Tuition and materials
provided at no cost to
Cardinal member agencies
through a Virginia DCJS
grant.

REGISTRATION

To register for either
session, please contact the
Academy's Cindy Sarver at
csarver@salemva.gov or
540.375.3095 with your
interest to attend. As the
course is capped at 50
students, early registration
is highly encouraged.

The Center for Police Leadership & Ethics



Your Spouse or
Significant Other
is Welcome to
Attend with You
at No Cost. See
the page 3.

Prioritizing the Health, Wellness, & Resilience of Our Employees

We see and experience life in ways most people do not. We see the best in people and events, we also see the worst in humanity and tragedies of every kind...sometimes all in the same shift. Whether covering your beat, dispatching at a monitor, processing a crime scene, maintaining order and safety in the jail, serving civil papers, or protecting our courts, this profession can have a profound impact on our emotional and mental health.

Join us for a powerful discussion exploring the nature of mental health in the law enforcement community, the warning signs, and how we can better lead at-risk employees and build resiliency across our organizations.

The Center also is providing an optional three-course, online component to this class at no costs to students. The courses stand on their own but were designed to compliment our face-to-face class. Each comes with its own course completion certificate. Each consists of three components - the presentation, assignment, and quiz. Watch the presentation (usually about 30 to 40 minutes), read the assigned articles or watch a video or listen to a podcast, and take a short quiz. Then print your certificate! Complete each online course on your schedule. Links to the courses will be provided during class.



The mental, emotional, and behavioral state of law enforcement officers is a critical individual, organizational, and societal issue. Officers are exposed to a range of stressors and traumatic experiences that can contribute to a host of mental health challenges. Studies indicate police officers experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal ideation compared to the general population. Mental health struggles can affect an officer's decision-making, judgment, interactions with the public, and overall job performance. Untreated, these challenges can lead to substance abuse, relationship problems, and other negative consequences in officers' personal lives.

Frequent exposure to horrific scenes like violent crimes, accidents, and death can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and other stress-related issues. High-stress situations, long and irregular hours, shift work, lack of adequate support, and excessive workload can contribute to chronic stress, compassion fatigue, exhaustion, and burnout. The policing culture, which often emphasizes toughness and emotional fortitude, can create a barrier to seeking help for mental health challenges. Fear of being perceived as weak or unfit for duty can lead officers to suffer in silence, exacerbating their mental health problems. Hypervigilance, the state of heightened alertness and sensitivity to potential threats, while essential for officer safety, can lead to chronic stress, anxiety, and difficulties relaxing off-duty. And issues within the department itself, such as lack of support from leadership, understaffing, or unfair policies, also may significantly impact officers' mental health.

The mental health of police officers has significant implications for our communities. Mental health challenges may lead to poor decision-making and judgment, heightened emotional responses, and increased risks to public safety. It also may affect their interactions with the community leading to negative encounters with the public, heightened conflict, officer isolation, and an erosion of public trust.

Mental health struggles underscore the critical need for effective wellness and resilience programs, resources, and a supportive work environment. Efforts to address these challenges must begin with removing the traditional stigma associated with officer mental health. Fostering a culture where seeking help is encouraged and supported can help officers overcome their reluctance to access services. Offering confidential counseling, peer support programs, critical incident stress debriefing, and training on stress management and resilience can equip officers with the tools they need to cope with the demands of their job. Departments can implement policies that prioritize mental health, such as ensuring access to qualified mental health professionals and addressing organizational stressors. And encouraging officers to prioritize self-care, including exercise, sleep, and healthy coping mechanisms, can help mitigate the negative effects of stress. By acknowledging the unique mental health challenges faced by police officers and implementing appropriate support systems, law enforcement agencies can work towards creating a healthier and more resilient police force that is better equipped to serve and protect our communities.

Bring Your Spouse or Significant Other

While the decision to ask your spouse attend this sort of training is personal, having a spouse attend can be highly beneficial for both individuals and their relationship. Spouses are the primary support system for many officers and can significantly benefit from understanding the unique emotional challenges their law enforcement partners face throughout their career.

Attending training together can improve communication and strengthen the relationship in several key ways:

- **Shared Understanding:** Spouses gain insight into the specific stressors, trauma, and hypervigilance that officers face daily. This understanding helps spouses better support their partner and recognize potential warning signs of operational stress injuries such as PTSD or burnout.
- **Improved Communication:** Joint training offers a common vocabulary for discussing difficult topics. It teaches effective communication strategies, which helps couples talk about sensitive work experiences without the spouse feeling overwhelmed or the officer feeling misunderstood.
- **Stronger Support System:** By learning resilience-building techniques alongside their partner, spouses are better equipped to help implement these strategies at home, creating a supportive and resilient family environment.
- **Reduced Secondary Trauma:** Spouses of first responders often experience secondary or vicarious trauma. These courses can provide spouses with their own coping mechanisms and resources to manage the stress that comes from supporting someone in a high-stress career.
- **Proactive Approach:** Attending training together is a proactive step that demonstrates a shared commitment to the officer's well-being and the health of the relationship, potentially preventing future crises.

When you register for the course, please make note of your spouse or significant other's interest to attend or contact the academy via phone or email.

Bringing the Best to the Best
– Meet Your Facilitator

Don Bostic is a Retired FBI Supervisory Special Agent with over 34 years of law enforcement experience at the local and federal levels. He is passionate about officer wellness and reducing the rate of officer suicide. As a member of the University of Virginia's adjunct faculty, Don taught courses on officer wellness and vitality at the FBI National Academy. Don has also lectured nationally and internationally in areas such as Crime Scene Management, Civil Rights, Hate Crimes, Ethics, and Law Enforcement Leadership. Don holds a master's degree in criminal justice from the American Military University and a Bachelor's degree in Business Management from Averett College.



Don began his law enforcement career in 1987 with the Danville, Virginia Police Department. As an officer, he served as a Peer Counselor, Field Training Officer, and Academy Instructor. In 1993 he was promoted to Detective and was assigned to the Special Investigative Division where he worked undercover, vice-narcotics, internal investigations, and other high-profile investigations. He was assigned to various task forces to include the FBI, DEA and the Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Board. In 1996, Don was selected to supervise the Special Investigative Division where he also assumed oversight of the Emergency Response Team and the Police Honor Guard Unit.

In 1998, Don was sworn in as an FBI Special Agent and assigned to the New Orleans Division, Lafayette Resident Agency. He was assigned to investigate violent crime, white collar crime, corruption, and civil rights matters. Don was a member of the Evidence Response Team and travelled internationally to lecture and provide training regarding Crime Scene Management. Following Hurricane Katrina, he assisted the New Orleans Police Department Homicide Unit in addressing the large number of related homicides. He was awarded the United States Attorney General's Award for Fraud Prevention for his efforts in post-Hurricane Katrina relief fraud investigations. Don also served as a coordinator for the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime and was instrumental in establishing task forces to address several high-profile serial killer investigations.

Don was promoted to Supervisory Senior Resident Agent of the Lafayette and Lake Charles Resident Agencies in 2013. He was responsible for the supervision and leadership of agents and professional support personnel across Southwest Louisiana. In 2017, he received the FBI Medal of Excellence Award for his leadership of these high performing resident agencies.

Don has instructed at the Baghdad Police College, the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) – Budapest, Hungary, the FBI National Academy, various FBI Regional Command Colleges, and the National Executive Institute.

Don currently resides in West Virginia with his wife Sarah. He enjoys time with his two adult children and five grandchildren when he is not working on his Christmas tree farm.

What Attendees are Saying about CPLE Courses!

Every now and then, a law enforcement officer will come across a training course that will resonate with them throughout their career. I can honestly say these wonderful instructors relayed what is means to be a great leader. They incorporated their life experiences into the training and brought it down to a personal level, regardless of whether the interaction was positive or negative. They gave us what we needed as leaders in our quest for greatness. They stressed the importance of credibility and possessing the right leadership framework to be effective. I believe they offer a training program that will assist you in growing and evolving as a leader, and I highly recommend taking as many of the courses from the CPLE as you can. One of the best investments you and your department will ever make.

I was forced to come to this class by my agency, and I did not want to be here! But I was pleasantly surprised and thoroughly enjoyed the class!!!!

I thought leadership came natural to me. I thought it was common sense. This course completely changed my view and forced me rethink everything.

An intensely different approach to education.

The conversational style was amazing. I took more notes during this class than I ever have. Highly recommend this course to other leaders.

So inspirational. They really made me think deeply about the topics and my leadership. I was constantly challenged throughout the entire course.

I felt like the entire class was designed specifically for me. Just being promoted to Lieutenant, almost every topic we discussed was something I am dealing with right now, or I see coming around the corner. Passionate, competent instructors completely avoiding death by PowerPoint. GREAT course!

Unlike anything I have ever attended. Outstanding!