



ACADEMY CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATION

TO: Chief Lisa Davis, Austin Police Department
FROM: Director Gail McCant, Office of Police Oversight
DATE: April 14, 2025
SUBJECT: Health and Safety

Dear Chief Davis:

The Office of Police Oversight (OPO) is collaborating with the Educational Development Unit of the Austin Police Department (APD) to enhance the academy's curriculum. OPO's Policy Compliance Consultant is a member of the Professional Advisory Committee (PAC), which is responsible for reviewing, evaluating, and providing feedback for improvement.

In addition to the subject matter experts hired by APD, the OPO has reviewed APD's curriculum for the Health and Safety Code and provided the following recommendations for improvement:

Basic Peace Officer Course (BPOC)

Chapter 15: Texas laws pertaining to the Health and Safety Code and controlled substances.

1. The PowerPoint presentation provided by the APD Academy uses multiple images that are unsuitable for a professional setting and do not benefit the context of the course. After the PAC group discussion, it was clear that the images were an overall attempt at levity. Considering the serious nature of the material, it is not appropriate to have images utilized in this way. It is most critical to educate and guide APD cadets with material that can inform them; not provide levity in matters they will encounter. The visual content throughout the presentation is discourteous, stereotypical and unprofessional.

OPO objects to the use of the following slides and recommends that the images used in this unprofessional manner be removed:

- The slide regarding the delivery of controlled substances to minors features a digitally altered image of a baby wearing a marijuana hat and smoking a marijuana cigarette.
- There are several slides that do not contribute to the learning objectives and reinforce negative stereotypes, such as a Black man with a pick in his hair holding crack cocaine while making a funny face at the camera.
- There are several slides that do not contribute to the learning objectives and reinforce negative stereotypes, such as a Black man holding a joint and looking cross-eyed.
- In another slide that also does not contribute to the learning objectives and reinforces negative stereotypes is the slide discussing steroids, which includes an image of a female bodybuilder used to depict steroid use.



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- The final slide recommended for removal is in the section that discusses drug paraphernalia; there is a picture of a teenage boy smoking some type of substance out of an Xbox game controller that was fashioned into a pipe.

Unit Goal: Narcotic interdiction/investigation techniques and procedures

BPOC (Basic Peace Officer Course) 15.13

Identify the incidence of drug interdiction and common characteristics of drug smugglers and their vehicles.

Actions of the driver

- **Nervousness**
- **Fidgeting**
- **Eye contact**

From drug interdiction incidents to routine patrol, always be observant. Keep eyes, ears, and nose open, in addition to asking questions.

2. The OPO agrees with the SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) that it is crucial to explore possible factors, other than guilt or being under the influence, that may explain why an individual appears nervous during an interaction with law enforcement. These factors could include a speech-language disorder, certain cognitive disorders, or even a prior negative experience with law enforcement.

The Office of Police Oversight appreciates the chance to offer constructive feedback on the Austin Police Department's academy curriculum, recognizing that there is room for improvement. We look forward to ongoing collaboration on current and future curriculum development to ensure continuous improvement and effectiveness.

Sincerely,

Gail McCant
Director
Office of Police Oversight