

Force Options Training for Security Officers Risk Assessment

Introduction

On March 30, 2020, a provincial risk assessment was initiated with regards to force options training for security officers. As per section 1.2 of the Adult Custody Policy, correctional officers have the authority to use the minimum amount of force reasonably necessary while carrying out their duties. Correctional officers have a duty to employ good judgment in assessing situations to determine if use of force is authorized and necessary, and which level of force is appropriate. Prior to successfully completing security officer training, new recruits are required to complete a force options training module.

The current Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic presents a potential risk to staff participating in the force options portion of the security officer training. The introduction of this hazard in the workplace requires the employer to review and implement change in the current practice of instructing the skills-based portion of the force options training.

On behalf of the Adult Custody Division, the following individuals have been assigned to complete the risk assessment, with presentation to Teri DuTemple, warden and chair of the Workplace Safety Committee on or before April 8, 2020.

- Kristina Hayes, KRCC; employee representative
- Brandon Cox, FRCC; employee representative
- Brian Campbell, BCGEU; employee representative
- Kaher Uppal, FRCC; employer representative
- Teresa Owens, NCC; employer representative
- John Campbell, SPSC, employer representative

Purpose

The purpose of the provincial risk assessment on force options training for security officers, in light of COVID-19, is to review and assess proposed changes through this joint committee and identify if any additional risk mitigation strategies are required to ensure the safety of the recruits. The skills-based portion of the force options training will be examined with the lens of reinforcing current practices in place to protect against possible exposure to COVID-19.

Pertinent Information

The goal of the force options training is to assist correctional officers in the understanding and the application of reasonable and appropriate force, while minimizing the possibility of injury to the officer or the inmate. Learning is reinforced through realistic, simulation-based training.

A large component of force options training is learning how to apply soft and hard physical control techniques. Learning how to safely, physically manipulate the body of another individual is an extensive part of the experiential skills-based learning. Learning to apply the techniques is equally as important as experiencing the effect of the different holds and force options

techniques. The joint committee recognizes that the close proximity of students when applying physical control techniques is an increased risk for possible transmission of COVID-19 if mitigation strategies are not utilized.

There are several physical control techniques covered in the skills-based portion of force options training:

- Soft physical control includes hands-on escorting a person from one area to another, joint/arm locks, and the use of pressure points; and
- Hard physical control includes strikes and grounding techniques (takedowns).

Some components of the force options training can be considered by utilizing safe social/physical distancing practices, however many of the physical control techniques require a hands-on approach and the resistance/reaction of course participants.

The joint committee recognizes the need to ensure that the same quality of force options training is available to course participants moving forward. Mitigating factors should not reduce the value of the training experience for participants and should not impede the instructor's ability to adequately assess the performance and reactions of the students in fast-paced emergent situations.

Responsibilities/Activities undertaken

The joint committee has conducted a review of the risk associated with participating in the skills-based portion of the security officer force options training, with a specific focus on the best ways to mitigate the spread of transmission of COVID-19. The review included:

- Adult Custody Division training materials related to the practical portion of force options training;
- Consideration of the utilization of personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Review of the current practices in place to protect against COVID-19;
- Consultation with the provincial force options coordinator to review potential modifications to the skills-based portion of the force options training to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19; and
- Consultation with other similar agencies.

Background

The following groups/workers were consulted as part of this risk assessment:

- BC Government Employees Union
- BC Corrections Branch provincial force options coordinator
- BCPSA safety services division
- Workplace Health and Safety assistant medical director
- Other agencies

Resources reviewed as part of this risk assessment:

- Adult Custody Force Options Training

- COVID-19 BC Support App and Self-Assessment Tool
- Adult Custody Policy

Agency consultations

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police have cancelled recruit training at the Regina training academy for an unknown period of time due to COVID-19. The Regina training academy differs in that a large number of recruits reside at the academy during training and dine together in a mess hall.

BC Sheriffs have cancelled all force response options training for an indefinite period. In-service pistol training class numbers have been reduced to allow for social/physical distancing and are restricted to experienced staff only. New recruits are receiving theoretical training only with social/physical distancing requirements; they will not be fully qualified until force options and pistol training is received.

The joint committee has provided recommendations stemming from the review to enhance staff safety

From the Provincial Risk Assessment related to force options training for security officers the following risks and mitigation strategies have been identified and discussed.

Identified Risk	Mitigating Strategy
Spread of the COVID-19 virus on surfaces (classroom, equipment, training areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwashing prior to entering the workplace and training area to the standard of public health guidelines • Utilize cleaning products; PerCept • Cleaning of classroom, training areas and equipment surfaces prior to and following training • Cleaning of equipment between participant use/exchange • Use of proper PPE (gloves) when sanitizing surfaces, safe disposal of PPE following cleaning and change of PPE between cleaning and engaging in contact activities
Spread of the COVID-19 virus by droplets in the air during classroom and social/physical distancing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction on safe social/physical distancing and cough/sneeze etiquette • Exercise social/physical distancing of at least 2 meters • Use the largest possible training space • Limited class size to allow for adequate social/physical distancing and instruction of techniques
Spread of the COVID-19 virus during contact activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of a self assessment screening document prior to training each day – BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) tool/testing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class size allows for adequate social/physical distancing and instruction of techniques to participants • Extend the duration of training and modules to allow for slower paced delivery of the physical components • Partners work together for the duration of the training day • Use of PPE during contact exercises
Spread of COVID-19 virus to others post training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning of the classroom, training area and equipment • Safe disposal of PPE following cleaning and sanitization of hands prior to leaving the training area, followed by immediate handwashing

Risk Identification

The joint committee has reviewed the risk of exposure to COVID-19 during the skills-based portion of the force options training. In absence of the implementation of mitigation strategies, the close proximity of participants during portions of the training does not allow for adequate social/physical distancing of at least 2 meters. The following components of skills-based training have been reviewed.

Skills-based training component	Risk control considerations
Movement drills – interview stance, ready stance, combat stance, movement from the line of attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular handwashing with soap and water • Social/physical distance requirements • The individual playing the inmate wears coveralls, a gas mask and gloves • Safe processes established for daily cleaning of coveralls and gas masks after each individual use • Disposal of PPE into clearly labeled garbage bins
Baton – removing, holstering, closing, opening, baton strikes in the air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular handwashing with soap and water • Regular cleaning of equipment • Extend social/physical distance requirements with each recruit facing forward to decrease the potential for droplet transmission while assertively communicating commands • Instructor distancing requirements and PPE
OC spray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove, holster and spray inert OC with social distancing to a target • The individual playing the inmate wears coveralls and a gas mask when moving off the line of attack

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect OC exposure achieved by spraying OC onto a surface outdoors with each individual recruit having water available to decontaminate • Indirect OC exposure at the end of the training day
Restraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individual playing the inmate wears coveralls, a gas mask and gloves • The recruit wears gloves and disposes of gloves after the exercise • The individual playing the second staff wears coveralls, gas mask and gloves • A handcuff/restraint cleaning station is used to clean restraints before and after use on an individual
Hard physical control strikes – practice movements in the air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend social/physical distancing with each recruit facing forward to decrease the potential for droplet transmission while assertively communicating commands • Instructor distancing requirements and PPE
Baton – strike bags/pads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individual playing the inmate wears coveralls, a gas mask and gloves • Drills that involve multiple strike bags are limited to partner work with the stationary partner holding the strike bag and rotating 180 degrees • Stationary strike bags utilized for portions of the training • During baton strike drills each recruit uses their assigned individual strike bag to practice with the individual playing the inmate
Blocking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individual playing the inmate wears coveralls, a gas mask and gloves
Pressure points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruits wear coveralls, a gas mask, gloves and practice on each other • The instructor wears PPE when demonstrating pressure points
Soft physical control – joint locks, arm bars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruits wear coveralls, a gas mask, gloves and practice on each other • The instructor wears PPE when demonstrating joint locks/arm bars
Searches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recruit and the individual playing the inmate wear gloves and a face shield
Hard physical control strikes – practice with strike bags/pads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individual playing the inmate wears coveralls, a gas mask and gloves • Drills that involve multiple strike bags are limited to partner work with the stationary partner holding the strike bag and rotating 180 degrees

Edge weapons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual playing the inmate wears coveralls, a gas mask and gloves
Ground survival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recruit and the individual playing the inmate wear coveralls, a gas mask and gloves
Simulation exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recruit and the individual the playing inmate wear coveralls, a gas mask and gloves Occupational Health and Safety member assessment of participant exertion and of PPE intermittently between exercises

Recommendations

- 1) Regular handwashing with soap and water and instruction on handwashing guidelines (20 seconds minimum) embedded into training.
- 2) Completion of the BCCDC BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool or the Active Daily Monitoring Form daily prior to training and follow BCCDC health guidelines.
- 3) Recruits travel together in a group while maintaining social/physical distancing and are limited to designated areas during skills-based training days where possible. Recruit interaction with staff and movement through the Centre are also limited.
- 4) A single equipment kit with duty belt, restraints, OC spray with holster, ASP baton with holster, foam baton and individually labelled strike bag is assigned to each recruit for the duration of the training and each recruit is responsible for cleaning assigned equipment.
- 5) Floor mats are cleaned prior to and following each training exercise.
- 6) Training areas are large enough to accommodate the required social/physical distance for identified training components and social/physical distance measurements are visually identified on the floor. Where possible recruits work in their designated training area.
- 7) Where possible training is conducted in an open or outdoor training space.
- 8) The individual playing the inmate/second staff is not a recruit and is an emergency response team member when possible. Partners work together for the duration of the training day.
- 9) Adjust the pace of the skills-based training and rate of module delivery to maintain the standard of the training. Training is delivered over a five-day period, however in order to adjust the pace of the skills-based training and rate of module delivery the joint committee recognizes need for the extension of this training period.
- 10) Adjust participant level of exertion where possible.
- 11) Exertion exercises that are physically taxing take place at the end of the training day.
- 12) N-95/Avon mask certification; mask fit testing completed prior to training if required.

- 13) Utilization and regular cleaning of gas masks and face shields to minimize the use of medical PPE.
- 14) Local chair appointment of a health and safety representative for involvement in the training for consultation.
- 15) Use of force training for the lower mainland (NFPC, SPSC, ACCW, FMCC, FRCC) takes place at FRCC, Sierra House.

Conclusion

This provincial risk assessment has been conducted to assess the risk to staff participating in the skills-based portion of the force options training while examining available PPE and considering modifications to the training to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The risk assessment considered risks, mitigation strategies and proposed risk control measures.

The employer and employee representatives have reviewed the identified risks and the associated mitigation strategies.

Assessment completed on April 03, 2020