At his third annual Human Trafficking Summit in January, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost announced the creation of guidelines for courts and communities interested in establishing “john schools” as well as seed money to help develop, or improve, 10 such programs statewide.

“To the sex buyers we’re going to bust in 2022, you’re going back to school, because you’ve got some learning to do!” Yost told the 1,100+ participants in the virtual event. “This education shows sex buyers the ugly truth about the market they encourage and support.”
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OPOTA initiates training required for officers in 2022

Throughout Ohio in 2022, law enforcement officers will be taking additional training to better protect themselves and the public.

Effective police training requires a solid plan and money.

Thanks to an allocation last year by the legislature, this year Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost and his team at the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) are implementing a $15 million program in Continuing Professional Training (CPT). The extra training is mandated for 33,000+ law enforcement officers (LEOs) in Ohio, including police officers, deputies, troopers, auxiliary officers and others.

“Policing has always evolved in response to changes in society’s resources, norms, needs and expectations,” AG Yost said. “We’re excited about the program we’re introducing in Ohio. And we’re excited about improving safety for our officers and the public.”

By the end of 2022, every LEO is required to complete 24 hours of training in the following areas:

- Four hours must deal with diversity, inclusion and equity.
- Twelve hours must come from any three of the following areas: responding to mental health events, use of force; legal updates; officer personal wellness; responding to sexual assaults; and domestic violence.
- The remaining eight hours must come from the leftover categories from the list just mentioned or from standards set by the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board. (For additional details, visit www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/CPT)

The funding, believed to be the single-largest investment in CPT in state history, will help Ohio’s peace officers better serve their respective communities. And the priority placed on training reinforces the integral role that law enforcement plays in any civil society.

In response to suggestions that many law enforcement agencies had for OPOTA, the 2022 training includes options closer to officers’ homes and workplaces — namely, regional course offerings and online classes. Likewise, OPOTA has worked hard to improve the training quality. The revamped approach compels officer interaction and is responsive to timely issues that surface out on the streets.

Separately from the courses related to the CPT requirements, OPOTA has launched a series of “Roll Call Refresher.” Offered through OPOTA Online, these virtual pop-up classes are intended as supplemental education, offering guidance on how to handle situations that might bubble up in communities.

In December, for example, OPOTA introduced a training on hate crimes after FBI statistics detailed a 63% increase in reports of such crimes in 2019. The Roll Call Refresher focused on how officers can recognize a hate crime, options in pursuing charges against any potential suspects, and reporting requirements.

To access this supplemental training, log in to OPOTA Online, click on “Catalog,” then click on “Roll Call Refresher.”

Questions about CPT or Roll Call Refresher? Email them to askOPOTA@OhioAGO.gov.

On the Job is typically published four times a year by the Ohio Attorney General’s Office.
To offer story ideas, contact Editor Tom Rinderle at 614-444-5379 or Tom.Rinderle@OhioAGO.gov. Sign up for the electronic edition at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov / Email Updates.


TWO WAYS TO ACCESS CPT TRAINING

For in-person training, go to: OPOTA Portal, https://opota.ohioattorneygeneral.gov
For virtual/online training, go to: OPOTA Online, https://opotaonline.inquisidms.com

Who will be trained?
A breakdown of the 33,000+ Ohio law enforcement officers who are required to take Continuing Professional Training in 2022, as reported by their appointing authorities:

- Full-time: 24,954
- Part-time: 3,454
- Special: 2,197
- Auxiliary: 1,273
- Reserve: 1,060
- Seasonal: 163

In an online “Roll Call Refresher” on K-9 training, Columbus Police Officer David Jones works with his partner, Ayko, a 7-year-old Belgian Malinois.

On the Job

On the Job

On the Job

On the Job
The new guide and impeding grants stem from a House Bill 431, which Yost and his Human Trafficking Initiative team pushed the General Assembly to pass in late 2020. The law, which took effect last spring, established legal sanctions aimed specifically at sex buyers, including stiffer fines and a requirement that offenders convicted of “engaging in prostitution” attend a job school, more formally known as a sex buyer education program.

“In order to send buyers to job school, we first have to have job schools to send them to,” the AG said. “There are some programs around the state, but we’re going to need more. And we need to make sure they are effective.”

Since taking office in January 2019, AG Yost has made human trafficking a top priority, focusing particularly on curbing demand.

“Since sex buyers create demand, human trafficking will continue,” he told summit attendees. “So we need to hit the demand side hard.”

One outgrowth of AG Yost’s Human Trafficking Initiative (HTI) is the annual summit, which for the past three years has brought together an increasing number of health-care workers, law enforcement officers, social-service providers, prosecutors, survivors, community members and others involved in combating this societal scourge.

The summit provides an opportunity for participants to share expertise and resources, attend workshops, celebrate the successes of the previous year and examine the challenges still ahead.

In his welcoming address for the 2022 event, held on Jan. 22, the attorney general praised this diverse group of professionals for the difficult work they do in the trenches. Human trafficking victims, he noted, have to believe they are worthy of recovery — and that isn’t always easy, given the damage that their traffickers do.

“You all know how a trafficker looks for insecure, half-formed and wounded souls, then pretends to offer them solace, security, fulfillment and love,” he told them. “And when the hook is set, he reaps them in and begins to extract his price.”

That price, he noted, “is not only the total surrender of the victim’s body, but also of her will and her identity. … A trafficker deconstructs a victim’s identity until there is little left but a sexual commodity that he can sell for a profit.”

Yost reiterated his unwavering commitment to those who help victims, one by one, take that first step toward recovery on the “Highway to Hope” — and continue moving forward.

Jennifer Rausch, legal director of the AG’s Human Trafficking Initiative, who, along with the rest of her team, plans and coordinates the HT Summit, said the attention given to trafficking survivors at this year’s summit was deliberate.

“An emphasis was placed on survivors as workshop presenters — an intentional focus and reminder of the different pathways from victim to survivor,” Rausch said.

Likewise, the keynote address was delivered by Cynthia Brown Long, a survivor who has become a nationally recognized advocate for criminal justice reform and trafficking victims. As for the successes of the past year, AG Yost raised as an example Operation Ohio Knows, a law enforcement sting that took place in October 2021. The anti-trafficking operation netted 161 arrests — including people seeking to buy sex with children. As part of the operation, participating partners were able to make contact with 51 trafficking victims and offer them help.

The would-be sex buyers who were arrested and charged with engaging in prostitution, the first-degree misdemeanor created as part of House Bill 431, face the enhanced penalty of attending job school.

The educational mandate mirrors that of driver-intervention programs — better known as DUI classes — which have reduced the number of repeat DUI offenders.

“It forces sex buyers to look at the drug addiction, the violence, the child sexual abuse and the degradation that they are responsible for,” AG Yost told summit participants. “We lay it at their feet and tell them, ‘You made this.’ ”

In the months between last year’s summit and the 2022 event, the attorney general’s HTI staff created the job school guide, timed for the unveiling — along with the seed money for such programs — during the summit.

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— JENNIFER RAUSCH (shown above)
Legal Director of the Human Trafficking Initiative

“John School: Guidelines for Sex Buyer Education Programs,” available on the AG’s website, is intended to help communities create such programs or enhance existing ones. The guide outlines steps to developing a sex-buyer education program, reviews applicable Ohio law, debunks myths, dive deep into the demand that drives human trafficking and examines the effects of sex buying.

“This road map is backed by support from the attorney general’s HTI team,” Rausch said. “We are always eager to train, share best practices and link organizations facing common problems to find a collective solution.”

The Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) trains law enforcement officers to both identify and investigate cases of human trafficking statewide.

The Bureau of Criminal Investigation processes evidence from human trafficking cases throughout the state, hires agents and criminal intelligence analysts who investigate such cases, and assists in demand-reduction operations.

The Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OCIC) forms special task forces by teaming with local law enforcement agencies to conduct operations and otherwise fight organized crime in Ohio, including human trafficking.
The first AG Drug Dropoff Day took place on July 31 at two sites each in the winter and summer, to give Ohioans additional disposal opportunities, adding events during spring and fall. With the DEA’s support, Attorney General Yost opted to give Ohioans new Drug Take Back Days, held during the summer. The Attorney General’s Drug Dropoff Days are modeled after DEA’s Take Back Days, added, also help keep Ohioans from flushing unused or dated drugs down toilets, which is not environmentally friendly. 

Most recently, for his second Drug Dropoff Day, AG Yost partnered with the Clark County Sheriff’s Office, the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office and Dayton 24/7 Now. The event, held Jan. 22 at three sites, elicited 710 pounds of medications and medical sharps.

A breakdown of the collections:
- Dayton: 495 pounds of drugs and 40 pounds of sharps
- Springfield: 63 pounds of drugs
- New Carlisle: 112 pounds of drugs

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The first AG Drug Dropoff Day took place on July 31 at two sites each in Franklin, Fayette and Scioto counties. Those collections weighed in at 446 pounds.

The five counties chosen for the first two events have one notable commonality: Their opioid death rates ranked among the top 10 based on a county-by-county analysis by AG Yost’s Scientific Committee on Opioid Prevention and Education (SCOPE) after a spike in opioid deaths in the second quarter of 2020.

SCOPE drives cutting-edge research and analysis of the opioid epidemic. Opioids have wreaked havoc on many Ohioans’ lives, and the attorney general has made it a priority to ensure that the drug manufacturers and distributors responsible for fueling the devastation are held accountable.

In September, he won the support of local governments throughout Ohio to secure a major victory in the state’s opioid litigation. Cardinal Health, McKesson and AmerisourceBergen, three of the largest opioid distributors, agreed to pay Ohio $808 million over 18 years.

AG Yost’s third Drug Dropoff Day is being planned for this summer, again with the help of local law enforcement, media and other partners.

Data-Driven Decisions

When opioid overdose deaths spiked during the second quarter of 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the AG’s Scientific Committee on Opioid Prevention and Education (SCOPE) mapped the deaths to identify the hardest-hit areas of Ohio. AG Yost used this data to determine where to focus his early Drug Dropoff Day efforts. The highest death rates (deaths per 100,000 people) were found in these 10 Ohio counties:

- * A county in which Drug Dropoff Day has been held.

Interested in shareable materials regarding safe storage and safe disposal of medications? Contact the Attorney General’s Office at 800-282-0515.

Honoring a pair of heroes

Police departments face off in hockey fundraiser to pay tribute to two fallen Toledo officers

Attorney General Dave Yost dropped the puck at the Toledo Memorial Classic in late January, helping to kick off a charity hockey game to honor fallen Toledo Police Officers Anthony Dia and Brandon Stalker.

The event, held Jan. 30 at the Huntington Center in Toledo, pitted the Toledo Police Department against Columbus’ finest. The families of the fallen officers assisted with the puck drop, and AG Yost gave both teams a pregame pep talk.

“What a great way to remember these heroes,” the AG said later, during a sideline interview. “They lost their lives in the line of duty, but they were heroes long before their watch ended. They were heroes every single day that they showed up for work knowing what might be required of them.”

The game was organized by the Columbus-based First Responder Face-Off Foundation, through its Hockey Helping Heroes program and in partnership with the Toledo Public Schools Foundation, which runs the Toledo Police Department’s Fallen Officer Memorial Scholarship.

More than $13,500 was raised from ticket sales, with the proceeds benefiting a scholarship fund named in memory of Dia and Stalker. Graduating seniors in Toledo Public Schools who want to pursue a career in public safety — whether as a police officer, firefighter, paramedic or emergency medical technician — are eligible to apply for the scholarships.

“Everybody knows that college is increasingly expensive every year,” AG Yost said, “and what we’re seeing is, as police forces professionalize — and they are, all across the country and certainly across Ohio — more and more forces need you to have a two-year or even a four-year degree for the job. Helping young people pay for that education is so important.”

Dia and Stalker were killed on the job within seven months of each other — Dia in July 2020, Stalker in January 2021. At that time, COVID-19 restrictions called for social distancing, keeping organizers from holding the fundraiser sooner.

“We wanted to do this game a year ago, but unfortunately weren’t able to get it done because of the restrictions,” said Don Zender, director of the First Responder Face-Off Foundation.

The Toledo Walleye, a professional hockey team that competes in the ECHL, donated the venue — the Huntington Center is the team’s home ice rink — for the event.

Zender said the Columbus Police Department’s hockey team got involved to show its support for its law enforcement family in Toledo.

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The hockey game ended in a 1-1 tie.

For more information about Hockey Helping Heroes, visit www.hockeyhelpingheroes.org.

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AG Yost tweeted after the game: “As appropriate for a benefit game remembering fallen officers, there was no final face-off to break the tie.”

For more information about Hockey Helping Heroes, visit www.hockeyhelpingheroes.org.
NEW UPDATES

Mark Your Calendar

**New for Sunshine Week**

Sunshine Week (March 13-19) is a national initiative promoting government transparency and access to public information. AG Yost is marking the occasion this year with updated open-records training and a comprehensive calendar of training opportunities.

**A busy May ahead**

The Attorney General’s Office will host two key events in early May: the annual Ohio Peace Officers Memorial Ceremony on May 5 and the Two Days in May Conference on Victim Assistance on May 9-10.