

# **ETHICAL DECISION MAKING: POLICING WITH** **PRINCIPLED INSIGHT** **ELEARN COURSE OVERVIEW & OUTLINE**



## Ethical Decision Making: Policing with Principled Insight

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### Overview

*Ethical Decision Making: Policing with Principled Insight* (EDM Online) is a thought-provoking eLearn course that explores the practice of decision making and the ethical principles that support effective policing. In one of its most impactful and rewarding endeavors to date, VCPI partnered with the USDOJ, COPS Office to create the Ethical Decision Making: Policing with Principled Insight program. As part of this larger initiative, EDM Online invites participants to join a 2500 year-old conversation on ethical decision making while exploring realistic, modern-day challenges faced by policing professionals. With public trust, integrity, and liability hinging on each and every decision, stressing police ethics as simply a means of discouraging bad behavior is wholly insufficient. Effective policing requires changing the concept of police ethics from merely an afterthought to a controlling insight that informs and guides police practitioners from an internal, personal capacity.

EDM Online is crafted as a concise and relevant course addressing the realities of policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Designed with the practitioner in mind, EDM Online includes on-screen text, videos, and narration in a user-friendly eLearn environment that allows participants to start, stop, and resume the training based on their schedules. Although EDM Online requires a minimum of 2 hours of uninterrupted run-time, participants should expect to spend approximately 4 hours completing this dynamic and timely course.

This tuition-free online training is supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, COPS Office.

### Scope

*EDM Online* is a training program designed to invite participants to explore ethical decision making and the realities of present day challenges faced by policing professionals.

### Target Audience

Flexible, interactive, and relevant, this course is geared towards law enforcement practitioners, criminal justice and public safety professionals, and appropriate stakeholders.

This no-cost training is supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). An unlimited number of participants from any given agency may participate in VCPI's eLearn programs.

## Prerequisites/Requirements

Although there are no prerequisites, ideal participants should be law enforcement practitioners or criminal justice and public safety professionals.

Participants will need access to a computer with reliable internet access and speakers. The course utilizes technology-enhanced media that includes on-screen text, graphics, narration, and video segments in an interactive and user-friendly eLearn environment.

## Course Length

*EDM Online* has been developed as an online training that will require an absolute minimum of 2 hours to complete. However, participants should expect to spend approximately 4 hours completing this course. The technology-enhanced design allows participants to start, stop, and resume the training based on the demands of their schedule.

## Testing/Examination

The *EDM Online* course utilizes a standalone exam (post-test) based on the program's curriculum content. VCPI does not have a pass/fail requirement for eLearn participation. Upon submission of the exam, participants may print a transcript of the exam that includes marked questions and the participant's score.

The following questions are used by the VCPI eLearn center to generate the ten (10) question post-course exam.

1. One way to evaluate the ethical merits of a decision is to examine it using which of the following criteria?
  - a. Risk, Reward, Revenge
  - b. Good, Right, Ought
  - c. Small, Medium, Large
  - d. Right, Wrong, Whatever
2. *Controlling Insight* is a term used in EDM Online to describe:
  - a. A mobile app that allows users to make decisions based solely on facts.
  - b. A guided decision-making process that guarantees ethically sound choices.
  - c. An ethical decision-making shortcut that reduces thinking by 30%.
  - d. A powerful, internal compass that helps each of us make ethically sound decisions.

- e. An external set of policies and procedures that clearly defines ethics and prescribe decision making in every situation.
3. “The way something is viewed; point of view; paradigm” is a definition that best describes:
  - a. Purpose
  - b. Precision
  - c. Perspective
  - d. Precognition
4. According to EDM Online, identifying a purpose is an important part of developing the controlling insight that drives ethical decision making.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. Which of the following is not an aspect of *Controlling Insight*?
  - a. Obligation
  - b. Perspective
  - c. Integrity
  - d. Precision
  - e. Purpose
6. According to EDM Online, “an act or course of action to which a person is morally or legally bound; a duty or a commitment” is most closely associated with which component of *Controlling Insight*?
  - a. Perspective
  - b. Purpose
  - c. Obligation
  - d. Integrity
7. According to EDM Online, “acting on our priorities” and “seeking the right things in proper ways” is most closely associated with which component of *Controlling Insight*?
  - a. Perspective
  - b. Purpose
  - c. Obligation
  - d. Integrity
8. Decision-making may often trigger some basic and involuntary physiological processes.
  - a. True
  - b. False
9. There is a growing body of research that suggests that there is no tangible connection between situational awareness and ethical decision making.

- a. True
  - b. False
10. In the context of EDM Online, “integral” and “incidental” are terms that refer to:
- a. Emotions
  - b. Deceitfulness
  - c. Fluids
  - d. Ethicalness
  - e. All of the above

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## Course Design Matrix

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### Course Modules

- Module 1 – Course Introduction
- Module 2 – Perspective
- Module 3 – Purpose
- Module 4 – Obligation
- Module 5 – Integrity
- Module 6 – The Challenge of Ethical Decision Making

### **Module 1 – Introduction to *Ethical Decision Making: Policing with Principled Insight***

Module 1 is designed to frame the fundamental premise of the course; the notion that ethical decision making is often the difference between effective community policing and the failure of the public-safety mission. Participants are informed that the goal of the course is not simply to learn strategies to curb unethical behavior, instead it is designed to help professionals develop a principle-centered “controlling insight” that encourages ethical excellence. In discussing some of the fundamental questions related to ethics and the process of studying ethical decision making, the module provides the foundation for the remaining EDM Online content modules.

#### Topic Outline:

- I. Introduction: EDM Online
  - a. Policing and Ethical Decision Making
  - b. Ethical Decision Making and Controlling Insight

### **Module 2 – Perspective**

Module 2 outlines the first of the four elements of Controlling Insight. The module focuses on *Perspective* and identifies it as the fundamental element that often impacts and influences the other three elements (*Purpose*, *Obligation*, and *Integrity*). The module begins with a Thinking Forward Scenario titled “Unclear Situations and Quick Judgements” that focuses on *Perspective* while addressing all four elements of Controlling Insight.

The module includes a Police Ethical Navigator (PEN) activity designed to encourage participants to examine their own paradigms and develop a personal perspective statement based on their own unique perspective.



Figure 1. Each module begins with a short video designed to challenge participants.

### Topic Outline:

#### II. Perspective

- a. Scenario (video)
- b. Identifying Perspective
  - i. Definition
  - ii. Scenario Review
- c. Challenges of Modern Policing
- d. Insight: “Identifying Perspective” Video
- e. Police Ethical Navigator: Perspective Statement Exercise

### **Module 3 – Purpose**

Module 3 focuses on *Purpose* and its unique relationship with *Perspective* and ultimately, ethical decision making. Building on the themes in the previous module, the section reaffirms that *Perspective* directly influences *Purpose*, which in turn may define ethical decision making. The module begins with a Thinking Forward Scenario titled “An Opportunity and a Challenge” that focuses on *Purpose* while addressing all four elements of Controlling Insight.

The modules includes a PEN activity which encourages participants to reconnect with the sense of purpose that initially drew them to public service. The activity also challenges participants to identify what they hope to accomplish as they strive to live up to their personal and professional sense of purpose.

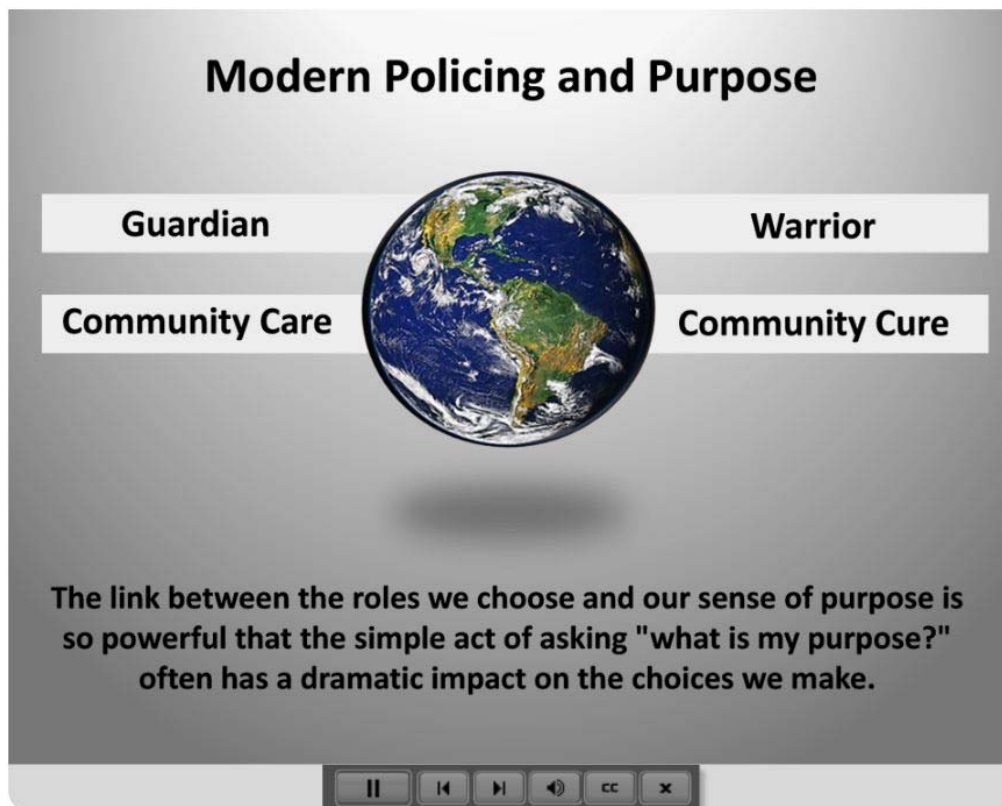


Figure 2. EDM Online participants navigate through the course with an easy-to-use interface.

### Topic Outline:

#### III. Purpose

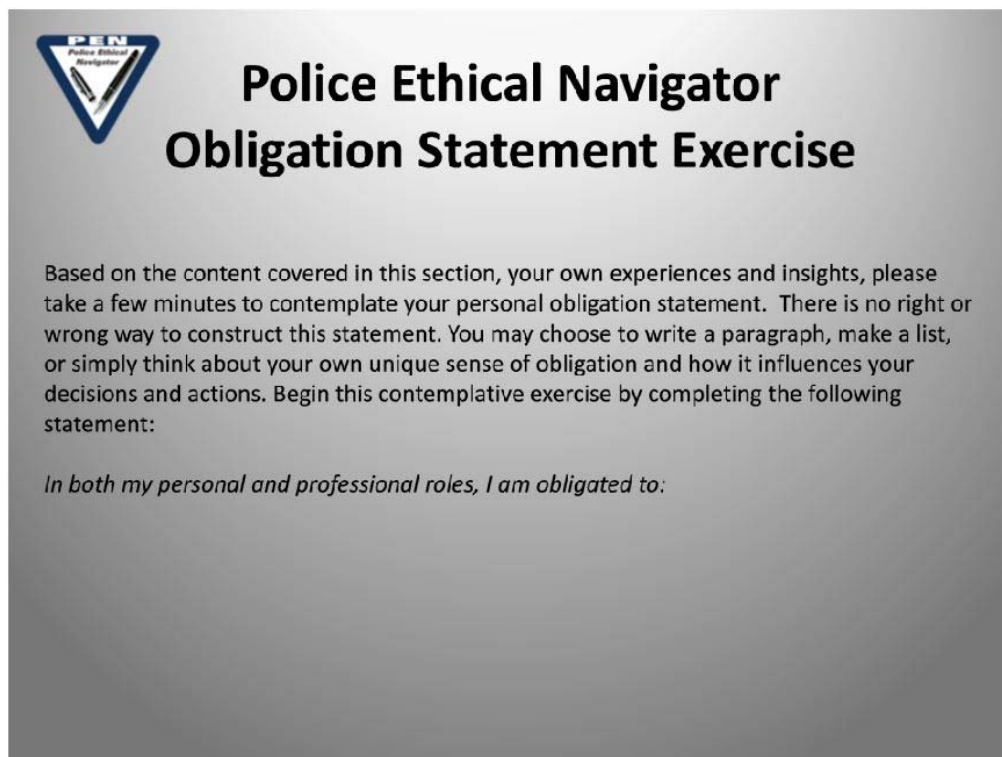
- a. Scenario (video)
- b. Identifying Purpose
- c. Modern Policing and Purpose
- d. Insight: "Identifying Purpose" video
- e. Police Ethical Navigator: Purpose Statement Exercise

## **Module 4 – Obligation**

Module 4 encourages participants to examine their own sense of *Obligation* and consider how it impacts their decision making. The module emphasizes that obligations are not necessarily cumbersome restrictions or things that "have" to be done. Instead, they are typically things that individuals "choose" to do. The module begins with a

Thinking Forward Scenario titled “Insight and an Expected Dilemma” that focuses on the sense of obligation while addressing all four elements of Controlling Insight.

This module’s PEN activity is designed to encourage participants to contemplate their own personal obligation statement by considering their own unique sense of obligation and how it influences their decisions and actions.



The image shows a slide titled "Police Ethical Navigator Obligation Statement Exercise". On the left is a logo for PEN (Police Ethical Navigator) featuring a blue triangle with a white border, containing a pencil and a pen. The text "PEN" is at the top, "Police Ethical Navigator" is in the middle, and "Obligation Statement Exercise" is at the bottom. The main title "Police Ethical Navigator Obligation Statement Exercise" is in large, bold, black font. Below the title, the text reads: "Based on the content covered in this section, your own experiences and insights, please take a few minutes to contemplate your personal obligation statement. There is no right or wrong way to construct this statement. You may choose to write a paragraph, make a list, or simply think about your own unique sense of obligation and how it influences your decisions and actions. Begin this contemplative exercise by completing the following statement:" followed by the prompt: "In both my personal and professional roles, I am obligated to:"

Figure 3. Modules conclude with PEN exercises that give participants the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and insights as related to the module focus.

#### Topic Outline:

#### IV. Obligation

- a. Scenario (video)
- b. Identifying Obligation
  - i. Definition
  - ii. A Fundamental Question: Where does our sense of obligation come from?
- c. Insight: “Identifying Obligation” Video
- d. Police Ethical Navigator: Obligation Statement Exercise

## Module 5 – Integrity

Module 5 introduces *Integrity* as an element of Controlling Insight that is especially important to policing. The module addresses the unique challenges of defining the concept of integrity in real and practical terms that are useful to policing professionals. Streamlining the definition of integrity, the module explores the concept in terms of choice and the essence of decision making. The module begins with a Thinking Forward Scenario titled “Priorities and Actions” that focuses on *Integrity* while addressing all four elements of Controlling Insight.

The PEN activity in this module is an exercise for participants to identify the things that are truly important to them, and then actively plan on how they intend to act on those priorities.

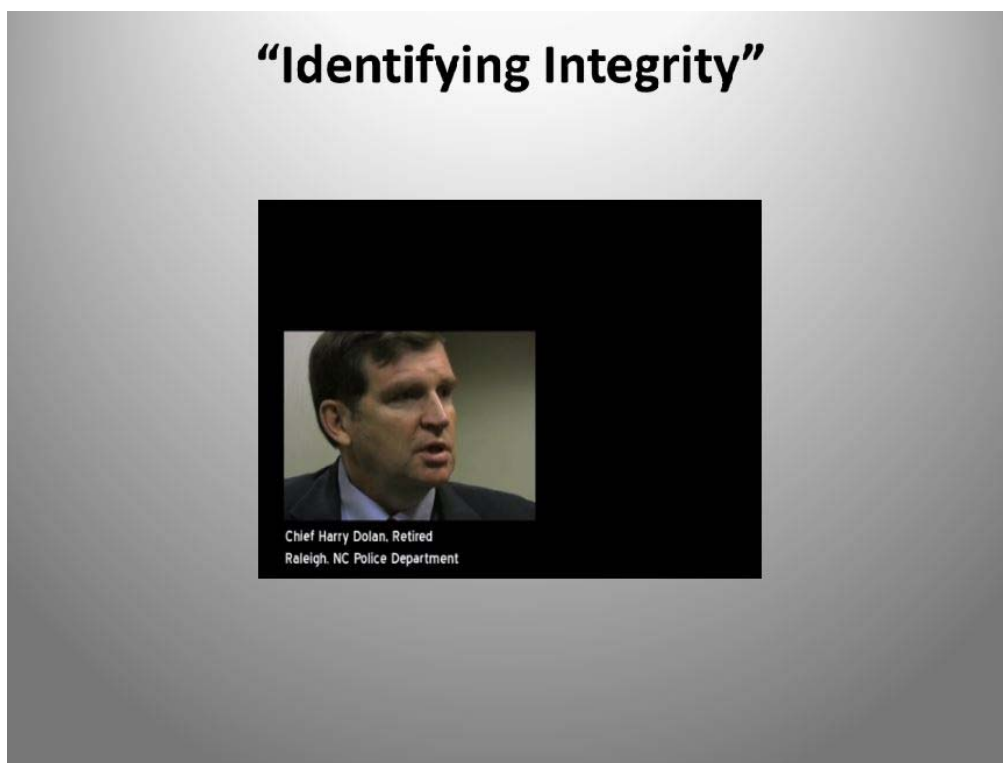


Figure 4. Interviews with various law enforcement professionals give insight on each of the elements of *Controlling Insight*.

#### Topic Outline:

- V. Integrity
  - a. Scenario (video)
  - b. Identifying Integrity
    - i. Definition
    - ii. The Challenge of Defining Integrity
  - c. Insight: “Identifying Integrity” Video

- d. Police Ethical Navigator: Integrity Check Exercise

## Module 6 – The Challenge of Ethical Decision Making

Module 6 is designed to merge the information from the previous modules into a cohesive summary and review. Participants are provided with a brief overview of the mechanics and processes of decision making and the role of awareness and orientation in ethics. The module emphasizes practices and techniques to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of ethically sound decision making.

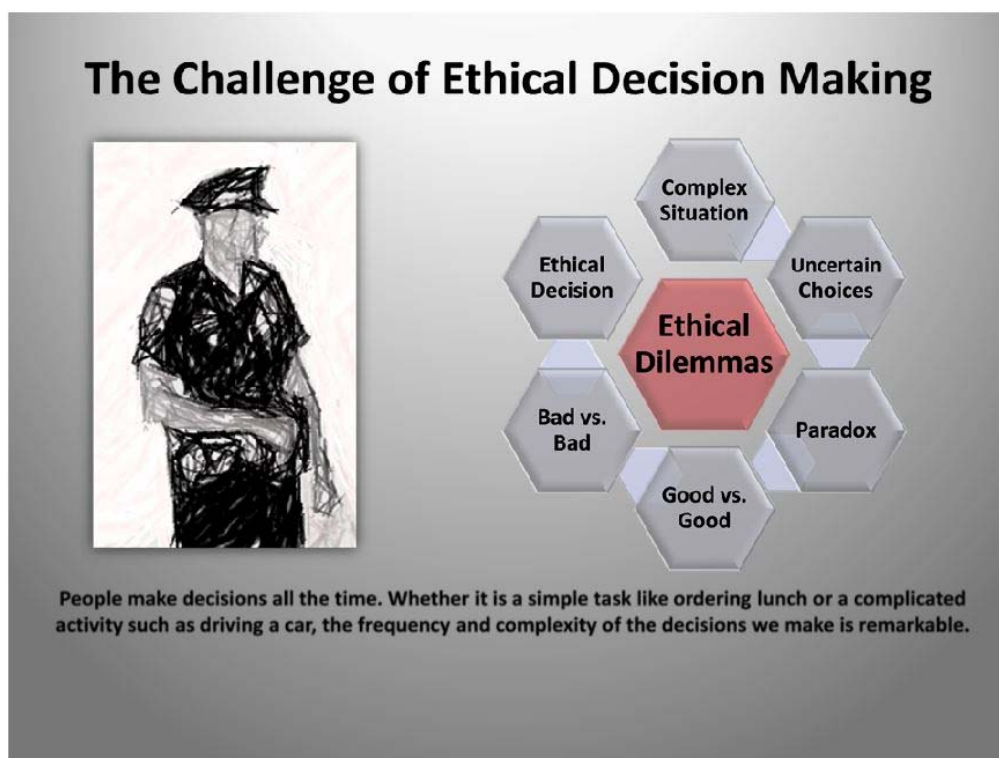


Figure 5. Diagrams strategically placed throughout EDM Online enhance participant learning.

### Topic Outline:

- VI. The Challenge of Ethical Decision Making
  - a. Physiological Processes and EDM Strategies
  - b. Awareness and EDM Strategies
  - c. Strategically Activating Your Own Development
    - i. Training and Education
    - ii. Knowledge
    - iii. Experience