



ABLE
ACTIVE BYSTANDERSHIP FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT
GEORGETOWN LAW

ABLE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

OVERVIEW

Since its inception, ABLE has aimed to provide law enforcement agencies with a comprehensive package of information, training, communication strategies, and supplementary resources designed to drive agency culture toward active bystandership. A key component of ABLE implementation is the creation of a communication channel by which leadership can promote the agency's goals related to ABLE to sworn and non-sworn staff at the agency, the agency's local community, and the law enforcement community as a whole. Agencies are proud to be affiliated with ABLE, and we want to give them the tools they need to promote their efforts in pioneering a new age in law enforcement, where the duty to intervene is understood as a way to protect both officer and community safety. Through your announcements to your agency and to the community, you are indicating your commitment to the pillars of ABLE and identifying your agency as a leader in the field.

GOALS

- **Position Your Agency as an Industry Leader:** Showcase your continued work to be one of a small group of agencies to put your community first through comprehensive, science-backed training and implementation of active bystandership
- **Celebrate Your Continued Investment in Your People:** Allow your agency to be recognized for prioritizing officer health and wellness through your commitment to offer meaningful resources to all members of your agency
- **Get Other Agencies On Board:** Call on other agencies in your area to learn more about the ABLE program and step up to the plate to shift the culture in law enforcement toward prioritization of the duty to intervene

STRATEGY

- **Press Release/Op-Ed:** Bring knowledge of ABLE to the people of your community in advance of implementation of the training
- **Statement to City Council:** Offer thoughts from your agency's leadership to community leadership in order for them to understand the intentions of your agency
- **Social Media:** Connect directly with engaged citizens to advertise your agency's commitment to community safety and innovation in law enforcement
- **Employee Engagement:** Develop robust employee communications to go live prior to external announcement

NARRATIVE

The Next Evolution in Law Enforcement.

Years of academic research and on-the-ground experience has shown us that effective active bystandership can be taught. The Center for Innovations in Community Safety, partnering with global law firm Sheppard Mullin, created the ABLE (Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement) Project to prepare officers to successfully intervene to prevent harm and to create a law enforcement culture that supports peer intervention.

The ABLE Project is a national hub for training, technical assistance, and research, all with the aim of creating a police culture in which officers routinely intervene as necessary to:

- Prevent misconduct,
- Avoid police mistakes, and
- Promote officer health and wellness.

Building upon a training developed by Dr. Ervin Staub, the Founding Director of a program on the psychology of peace and violence, to help police officers stop unnecessary harmful behavior by fellow officers, in 2014, Dr. Staub, other consultants, and the New Orleans Police Department developed the EPIC (Ethical Policing Is Courageous) Peer Intervention Program. The ABLE Project builds upon EPIC and Dr. Staub's prior work to develop and deliver practical, scenario-based training for police agencies in the strategies and tactics of police peer intervention. The ABLE Project guides agencies and communities on the concrete measures that must be in place to create and sustain a culture of peer intervention.

ABLE training is evidence-based and founded upon decades of research, field and lab experiments, and on-the-ground experience. The ABLE Project team has brought together experts from a wide array of disciplines to ensure ABLE training incorporates the best and newest thinking about active bystandership, and continues to evolve as we learn more about what makes people active or passive bystanders. The ABLE team makes yearly updates to the curriculum to ensure it reflects the latest learning on active bystandership in law enforcement contexts. The team also produces yearly refresher training curricula, which all officers at ABLE agencies are required to complete.

Law enforcement agencies must adapt to best practices in prioritizing community safety.

As research is furthered and policies improve, law enforcement agencies must be willing to adapt to reflect evidence-based practices. ABLE builds upon decades of research and collaboration with law enforcement to bring the concept of active bystandership into practical, real-world, scenario-based training that helps law enforcement officers feel empowered to better serve their community. The anticipated benefits of creating a meaningful culture of active bystandership at a law enforcement agency include:

- Reduced unnecessary harm to citizens
- Reduced unnecessary harm to officers
- Reduced risk of officers losing their jobs

- Reduced risk of lawsuits against the department, the city, and individual officers
- Improved police/community relations
- Improved officer health and wellness
- Improved officer job satisfaction
- Improved citizen satisfaction with their law enforcement agency

Since August 2020, the ABLE Project has trained hundreds of officers to go back to their agencies and provide thoughtful, evidence-informed active bystandership training to their peers, subordinates, supervisors, and leaders. The feedback we have received from our instructors has been overwhelmingly positive, despite the fact that ABLE pushes officers to rethink much about current police culture and challenges officers to tackle difficult issues, from preventing misconduct, to telling a ranking officer they are about to make a mistake, to having a courageous conversation with a colleague facing mental health issues. [Officer testimonials](#) and feedback from agency leadership has informed ABLE’s approach, and reinforced confidence that ABLE makes a lasting, positive impact on agencies.

Sincere Commitment to Change.

In order to ensure ABLE is implemented effectively and meaningfully, law enforcement agencies wishing to send instructors to participate in an ABLE Train-The-Trainer event, receive other ABLE training or technical assistance, and/or use the registered ABLE trademarks must commit to the [ABLE Standards](#): 1) Community Accountability; 2) Training; 3) Implementation and Program Coordination; 4) Supporting Intervention in Police and Practice; 5) Employee Wellness; 6) No New Intervention Reporting Requirements; 7) Data and Research; 8) Sustainability and Commitment. More information on the Standards can be found by reviewing the linked page on the ABLE website. The ABLE Standards are designed to keep agencies accountable to their stated intent to shift the culture in law enforcement toward acceptance and promotion of active bystandership. When agencies implement the Standards, they are honoring their commitment to spearhead culture change.

ROLLOUT TIMING

AUDIENCE	APPROACH	DETAILS	OWNER	SENDER	TIMING
Planning Phase (INSERT DATES)					
Planning Team	Key Messages	Gather involved leadership, chosen Program Coordinator, and any other invested staff to collaborate on messaging	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date
Employees	Internal Rollout	Plan and assign internal messaging	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date

		tasks to agency leaders			
Planning Team	Rollout Plan	Finalize rollout plan	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date
Planning Team	Rollout Plan	Finalize all assets	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date
Announcement: INSERT DATE					
Media	Local television	You may choose to do an interview with local news regarding your decision to join ABLE.	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date
	Press Release	Send release to media contact	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date
Employees	Verbal	Recap with employees at roll call, take any questions	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date
Owned Channels	Social	Release link to press release, or create own post for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date
	Website	Release website page advertising affiliation with ABLE	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date
Stakeholders	Email	Share acceptance into the program with all stakeholders who wrote letters of support for your agency's application	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date
Executive	Social	Agency top leader may choose to share information on ABLE on their individual social media account	Insert name	Insert name	Insert date

ASSETS

ITEM	USAGE	STATUS	REVIEW
Interview Prep	Local media interview		
Press release	Distributed to media contact		
Q&A	Reactive only		
Verbal Comms	Internal roll call recap		
Social Media Comms	Post on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.		
Stakeholder Letters	Day-of stakeholder outreach		

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

"[Insert agency name] is proud to announce a partnership with the Georgetown University Law Center for Innovations in Community Safety (CICS) to implement the Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project.

Georgetown Law CICS partnered with global law firm Sheppard Mullin to create the ABLE Project, preparing officers to successfully intervene to prevent misconduct, avoid police mistakes, and promote officer health and wellness. ABLE builds upon a training developed by Dr. Ervin Staub, the Founding Director of the UMass Amherst Psychology of Peace and Violence Program, to help police officers stop unnecessary harmful behavior by fellow officers. ABLE teaches officers how to successfully intervene and protects those who do intervene. It also authorizes and empowers law enforcement to intervene in another officer's action regardless of his/her rank. The [Insert agency name] adopted the ABLE Project training at the request of [Insert name of Chief/Sheriff/Commissioner/etc.].

On [Insert date], the first delivery of ABLE training was provided to [Insert agency name] officers, who received 8 hours of ABLE instruction. Department-wide implementation of ABLE training will continue until all sworn personnel have been trained.

For more information about the ABLE Project, visit the following:
<https://www.law.georgetown.edu/cics/able/>

SAMPLE STATEMENT TO CITY COUNCIL/TOWN HALL

We would like to announce that our application to join the ABLE Project through Georgetown University Law Center for Innovations in Community Safety was accepted, and we will begin training our agency in active bystandership on [X date]. [Insert name of Chief/Sheriff/Commissioner/etc.] championed the application process, and we were honored to have the support of the [mayor/governor/other leader] as well as two community groups, [Insert names of community groups].

The ABLE Project prepares officers to successfully intervene to prevent misconduct, avoid police mistakes, and promote officer health and wellness by teaching officers how to successfully intervene and while protecting those who do intervene. It also authorizes and empowers law enforcement to intervene in another officer's action regardless of his/her rank. ABLE requires their agency partners to commit to a set of standards in order to participate in the program, and our application for the program indicated our willingness to do so.

We will be implementing the following changes in our agency to remain in compliance with the ABLE Standards: 1) We will provide, at the very least, annual updates to the community regarding our progress with the training and will launch a public awareness program informing the community of our efforts to build a culture of active bystandership; 2) All officers, including leadership and recruits, will receive at least 8 hours of initial dedicated ABLE training and at least 2 hours of annual refresher training; 3) We will appoint a program coordinator who will roll out, promote, and reinforce the program, and will serve as a point of contact for the ABLE team; 4) We will roll out internal and external messaging regarding ABLE; 5) We will update our policy regarding the duty to intervene to include a strong written anti-retaliation policy to ensure interveners are not punished, targeted, or otherwise ostracized, and a discipline policy that recognizes a successful intervention that prevents misconduct from escalating as a potential mitigating factor in any consequent discipline proceeding; 6) We will launch a communications initiative regarding the health and wellness resources that officers have available to them, including access to professional counselors and/or social workers available to provide guidance and support to officers in need; 7) We will ensure that it is clear that ABLE is not intended to alter the agency's reporting policies, and that reportable incidents remain so after implementation of active bystandership training; 8) We will be administering surveys to determine officer perceptions of active bystandership in our agency; 9) We will implement ABLE training department-wide to ensure a culture of active bystandership is promoted.

We are thrilled to be partnering with ABLE and are extremely hopeful that the training will serve to reinforce and promote best practices in law enforcement, and maintain prioritization of officer health and wellness within our agency. If you have any further questions about the ABLE Project, I can direct you to the ABLE page on the Georgetown Law Center for Innovations in Community Safety website.

DRAFT LETTER TO THE EDITOR/OP-ED

"[Insert agency name] is pleased to announce a partnership with the Georgetown University Law Center for Innovations in Community Safety (CICS) to implement the Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project. Championed by [Insert name of Chief/Sheriff/Commissioner/etc.], our agency is committed to continuing our well-established relationship with the community and to keeping our community safe. The acceptance of our application to join the ABLE Project is a testament to our sincere intention to promote active bystandership and officer health and wellness, which we feel go hand-in-hand.

The ABLE Project builds upon a training developed by Dr. Ervin Staub, the Founding Director of the UMass Amherst Psychology of Peace and Violence Program, to help police officers stop unnecessary harmful behavior by fellow officers. ABLE teaches officers how to successfully intervene and protects those who do intervene. It also authorizes and empowers law enforcement to intervene in another officer's action regardless of his/her rank. All sworn staff at our agency, including top leadership and recruits, will be required to complete the ABLE training and will receive annual refresher training from here on out.

[Insert name of agency] is proud to become an ABLE agency, and contribute to a legacy of prioritizing community safety and fostering a healthy environment for our officers to serve. For more information on the ABLE Project, please visit <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/cics/able/>.

OWNED CHANNELS

In addition to the sample posts found below, you may also be interested in updating your bio for your social media accounts to indicate that you are an ABLE agency.

FACEBOOK



"[ABLE](#) is coming! We are pleased to announce that our agency has been accepted into the Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project through [Georgetown University Law Center for Innovations in Community Safety](#). We will begin training our sworn staff on [X date]. Thank you to [insert names of individuals and groups who wrote letters of support] for your support during the application process. We are so excited to get started!"

TWITTER



"We are pleased to announce our collaboration with @GeorgetownABLE through @CICSGeorgetown. All sworn staff will now be trained in active bystandership. Go to <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/cics/able/> for more information."

INSTAGRAM



"Announcing our collaboration with the ABLE Project at Georgetown University Law Center for Innovations in Community Safety! All sworn staff will now be trained in active bystandership. Visit the link in bio to learn more."

Please add this link to your instagram bio:
<https://www.law.georgetown.edu/cics/able/>

LOGOS

For each post, you have the option to post either ABLE logo, seen below.



The ABLE Project logo was designed to reflect helpfulness, active bystandership, diversity, and inclusivity. The three images in the circle are meant to represent individuals: two law enforcement officers and a community member. The image is suggestive of one officer putting a hand on another officer's shoulder as a reflection of active bystandership. That each individual has a hand on another shoulder is a reminder that active bystandership is a tool that everyone — officers and community members — can use to prevent harmful behavior.

The color scheme also presents its own symbolism. The blue and green give a nod to law enforcement, while the gold is intended to reflect the importance of placing paramount value on every community member as an individual. The openness of the center of the image is meant to reflect a safe space for an intervention, a courageous conversation, the creation of allyship, and other helpful behavior. That the outer circle is gold — the same color as the community member symbol within the circle — is a reminder that, to have legitimacy, law enforcement must be fully responsive to the needs and demands of the community it serves.

ABLE and the ABLE logo are service marks of the Georgetown University Law Center. Please see our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for information regarding use of the ABLE service marks and logos.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

As with any change, agencies should anticipate that some of their officers may be resistant to hearing the ABLE message, especially before they truly understand what the program means. To prepare to respond to pushback, it is important to review materials like [this primer](#) on responding to tough questions, and to take the time to think through who in leadership, if anyone, may be the most resistant to ABLE. Top agency leaders should contemplate strategies to reach that person (or people) before they have the chance to vocally oppose the program. It is essential for officers to receive a consistent positive message about ABLE if they are to take the training and the message to heart. One strong opposing voice could threaten the efficacy of the program. Agencies should work with their designated Project Coordinator on the ABLE team to work through any roadblocks in implementation, including difficult conversations with resistant colleagues.

SAMPLE EMAIL ANNOUNCEMENT

"We are excited to announce that our agency's application to the Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project has recently been approved, and we will begin implementing the program in the coming months. To find out more about ABLE, please click [here](#).

The first step in the implementation process is to send two outstanding agency leaders to an ABLE Train-the-Trainer session, where they will learn the ins-and-outs of the training and become experts in the program material. From there, those representatives will return to [Insert name of agency] to serve as trainers. Attending ABLE training will be a *requirement* for every sworn staff member. Our trainers will host sessions until every member is trained, and will host additional sessions for any recruits who join us in the future. In addition, attending an ABLE training refresher course will be an annual requirement for every sworn staff member. If you are interested in applying to serve as an ABLE trainer for our agency, please see the attached job description and submit an application to [Insert name of application manager].

The ABLE Project is proving to be extremely successful and influential for law enforcement agencies across the country and we are proud to now be affiliated with the program. If you have any questions about our involvement with ABLE, please contact [Insert name of designated ABLE Point of Contact]."

SAMPLE VIDEO SCRIPT

Agencies may choose to communicate admission into the ABLE Project via a video announcement from top leadership, whether that be the Chief, Commissioner, or Sheriff. The following sample script may be adapted to fit your agency's needs.

"Hello to all members of the [Agency name] community. I have an exciting announcement regarding an initiative that we have been working on behind the scenes. Some of you may know that I submitted an application for our agency to join the ABLE Project at Georgetown Law Center for Innovations in Community Safety. ABLE stands for Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement, and the Project involves participating in a robust training program and implementing policy and practical changes in our agency to encourage a culture where intervening to stop misconduct is welcome. I would like to announce to you all that our application was accepted, and we will begin the implementation process in the coming months. I am proud that our agency will be affiliated with this program as we build on our resources to help prioritize officer safety and wellness.

From this point forward, all sworn staff will be required to receive ABLE training. In order to meet that goal, we must designate two agency leaders to spearhead the implementation process by attending an ABLE Train-the-Trainer session, and returning to [Agency name] to facilitate the training. More information is to come about how to submit your name as a potential ABLE instructor.

I support this program 100% and I expect to see all of you get behind it as you learn more about ABLE's goals and objectives. I look forward to seeing our agency demonstrate our commitment to community safety through enthusiastic participation in this new initiative. Thank you, and as always, stay safe."

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

When your agency applied to ABLE, you were required to submit letters of support from various stakeholders in your community who could vouch for your sincere commitment to ABLE implementation. As per the ABLE Standards, you are required to update those stakeholders at least annually to discuss your agency's progress.

COMMUNITY GROUP UPDATES

Initial Community Group Update

Dear *[Insert Name of Community Group]*,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for your support during our application process for the Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project. I am pleased to announce that we were accepted into the program and have begun rolling out the training at our agency.

[Insert update on training - a few possible options are listed below].

- Our first training session is scheduled for *[insert date]* where we are planning to train *[X amount]* of sworn staff. We will continue to host training sessions *[weekly, biweekly, monthly, etc]* until all sworn members of our agency have been trained, after which we will implement refresher training. We anticipate that the training will be received very well as it is consistent with current practices at our agency, and that agency leadership will actively and consistently reinforce the principles of the training.
- We began training on *[insert date]* and have at this point trained *[X amount]* of sworn staff. We have been hosting training sessions *[weekly, biweekly, monthly, etc]* and expect that all sworn members of our agency will be trained by *[insert date]*. When we have achieved 100% completion of ABLE training across the board, we will implement refresher training. Thus far, the training has been well received and agency leadership has been actively and consistently reinforcing the principles of the training.
- As of *[insert date]*, 100% of our sworn staff members have been ABLE trained, and we are currently implementing the refresher training. We have received a very positive response from our officers and agency leadership continues to actively and consistently reinforce the principles of the training.

[Please provide an update on ABLE implementation based on the Implementation Plan you submitted in your application. The update should include information on adherence to ABLE Standards, such as who you have chosen as your Program Coordinator, whether your agency has implemented any policy changes regarding the duty to intervene in accordance with ABLE's requirements, any new health and wellness resources for officers, whether you have pursued any independent research opportunities, and what your plans are for sustainability of the program.]

[Please also feel free to include any anecdotes describing instances where officers at your agency have put the training to use, any quotes from officers regarding feedback on the program, a reflection from the Program Coordinator or other leadership about how things are going, or any other personal touch that allows the community group to better understand specifically how ABLE is making an impact.]

We are very grateful for your continued support of our agency, and we will continue to update you on our progress going forward.

All the best,

[Insert Name of Agency Point of Contact]

Annual Post-ABLE Implementation Update

Dear [Insert Name of Community Group],

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for your continued support of our agency as we have implemented the Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project. I am writing to provide an update to your organization post-implementation so you can better understand the impact that ABLE has had on our agency and consequently on our community. [Insert update on training - possible options are listed below].

- As of [insert date], 100% of our sworn staff members are ABLE trained. We have a plan in place to train all new recruits [X amount] of months post-arrival at our agency. The ABLE team has provided us with an in-service module that serves as a refresher training, and we have added the training into our scheduled training rotation. We have received a very positive response from our officers and agency leadership continues to actively and consistently reinforce the principles of the training.
- We have had some trouble getting ABLE off the ground at our agency due to [insert explanation]. I would like to reassure you that we are working closely with the ABLE Executive Team to ensure that the program is implemented in short order. Our leadership is behind the program 100% and we are dedicated to making sure that the program has maximum impact at our agency. We will be certain to keep you in the loop as we troubleshoot.

[Please include one of the following: an anecdote describing an instance where an officer at your agency has put the training to use, a quote from an officer regarding feedback on the program, a reflection from the Program Coordinator or other leadership about how things are going, or another personal touch that allows the community group to better understand specifically how ABLE is making an impact.]

We are very grateful for your continued support of our agency, and we will continue to update you on our progress going forward.

All the best,

[Insert Name of Agency Point of Contact]