TechBeat

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by JTIC

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About TechBeat

TechBeat is the monthly newsmagazine of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center System. Our goal is to keep you up to date on technologies for the public safety community and research efforts in government and private industry.

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The NLECTC System

The Justice Technology Information Center (JTIC), a component of the National Institute of Justice's National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) System, serves as an information resource for technology and equipment related to law enforcement, corrections and courts and as a primary point of contact for administration of a voluntary equipment standards and testing program for public safety equipment.

JTIC is part of the NLECTC System, which includes the Justice Innovation Center for Small, Rural, Tribal, and Border Criminal Justice Agencies, which focuses on the unique law enforcement challenges faced by those types of agencies; the National Criminal Justice Technology Research, Test and Evaluation Center, which provides technology-related research and testing and operational evaluations of technologies; and the Forensic Technology Center of Excellence, which supports technology research, development, testing and evaluation efforts in forensic science. In addition, a Priority Criminal Justice Needs Initiative exists to assess and prioritize technology needs across the criminal justice community.

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The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the Office for

Victims of Crime; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking.

WWW.JUSTNET.ORG

JUSTNET News. Includes article abstracts on law enforcement, corrections and forensics technologies that have appeared in major newspapers, magazines and periodicals and on national and international wire services and websites.

Testing Results. Up-to-date listing of public safety equipment evaluated through NIJ's testing program. Includes ballistic- and stab-resistant armor, patrol vehicles and tires, and more.

Calendar of Events. Lists upcoming meetings, seminars and training.

Social Media. Access our Facebook, Twitter and YouTube feeds for the latest news and updates.

Tech Topics. Browse for information on law enforcement, corrections and courts technologies.

http://www.youtube.com/JUSTNETorg

Gaining the "EDGE" on Virtual Training for Schools and First Responders

Gaining the "EDGE" on Virtual Training for Schools and First Responders

What if you could take care of all your emergency training needs, such as active shooter, fire, and major storm, with one tool?

What if that tool allowed school resource officers (SROs) and school administrators to work collaboratively with law enforcement, fire and EMS?

And what if that tool was also free?

You can find the answer to all of those "what ifs" here, where you can register for and access the Enhanced Dynamic Geo-Social Environment (EDGE), a free virtual training platform funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate (DHS S&T).

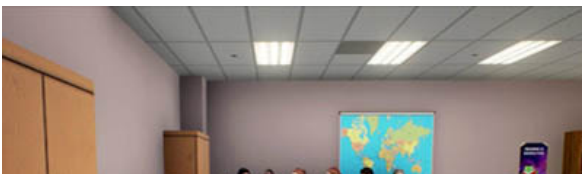Although EDGE is built on the Unreal 4 gaming

engine, it does not resemble a traditional video game with pre-programmed respond-and-react scenarios. Rather, it provides a setting where SROs, teachers and administrators, law enforcement and other first responders control avatars and role play to scenarios designed by their own trainers to fit their community, their policies and their procedures. One individual can't sit down and play EDGE like a game; it requires an experienced trainer to design events, in addition to participation from members of a variety of disciplines.

After EDGE launched with a hotel setting in July 2017 (see "Virtual Training Tool Allows First Responders to Train Across Disciplines and Jurisdictions," November 2017 *TechBeat*), DHS S&T Program Manager Milt Nenneman and the rest of the development team realized the need for a companion school environment. Working with the West Orange school district in New Jersey and its SRO supervisor, Lt. John Morella, the team visited a campus to film and replicate the school for EDGE. In the meantime, they also worked with Amanda Klinger, director of operations for The Educator's School Safety Network and Amy Klinger, co-founder and director of programs, along with various administrators, SROs and educators to ensure that the module's design met school safety and security needs.

"The unfortunate reality is that some 65 percent of active shooter incidents are resolved before law enforcement gets there," Nenneman says. "We wanted a tool that schools could use to train to their own policies so that they could mitigate threats, or even prevent them if possible. There are roles for administrators, teachers and even students. The tool gives them the capabilities they would have if they were actually in their school, and gives them a chance to practice their own policies and procedures."

The true richness of the tool, he says, lies in the ability to train together with first responders on how to react during an event. Although it's seen primarily as an active shooter tool, it's "open sandbox" and can be used for conflict de-escalation, a hostage situation, a fire or any other type of emergency the school wants to design.

"Active shooters, as we know, are statistically rare," says Bob Walker, EDGE program manager with DHS S&T partner Cole Engineering

Services, Inc. "There are a lot of other types of emergencies, and EDGE is the perfect tool to train for all of them."

That training capability doesn't stop when the scenario ends. EDGE allows the trainer to replay all or part of the scenario from the point of view of any participant, creating an opportunity for analysis of response and discussion about ways to improve that response.

"For example, a teacher might see a student in the hallway and order him to come into the classroom for lockdown," Walker says. "The student may or may not listen. The teacher then must decide whether to focus on rescuing that one student or concentrating on the others already in the classroom. You can put a policy about what to do on a PowerPoint slide, but EDGE lets teachers actually make that rapid decision in a safe training environment. Later, there's time to review that decision and its consequences. You can't do that in real-life training drill."

The importance of allowing teachers to train and make those kinds of decisions became apparent during beta testing, Walker says, and that beta testing proved invaluable in seeing how first responders and educators interacted during training: "You can see that first responders get a lot of training. They know what to do, and as events unfold, they are laser focused. For teachers, there's a realization that there's a man with a gun, or two girls were yelling at each other and suddenly one of them pulled out a weapon. In the end, the teachers said it was an amazing way to learn that felt very immersive."

Amanda Klinger echoed his thoughts by saying that instructors need to be aware of the skills and abilities of the individuals who are using EDGE.

"You don't just sit people down and say 'here, it's going to train you,' "she says. "The fact that it's open sandbox and can be tailored to the needs and abilities of each school is really powerful. You can use it for de-escalation tactics, for communication scenarios, for all types of emergencies. It's important that instructors design scenarios where teachers get a chance to make some of those emergency situations. Training shouldn't focus on first responders while teachers just get shot at."

EDGE allows schools to make emergency decisions by following their own policies; it contains no recommendations from the government on how to react. However, registered

users can access a train-the-trainer manual, a users' manual, and some short video vignettes and tutorials that will help them realize all of the tool's capabilities. Plans are also underway for some train-the-trainer instruction.

"In the end, the majority of real training takes place during the after-action review. Being able to replay the scenario from every trainee's vantage point is a great way to get to those teaching moments," Walker says. "That's where a well-trained instructor team comes in. If they're prepared to let things unfold and then ask the right
questions about the decisions, that's when you get people talking, thinking and learning."

For more information about EDGE and how to obtain access, click here or contact first.responder@hq.dhs.gov.

Article photo: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Science and Technology Directorate

Main photo: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Science and Technology Directorate

New NIJ FTCoE Webinar Series Helps Agencies Help the Most Vulnerable

New NIJ FTCoE Webinar Series Helps Agencies Help the Most Vulnerable

Earlier in 2018, when the National Institute of Justice's Forensic Technology Center of Excellence (NIJ FTCoE), led by RTI International, highlighted upcoming projects in its sexual assault reform initiative, a webinar series on responding to special populations was in the early stages of development (see *TechBeat* April 2018, "There's an App for That, and a Glossary, and Several Other FTCoE Sexual Assault Investigation Products"). Less than a year later, not only is this webinar series up and running, Paige Presler-Jur, special initiative lead, is working with collaborators on new topics that will keep the series going well into 2019.

As of December 2018, the FTCoE had hosted two webinars, "Providing Gender Inclusive Care to Victims of Sexual Assault" and "Responding to Sexual Assault Victims of Color," both available in archival form here. In 2019, look for additional webinars on the elderly, college and university campuses, the Hispanic/Latino (a) community and more.

"It's been said by others that when you improve

your response to sexual assault for your most vulnerable victims, you improve your response to all victims," Presler-Jur says. "And if you focus on serving the stereotypical victim you might have in your head, you might miss providing needed services to victims in special populations. You won't help those victims get on the path to recovery. Each community should determine gaps or barriers for special populations and find a way to bring services to those populations in a way that connects them to the criminal justice system. When an agency helps members of a vulnerable population find a way to heal, it promotes better case outcomes for them, and overall."

Input from the field on those challenges has helped inform the selection of the topics for the series, and Presler-Jur says that when staff members hear from a jurisdiction that needs help with serving a particular community, they try to find an individual or agency that has experience working with that population: "We're gathering expertise so that we can provide suggestions for law enforcement policies and guidance on evidence collection with special populations."

For example, she says, the series launched with a webinar on the LBGTQ community, with a special focus on working with transgender victims and "understanding how gender inclusive care will allow professionals to help victims reach a path to healing and at the same time, prevent secondary victimization. In the second event, we focused on the important role played by cultural history and discussed ways to be trauma informed and engage with victims of color."

The third event, on working with the elderly, will look not only at sexual assault response, but also will discuss elder abuse in general. Lt. Jordan Satinsky, a deputy commander in the Montgomery County (Md.) Police Department, and his team will lend his expertise on the subject, along with Dr. Lyndsie Ferrara, who is one of three subject-matter experts collaborating with the FTCoE on the project. The collaborators include:

- Dr. Ferrara, forensic science teaching assistant professor at Duquesne University.
- Dr. Julie Valentine, assistant professor at Brigham Young University College of Nursing and a certified adult/adolescent sexual assault nurse with Wasatch Forensic Nurses.
- Teresa M. Stafford, senior director of Victim Services and Outreach at Cleveland Rape Crisis

Center.

To learn more about their backgrounds and the *Improving Sexual Assault Response Within Special Populations* webinar series in general, visit the NIJ FTCoE website at the link above. The NIJ FTCoE makes all webinars available to the public at no charge in both live and archival formats.

"If you can't watch it at the moment it takes place, you can watch it whenever it fits your schedule. They're always available online. You can watch them in segments if you need to, you can watch from a computer, from a tablet or from your phone. They're always accessible," Presler-Jur says.

For more information on the NIJ FTCoE webinar series on sexual assault among special populations, contact Paige Presler-Jur at (919) 541-6813 or email pjur@rti.org. For more information on NIJ's forensic portfolio, contact Gerald LaPorte, Director, NIJ Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences, at Gerald.Laporte@usdoj.gov.

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Animal Cruelty as a Gateway Crime

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and National Sheriffs' Association

The Animal Cruelty as a Gateway Crime project was designed to build the capacity of all participating law enforcement agencies to recognize that animal cruelty crimes can serve as precursors to more violent crimes, as a co-occurring crime to other types of offenses, and as an interrelated crime to other offenses such as domestic violence and elder abuse. Armed with this knowledge, law enforcement officers can take steps both to solve current crimes and to prevent future crimes from occurring, according to a recent report about the project.

The National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) facilitated meetings during its 2015 winter conference to foster greater law enforcement awareness of the dangers of animal abuse and its role as an indicator of other criminal behavior, and to foster a collaborative relationship between law enforcement, prosecutors, judges and animal welfare advocates. The NSA and its partner organization, the National Coalition on Violence Against Animals, developed several educational tools for law enforcement personnel:

  ▪ A report, *Animal Cruelty as a Gateway Crime,* to raise awareness among the law enforcement

community.

- Informational videos on the relationship between animal cruelty and other crimes.
- A free smartphone app that officers can access when responding to calls for service. Some features of the app include a Response section on what questions to ask when responding to calls for service and recognizing the interrelationship between animal cruelty calls and other criminal offenses and behaviors; a Training section that includes training videos; and a Resources section.

For more information and to view the report, go here.

Main photo: Kudryashka/Shutterstock.com

Report: Body-Worn Cameras in Law Enforcement Agencies

Bureau of Justice Statistics

Nearly half of state and local law enforcement agencies in the United States had acquired body-worn cameras by 2016, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Findings in the report, *Body-Worn Cameras in Law Enforcement Agencies, 2016*, are from the 2016 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics – Body-Worn Camera Supplement, which found that 47 percent of the 15,328 general-purpose state and local law enforcement agencies had acquired body-worn cameras.

Local police departments and sheriffs' offices reported the top reasons for acquiring the cameras were to improve officer safety, improve evidence quality, reduce civilian complaints and reduce agency liability.

Data from agencies with the cameras include number acquired, deployment, policy coverage, access to footage and obstacles to use. For agencies without the cameras, data include

alternate types of recording devices and primary reasons for not obtaining the cameras.

To read the report, go here.

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