Public Indecency

Incidents involving public indecency can be unsettling for witnesses and require calm, professional response from telecommunicator. These calls may involve emotionally distressed callers, vulnerable individuals, or public safety concerns.

In this course, learners explore how public indecency is typically defined, why these offenses are often classified as sex crimes, and how to recognize key terminology associated with these incidents. The course also provides guidance for gathering essential facts, responding with empathy and composure, and supporting caller safety during sensitive situations.

Learners will examine real scenarios, practice identifying critical information, and apply trauma-informed communication strategies to help callers reporting public indecency incidents.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Define public indecency.
2. Identify what constitutes an act of public indecency in their state.
3. Explain the critical details to gather from a caller reporting a public indecency incident.
4. Recognize ways to display sensitivity to a caller reporting a public indecency incident.

Modules

Module 1: What is Public Indecency?

This module introduces the definition of public indecency and explains how public nudity, sexual activity, and sexual gratification may factor into these incidents. Learners review related terminology, including indecent exposure, public lewdness, exhibitionism or flashing, and obscenity. The module also helps learners recognize words and phrases callers may use that indicate a potential public indecency incident.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Define public indecency and explain its common characteristics.
2. Differentiate public indecency from related concepts such as indecent exposure, public lewdness, exhibitionism, and obscenity.
3. Explain the role sexual gratification may play in determining whether conduct constitutes public indecency.
4. Recognize caller terminology and key words that may indicate a public indecency incident.
5. Distinguish possible public indecency behavior from circumstances that may involve another type of issue.

Content/Activities

- Definition and characteristics of public indecency
- Public indecency as a sex crime
- Definitions of indecent exposure, public lewdness, exhibitionism/flashing, and obscenity
- “Is it Public Indecency?” activity
- Call-documentation keyword activity
- Public indecency key-word review
- Call examples and screen-recording activities

Module 2: Find Your State Statute

Because definitions and penalties associated with public indecency vary by jurisdiction, this module directs learners to review the laws governing indecent exposure and public lewdness in their state. Learners use statute information to become familiar with the legal requirements applicable in their jurisdiction.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain why telecommunicators should be familiar with state and local public indecency laws.
2. Locate their state's statutes related to indecent exposure and public lewdness.
3. Identify how the definition of public indecency may differ by jurisdiction.
4. Recognize conduct that may meet the statutory definition of public indecency in their state.

Content/Activities

- Public indecency laws by state
- State statute exploration
- Indecent exposure statute review
- Public lewdness statute review
- State-specific knowledge check

Module 3: Information Gathering

This module focuses on the information telecommunicators should obtain when handling reports of public indecency. Learners examine how location, incident timing, suspect descriptions, weapons, and the involvement of children can affect responder preparation and dispatch priority. The module uses a staged call example to demonstrate how relevant information is gathered from a caller who may be flustered or distressed.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify the caller's location and the exact location of the reported suspect.
2. Determine whether an incident is in progress or occurred previously and explain how timing may affect response priority.
3. Gather useful suspect and vehicle descriptive information from a caller.
4. Determine whether a suspect may have access to or be carrying a weapon.
5. Apply additional safety and priority considerations when children are involved in a public indecency incident.

Content/Activities

- Call example: woman exposing herself at a store
- Caller and suspect location
- Time of incident and response priority
- Suspect description activity
- Weapons identification and safety considerations
- Knowledge check on suspect details
- Children involved in public indecency incidents
- Child and caller safety considerations

Module 4: Maintaining Composure and Sensitivity

This module examines the emotional impact public indecency can have on callers and witnesses. Learners explore why telecommunicators must remain composed, avoid behaviors such as laughing or making inappropriate comments, and communicate in a way that demonstrates compassion and understanding. The module also presents examples of the longer-term effects these incidents may have on witnesses.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain why public indecency incidents may be distressing or traumatic for witnesses.
2. Identify telecommunicator behaviors that may be perceived as insensitive.
3. Maintain composure when a public indecency call contains unusual, uncomfortable, or unexpected details.
4. Demonstrate compassionate communication techniques with callers reporting public indecency.
5. Identify practical ways to reduce caller distress while continuing to gather necessary information.

Content/Activities

- Call example: naked person walking near a roadway
- Identification of insensitive telecommunicator behavior
- Impact of public indecency on witnesses
- Victim-impact article and reflection activity
- Knowledge check on effects experienced by witnesses
- Be Compassionate
- Distance from the Scene
- Take a Break and follow-up contact activity

Module 5: Why It Matters

This module demonstrates the consequences that can result when a public indecency call is handled without sufficient urgency, compassion, or attention to the caller's information. Learners examine a caller's account of an indecent exposure incident and a subsequent investigation into the 911 response. The lesson emphasizes that following protocol alone may not be enough if the caller is not treated with appropriate compassion and the urgency of the situation is overlooked.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain why public indecency calls should be taken seriously even when the act is generally nonviolent.
2. Identify how a lack of urgency can interfere with the collection of time-sensitive information.
3. Describe how an insensitive response can affect caller confidence in the 911 system.
4. Explain why procedural compliance should be accompanied by compassion and attentive listening.
5. Recognize how poor call handling may expose an emergency communications center to organizational or legal consequences.

Content/Activities

- Target parking lot indecent exposure case
- Caller social-media account
- Review of the 911 response
- Newspaper report on the city's investigation
- “What Went Wrong?” analysis
- Compassion versus strict protocol discussion
- Liability and professional responsibility review

Module 6: Knowledge Check

This module assesses learners' understanding of the major concepts covered throughout the course. Questions address the definition of public indecency, state-specific legal differences, caller terminology, information gathering, sensitivity, witness impact, and other key principles.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the characteristics of public indecency.
2. Recognize words and behaviors that may indicate a public indecency incident.
3. Identify critical information that should be gathered from callers.
4. Apply principles of composure, sensitivity, and caller care.
5. Demonstrate understanding of factors that may affect the seriousness or priority of an incident.

Content/Activities

- 10-question course knowledge check
- Public indecency definition questions
- State-law awareness questions
- Caller keyword identification
- Information-gathering questions
- Sensitivity and caller-care questions
- Witness-impact questions
- Scenario-based application questions

Course Completion Criteria

To successfully complete this course and earn continuing education hours, learners must achieve a minimum score of 75%. The quiz must be completed within 30 minutes.

- CE hours awarded: 1
- Certificate duration: 12 Months

Technical Requirements

- Desktop, laptop, or mobile device
- Speakers or headphones
- High-speed Internet access
- A current web browser