



the Open Line



WESTERN STATES HOSTAGE NEGOTIATORS' ASSOCIATION - TRAINING CRISIS NEGOTIATORS SINCE 1986

Summer 2026

TRAINING FUNDS



WSHNA has training funds available for members in good standing. We have money for you in the form of Training Day lunches, coffee, donuts, etc. We also have money for you in the form of a \$500.00 Individual Scholarships. You can read all the guidelines on the Training Page at www.wshna.com



REID TECHNIQUE

WSHNA Members who are in good standing receive a discount at John E Reid Technique. POC is Toni Overman, toverman@reid.com.

WHY SHOULD YOU BE PART OF WSHNA?

- Annual Training Seminar provides leading presenters in our specialized field.
- Fantastic networking opportunities.
- One of the best HNT Competitions in the United States.
- Team Training Funds & Individual Scholarship opportunities.
- Membership allows access to the NCNA Website.

- Discounts at John E. Reid Classes.
- Support the WSHNA Mission.
- Lots of quality 'negotiator time'!

MEMBERSHIP PORTAL

If you attended the training seminar in Spokane 2026, then your membership is valid until the start of Salem 2027. If you want to join now and see the benefits of WSHNA membership, here is a link at www.wshna.com.

MEET YOUR WSHNA PRESIDENT – JOE MILLER

Joe Miller is a highly accomplished public safety expert, veteran, and consultant with 34 years of dedicated service



spanning military operations and civilian law enforcement. Specializing in crisis

intervention, tactical response, and de-escalation, he currently uses his extensive field experience to train the next generation of first responders and provide expert legal consultation.

Military Service & Tactical Foundations

Miller began his career of service in the United States Air Force, where he served as a member of the Emergency Services Team (EST). During his enlistment, he was stationed at Clark Air Base in the Philippines and was on the ground during the historic 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo. This foundational military experience instilled a deep ability in high-stress disaster response, tactical positioning, and crisis management under catastrophic conditions.

Law Enforcement Career & Commendations

Following his military enlistment, Miller transitioned into civilian law enforcement, embarking on a career marked by exceptional leadership across three Pacific Northwest agencies. He served with the Quincy Police Department (WA) and the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office (WA), before spending his final 25 years of service with the Salem Police Department (OR).

His decisive actions and commitment to preserving human life earned him three Lifesaving Awards over his career. His sustained performance, tactical proficiency, and agency leadership culminated in his selection as Officer of the Year. Throughout his decades of service, he routinely applied advanced communication and crisis negotiation

strategies to resolve high-risk critical incidents safely.

Training, Entrepreneurship, & Expert Witness Services

An advocate for physical and mental preparedness, Miller founded the Saxon Jiu-Jitsu Club to provide essential defensive tactics and physical conditioning to law enforcement and community members.

As an entrepreneur, he is the founder and principal of J. Miller Consulting, a professional advisory firm originally established as Thane Training.

Capitalizing on his 34 years of operational experience, he now provides specialized expert witness services nationwide. He offers objective analysis, case reviews, and court testimony specifically in the critical areas of law enforcement tactical response and de-escalation practices.

Institutional Leadership at DPSST

Currently, Miller serves as a Program Coordinator for the Center for Policing Excellence at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) in Oregon. In this capacity, he helps shape the state's law enforcement standards by translating evidence-based research into actionable training curricula and leadership programs. His work ensures that public safety professionals are

equipped with the modern tactical, ethical, and communicative tools necessary to serve their communities effectively.

Personal Life

Beyond his professional endeavors, Joe has been happily married to his wife, Lisa, for over 30 years, and together they have two adult daughters. Outside of training and consulting, Joe and Lisa love to travel and can frequently be found on the road following their favorite bands on tour.

RESEARCH TOPICS

Have you ever wondered if somebody else has previously researched a topic you are now tasked with researching? Well, WSHNA keeps a database of subjects that have been previously explored by WSHNA members. The list is an on-going collection of topics, and we realize that some of the contact persons/emails are no longer valid (retirement, left law enforcement/correction). But it is a good place to start. There is a link on the home page of www.wshna.com.

PRO TIP – RESPONDING TO SUICIDAL JUMPERS

BY Joe Miller, WSHNA President

Few situations are more stressful than responding to a suicidal jumper. Their actions

combine danger, public scrutiny, and unpredictable outcomes.

Location, location, location

Suicidal jumpers are often motivated by a desire to escape pain and may believe in a chance for a new beginning after death.

Iconic sites like the Golden Gate or Tacoma Narrows bridges can attract those seeking an escape, especially when atmospheric conditions make them seem mysterious or surreal.

Low-stim response.

On one call, we used a city bus to discreetly block off a lane, minimizing public attention and distractions. The motoring public could see nothing more interesting than a broken-down city bus. There was no yelling from frustrated drivers, and our team could do its



work with some level of safety and privacy.

Build relationships with local services like bus companies in advance; these contacts can be invaluable during an incident.

Minor safety improvements

Me: “You know you could get over that railing before I could reach you, right?”

Jumper: “You’re G.D. right. If you make a move, I’ll jump!”

Me: “Understood. I am not going to grab you. I just want to talk while you decide what to do. How about you flop a leg over to this side of the railing while we talk”?

If the person is withdrawn, I ask when they last ate a meal off a plate. This unusual question can shift their focus, promote cognitive thinking, and open the door to positive police actions, like offering food or water.

I almost had a full negotiation mutiny on my hands with one young lady threatening to jump from a bridge. I told my primary to offer her a bag of goldfish crackers and the water I gave him. The mutiny happened when I told him that if she did not take them, I wanted him to eat them himself right in front of her.

The negotiator was hesitant, but after making the analogy of a first date, how it is easier to talk once the food arrives, he agreed to try it.

The young woman safely walked to a waiting ambulance voluntarily. While our actions may not have been the only factor, building rapport seemed to help.

Takeaways:

- Suicidal jumper incidents are extremely stressful and unpredictable, requiring a careful, calm response. Identify

and train in locations that have a history of suicide attempts.

- Discreet staging and minimizing public attention can help de-escalate the scene.
- Building rapport through empathy, non-typical question-asking methods, and positive police actions—like offering food or water—can shift the dynamic of a crisis.
- Preparation and relationships with local agencies (like bus or transit services) make tactical responses smoother.
- There is no single solution but connecting on a human level and focusing on safety can make a real difference.

RESPECT

Why does everybody think they can negotiate?

We’ve all been at the scene when the field commander says, “hurry up, and just talk ‘em out of there.” Does that same field commander say to the marksman, “hurry up, just shoot the guy,” or to the entry team, “hurry up, just go in and get the guy.”

How many times have the SWAT team members, the field commanders, the public information officer, and others leaned over your shoulder and said, “why don’t you tell him this? How many times before you’ve got to the scene have well meaning, but untrained, supervisors let a mother,

girlfriend, or other family member talk to the suspect?

To prove my point maybe next time the negotiators should grab an MP5, an ARWEN, or some entry tools and show the SWAT guys how it's done. How about letting the negotiators do the press briefing or the negotiators tell the field commander what decisions to make? Why? Because we're not trained in those areas. Then why does everybody think they can negotiate?

When planning events how many times are the negotiators included in the planning of an event. Very rarely. We pre-plan traffic, we pre-plan perimeters, and we pre-plan entries. How about letting the negotiators pre-plan a psychological profile prior to a high-risk warrant service.

Like the Rodney Dangerfield of the police world, negotiators get no respect. Negotiators train extensively and we are well versed in the art of negotiations. Yes, an art. Contrary to the belief of the uninformed field commander, we don't just, 'talk 'em out.'

A negotiation is the art of letting someone else have your way. It's not as easy as you may think. Just like it takes training and expertise to shoot an MP5, to enter a doorway with an armed man on the other side, or to command an entire operation, it takes training, experience, and knowledge to negotiate.

Considering that the police negotiators save governments millions in litigation, bring positive press to our agencies, and save SWAT team members from going through the front door about 90% of the time, I would think we have earned and deserve to be on the A team.

All we want is a little respect.



Salem

**41st Annual WSHNA Training
Seminar & HNT Challenge
April 2027**

A NOTE FROM VENESSA BEHAN (OUR 2026 CHARITY)

Dear Friends,

“There is no judgement, just compassion and support...The feeling of being safe and knowing I have the support I need is indescribable” – Tamra, Vanessa Behan Grandparent



On behalf of the parents and children of Vanessa Behan, thank you for your generous gift of \$10,000.00.

Because of supporters like you, more than 7,000 children each year experience a safe, nurturing environment where they can thrive while their caregivers navigate life's challenges. Your generosity also strengthens thousands of local families like Tamra's, by ensuring they have a trusted place to turn when they need support most: Vanessa Behan.

Your commitment is creating lasting change throughout our community. Thank you for making this work possible and for helping us make a difference every day in 2026 and beyond.

With gratitude,

Amy Knapton Vega, MSW
Executive Director

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