



# High Intensity Team Supervision

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## H.I.T.S. Inside Edition

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Greetings from your HITS Commanders! It's already February and HITS is on the move in 2016 and we have a lot to share with you in this issue!

This month, we spotlight the seventeen officers of BJPOT Class 004 sworn in by Commissioner Niles in January. These officers have taken a huge step in their careers as they prepare to join their HITS teams across the state.

Also in this issue, we talk about the topic of being vigilant while working in the field using proper officer safety and we spotlight the Rockdale HITS Team, which has forged an amazing partnership with the Rockdale County based Boyz to Men of Honor community service group.

We hope you enjoy this issue and as always, thank you for all you do!



### BJPOT Class #004 Swearing In



# Training and Special Topics

## *Field Officer Safety*

For probation officers, conducting home visits offers a unique opportunity for a glimpse into the private world of their clients. During home visits, probation officers leave the office and enter the offender's world. While officers want to catch offenders doing something right and not something wrong, officer safety remains the number one consideration.

Preparation and planning prior to conducting a home visit are important keys for ensuring safety.

### Field Safety Considerations

- ☞ Reputation of neighborhood
- ☞ Observe pedestrian and traffic flow
- ☞ Watch for local graffiti
- ☞ Assess your visibility in the area
- ☞ Be aware of lighting conditions
- ☞ Pay attention to your "gut feeling"
- ☞ Consider geographical factors
- ☞ Planned or unplanned visit
- ☞ Note cell phone or radio communication in the area

### During Your Home Visit

- ☞ Be assertive but courteous
- ☞ Always introduce any other staff working with you
- ☞ Explain to third parties the nature and purpose of the visit
- ☞ Avoid "fish bowl" effects (situations where you have no privacy with your clients)
- ☞ Be respectful to client and third parties
- ☞ Never violate anyone's 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights

### Field Contact Itinerary

- ☞ Have an itinerary that includes field contact information and solid plan of action before arriving and departing
- ☞ Group field contacts geographically and plan travel route
- ☞ Leave copy of itinerary with supervisor or designee. Enter planned return time
- ☞ Know your local law enforcement
- ☞ Always contact local law enforcement if you feel a situation may be dangerous
- ☞ Avoid conducting home visits alone

### Approaching a Residence

- ☞ NEVER park directly in front of a home in the event of an ambush situation.
- ☞ Park in a convenient and inconspicuous location, always try to avoid parking in driveways to prevent from being blocked in
- ☞ Be alert to unusual activity
- ☞ Observe physical condition of residence and note windows
- ☞ Note vehicles at the residence and their location
- ☞ Note which direction the door swings
- ☞ Knock and step back and to the side  
NEVER stand directly in front of a door  
**This is called the "fatal funnel" and can get you killed!**
- ☞ ALWAYS have an avenue of escape
- ☞ Remember your approach and exit is the most important and vulnerable time of a home visit

# HITS STATEWIDE MEETING

HITS conducted their first statewide meeting on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2016 at GPSTC, in Forsyth, Georgia. More than two hundred HITS staff members from across the state participated in this meeting facilitated by Academy Director, DeBaja Coleman, HITS Commanders Tiffany Castillo and Richard Grant. DJJ Commissioner Avery Niles and the entire Executive Staff from Division of Community Services also attended.

During the meeting, staff actively participated in ice breaker sessions, team building activities, and presentations from guest speakers. Lunch was provided for the staff that during the break was able to network and build cohesive work relationships with each other. Staff was briefed on HITS updates, training updates, EPICS, OCATS and New Freedom.

The focus of the HITS statewide meeting was to allow HITS staff and guests to make statewide connections with their peers and leadership and provide them with vital information, presentations, and beneficial resources to HITS Teams and their caseload youth.



## Customer Service Matters: An Open Letter of Gratitude

*Working at the Department of Juvenile Justice is not for the faint of heart. On a daily basis, employees must react to difficult situations while keeping their cool and composure. While the work can be internally rewarding, outside praise is a rare occurrence.*

*That is why when DJJ gets thank you notes from the general public, they mean quite a bit to everyone. Below is a recent letter of praise and support directed to JPPS I Kevin Fleming and JPPS I Noah Tolbert of Carroll HITS...*

Mr. Fleming & Mr. Tolbert,

I just wanted to say thank you both so very much for all the hard work and dedication you gave to my son over the past several months. I have completely appreciated every single moment of your time and all that you have done for him. He has done well with both of you, better with the two of you than he ever has. He respects you guys and looks up to both of you.



Noah Tolbert & Kevin Fleming  
JPPS I Carroll HITS

Both of you are absolutely wonderful at what you do. You both care for these kids and you care for their lives and how they turn out. You guys go above and beyond the call of duty for these kids and I'm sure there are a lot of parents and kids (teens) out there that don't appreciate your help in what you're doing but I do.

I am not the Mom that wants my son "out of trouble" I am honestly the Mom that will stand on the DA side and I had to just about a year ago against my son. I know that he isn't the perfect kid and I do want what is best for him, I will always want what is best for him and I will always be there for him. I know he has a past and I hope and pray this change of scenery if you will, is going to be what will be what helps him.

I really just want to thank you both for all your hard work. You guys are the best probation officers. Carroll County has a great team over all and my son has been very fortunate to have wonderful, caring probation officers.

*A Very Appreciative Mother*

***Identities of the youth referenced in this letter and the parent who wrote it have been omitted by the Department of Juvenile Justice to protect the privacy of this family.***

## HITS in the Community

The Rockdale HITS Team has forged an amazing partnership with the Rockdale County-based community service group “Boyz to Men of Honor” (B2MH). In 2009, the B2MH’s founder and CEO Mr. Gregory Vann saw an immediate need for mentorship and guidance for the young men of Rockdale County and made it a mission of his organization to assist single parents of male youth so that they may grow into productive members of society. Through mentorship, Mr. Vann wanted to help fill the gap left by absentee fathers and made it his goal to “empower young people to break the habits that lead to trouble in school and in the streets”.



Community outreach is a task the Rockdale HITS team takes seriously. When choosing a Service Learning Project, HITS leaders believed it was important to use the opportunity to teach DJJ youth about the joy of selflessly giving to others. On December 12, 2015, Rockdale HITS youth and officers volunteered their Saturday to assist B2MH in their 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Christmas Celebration. HITS youth worked diligently to set up game centers, outdoor moonwalks, food and toy tables, Christmas trees, banners, and raffle prize items such as flat screen TV’s, bicycles, and household appliances.



In the beginning stages of this task, the Rockdale youth didn’t seem to understand the importance of their involvement, or if this event was something people would even attend, but through coaching from their HITS officers and Mr. Vann, they still got the job done. By the end, HITS youth sat with staff to discuss the event and realized every child entering the holiday event received a new, unwrapped toy, and every person who attended was received a holiday meal thanks to the efforts of concerned citizens who took time to care. Because our youth were given an opportunity to give back to their community, they began to understand the impact positivity can have, gaining appreciation for working as productive and law abiding citizens. The Rockdale HITS team would like to thank Mr. Gregory Vann for helping forge the DJJ - Boyz to Men of Honor partnership for continued support of our HITS program and our Rockdale Community.



***Contributed by: Margaret Standifer, JPPS | Rockdale HITS***



### Georgia Fun Facts:

Nickname: Empire State of the South, Peach State  
 Capital: Atlanta  
 Motto: Wisdom, justice and moderation.  
 Flower: Cherokee Rose  
 Bird: Brown Thrasher  
 Tree: Live oak  
 Song: Georgia on My Mind  
 Entered Union: January 2, 1788  
 Rank: 4

### BJPOT Class 005 Pre-Shoot Week



### Final Thoughts



Never doubt the work you are doing matters and that you are change agents! You each are the face of something big happening right now in DJJ. Every day, we each strive to do things better than they were done the day before. Whether this is with improved assessments for our youth or different ways of engaging our youth through EPICS, we are changing, growing and evolving as a team with improved outcomes for our youth and families.

At times we can all get lost in the workday shuffle and in the demands of our jobs; it is important that we never forget we are setting an example in all things that we do for the youth we serve. At times, this is done through intentional acts or it can even be done with unintentional acts. It is our reputation, character, and behavior that will inspire our youth more than anything else will.

The only way to call the best out of others is to expect the best of ourselves. I want to say a heartfelt thank you to each of you for the jobs you do each day.

*Diana Aspinwall*

Assistant Deputy Commissioner  
 Division of Community Services

In the famous words of  
 Mr. Monaletto Irby  
 "Learning was taking place"

