



SPJ Georgia



SPJ GA develops police de-escalation training with GPSTC

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The Society of Professional Journalists Georgia Chapter has partnered with the Georgia Public Safety Training Center (GPSTC) to develop an online training course for law enforcement officials on interacting with the news media during times of civil unrest.

The course, produced with guidance from the Georgia First Amendment Foundation and the UGA Law School's First Amendment Clinic, trains law enforcement and other public safety officials on effectively handling interactions with the news media in volatile events of public interest, such as protests and riots.

These efforts come in direct response to the dozens of journalists who were targets of violence and other uses of force during the George Floyd protests in May 2020.

"We saw these events as an opportunity for SPJ Georgia to not only equip law enforcement with ways to de-escalate interactions with the press but also educate journalists on the boundaries of their rights in these scenarios," said 2020 SPJ GA President Charlotte Norsworthy. "The result has been a thoughtful collaboration consisting of a two-way street and a productive way forward."

The goal of the course is to develop stronger relationships between police and members of the press, bettering more respectful interactions that avoid use of force.

SPJ GA members will be receiving a copy of the course and are encouraged to read through these materials in order to fully understand the restrictions of the law and ways to facilitate constructive conversation during times of civil unrest.

"Part of the Society of Professional Journalists' mission is to maintain constant vigilance—ensuring that First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech and of the press are protected. Journalists have the right to observe and report on public demonstrations, their causes, and the interaction between protestors and police without fear of retaliation or arrest," said current chapter president Ashlyn Webb. "For these reasons, the Georgia Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists spearheaded this training for the sake of our members and Georgia journalists overall."

SPJ GA is immensely grateful to the GPSTC, Georgia First Amendment Foundation and the First Amendment Clinic for contributing to a common goal.