

## **CPI *Unrestrained* Transcription**

Episode 29: Carleen Doucet

Record Date: 5/4/16

Length: Total time TBD

Host: Terry Vittone

Terry: Hello, and welcome to *Unrestrained*, the CPI podcast series. This is your host, Terry Vittone. Today, my guest is Carleen Doucet. She's a crisis interventionist at the Lafayette Parish School System. Hello, and welcome, Carleen.

Carleen: Hello, welcome to all.

Terry: Yeah, thank you. Let me tell you a little bit about our guest. Carleen Doucet has worked for the Lafayette Parish School System in Lafayette, Louisiana for 33 years. She was a classroom teacher for 12 years, of students with behavior disorders. She was the Director of the Lafayette Parish Special Education Alternative School for 17 years. The site serves students who are removed from their base school for possession of drugs, weapons, and/or assault against staff or other students.

The age range of students at the alternative school was between 5 and 22 years old. Carleen is currently working as a crisis interventionist in seven schools in the Lafayette Parish System. She has been a CPI Certified Instructor since 2001, and in 2014, Carleen received the honor of being named a Meritorious Instructor by CPI. She is also a certified Boys Town Well-Managed Classroom Trainer. Carleen is an adjunct professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, a position she has held for the past 10 years.

So then Carleen, let's begin. Why don't you give our listeners an overview of the size and makeup of the Lafayette Parish School System? And then talk about the roles you've played there, over the course of your three-decade career.

Carleen: Okay. Size and makeup of Lafayette Parish: we have approximately 30,499 students, approximately 4,187 staff members. That breaks down to 23 elementary, 10 middle schools, 7 high schools, a career center for those students who are in vocational-type programs, and a K-12 Alternative School. We also are

building a brand-new high school that is projected to open in 2017.

Terry: All right, big district.

Carleen: A big district.

Terry: How did you first start working for the Lafayette Parish School System?

Carleen: I was born here and just decided that I wanted to go into education, and started at one of the at-risk middle schools and loved it there. And then I was teaching Resource, and they wanted to open a Behavior Disorder room. So when they wanted to open the Behavior Disorder room, my name came up, and so I did that for a few more years. And then once my students started going into regular classrooms more, because we do full inclusion here, they were sending me to other schools to get their behavior problems under wraps. So that's how this whole crisis job evolved.

Terry: Do you find yourself just having an intuitive grasp of how to de-escalate or work with students who are experiencing some issues?

Carleen: Right, right. It's getting that word out, and so that's how we actually became interested in CPI.

Terry: I see. That was my next question. I was going to ask about the history of CPI training in the Parish.

Carleen: Well, we started in 2001, because we had a large number of students that were being referred to the Alternative School, for assault on staff.

Terry: I see.

Carleen: And the initial reaction to the training was so good that we started increasing the number of staff to be trained. So we train over a thousand people a year. I have a little over 2,000 hours of training in CPI.

Terry: How many trainers do you guys use?

Carleen: We use three. And that's the only way that we can keep quality control going within the Parish. Everybody's getting the same message from the three Instructors, and you can keep a lid on it that way, on the quality of the product that you're putting out.

Terry: So how much of the percentage of time do your trainers and yourself spend actually training then, would you guess?

Carleen: We train, sometimes, three days a week.

Terry: I see. That's heavy.

Carleen: During the school year. And during the summer months—we work 10 months a year, all three of us. So the last two weeks of the school year and the two weeks before, we dedicate to transportation. We're projected to be training 400 bus drivers.

Terry: Excellent.

Carleen: Yeah, it's a large number of people, and we just have to get that message out to more and more people.

Terry: Now, do you remember the initial reaction when *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® training came into the Parish schools?

Carleen: It was actually funny because most people that first came into it thought that it was a take-down program.

Terry: We fight that perception today.

Carleen: Yeah. Well, we've managed to change that, but on the first training, it was really humorous because we had a group of kindergarten teachers that came in for day two, and they had all worn T-shirts, "CPI Take-Down." [laughter]

Terry: So actually written on the T-shirt was "CPI" and the word "Take-Down." Oh my—there'll be some heart rates elevated around here, to know that.

Carleen: Right, right, and that was back in 2001. That has changed, and that whole perception has changed, and it took us—and you have to show a reduction in restraint. We don't want you to touch them.

Terry: Prevention, as we say, is our middle name. So that was the initial reaction was to have T-shirts made that said, "CPI Take-Down." And we prefer "talk down" rather than . . .

Carleen: "Talk down" is much better. It doesn't hurt.

Terry: That's right. So you implemented back in 2001. Now, how long before you became a trainer of the *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® program?

Carleen: Since 2001.

Terry: So you became a trainer, right? You went through the four-day course right away and got your certification.

Carleen: I went through training prior to anybody getting it in Lafayette Parish.

Terry: I see.

Carleen: We were the initial Instructors, the initial training. And we have the same Instructors that we had back in 2001.

Terry: Wow, that's some staying power. That shows you guys must be realizing some successes out of your training. Otherwise, you wouldn't stay at it for any reasonable length of time, if you weren't seeing results. How many staffs and departments have you trained since 2001?

Carleen: Well, we've trained all paraprofessionals in the district, regular education teachers, all the special education teachers, bus drivers, custodians, the school support officers, secretaries, and I even have a few parents that have come in. They have children who have severe behavioral problems.

Terry: So pretty much top to bottom at Lafayette Parish, everyone's going to—

Carleen: Everyone, administrators, everybody.

Terry: Is it mandatory that people attend [CPI training]?

Carleen: It's mandatory through our state law for paraprofessionals, for special ed teachers and for administrators, and counselors, those types of support groups. But we make it mandatory. If you put your hands on a child, you must be trained.

Terry: Right. Excellent. Let's talk about outcomes associated with our training. What comes to mind first when you think about the positive outcomes that are associated with *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*<sup>®</sup> training?

Carleen: I think the biggest outcome is—it just got posted—a 7% increase in graduation rates.

Terry: Oh, that's excellent.

Carleen: We've been in the negatives for a while, and that just turned around. And we have about a 49% decrease in workers' compensation claims for assault.

Terry: Over how long a period?

Carleen: Well, 49% this year.

Terry: Forty-nine percent this year.

Carleen: Right, we've shown as high as 60. We're at 49%, but we still have another 16 days. But as of this date, we're at 49%, which is significant.

Terry: Yes, no doubt. During our pre-interview, you were really vocal about how the enhancements to *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*<sup>®</sup> training have made a dramatic difference in successfully de-escalating challenging behavior there at Lafayette. Could you talk about the enhancements, how you responded, how your staff responded?

Carleen: Oh, I think it gives staff more options to use, and you combine that with the Decision-Making Matrix, and we're seeing a reduction in about 42% of restraints overall. One thing that really impresses me is we started looking at total schools. And we took a middle school that was an at-risk middle school, and worked with the principal there, and trained the entire staff from the ground up, custodians, everybody.

Terry: So in other words, since the enhancements were brought in, you guys have decreased restraints by 42%?

Carleen: Forty-two percent.

Terry: Wow. These tools are powerful. The Decision-Making Matrix, I know, is very powerful for on-the-fly risk assessment, and I can see how that would lead to such a dramatic decrease.

Carleen: Well, we use it, too, for office referrals.

Terry: Explain.

Carleen: That you weigh it out. Whatever behavior you're seeing in your classroom, you weigh it out on the Decision-Making Matrix. If it's a low-level risk, you don't need an office referral. That's classroom management.

Terry: Oh, I see. So it's part of the thought process even before challenging behavior might be occurring?

Carleen: Right, Right! In this school I was telling you about, we put it up; we blanket the

school with the Decision-Making Matrix in every classroom. They're showing a 60% reduction in office referrals.

Terry: Wow, that's fantastic.

Carleen: So we have this principal now that's going to be presenting at the administrator's conference in the fall, as to how she got all of her staff trained, and the results that she's showing.

Terry: Getting 60% less referrals, that's got to be just a very dramatic, a very apparent outcome. When one day you've got 10 kids, and next day you've got 4, that's remarkable.

Carleen: Right. It's big. When you look at—one of the staff complaints is that administrators are not seen enough. Well, if you're bombarding them with classroom-management-type behavior incidents, how do they get out of their office?

Terry: Right. So this actually frees them up more to walk around, to experience . . .

Carleen: Right, to be more visible.

Terry: And more accessible and more knowledgeable about what's happening, really, on the ground in the schools and in the classrooms.

Carleen: Right, and it builds relationships. So we've seen a lot more staff retention at an at-risk school.

Terry: So another benefit is staff retention? That's nice. Excellent.

Carleen: Right, because that's a big concern.

Terry: Are there any other enhancements that you'd like to speak to, or maybe the *RESPONSE Continuum*<sup>SM</sup>? Has the big one been the Decision-Making Matrix?

Carleen: The biggest one has been the Decision-Making Matrix, and I'll throw in the *Verbal Escalation Continuum*<sup>SM</sup>. That one, if you can get people to understand and adopt it, it'll solve a lot of problems.

Terry: Excellent. Carleen, do you have an especially memorable or notable example of an occasion where working with CPI techniques helped to successfully de-escalate a situation that otherwise might have hurt somebody?

Carleen: I was at one of the elementary schools just the other day, and as I walked in, the

assistant principal said, "We have an emergency! We have a crisis!" So I started running after her, and we went into this classroom that all the other students had been evacuated from except for one. And this child was throwing desks around the room.

Terry: How old a child?

Carleen: Eleven. He's just chucking desks around the room.

So when I walked in, she said, "What are you going to do?"

I said, "I'm going to sit." [laughter]

And so she sat by me and she said, "Why are you sitting?"

And I said, "Just be quiet; just be quiet. Don't say anything."

So after a little while I just asked the child, I said, "Are you done?"

He said, "No, ma'am."

I said, "Continue." And then once I said, "Continue," he looked at me and then he came to sit by me. And I said, "Babe, I'll come talk to you anytime you need. It's easier to talk than to throw desks around."

Terry: What an understanding approach.

Carleen: "It's your choice."

And he said, "I'm so sorry."

And I said, "Well, I'll help you pick it up. Let's get it all up, and let's get on with things."

"Yes, ma'am."

And then I met with him later to talk about what are some other options, gave him a Chill Card that he could go to the counselor, and put in some more interventions. You don't have to throw desks.

Terry: Did you say a Chill Card?

Carleen: A Chill Card, which is just an index card that we write "Chill" on it.

Terry: I see. That's great—what a great concept.

Carleen: And all you have to do is present that to the teacher, and you don't have to say a word, and she'll let you go to the counselor, or they'll call me.

Terry: How did that evolve? Was that in place when you started? It's really fascinating. I've never heard of something quite like it.

Carleen: No, that was something I just implemented.

Terry: Did you? Wow, that's great that teachers are going to get to hear about that.

Carleen: It just gives that child a free pass. And the teacher doesn't have to say anything. And the only condition is you can't abuse it. If you ask to get out of class too much, the Chill Card gets removed.

Terry: But it's another tool in de-escalation to offer the child that option, to use that Chill Card. To know that you've always got that card, and you have a pass out of—say you're having a panic attack that you're reacting to, or you didn't have breakfast, or whatever it might be that morning, or you encountered a bully. There's no way for a teacher, administrator to understand that experience. But that card kind of says it all.

Carleen: It says it all, yeah, and it gives them that freedom. It's that whole decision thing. You can make a decision to throw desks, or you can choose to do the better option.

Terry: And so after your initial interaction with this boy that was throwing the desks around, and you helped him set up, I imagine that there hasn't—has he had any behavioral recurrence?

Carleen: No problems.

Terry: I didn't think so.

Carleen: No problems. And he has used the Chill Card twice since then.

Terry: That's great. That's a really dramatic example. So now, after an incident like that, are you guys pretty religious about debriefing?

Carleen: Oh, yes.

Terry: Yeah? Excellent. And how about refreshers? How often do you guys offer those?

Carleen: Every year. And we have a system set up to where they're—we have a spreadsheet, and it alerts them when their year's coming up.

Terry: I see. Now, beyond the core curriculum of *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® training, has the Parish—do you guys do any advanced training programs?

Carleen: We use the Autism Spectrum [Disorders] training as a refresher course. And we'll probably be rolling out, I'd say, Trauma-Informed Care within the next couple of years, because I've attended everything CPI has offered. And so we need to get those messages out.

Terry: So you have so much experience with our curriculum, CPI's training, rather. You were quoted as saying that "the training we provide is a missing component in a teacher's college curriculum." Could you explain what you mean by that?

Carleen: Well, what's the number-one reason that teachers are leaving the classroom?

Terry: Abusive behavior?

Carleen: Behavior. And if they [new teachers] don't know how to deal with it, you can have the best academic curriculum that you want, but if you don't have a behavioral component, and a strong behavioral component such as CPI and those techniques, they fail every time. It's amazing when you get those new teachers (and we try to get in within the first two weeks of teaching to train them), that they say, after a year, "My god, this saved my life. This saved my career. When I wanted to throw it in, all I had to do was open up my book [*Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® workbook]."

As trainers, we give every [staff] member that comes to CPI [training] our cell phone number. So they can call for support 24 hours a day.

Terry: And I bet they use that 24 hours a day sometimes, too.

Carleen: Well, they use that, and then we use it for our second step where we do investigations, because the more people we train, the more eyes we have out in the field. So if somebody's doing something wrong or using a wrong technique, they can call anonymously, and we'll go investigate and re-train.

Terry: I see, sort of like an internal affairs department.

Carleen: Right.

Terry: That's great. So you can anonymously say, "I think this could be done better." And then you guys go in and observe, and help out where that problem has been seen.

Carleen: Right. Right.

Terry: Do you have a name for that program, or is it just something people are aware of?

Carleen: It's just a CPI investigation. We use it on the premise that every school person is a mandatory reporter. I view that if you're doing a restraint wrong, or dealing with a child wrong, it's abusive. So, we're reducing the abuse.

Terry: It's a noble intention. It is the bottom line with this training and the values that are at the center of it, for sure. So when you look at—with all your years of experience in the Lafayette Parish, what still drives you nuts? What's the most pressing problem out there facing your district, do you think?

Carleen: I think it's still keeping qualified staff, the sheer numbers. And this is a problem in the United States—the whole United States—that we need the best staff that we can get in place that can offer *Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security*<sup>SM</sup> to our schools. And so many young people are not going into education.

Terry: We read that, especially about burnout from not understanding behavior management when teachers first enter the classroom. Certainly, that's in the news quite a bit.

Carleen: It's a big, big problem. And I think the more people we can get trained, we can stop that. But definitely we have to get the people on the ground at the beginning. And also, we've started—I just spoke to my director that next year we're going to be training substitutes also, because substitute teachers are very hard to find because they're being abused in the schools. So let's get a pool that we can have, that can be highly trained, that can go into some of these situations.

Terry: Carleen, if you had to cite a life inspiration, someone that's really inspired you, or some experience that has really pointed you in the place that you are now, what would you speak to?

Carleen: I think it's just seeing the need. And I go into homes for kids that are having problems, because I believe in the whole family approach, and to see how people are hurting.

Terry: Can you talk about it? You don't need to name names, obviously, but a visit like that, what is that like? How does it work?

Carleen: Well, okay. We had kids that were having a problem at one of our elementary schools. So I made a home visit, and I was talking to the mom. And the mom started crying. She had substandard housing, and she said, "This is all I can afford right now. I was in the foster care system. I don't know how to be a mama, and I have four kids."

Terry: Oh my. Talk about a challenge.

Carleen: So I said, "Well, what is your greatest stress right now?"

And she said, "Well, it's almost Christmas time." This was just this last Christmas. And she said, "I don't have a way to get my children anything."

So I said, "Don't worry. We'll take care of that." And I spoke to my special ed director, and we adopted that family for Christmas. And then I said, "Well, we're going to do this, but I need you to do some things, too. You have a Fica tree, a fake Fica tree in your living room. I want you to go to the dollar store and get some balls, and put some Christmas balls on it, because that's going to be your Christmas tree."

I got back to her house. She did it. You know, and then we went to the second step. Okay, you're worried about not having things. The way you have things is you get a job. So we got her a job on campus, on the UL campus, working at the McDonald's to start off with. She has been very successful.

Terry: Well, that's excellent.

Carleen: Her children were still having problems somewhat behaviorally, so I went to visit her last week, and she said, "I took the step. I brought them to the doctor, and two of them need to be medicated." She said, "So we're doing it." She said, "You've been the closest thing to a mother that I've ever had."

Terry: That's a beautiful testimony.

Carleen: But there's so much of that. When I got into education, I worked with the behavior disorders and the emotionally disturbed. Those are byproducts, a lot of times, of the family, and the family is in crisis, too. So we realized that you have to go a little further when you're dealing with the child, and deal with what's happening in the home. And how can we try to get that whole home up, working for that child, too?

Terry: How do you begin that conversation, Carleen, with the parent that you would

like to stop in their home and talk about their child with them?

Carleen: It's all about relationships. So I'll generally meet them at school first and say, "You don't mind if I come by your house?" "No, come on." So it's been open doors. And it's relationship building, and I've found that a lot of the parents that I work with were not successful in school. So how do you have your child be successful in school if you don't value school as being an option?

Terry: How would you transmit the value of education, right, if you don't feel it yourself?

Carleen: Right, it's going that step above and bringing those parents into that, "You didn't have this, but do you want it for your child?" And it's always a "Yes."

Terry: Right. I imagine that you have a lot of alumni that stay in touch with you, because you've made a difference for them.

Carleen: Oh, yes. Oh, I have eight godchildren that I'm godparent to, of kids that came through the system.

So it's all about relationships. Matter of fact, I went to the Popeye's fried chicken place last week, and as I drove into the drive-through, there was a kid working in the window. And when I drove up, he said, "Oh, my second mama." [laughter]

And I said, "Gabe, how are you doing?"

He says, "Well, I'm doing fine, Miss Carleen. But I remembered everything you taught me at SEAS." SEAS was the Alternative Site.

And so I said, "Well, babe, you were at SEAS for six years. So tell me what bit of information did you glean in those six years?"

Terry: This was in the drive-through? [laughter]

Carleen: Yeah. He said, "Well, you always told me never to have more kids than I could support." [laughter] He said, "I only have one child, and I was working offshore. I'm married. I was working offshore, cooking, and somebody bought out the company, so I had to support my family, so I'm working at Popeye's so I can get back offshore."

I said, "Well, you got it. You got the key."

Terry: So you've been very inspirational to a lot of people, I'm sure. And it continues

on; it continues on. Now, you're an adjunct professor at the University of Louisiana. What sorts of things do you do there?

Carleen: I teach Special Ed 300 and Special Ed 391. This is a course that everybody in education has to take. So what I call it is "growing my own teachers."

Terry: Growing your own teacher. I like it.

Carleen: So I get the people in that group that thought they were going to go into regular ed to decide that they want to go into special ed.

Terry: I see. Do you tell them about the Chill Card?

Carleen: Right. [laughter]

Terry: That's great. Do you have any last thoughts, anything you would want to leave our listeners with today, Carleen?

Carleen: No, I think just don't stop. CPI is a great message.

Terry: I agree.

Carleen: A great message, and it's best practice.

Terry: Yes, well said.

Carleen: So don't stop. And make the trainings as fun as possible, so you'll just have people want to come in and back, and back, and back. We generally top out. All of our trainings are full.

Terry: I see.

Carleen: So we've put them up now for all of next year, so they're already registering.

Terry: Oh, that's great.

Carleen: In 15 years, we haven't had a bad evaluation.

Terry: Is that right?

Carleen: Well, that says something.

Terry: Loud and clear.

Carleen: Yeah, and then we take all of their comments that they put on their evaluations, and put it up on a PowerPoint. And we paired it with music, and that's what

starts the training, while they're signing in. So they're seeing their own comments up there. So it gives ownership.

Terry: Indeed. Indeed.

Carleen: And that's what—CPI can't be a training. It's got to be an ownership of a mentality.

Terry: CPI has to be an ownership of a mentality. That's very well said, very well said. I think it's a good thought to wrap on today, unless you'd like to add more, Carleen.

Carleen: No, I think I'm done, Terry.

Terry: All right. Well, I appreciate it. Well, my guest today has been Carleen Doucet. She's a crisis interventionist at the Lafayette Parish School System. Thank you very much, Carleen.

Carleen: Well, thank you, Terry, and have a nice day.

Terry: And you, too. And thanks to all our listeners.