



ARLINGTON COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

USE OF DE-ESCALATION

DE-ESCALATION DEFINITION AND GOALS

De-escalation is the use of different techniques and actions by officers to calm and stabilize an incident and allow for the introduction of additional options and resources to safely resolve any situation. The goal of de-escalation is to ensure public safety while bringing resolve to the situation without the need to use force.

De-escalation techniques are a tool officers use daily in almost every interaction with members of the public. As such, we do not take a siloed approach to the concept of de-escalation by teaching it in a singular course. Instead, it is something that has been weaved into our hiring practices, trainings, programs and the culture of the agency.

TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

ACPD is committed to fostering a training environment which produces police officers that can serve our diverse and inclusive community with the utmost professionalism. Our Training and Career Development Unit is tasked with ensuring training throughout the agency is consistent, aligns with smart practices, meets the needs and expectations of our community and utilizes the most progressive and proven methods.

Our officers are equipped with extensive knowledge, skills, and abilities so they can successfully manage and safely resolve a range of incidents which span from basic calls for service such as neighborhood disputes to active shooter situations. Training is centered around the principles of de-escalation, is based on realistic scenarios and builds upon officer experiences. When practical, officers are expected to de-escalate all situations prior to using force.

TRAINING

- From the onset of the hiring process, potential candidates are provided with realistic scenarios and are evaluated on their ability to make mature decisions while de-escalating tense and difficult situations. Throughout an officer's career, we train and expect all decisions to be grounded in the [core values](#) of ACPD.
- Once hired, new officers receive approximately 800 hours of formal Academy training followed by 630 hours of field training. This training includes, but is not limited to use of force, community policing, implicit bias, fair and impartial policing, communicating with those with disabilities and cognitive disorders and active listening. De-escalation is specifically covered during critical incident training, however, de-escalation and ethics are woven into the legal topics, practical scenarios (reality-based training and force-decision making) and use of force training throughout the session.
- Officers are taught de-escalation techniques to include effective communication, active listening, empathy, time, and distancing and these are constantly reinforced throughout our departmental training curriculum. Over the past five years, our sworn staff have attended over 55,000 hours of training annually. This training covers topics such as legal issues/review, cultural diversity, implicit bias, ethics, verbal judo, conflict communications, defensive tactics, firearms, investigations, and other topics related to the daily responsibilities of a police officer.
- Since 2016, all new ACPD officers are required to take the 40-hour [Crisis Intervention Training](#) course within 6 months of completing field training. In addition, many tenured officers have completed the course with others being rotated through. This training is designed to equip officers with the knowledge and skills necessary to deal with a situation involving a person in a mental crisis. However, many of the skills learned are often used to de-escalate a variety of situations, regardless of the mental status of parties involved.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Use of force is governed by [departmental policies](#) and training.
- All use of force incidents are documented and [investigated](#) by supervisory staff. The findings are reviewed and affirmed through their chain of command and the Office of Professional Responsibility.
- In over 99.9% of [documented](#) police-citizen encounters, no force is used.
- The agency also investigates all allegations of officer misconduct and has an Early Intervention Program (EIP) which identifies when officers have received multiple complaints in a given period and triggers an automatic inquiry.