



Lincoln Police Department

Standard Operating Procedures

Integrity, Competency, Fairness



Subject:	De-escalation	Policy #	O-2.A
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	<i>Rescinds All Previous Policies Related to This Current Policy</i>		
Issuing Authority:	Chief of Police Lee Miller		

I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Lincoln Police Department that officers hold the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity, liberty, and worth of all persons in the highest regard. All officers shall use de-escalation techniques to reduce threats, gain voluntary compliance, and safely resolve tempestuous situations. De-escalation techniques reduce the need for physical force.

De-escalation may involve scene management, team tactics, and individual engagement. Even when personal engagement is not feasible, de-escalation techniques, such as time, distance, and cover and concealment, should still be considered unless doing so would create undue risk of harm to any person.

not every potentially violent confrontation is resolved by de-escalation, but officers have the ability to guide the direction and the outcome of many situations. Officers are expected to recognize that their approaches, such as tone and body language, to a civilian interaction, may preclude a potentially volatile situation from escalating to the point of having to engage physical force.

It is the policy of the Lincoln Police Department that officers resolve situations impartially, free of bias, and in accordance with applicable laws and policies of this agency.

II. PURPOSE

This policy aims to establish the guidelines for the Lincoln Police Department's de-escalation tactics and techniques. De-escalation is expected to be used by officers when it is safe to do so and without compromising the safety of citizens and officers or law enforcement priorities.

III. DEFINITIONS

De-escalation Techniques: Techniques used to minimize the need for physical force and increase the likelihood of voluntary compliance. These techniques may include but are not limited to, persuasion, warning, creating space, use of physical barriers, slowing down the pace of an incident, and requesting additional resources.

Sanctity of Human Life: The theological or philosophical understanding that all human life has an inherent dignity, worth, and sacredness that sets it apart from all other living things.

Totality of the Circumstances: A method of analysis where decisions are based on all available information, facts, and circumstances surrounding any event or incident.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. GENERAL

1. When feasible, officers should collect information and attempt to assess the situation, threats, and risks the scene poses. Officers should approach the situation to not precipitate an unnecessary, unreasonable, or disproportionate use of force by placing themselves or others in jeopardy.
2. De-escalation techniques seek to minimize the likelihood of possibility and using force during an incident, increase the likelihood of voluntary compliance, and lessen the amount of force needed to resolve an incident.
3. De-escalation techniques involve a range of tactics that may assist in slowing down or stabilizing an incident so that more time, options, and resources become available to resolve an incident safely.
4. De-escalation techniques are essential to maintain individual safety during encounters with children, youth, and persons experiencing a behavioral health disorder.

B. Types of De-escalation Techniques

The selection of de-escalation options should be guided by the totality of the circumstances to attain voluntary compliance. Scene stabilization assists in transitioning incidents from dynamic to static by limiting access to unsecure areas, limiting mobility, and preventing the introduction of non-involved community members. Techniques include, but are not limited to:

1. Communication techniques to calm an agitated person and promote rational decision-making (e.g., ensuring that only one officer addresses the person and that other officers remain detached as much as safety permits).
2. Regulating vocal tones and pitch (e.g., speaking slowly in a calm voice rather than shouting commands).
3. Using calming gestures and facial expressions (e.g., arms extended with palms out, avoiding angry or annoyed expressions).
4. Sharing the officer's name, asking the person their name, and exhibiting a genuine willingness to listen.
5. Practicing procedural justice techniques, such as explaining law enforcement actions and answering questions.
6. Verbal persuasion (e.g., explaining, without threats, how the person would benefit from cooperation).
7. Verbal advisements (e.g., respectfully explaining the person's rights or what law enforcement wants the person to do).
8. Verbal warnings (e.g., when necessary, notifying the person of the consequences of continued non-cooperation and then offering the person a chance to cooperate).
9. Avoiding the unnecessary display of weapons, including firearms, electronic weapons, impact tools, and OC spray.
10. Considering whether any of the following factors may be contributing to the person's behavior:
 - i. Medical condition(s)
 - ii. Mental impairment
 - iii. Developmental disability
 - iv. Physical limitation
 - v. Language barrier
 - vi. Drug interaction
 - vii. Behavioral crisis
 - viii. Fear or anxiety
 - ix. history or experiences

C. Decreasing Exposure

Decrease exposure to a potential threat by moving to a safe position. This may involve creating distance between the officer and the person seeking cover, tactical repositioning, concealment, and placing barriers between the officer and the person.

D. Slowing the Pace

Slowing down the pace of the incident by slowing your speech, taking deep breaths, and applying the critical thinking framework, including waiting out the person, avoiding physical confrontation, calling, preferably out of the subject's hearing, for extra resources (e.g., additional personnel, or specially training personnel).

V. **OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. As part of their tactical planning, officers should begin to think through de-escalation techniques and the critical thinking framework before arriving on the scene.
- B. Officers should use de-escalation techniques to reduce threats, gain voluntary compliance, and safely resolve a situation.
- C. Officers are expected to perform their work in a manner that avoids unduly jeopardizing their safety or the safety of others through poor tactical decisions including, but not limited to, immediately approaching a person without proper evaluation of the situation, failing to leave sufficient space between the officer and the person, closing the reactionary gap, or escalating the situation.
- D. When time and circumstances reasonably permit, officers should consider whether a person's lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or an inability to comply based on factors listed in IV.B-10 above.
- E. During encounters with children, youth, and persons experiencing behavioral health disorders or crises, officers are expected to use developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed tactics, including, but not limited to, a calm and unassuming demeanor and avoiding threatening verbal and body language.
- F. Any force used shall be de-escalated immediately as resistance decreases; e.g., if the person stops resisting, the officer must stop using force.

VI. **SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The prospect of a favorable outcome is often enhanced when supervisors become involved in of managing an overall response to potential violent encounters by coordinating resources and tactical actions. Supervisors should have a good knowledge of tactics and appropriately supervise subordinate officers regarding proper standards. It is best practice for supervisors to acknowledge and respond to incidents promptly and in a timely manner when law enforcement use of force is probable. Therefore, supervisors shall:

- A. Ensure an appropriate number of officers respond promptly to an incident.
- B. Assess officers' tactical positioning or deployment of specialized equipment, e.g., less lethal munitions.
- C. During a use of force review, assess whether officers appropriately and successfully employed de-escalation techniques during and
- D. Provide timely and constructive feedback directly to the officer or refer the officer to further training if deficiencies are noted.

VII. **TRAINING**

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- A. Members shall receive training techniques on de-escalation techniques annually.
- B. Training on bias-based policing shall be documented.